

Urban Sociolinguistics

The City as a Linguistic Process
and Experience

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and Patrick Heinrich**

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11 The Randstad area in the Netherlands

Emergent and fluid identity-locality
production through language in use

*Leonie Cornips, Vincent de Rooij
and Dick Smakman*

In the 1930s, Albert Plesman (1889–1953), **founder** of the Royal Dutch Airlines, hosted a trip over the west of the Netherlands. **Looking** out the window, he **pointed** out to his guests the shape of the sea-sided urban conurbation wrapped around a green area and called out: “*Een randstad!*” (A ring city!). Plesman’s nickname for the area soon grew into a household name and nowadays refers to the urban area in the western part of the Netherlands. It is used in official and unofficial documentation. It is associated with other terms to refer to the same area, like “Holland” (because most of the area consists of the provinces of North Holland and South Holland), or “the West”. Unlike these other terms, Randstad emphasises the urban parts of the area because it contains the word *stad* (city).

This chapter first introduces the physical, infrastructural and population characteristics of the area in some detail, which explain the specific language variation situation in this area and the challenges it poses in the second part. The final part of the chapter provides specific illustration of urban language contact situations – from the cities of Rotterdam, Utrecht and Amsterdam – which demonstrate the daily language use in the big cities within the region, the mechanisms of identity expression through language, and the coming to existence of language variation in neighbourhoods where speakers with different social orientations meet, interact and assert themselves.

Features of the area

Geographical contours

The Randstad denotes the semi-ring of built-up area around a less urban area unofficially called the “*Groene Hart*” (Green Heart) and includes the stretched-out peripheral band of cities by the sea. This C-shaped entity runs from the inland city of Utrecht in the central part of the Netherlands to the smaller city of Dordrecht in the inland southwestern part of the Netherlands. It includes the four largest cities in the Netherlands: Amsterdam (capital city), Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. Between the four largest cities are two types of other, smaller cities and towns. The first type includes the historical, economically important and relatively

self-contained cities with strong identities, like Haarlem, Leiden, Dordrecht and Gouda. The other type are the predominantly residential areas that form the “urban glue” between the larger and smaller cities, like Alphen aan den Rijn, Zoetermeer and Zwijndrecht.

Infrastructure

The nature of Randstad urbanisation has been affected strongly by geographical features. It did not gradually grow from the inside out as one urban entity, because water was often in the way. Lying in the deltas of the Meuse and Rhine rivers and some smaller deltas, and bordered to the West by the North Sea, the area can, according to Warf (2010), be referred to as a “Delta Metropole”. Over the centuries, large-scale land reclamation and water management have made it possible for some formerly separated cities to expand and to physically connect. Reclamations in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries have led to some parts of the area having a relatively short history of population (Hoeksema 2007).

Mobility between the various types of urbanised centres gradually developed in the twentieth century between the largest towns and cities: a major motorway system, as well as Rotterdam Airport and Amsterdam/Schiphol Airport. Within the major cities, there is a well-functioning tram and/or bus system and in Amsterdam and Rotterdam a metro system is in operation. Extensive bicycle lanes and the legal protection of cyclists in the Netherlands make this a practical means of transport within and between neighbourhoods in cities and oftentimes also between cities. Living in one urban centre and commuting daily to another is common and so is commuting in and out of the Randstad on a daily basis. There is variation in the degree to which the various populations use transport means. Some non-western newcomers and their offspring, for instance, are known to use bikes less habitually than most Dutchmen do (Verhoeven 2009).

The Randstad area as a unity

There are several reasons why the area could be viewed as not being united. It consists of several independent cities, is stretched out rather than round-shaped (i.e. without an obvious centre in the middle), and some greener areas interrupt the continuous spread of urbanisation. There is no centralised authority, due to the independent histories of the various cities, and there are no signs that this city autonomy will not continue.¹ Inhabitants tend to associate with the city where they live or are from. In fact, a certain rivalry between the cities, perhaps expressed most overtly through soccer club associations and highly recognisable city dialects, is very common.

The area is, nevertheless, widely seen as an entity. Foremost, it is historically associated with the formation of the Netherlands as a nation state. Furthermore, major industries and important national institutions in the Netherlands are often situated in this area. The feeling of unity may come from the fact that these institutions are scattered across the area and not located in one of the cities. While Amsterdam is the capital city and the touristic and financial centre of the country, other urban

centres have important symbolic and practical central functions, too. None of the cities is academically dominant, for one. Leiden University is the oldest university in the country, yet the other Randstad universities (Utrecht, Amsterdam, Delft and Rotterdam) have high-ranking universities as well. The seat of government is in The Hague, and this city is also most strongly associated with the royal family. The Hague is a major international centre of peace and justice and is home to the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration, while the port of Rotterdam is amongst the largest in the world. Utrecht has the most geographical central position and forms a natural connection with the rest of the country, which is partly due to Utrecht train station being the busiest train station in the country. The city of Haarlem is popularly associated with “good, standard” Dutch language and so is the western urban region as a whole (Smakman 2003). In other words, each of the four major cities and some of the smaller old cities hold important official and symbolic functions within the area.

