WINDOW ON THE NETHERLANDS

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE THE FUTURE? COMPARING ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF DIVERSITY IN A HIGHLY DIVERSE NEIGHBOURHOOD

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ABSTRACT

As today's cities are becoming more diverse, scholars and policy makers have become increasingly interested in the impacts of living in diverse neighbourhoods on people's perceptions of diversity. While adults' and young people's perceptions have been studied separately, we know little about how different age groups living in the same neighbourhood encounter and experience diversity. In this paper we explore how adults (aged 35–65) and young people (aged 12–19) in Feijenoord, Rotterdam perceive neighbourhood diversity and how this is related to encounters with differences in public, semi-public and private neighbourhood spaces. We argue for combining generational and spatial approaches when studying perceptions of diversity by showing that these perceptions cannot be explained by age and the time people grew up in alone, but are also shaped by the different ways in which age groups use neighbourhood spaces and encounter others in these spaces.

Key words: Perceptions of diversity, practices of diversity, generations, adults, young people

INTRODUCTION

Cities in Western Europe, including the Netherlands, are becoming more diverse than ever. This development has triggered an expanding debate about the consequences of diversity for a sense of community and social cohesion (Stolle & Harrell 2013). The recent academic literature has started to examine the impact of living in highly diverse neighbourhoods on experiences of diversity and social cohesion among residents. These studies show that highly diverse neighbourhoods facilitate various sorts of daily encounters, across various sorts of differences (e.g. in terms of demographic features, activity patterns, attitudes and behaviours and identity). These encounters evoke both positive and negative perceptions of diversity (Wise & Noble 2016). Still, much remains unclear about the circumstances under which encounters with diversity lead to positive and negative perceptions of diversity and the different ways in which resident groups – and specifically different age groups – encounter and engage with diversity in different spaces in their neighbourhoods (Nayak 2003; Harris 2009).

This paper seeks to provide more insight into this topic by exploring the daily use of spaces and perceptions of diversity of two groups of

residents in the same highly diverse neighbourhood, namely young people (aged 12–19) and adults in middle adulthood (aged 35–65) in the neighbourhood Feijenoord in Rotterdam. We will answer the following question:

How do adults and young people perceive neighbourhood diversity and how is this related to encounters with, and perceptions of differences, in public, semi-public and private spaces?

So far, the social practices and perceptions of diversity of adults and young people living in the same neighbourhood have hardly been studied together. We believe that doing so provides at least two important insights. First, it shows how different ways of using the same urban space can result in different encounters, social ties and perceptions of diversity. Compared to many adults, young people depend more on the neighbourhood for their daily activities and have less choice regarding the local spaces they use, particularly during school hours (Harris 2009). Consequently, they are often more rooted in their local environments, and have a more nuanced knowledge of the neighbourhood environment than adults (Matthews & Limb 1999; Karsten 2005; Horton et al. 2014). Furthermore, more often than adults, young people use public spaces such as plaza's and pavements as social spaces, for instance to meet friends (Visser 2014).

Second, this study provides insight into generational differences in how diversity is perceived. Generational explanations for differences in perceptions of diversity thus far have focused on the role of age and historical events at the time people grow up (Cornelis et al. 2009), but have not taken into account possible differences in the use of space and in encounters with difference in the present. We believe, however, that it is important to take activity patterns into account. Young people have more opportunities to encounter diversity in their everyday environments and for experiencing friendships across differences than adults (Hoerder et al. 2005; Stolle & Harrell 2013). Furthermore, research shows that it is difficult for people to acclimatise to new forms of diversity in their environments as they grow older (Wise 2010), which might also be reflected in less diverse activity patterns.

We focus on the highly diverse neighbourhood of Feijenoord in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. We use the term 'highly diverse' to underline that – like Vertovec (2007), Valentine (2013) and Tasan-Kok et al. (2014) – we approach diversity broadly, not only in terms of ethnicity and income. The study focusses on categories of difference that are meaningful to interviewees, including demographic features as well as features that relate to identities and behaviours.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
Perceptions and practices of diversity in highly diverse neighbourhoods – Since the mid-1990s, studies on multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, and more recently super-diversity and hyper-diversity (Vertovec 2007; Tasan-Kok et al. 2014), have examined the perceptions and practices of diversity in diverse neighbourhoods. With the term super-diversity, scholars (Vertovec 2007) are pointing to the increasing ethnic diversity and to the demographic diversity between and within these ethnic groups. Taking this one step further, scholars that study hyper-diversity, argue that cities are not only socio-economically and ethnically diverse, but that also differences exist regarding activities, attitudes and lifestyles (Tasan-Kok et al. 2014).

These works have to a large extent focused on the relationship between diversity and issues like social cohesion, trust and inter-group relations. On the one hand studies, the most influential one of Putnam (2007), have primarily focused on the alleged negative effects of ethnic diversity on neighbourhood social cohesion. The underlying idea is that in diverse neighbourhoods there are less people to identify and feel familiar with, resulting in distrust and social withdrawal. Such findings were, however, generally not found in the European context (Gesthuizen et al. 2009; Hooghe et al. 2009). European studies, for example, do not support the presumed negative association between ethnic diversity and social capital in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods (Albeda et al. 2017; Bolt & Dekker 2018; Virág & Váradi 2018).

Contrary to the abovementioned conflict theory stands the contact theory which contends that direct contacts with diverse others decrease out-group hostility (Allport 1954;

Tajfel & Turner 1979). This is particularly the case when certain conditions are met, for example when social interactions are combined with common cooperative experiences between equals (Amin 2002).

More recent qualitative studies show that living amidst diversity can simultaneously have positive and negative social outcomes and that the actual negotiation of diversity happens at a very local level (Amin 2002; Berg & Sigona 2013). Differences in lifestyle, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age or religion become visible in neighbourhood bars, corner shops and parks (Valentine 2013). It is at the scale of the neighbourhood that residents encounter and deal with expressions of diversity (Berg & Sigona 2013). Studies have shown that in diverse neighbourhoods residents are often open, or at least civil, towards other cultures (Wessendorf 2014, 2016; Noble, 2009; Tersteeg 2017). Yet, in her study of perceptions of and encounters with differences Valentine (2008) shows that daily courtesies in public space can coexist with privately held prejudiced views. Moreover, Albeda *et al.* (2017) find that despite the complex social diversity that characterises super-diverse neighbourhoods, people still conceive and form separate social groups. Also other studies have shown a complex interplay between perceptions and practices, and that sometimes behaviour and views might even be contradictory (e.g. Watt 2006; Lobo 2010). Indeed, Wise and Noble (2016, p. 425) argue that living together amidst differences 'includes an emphasis on practice, effort, negotiation and achievement. This sense of "rubbing along" includes not just "happy togetherness" but negotiation, friction and sometimes conflict'.

Although most studies of perceptions and practices of diversity focus on adults, more recently, scholars have started to specifically pay attention to young people as well. Valentine and colleagues (Valentine & Sadgrove 2012; Valentine 2013), have for example investigated what kind of encounters between young people change values and translate into a more positive attitude towards 'the other'. They focus on semi-public sites such as youth clubs and sport clubs, where people from diverse backgrounds encounter each other and can learn new ways of living together. Similarly,

Iqbal, Neal and Vincent (Neal *et al.* 2016; Iqbal *et al.* 2017; Vincent *et al.* 2017) illustrate how children in super-diverse neighbourhoods in London encounter diverse others through schools, and that interactions across differences at school radiate out to other local social spaces, both public and private.

Encounters in different neighbourhood spaces – To understand how young people and adults encounter and perceive neighbourhood diversity, we draw on the literature on everyday activities of people in different types of neighbourhood spaces. In the last decade, the mobility turn in the social sciences has shifted our focus away from sedentarist theories and towards the idea that mobility is a part of everyday life (Cresswell 2010; Skelton 2013). We therefore focus on the different everyday practices of adults and young people in neighbourhood spaces.

For this, we draw on the notion of space as a public-private continuum (Madanipour 2003). Public space being open and accessible to all and offering a realm for one-time brief encounters with difference (Peterson 2017). For example, sharing space with strangers in parks, local services or public transport. Private space being spaces owned or dominated by familial often homogenous groups, which are not accessible to all, such as people's homes or exclusive private leisure spaces (Madanipour 2003). Semi-public spaces offer opportunities for prolonged and repetitive interaction between diverse groups along shared interests. Therefore, they are considered the ideal sites for encounters between different groups (Allport 1954; Amin 2002). Examples of such spaces are community centres, libraries, schools and sports clubs (Amin 2002; Nava 2007; Harris 2009).