Randstad is a string of cities that together symbolise an urban way of life, both to its inhabitants and to Dutchmen not living there. Nowadays, the area is referred to as an entity in the media and in general discourse amongst inhabitants. Most national radio and television transmission is from the area and to people from outside the area the language used during much of Dutch broadcasting has a distinctive Randstad ring to it.

The people

According to Wikipedia (2016a), the Randstad megalopolis roughly housed around 7.1 million inhabitants in 2008, which in that year was roughly 43% of the total population of the Netherlands. The population number in 2015 was 16,900,726, and because the Randstad population is expected to grow slightly faster than that of other areas (CBS 2011, 2013), a reasonable estimate of today’s population of the area is 7.5 million. The Dutch population tripled in the twentieth century (CLO 2016) and it is estimated that the Randstad area will increase by about 1 million in the coming decades and that most of the growth in the country until 2040 will be in the four major cities in the area (De Jong and Daalhuizen 2014).

In the 1960s and 1970, immigrants came mostly from Southern Europe, Turkey and Morocco. In the second half of the 1970s, 300,000 immigrants from the former South American Dutch colony of Surinam migrated to the Netherlands. In the 1990s, a considerable number of refugees from former Yugoslavia and various other countries suffering from war or natural disasters came to the Netherlands. The first decade of the twenty-first century brought immigrants from new European Union countries in Eastern Europe. Currently, refugees are entering the country, which adds to the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of Randstad.

Social issues

Like in other areas in the Netherlands, poverty exists in Randstad. Cities and towns with high numbers of citizens have the highest risk of suffering from poverty

(CBS 2015a, 2015b), which makes the area particularly susceptible in this respect. Indeed, the first food bank was opened in Rotterdam in 2002 and the number of Dutch food banks has grown inside and outside the area to 149. Between 2013 and 2014, the number of people making use of this service rose by 30% (Boer 2014). Rotterdam and Amsterdam citizens run the highest risk of suffering from poverty, often leading to social exclusion and ethnic segregation, and in Amsterdam the risk of long-term poverty is the highest. One in four Rotterdam children are growing up in a family on a relatively low income (CBS 2016b). Amsterdam and Rotterdam had a poverty percentage (households) of over 18% in 2013, while the national average was 10.3%. For The Hague, this percentage was 17.6% while for Utrecht it was 12.6% (CBS 2015a, 2015b). Poor families tend to be concentrated in certain neighbourhoods, meaning that a considerable degree of social segregation exists. This degree of segregation rose between 2010 and 2013 in the largest cities while it fell slightly in the smaller towns, making the Randstad particularly vulnerable to this phenomenon. The degree of segregation in the city of The Hague is the highest in the country. Gentrification further reinforces segregation. Non-Western foreigners run the highest risk of poverty (CBS 2015a, 2015b). The number of non-Western homeless people doubled in the 2009 to 2015 period (CBS 2016a).

The other side of the coin is that most of the 10 richest towns in the Netherlands are in the Randstad area or on its fringes (CBS 2015c; Quote 2015). Furthermore, the educational level in Dutch cities and the surrounding urbanised areas is higher than in non-urbanised areas, making the Randstad a relatively highly educated region. While the area attracts the rich and highly educated, the difference between rich and poor in the Netherlands is rising (Huygen 2016), and living in cities in particular is becoming increasingly difficult to afford, which adds to the mixed social image of the Randstad area.

The area has a high and stable percentage of 75 and older inhabitants but attracts relatively young people. Fielding's (1992) so-called "escalator function" of large cities seems to apply to Randstad; upwardly mobile young adults move to the city to become highly educated, get work experience and then move out of the city again to start a family. This had, for a long time, also been true in Randstad, but in recent years the tendency to move out of the city has been stagnating (De Jong and Daalhuizen 2014).

The sociolinguistic situation

Old-town and new-town languages

The historical cities all have strong remnants of historical dialect formation through generations of less mobile speakers residing in the same cities and neighbourhoods. Some of the expanding areas (like Alphen aan den Rijn) can be considered "new towns". This research could be done in the same vein as research by, for instance, Prompakorn (2004) and Kerswill and Williams (1992) in neighbourhoods in Bangkok and London, respectively, where people from various regions come together, each bringing with them their own languages and styles.

In the old towns and the new towns, a certain hybridisation in language use by speakers with various backgrounds and mobilities prevails, and this makes for a colourful pallet of linguistic spaces in the area, in which patterns and categories are constantly being developed and renegotiated. Individuals index and construct ethnicities, and not necessarily their own.

The language situation in the Randstad area

Dutch is indisputably the most dominant language in Randstad. In 2014, more than 350,000 Moroccans and between 400,000 and 500,000 Turks lived in the Netherlands (Wikipedia 2016b) and this affects the language situation. According to Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons and Fenning 2016), the following immigrant languages are now spoken the most in the Netherlands: Indonesian (300,000), Tarifit (by many Moroccans; 200,000) and Turkish (192,000). In the four largest cities in the Randstad area, at least 110 languages are spoken; the most frequent ones being Turkish, Hindi, Arabic, English and Berber (SAL 2012). Extra, Aarts, Van der Avoird, Broeder and Yagmur (2001) explain that in a city like The Hague more than half of the primary school pupils speak not only Dutch but another language as well in their home environment. In 1999, no fewer than 87 of those "other" home languages were counted (Extra et al. 2001). This number is growing (Extra 2011). English is the most dominant second language, although many first-generation immigrants do not have the level of command that people who went through Dutch primary and secondary education typically have.

The changed role of Dutch

Dutch colonial regimes were aggressive in their approach as any other colonial regime, but imposing Dutch language and culture was not a common in Dutch colonies (Gouda 2007). The Dutch relationship with Dutch culture and language in the face of other cultures is also illustrated by Schrover (2014), who explained how in the 1950s, Australia and Canada favoured Dutch immigrants because they quickly assimilated in the Australian and Canadian society. Extra (1995) indicated that in the literature describing this self-adjustment, authors in Canada, Australia, the US and New Zealand qualify Dutch immigrants as willing to give up their language within a generation. He argued that this shows that when they migrate, Dutchmen do not see the Dutch language as a core value of their cultural identity and that even in official policy there has been a sense of acceptance of the language and culture of immigrants. This is, however, the opposite for migrants entering the Netherlands nowadays, who have to take naturalisation classes in Dutch language and culture in order to get their permit.

The way the Dutch government treats Dutch has changed relatively recently. According to Schinkel and Van Houdt (2010), "Dutch identity" is a quality of someone who is an "active citizen" and adheres to a "Dutch and liberal acculturation". Schinkel (2008) indicates that, according to the Dutch government, acculturation includes speaking Dutch – besides, amongst others, raising one's

children according to Dutch customs and gaining curiosity about Dutch culture and passing this on to children. Bjornson (2007) shows how, since the 1990s, “[t]he Dutch language has become the key technology of the Netherlands’ new integration and immigration policy regime”, a regime that resulted from an unlikely mutual reinforcement of linguistic nationalism and Third Way politics. This led to a normalisation of a “language as commodity” ideology. Within this ideology, a good citizen is self-reliant, i.e. no longer dependent on the welfare state. To achieve this, the good citizen should be fully employable, for which proficiency in Dutch is considered a necessary precondition.

Conclusion

With so many various types of immigration, with recent ones having a particularly strong linguistic impact and with so many cultures and languages in the same place, the social and ethnic position of groups is constantly changing. The typical individual who speaks Dutch as a first language and English as a second language has not been the norm for a while in certain urban areas. There are first-generation immigrants who do not speak English or Dutch, second-generation immigrants who speak Dutch as a first language and English as one of their second languages besides a Western or non-Western language and who are orienting towards their ethnic origins, and many more speaker types who do not fit the dominant picture of the Dutch speaker.

The well-known city dialects are developing new shapes and social meanings in settings where newcomers from all over the country and the world come together in these old cities while locally born inhabitants have been moving out of the big cities to smaller commuter towns. The necessity for economic exchange and generally life in the big city brings groups into contact with each other and urges them to assert their identities and distinguish themselves from other groups. They could be viewed as competing not only economically but also culturally, linguistically and symbolically.

Case studies

Identity and the production of locality

Randstad is a pivotal meeting place for a multiplicity of cultures, orientations and identities (Qian, Qian and Zhu 2012). By means of three case studies, this section will show that the Randstad is a dynamic, multiple and hybridised place of identity in which (groups of) speakers continuously define and redefine social categories in processes of selfing and othering as relational constructs negotiated through the complex networks of interactive relations (Qian et al. 2012). In the Randstad, as everywhere else, local variation is involved in the production of novel meanings and shifting, multiple group membership, as well as ambiguous or uncertain group membership, which are the hallmarks of social life in contemporary societies. This section will show that although the world may have become more complex

linguistically, allowing much more space for linguistic hybridity, this does not mean that users of new hybridised ways of speaking have stopped thinking in terms of stable (ethno)linguistic categories and no longer have strong feelings of what they consider to be linguistically and culturally theirs (Cornips and De Rooij 2013).

The three case-studies below focus on adolescents in Rotterdam (Cornips and De Rooij 2013), Utrecht (Boumans, Dibbits and Dorleijn 2001) and Amsterdam (Cornips 2002). In order to interpret what is going on in the interactions in terms of identity construction, we focus on the indexical processes specified by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), in particular:

overt mention of identity categories and labels; [. . .] displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and [. . .] the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups.