Generations and attitudes – A second strand of literature on which we draw is research on changing perceptions and preferences over the life course due to life-cycle effects or generational effects (see Konty & Dunham 1997). Life-cycle or age effects are changes introduced by aging and specific stages in life people go through. According to the age-conservatism perspective both values and

attitudes become more conservative as people age (Glenn 1974; Cutler & Kaufman 1975; Cornelis *et al.* 2009).

Generational explanations, on the other hand, focus on the intersection between individual and historical events, explaining differences between age groups in socio-political attitudes by age cohorts' differential reactions to the same events. Young people are shown to be more susceptible to social change and historical events than older cohorts (Cornelis *et al.* 2009). Fed by processes of globalisation, increasing social and geographical mobility, and advancements in ICT, today's young people are subject to a wider range of ways of living than preceding generations (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002). Earlier generations, who grew up in a more homogeneous society or environment, were found to regard homogeneous cultures, religions and values as natural and desirable (Wise 2010; Ford 2012). Studies in several countries, such as the Netherlands (Vollebergh *et al.* 1999), the United Kingdom (Tilley 2002) and the United States (Campbell *et al.* 1960), confirm this generational explanation for differences in conservatism and political attitudes.

In this paper we argue that perceptions of diversity cannot be explained by age and broader historic events alone. Perceptions are also shaped by the different ways in which young people and adults use neighbourhood space and the social interactions they have in neighbourhood spaces. In this paper we will therefore combine the literature on encounters with difference and of generational patterns in attitudes towards difference by comparing young people's and adults everyday use and interpretations of diverse neighbourhood spaces.

METHODS

The research was carried out in Feijenoord (72,400 inhabitants in 2014), a district of Rotterdam. Feijenoord is located south of the river Meuse, an area that has traditionally been the poorer part of the city. It is one of the most diverse areas in the Netherlands. It is characterised not only by a multiplicity of minority ethnic groups but also by differentiations regarding migration histories, religions, household types, and educational and economic backgrounds. The largest non-Dutch ethnic groups are Turkish (19%), Surinamese (11%), Moroccan (10%) and Dutch Antillean (4%) (Tersteeg 2017). Compared to the city average, the population of Feijenoord is characterised by relatively low income and education levels and high unemployment levels. Moreover, the area has to deal with low levels of perceived safety, nuisance from youths and drugs use.

The data for this paper stems from two research projects, of which one focused on adults and one on young people. Both studies focused on resident perceptions of and experiences with neighbourhood diversity. Respondents were recruited through 'purposeful' sampling with the aim to generate a mix of interviewees in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. Interviewees were recruited through community organizations, in the streets, at their homes, and through a snowballing method to include both residents active in the community and residents who are not. We conducted 26 interviews with young people, aged 12 to 19 years,[1] 18 boys and eight girls and 39 with adults, aged 35 to 65 years, 25 women and 14 men. We interviewed people of 15 different ethnic backgrounds, of which most identify their ethnicity as Dutch, Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Dutch Antillean or Pakistani.

The interviews with both youths and adults focused on perceptions of urban diversity; socio-spatial activity patterns; encounters with differences in places inside the neighbourhood and diversity of their social ties. We focused on the settings the respondents themselves mentioned as important places of encounter with diversity in their neighbourhood. Questions were open-ended and 'diversity' and 'difference' were not defined, allowing for respondents' own experiences and interpretations of diversity. This resulted in respondents talking about ethnic diversity as well as diversity in terms of, for example, subculture and age. To gain insight in the respondents' social ties, we asked respondents to name the people they felt most close to and continued by discussing who they are, what they mean to respondents, and where they meet.

The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours and were conducted by two white Dutch, female researchers. We are aware of our researcher positionality as we conducted this study as white researchers in a diverse neighbourhood. We aimed to account for this as much as possible by using Milner's (2007, p. 388) framework to 'consider dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen'. This requires a critical attitude towards power relations in the field, the nature of social interaction between the researcher and the researched, and the interpretation of data. Moreover, it includes cultural self-reflection as well as researching the self in relation to the community under research. The researchers could be considered 'cultural outsiders' to the community under study, which meant that being aware of the difference with the research community and the privilege of the researchers was crucial. Working with young people posed an additional complexity, as we had to be aware of the unequal power relations between the adult researchers and the young respondents. We are aware that our positionality could influence the interpretation of the results, and therefore in our interviews we departed as much as possible from the experiences of the respondents themselves and allowed the respondents to be the experts on their neighbourhood. Moreover, we asked respondents for their own definitions of diversity, which allowed us to go beyond dominant ethno-national categorisations and prevent 'methodological nationalism' (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2013). Finally, prolonged researcher time in the field added to increased trust between the researcher and the respondents and increased understanding of cultural and age-related sensitivities.