(Bucholtz and Hall 2005: 594)

These processes are most readily identifiable in transcribed recordings of interactions. The three case-studies in Rotterdam, Utrecht and Amsterdam will reveal that, in the various productions of Self versus Other, speakers may rely on categories of place, race, clothing, religion and language that are, more often than not, interlinked (cf. Cornips and De Rooij 2013) and that their specific ideas about Self and Other are defined and redefined in socially negotiated processes at a local level such that the complex relations of difference and otherness are constantly renegotiated and re-imagined (cf. Qian et al. 2012).

Rotterdam

The first case-study (Cornips and De Rooij 2013) is based on fieldwork carried out in Rotterdam in October 2002 and January 2003 by Merlien Hardenberg, who is of Surinamese Creole origin.² Through friends she made contact with several adolescents who allowed her to observe and interview them and their group of friends for four months. She also made recordings of these youngsters. The core group consisted of four male adolescents of Surinamese Creole descent between 14 and 18 years old: Ronald, Vincent, Romano and Gerard (all names in this section are pseudonyms). To understand how these young men distinguish between Self and Other, Irvine's notion of "style" will prove to be helpful:

"Style" crucially concerns distinctiveness; though it may characterize an individual; it does so only within a social framework (of witnesses who pay attention); it thus depends upon social evaluation.

(Irvine 2001: 21)

Elements selected from available linguistic and other semiotic resources, such as clothing, are specially crafted and combined in ways that are recognised

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by insiders and, to varying degrees, by outsiders as distinctively characteris-
tic of a particular group, and invested with socio-cultural significance. Irvine
continues:

Images of persons considered typical of the group – and the personalities,
moods, behavior, activities, and settings, characteristically associated with
them – are rationalized and organized in a cultural ideological system, so that
these images become available as a frame of reference within which speakers
create performances and within which audiences interpret them.

(Irvine 2001: 31)

The following case studies will show how speakers engage in this process of
dynamic and localised meaning making and social identification.

In Fragment 1 below, the fieldworker Merlien asks Ronald, Vincent, Romano
and Gerard about the clothes they are wearing. Clothing and the way youngsters
and others wear it, or are “supposed” to wear it, is an identifying feature of a
particular style. The following fragment reveals that a particular way of clothing
is identified and recognised as characteristic of a Surinamese style.

Fragment 1

1 October 2002, in front of Ronald’s house in Feijenoord (neighbourhood in Rot-
terdam), between 7 and 10 pm.

- 1 fieldworker: jullie hebben ongeveer dezelfde soort kleding aan hè?
2 Gerard: ja toch
3 fieldworker: wat voor stijl is dat?
4 Ronald: Surinaamse stijl

- 1 fieldworker: you wear the same type of clothing, don’t you?
2 Gerard: yes
3 fieldworker: what kind of style is that?
4 Ronald: Surinamese style

In Fragment 2 below, the same fieldworker tries to find out whether clothing
concerns members’ distinctiveness: “Why do you wear your shoes like that?” The
unfolding interaction reveals what is of crucial importance here to these Surinamese
youngsters, namely to distinguish themselves from Antilleans (line 13, 19, and 20)
and Moroccans (line 9). The unmarked Surinamese style is to wear the “tongue (of
the shoe) at the other side” (line 15), unlike the Antilleans do: “Antilleans wear
the tongue just underneath it” (line 19–20). The presupposition in the unfolding
interaction is that Moroccans will have a clothing style of their own as well (line 9).
The Moroccans are brought up in this conversation since the fieldworker has a
Moroccan boyfriend.

Fragment 2

1 October 2002, in front of Ronald's house in Feijenoord, Rotterdam, between 7 and 10 pm.

- 1 fieldworker: waarom draag je je schoenen zo?
 2 Ronald: hoe?
 3 fieldworker: zo
 4 Ronald: dat is gewoon een Surinaamse stilo
 5 Vincent: dat heb ik haar al gezegd
 6 fieldworker: ik heb het nergens anders gezien
 7 Gerard: wat de lippen zo
 8 Vincent: ja maar waar woon je?
 9 Gerard: hoe dragen Marokkanen het hoe dragen Marokkanen het?
 10 Gerard: zeker over die schoenen
 11 fieldworker: ik weet het niet
 12 fieldworker: maar andere Surinamers heb ik niet zien dragen zo
 13 Ronald: dat zijn Antillianen
 14 fieldworker: maar andere Surinamers heb ik het ook zo niet zien dragen
 15 Gerard: bij mij moet die lipje voor
 16 Vincent: dan kan je niet zo waka man zo
 17 fieldworker: doen andere mensen jullie ook na?
 18 Gerard: nee joh iedereen zijn eigen style
 19 Ronald: de meeste Surinamers dragen het zo dat zeg ik je de hele
 20 Gerard: tijd Antillianen dragen het d'r over heen
 21 fieldworker: het kan niet zo het is gewoon niet mooi
 22 Gerard: en wie begon ermee?
 23 Ronald: dat weet ik echt niet hoor
 het is gewoon van de Surinamers

- 1 fieldworker: why do you wear your shoes like that?
 2 Ronald: how?
 3 fieldworker: like that
 4 Ronald: that is just a Surinamese style
 5 Vincent: I have told her that already
 6 fieldworker: I didn't notice it anywhere else
 7 Gerard: what the tongues [Dutch: *lippen*, literally "lips"] in this way
 8 Vincent: yes but where do you live?
 9 Gerard: how do Moroccans wear it how do Moroccans wear it?
 10 Gerard: [it is] certainly [worn] over the shoes
 11 fieldworker: I don't know
 12 fieldworker: but I haven't seen other Surinamese wear it in the same way
 13 Ronald: those are Antilleans.
 14 fieldworker: but I haven't seen other Surinamese wear it in the same way
 15 Gerard: that tongue [of the shoe] has to be at the other like this
 16 Vincent: you can't walk [Sranan: *waka*] like that man

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 19 Ronald:
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- 17 fieldworker: do other people imitate you?
 18 Gerard: no of course not everyone has his own style
 19 Ronald: the large majority of the Surinamese wear it like that, that's what
 20 Gerard: I tell you all the time, Antilleans wear the tongue just overneath it
 21 Fieldworker: that's just not right, it is just not nice [Dutch: *mooi*] and
 22 Gerard: who started it? I really don't know
 23 Ronald: it just belongs to the Surinamese

The opposition constructed in Feijenoord neighbourhood in Rotterdam by a style's distinctiveness depends on social evaluation and aesthetics such as *mooi* (nice) (line 20), and it interacts with ideologised representations (Irvine 2001) such as "the Surinamese" (line 23), "the Antilleans" (line 13) and "the Moroccans" (line 9). This means that these four youngsters think in terms of stable ethnic categories in the context of clothing. However, when reflecting about language use, these youngsters may construe Self as including Antilleans, showing that Self and Other are subject to redefinition throughout their interaction (Cornips and De Rooij 2013).

Utrecht

The second case study involves data from interviews of six male speakers in the neighbourhood of Lombok/Transvaal in Utrecht in the early 2000's with a sociolinguistic interviewer (Boumans et al. 2001). These speakers are childhood friends. They speak Moroccan Arabic/Berber, Turkish Hindi in addition to Dutch. All speakers are in their early 20s during the interviews (see also Cornips 2002).

Fragment 3 shows the reflections of Abdelkalek, who is of Moroccan descent. He reflects on his friends whose ethnic backgrounds differ and on there being two categories that go beyond ethnicity, namely religion (i.e. being Muslim) and language use (i.e. speaking Dutch amongst each other). In line 1 through 5, Abdelkalek observes that socialising with boys with different ethnic backgrounds is not so special, which he confirms in line 6. In line 11, he emphasises that they just talk Dutch among each other, which shows that despite the different ethnicities Self is constructed through language use. Their belief in Islam (line 16) is the second category constructing Self; they are all able to talk about religion-related topics (line 16) and they have the same routine habits such as fasting during Ramadan (line 18). Therefore, Abdelkalek concludes in the last line (line 22) that there is no distinction between them.

Fragment 3

Early 2000's, Lombok/Transvaal (neighbourhood in Utrecht).

- 1 Abdelkalek: ehm verder nooit sowieso nooit iemand van ons aan eh
 rassenhaat
 2 gedaan en eh ja zoals ik al zei op uiterlijk afgaan # want het is
 3 dat ik het nu weer hoor van allemaal verschillende jongens maar ja
 4 normaal ga je heus niet denken van eh hè ik ga met Turkse en