The interviews were transcribed in their entirety and then coded and analysed in NVivo. A grounded theory approach was adopted. In the first round, general patterns in the data were identified and these were further refined during the subsequent rounds. Furthermore, text query and negative case analysis were used to strengthen or nuance the themes that emerged from the data. Participants were assigned pseudonyms, which are used throughout this paper.

PERCEPTIONS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD DIVERSITY

The adults we spoke with generally appreciated diversity in the neighbourhood. The most important feature defining local diversity for them was ethnicity, followed by gender, household type and age. When asked to describe her next-door neighbours, like most adults, Sonia (41, Moroccan Dutch) responds:

> There is a Dutch man who lives next-door, I hardly see him. I sometimes wonder whether he still lives there. Upstairs an Algerian man. Downstairs a Surinamese woman and at the bottom floor, she comes from Eritrea. A very kind woman. Then there is also a Hindustani woman who lives at the bottom floor … Upstairs there is also a Moroccan couple. Have not seen them for ages.

Also, when discussing positive and negative experiences with diversity in the wider neighbourhood, ethno-cultural diversity appeared to be the main denominator. Adults generally appreciated the diversity in their neighbourhood because of the lively and busy residential atmosphere and culturally rich variety of shops and other facilities. Dunya (40, Surinamese Dutch) explains:

> The diverse and mixed cultures in the neighbourhood make it fun.
>
> Interviewer: What do you think is fun?
>
> The liveliness, differences, like yesterday I was walking that way and suddenly I heard a sound 'oooow', it was a wedding … The happiness, the atmosphere that comes with it. You can see the people sing and dance [in the streets].

Furthermore, some adults who belong to a minority group, for example, on the base of ethnicity, socio-economic position (SEP) or household type, argued that a diverse social context offers them an environment in which they feel less 'out of place' than in more homogenous neighbourhoods. Some of them even argued that for this reason they preferred not to live in a neighbourhood with a majority of white Dutch residents.

The other way around, some long-term residents – both with and without a migration background – expressed the feeling of being less 'in place' in their neighbourhood due to the increasing flow of minority ethnic groups to the area. Some white Dutch long-term residents expressed dislike with the gradual disappearance of certain facilities such as a 'Dutch' butcher or traditional Dutch pubs ('brown cafés') and felt that they were now 'the minority'. This did not mean that they disliked the area's diversity. Many long-term residents had got used to the area's diversity and dynamism and appreciated aspects of it. Yet, the praising of diversity was combined with a concern for the preservation of control over place. Several long-term residents – mostly ethnic Dutch and Surinamese – indicated a certain feeling of nostalgia for Feijenoord's ethnically more homogenous past (see also Watson & Wells 2005; Jones 2014). They referred to a past with more support relations between neighbours and less vandalism by young people in the streets and connected these changes to an increase in non-white residents in their neighbourhood.

In contrast, when young people were asked what they liked and disliked about their neighbourhood, ethnicity did not come up as a reason for being positive or negative about the neighbourhood. For the young people the social cohesion in the neighbourhood was mentioned as one of the most important positive points. Salma (15, Moroccan Dutch), describes her neighbourhood as follows:

> If you'd ask me about my neighbourhood, well, the neighbourhood is simply boys and girls, mixed, who sometimes like each other. The community, we're not like neighbours or friends, we're like brothers and sisters. Because, I grew up with most here. I used to play with them a lot. They know my parents. It is just normal to see each other.