- 5 Surinaamse en en met die om, dus dat is best wel bijzonder.
- 6 Abdelkalek: zo denk ik helemaal niet.
- 7 Interviewer: of ten minste nou ja misschien doordat ().
- 8 Abdelkalek: () ja het zou wel kunnen van mensen die zeggen van da's wel
- 9 bijzonder Marokkanen, Turken en Surinamers allemaal bij
elkaar eh
- 10 heel goed omgaan, maar ik vind ik vind het niet.
- 11 Abdelkalek: we praten allemaal gewoon Nederlands met elkaar.
- 12 Abdelkalek: en eh we zien elkaar dan.
- 13 Abdelkalek: ja 't is gewoon iedereen is gewoon precies hetzelfde dan.
- 14 Interviewer: mm ja is er dan toch iets wat eh wat jullie bindt als groep?
- 15 Abdelkalek: ja gewoon het ge& eh gewoon 't geloof ook (.) vind ik.
- 16 Abdelkalek: eh met z'n allen geloven we gewoon in de islam, hebben we vaak
- 17 hebben we vaak discussies over, praten we over (.) ehm met de
- 18 Ramadan we vasten allemaal gelijk dus daarom zie je uberhaupt
- 19 geen verschil.
- 20 Abdelkalek: je ziet je ziet helemaal geen verschil, het is gewoon iedereen
- 21 vast en eh eh met z'n allen gelijk feest, meestal dan, en ja dat is
- 22 ja verder is er geen, echt geen onderscheid eigenlijk.
- 1 Abdelkalek: uhm no one of us has ever done anything racist or acted on
- 2 appearance because now I hear it again by various youngsters but
- 3 yes normally you don't start thinking like uh I hang out with
- 4 Turks and Surinamese and with that one, so that is special in a
- 5 way
- 6 Abdelkalek: I don't think in that way
- 7 Interviewer: or at least maybe because ()
- 8 Abdelkalek: () yes it might be that people say like that's special
- 9 Moroccans, Turks and Surinamese who get along rather well but
- 10 I find I don't
- 11 agree
- 12 Abdelkalek: we all just talk Dutch to one other
- 13 Abdelkalek: and uh then we see each other
- 14 Interviewer: yes, it is just everyone is just similar then
- 15 Interviewer: mm yes is there something that you binds together as a group?
- 16 Abdelkalek: yes just the uh just the religion too I find
- 17 uh we all just believe in the Islam, we often have
- 18 we often have discussions about it, we talk
- 19 about (.) uhm during Ramadan we fast all at the same time thus
- 20 that's why
- 21 you don't see any difference
- 22 Abdelkalek: one sees, one sees no difference at all it is just everyone
- fasts and
- uh uh together with everyone celebrate, well, usually, and
- yes that is yes further there is no, no real distinction actually.

In the specific context of going out in Utrecht, Anouar, who is one of the adolescents with a Moroccan background, labels himself and is labelled by others (Cornips, Jaspers and De Rooij 2015) as Moroccan. While the label "Moroccan" does not play a role in the context of religion, it becomes important in the context of going out in Utrecht. Anouar feels excluded (line 3 in Fragment 4 below) due to the door policy of discos in Utrecht (line 11 through 13) refusing Moroccans to enter (line 9–10). In this context, Anouar constructs an opposition between Dutchmen *Hollanders* (line 2) and Moroccans (line 3), which is the same opposition as constructed by the bouncer (line 16).

Fragment 4

Early 2000s, Lombok/Transvaal (neighbourhood in Utrecht).

- 1 Anouar: nou kijk () zoals in Utrecht eh (.) gezellige sfeertje ja, soms
 2 hebben de Hollanders wel een gezellige sfeertje, maar die
 3 Marokkanen voelen zich dan buitengesloten.
- 4 Anouar: niet door het muziek.
 5 Anouar: het is eh gewoon eh een beetje eh te: eh: ja, [?] is best wel
 6 racistisch hier.
 7 Anouar: nee zijn gewoon eh, omdat de Marokkanen [wel] een slechte
 8 naam hebben, hier in Utrecht.
 9 Anouar: en als ze het iedereen [?] over een kam scheren en niemand
 10 komt meer binnen, gewoon. (. . .)
 11 Anouar: toen g-ing ik naar een discotheek toe.
 12 Anouar: en eh (.) ik kom, ik kom naar beneden, en hij zegt tegen
 13 mijn eh nou je mag d'r niet naar binnen, ik zeg hoezo niet?
 14 Anouar: de portier.
 15 Anouar: hij zegt jij hoort bij de Marokkaanse jongeren die hier boven
 staan.
- 1 Anouar: now look () like in Utrecht uh (.) cosy little atmosphere yes,
 2 sometimes the Hollanders have a cosy atmosphere but those
 3 Moroccans feel excluded then.
 4 Anouar: not because of the music.
 5 Anouar: it is uh just uh a bit uh too uh yes is really rather
 6 racist here.
 7 no just uh because the Moroccans have a bad
 8 reputation here in Utrecht.
 9 Anouar: and if they generalise and no one gets in ((in the disco)) any
 10 longer, you know. (. . .)
 11 then I went to a disco.
 12 Anouar: and uh (.) I walk I walk downstairs and he tells
 13 me uh "now you are not allowed to enter", I say "why not?"
 14 Anouar: the bouncer.
 15 Anouar: he says you belong to the Moroccan youngsters who are upstairs.

In Fragment 5, Anouar confirms how difficult it is to enter a disco in Utrecht for male adolescents who are labelled by others and by themselves as Moroccan. However, in line 9 and 10 Anouar refers to himself as having “*zwarte krullen*” (black curls) (line 9–10).

Fragment 5

Early 2000s, Lombok/Transvaal (neighbourhood in Utrecht).

Anouar

- 1 maar Utrecht is echt eh, een hele moeilijke stad om eh om uit te gaan.
- 2 maar ik vind het ook niet zo supergezellig hier in Utrecht hoor.
- 3 ik vind het sfeer niet zo.
- 4 ja dat is meestal de vaste reden altijd, vaste klanten.
- 5 of je bent te jong.
- 6 meestal hoor je dat van eh alleen maar vaste klanten of je
- 7 bent te jong.
- 8 ze gaan natuurlijk niet zeggen tegen jou ja sorry je hebt zwarte krullen
- 9 je komt niet binnen.

Anouar

- 1 but Utrecht really is er, a very difficult city to go out.
- 2 but also I don't find it very cosy here in Utrecht.
- 3 I don't like the atmosphere very much.
- 4 yes, most often the reason [for refusing him at the door] is always, “regular customers”
- 5 or “you are too young.”
- 6 most often you hear like uh “regular customers only” or
- 7 “you are too young.”
- 8 of course they are not going to tell you yes sorry you have black curls.
- 9 you won't get in.

Fragment 4 and 5 show that the interviewed youngsters define and redefine social categories in processes of selfing and othering as relational constructs. In the context of religion, they identify themselves using the supra-ethnic label Muslim; in the context of the disco door policy in Utrecht they label themselves as Moroccans in opposition to others who are able to enter the disco without any problems. In addition, Anouar labels himself as “having black curls” to foreground his personal identity backgrounding group identities like Muslim and Moroccan. This exemplifies the way in which speakers construct constantly shifting, layered identities.

Amsterdam

The next case study involves an interview with Mick by Anne Ridderikhoff for her internship at the Meertens Institute in Anne's house (Ridderikhoff 2009). Mick was 21 years old at the time of the interview; he had Dutch nationality and was

from Surinamese Creole descent (through his mother). He attended an intermediate vocational school (*MBO* in Dutch). Anne lived in the Westerpark neighbourhood in the West of Amsterdam where she met Mick a few years earlier in what she describes as a “restaurant annex dancing”, called “Pacific Parc”, where he was an employee. Since they both lived in Westerpark, they met regularly in the neighbourhood and kept in contact. Mick visited Anne several times at her place.

Mick responds to Anne’s question that he grew up in the Bijlmer, a suburb of South-East Amsterdam where many Surinamese and Ghanese inhabitants live. He identifies with the Bijlmer when saying “*dat is gewoon mijn ding*” (that is just my thing) (line 3). He mentions the alternative name of the Bijlmer, “*Bimri*”, which stems from Sranan (methathesis of *lm* or *rm* > *ml* or *mr* or /l/ replaced by /r/) (Daniëls 2004).

Fragment 6

4 December 2004, evening, Anne’s house.

Mick

- 1 ja dan zeg ik uit de Bijlmer uit Bimri echt waar. (.2) Ik kom uit de
- 2 Bijlmer, Zuid-Oost, ja daar kom ik vandaan, ik kom uit de Bijlmer daar ben ik
- 3 opgegroeid, dat is gewoon mijn ding.

Mick

- 1 yes, then I say from the Bijlmer from Bimri really. (.2) I am from the Bijlmer,
- 2 Southeast, yes that’s where I am from, I am from the Bijlmer, that’s where I was
- 3 raised, that is just my thing.

Mick informs Anne that one and the same verb, *djoeken* (line 1, Fragment 7 below), which stems from Sranan *dyuku* (Snijders 2000), can have two different interpretations, depending on which company you are in (line 8) and depending on where the verb *djoeken* is pronounced (line 8). Mick indicates that *djoeken* is a death threat in the Bijlmer neighbourhood but not necessarily so in the Westerpark neighbourhood. In the Bijlmer, someone will stab you down and this threat can be executed by various people in the Bijlmer (line 3), which is unlike Westerpark where the person who utters it will also execute the threat (line 5–6). The use of the adverb “*gewoon*” (just) in line 3 shows that the use of *djoeken* is more common in the Bijlmer whereas *gewoon* is absent when Mick talks about Westerpark, which demonstrates that this death threat is more rare in Westerpark than in the Bijlmer. Moreover, in Westerpark *djoeken* has the meaning of “to prick” (line 7), which sounds less serious than “to stab down” as in the Bijlmer (line 2).

Fragment 7

4 December 2004, evening, Anne’s house.

Mick

1 in de *Bijlmer* als iemand (.) tegen je zei moest je gewoon bang zijn ik ga
 2 je djoeken dan wist je gewoon dat niet die persoon die het *zei*: zou je steken
 3 misschien iemand anders iemand komt gewoon naar je toe en die steekt je gewoon
 4 neer. in Westerpark ((lach)) is het gewoon heel anders, iemand komt daar, mensen
 5 zeggen het niet en als ie:mand het *zegt*, bang zijn want alleen die persoon, alleen
 6 die persoon komt neerge-(.).((doet ander na)) "ja ik heb hem alleen maar geprikt"
 7 Alleen maar geprikt, vast wel. (.3) er is een verschil woorden zijn anders.
 8 sommige woorden verschillen met wie: je 't zegt (.2) sommige woorden verschillen
 waar: je het zegt.

Mick

1 in de *Bijlmer* when someone tells you you just have to be scared I will stab
 2 ((djoeken)) you then you just knew that the person who told you would not
 3 stab you but maybe someone else someone else just comes to you and he
 4 will just stab you. in Westerpark ((laughs)) it is just completely different,
 5 someone comes there, people don't say it and if someone says it ((viz. djoeken))
 6 to you, be afraid of that person only, only that person comes down . . .
 7 ((imitating someone)) "yes but I only pricked him." Just pricked for sure. there is
 8 a difference words are different. some words differ with whom you say them,
 some words differ where you pronounce them.

Another example of social production of locality through language use is the two localised meanings of the expression "*(een) tori zetten*" or "*(een) tori plegen*" in Westerpark and the *Bijlmer*. The word "*tori*" (issue) stems from Sranan (*tori* originally means "story"). Mick again shows how the *Bijlmer* and Westerpark are produced as place through different meanings of this idiom. If someone in the *Bijlmer* uses this expression (line 2), it means that people talk about an illegal way of getting money somewhere (line 3). The same expression used in Westerpark (line 6) has the meaning of bothering someone (line 8), which is completely different (line 6) and in the words of Mick much more innocent (line 9). This is the reason why he expresses his idea that "the values are different but the [meaning of the] words have been weakened a bit" (line 1).

Fragment 8

4 December 2004, evening, Anne's house.

Mick

1 de waarden zijn hetzelfde, maar de woorden zijn een beetje afgezwakt. als
 2 iemand in de *Bijlmer* tegen je zegt zullen we *tori zetten* dan hebben we het
 3 over van ok we hebben een manier hoe we geld kunnen komen die niet
 4 eerlijk is, maar we hebben het wel gewoon over geld, we hebben het over
 5 een paar (honderd) (maar ja) in de huidige tijd zullen we het hebben over

- 6 weet ik veel het bedrag is niet belangrijk (.) in Westerpark als iemand zegt we
 7 gaan een tori zetten dan is het heel anders, dan is het van we gaan eh: we gaan
 8 even naar die en die toe want die heeft want die heeft dat en dat gedaan,
 9 gewoon eh: even lastig vallen ofzo. dat is heel iets anders. het is iets onschuldigers.
 Het heeft iets onschuldigs over zich. Het is gewoon heel anders.

Mick

- 1 the values are the same but the words have been weakened a bit. if someone
 2 in the Bijlmer tells you shall we commit tori then we talk about ok we have
 3 a way how to get money which is illegal but we just talk about money we
 4 talk about a few hundred but yes nowadays we will talk about I don't know
 5 the amount is not important. if someone in Westerpark says we commit a
 6 tori then it is completely different, then it means something like uh we go
 7 to that one and that one for a minute for he has for he has done this and
 8 this just uh bother him or so. That is completely different. it is more innocent.
 9 there is some innocence about it. it is just something else.

Mick shows by both fragments that neighbourhoods like Westerpark and Bijlmer in Amsterdam are constructed through language use: the same word "*djoeken*" and expression "*(een) tori zetten/plegen*" can have two different meanings depending on where you are and with whom. It shows how social relations and meaning allocation are crosscutting practices in one place.

Conclusion

We have argued that the Randstad is not a linguistic or homogeneous entity. It is a dynamic, multiple and hybridised space in which (groups of) speakers constantly define and redefine social categories such as language, religion, clothing, ethnicity and place in processes of selfing and othering as relational constructs. We have shown various groups of speakers who in their orientations and identifications engage in locality production through language use and shifting social categories. In their interactions, the adolescents in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht reveal specific ideas about the context-dependent Self and Other. Their interactions show that local Randstad identities and concepts of the local within the Randstad area are emergent, relational and situated and are discursively constructed. Identities are, above all, local achievements, i.e. they shift and change according to how interactants perceive shifting borders between Self and Other in particular social contexts; influenced by particular aims, ambitions and desires; and constructed with the help of linguistic and cultural resources available.

Key to symbols used in transcription

- (.1): pause in seconds, often in tenths of a second
 (.): just noticeable pause
 (): unclear talk

[]: best guess

(()): or transcriber's comment/clarification, description of paralinguistic phenomena

: (colon): indicates lengthening of preceding vowel

underline: emphasis

Notes

- 1 Ritsema van Eck, Van Oort, Raspe, Van Brussel and Daalhuizen (2006) indicate that the lack of a central administration in the Randstad area – combined with the relatively low concentration of urbanisation – affect the economic power of the area as a whole.
- 2 In Surinam, as well as in the Netherlands, “Creole” is the common term that refers to that part of the population descending from African slaves.

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