An important theme that emerged from young people's interviews was the 'normality' of difference (Wessendorf 2014; Harris 2018). When young people were for instance asked to list the most important 'groups' in their community, they found this very difficult. Many indicated that such groups did not really exist and when certain groups were

identified those were often based on various kinds of subcultures (dancers, soccer players, basketball players), the school they went to, or the sub-neighbourhood they were from (Visser 2016). Several of the young people indicated that others were welcome to join their group of friends irrespective of ethno-cultural background. Thus, young people's friendship groups seemed to be more fluid than those of adults, and as a result also allowed for more diversity. As noted by Mehdi (16, Moroccan Dutch) about the backgrounds of people he hangs out with: 'I don't care. Everybody is welcome, it doesn't matter which colour your skin is. We're all just humans, right? As long as you're fun to hang around with, it's ok'.

The young people also were aware of negative aspects of their neighbourhood, but again, at first, these were rarely about ethnic diversity. Rather, most related to criminality and safety issues in the area, as Ayoub (15, Moroccan Dutch) noted: 'There are many troubled youths, causing nuisance. Police come by often. Destruction, common vandalism, bus shelters are being vandalised'. In addition, young people often referred to issues of stereotyping and negative labelling by adults based on their youth and ethnicity. Discrimination based on wearing a headscarf and negative images about radicalisation of Muslim youth came up. Many young people felt that this discrimination, both at the neighbourhood level and in public debates, was an important threat to cohesion within their community, while they themselves did not see ethnicity as a significant dividing factor.

DIVERGENT USES OF PUBLIC SPACES

Several authors who study encounters with diversity among adults (Wessendorf 2016; Piekut & Valentine 2017) have argued that encounters in public spaces are often fleeting and constructed according to the rules of civility and anonymity. As such they provide little opportunity for sustained contact that might change people's understandings of those different from themselves. Our study confirms these findings, but only for the interviewed adults.

Interviews with adults indicated that local public spaces in Feijenoord are used by a wide variety of residents. Yet, adults used public spaces mostly as a passage way and social relations had rarely started off in local public spaces such as parks, plazas and streets. Interviewees related this to the fleeting nature of encounters between strangers in public spaces. As Rick (45, Dutch) explains:

> Well, whenever I see Moroccan women, you know, sitting on a bench outside and talking with each other while their children are playing, I won't just go and join them. It's, well, they keep to themselves and I, we also keep to ourselves.

Whilst adults spent most of their time indoors at home, workplaces or pubs, young people used a wider variety of public spaces and hung out there for longer periods of time. The spaces formed important locations to get to know and meet others, to see and to be seen. The young people – both boys and girls – spent much of their leisure time in the company of peers in the public spaces of their neighbourhood, walking or cycling around, shopping, sitting, talking and eating together (Matthews 2003). The street was one of the few places where young people could hang out in a context where they did not have to adhere to the rules of their parents, schools or community centres (Hopkins 2013). James (17, Moroccan Dutch), for example indicates: 'I rather just hang around outside. In a youth centre you have all kinds of rules. When you're young, you want to be entirely free'. Street corners, playgrounds and parks were also the places were young people met each other for the first time, as younger children or when they moved to the neighbourhood. By hanging around at playgrounds or parks nearby their home they 'automatically' met diverse others. According to the interviewees, almost all places for hanging out attracted a mixed crowd. When asked how Lina (16, Moroccan Dutch) got to know her friends, she explains:

> Well, just from the neighbourhood. The two playgrounds opposite of my house are the central playgrounds for us. This is where you get to know each other, hang out together. During the breaks at school our

class used to go to the playground. That is also how you get to know each other.

It has to be noted here, however, that although young people felt that they were welcome to use most local public spaces of their choice, both young people and adults mentioned how young people hanging around in the street was often experienced as nuisance by adults and warranted extra attention from police or neighbourhood watch. In addition, these encounters resulted in negative attitudes toward young people based on their youth, ethnic background, and often also gender. Young people felt that they were reprimanded by neighbours or police when they 'only wanted to hang around'.

MEETING DIVERSE OTHERS IN SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES

In line with previous studies (e.g. Wessendorf 2016; Piekut & Valentine 2017) we found that semi-public spaces are important for both adults and young people for encountering difference. Nevertheless, also here we find that there is a difference in how adults and young people use semi-public spaces and what these spaces mean for relationships across difference. We will focus here on places that were mentioned most commonly in the interviews. As will be elaborated upon below, the most important semi-public places for encountering difference in the neighbourhood mentioned by adults were community centres,[2] whereas for young people the range of places was more extensive, including schools, youth centres and sports clubs.

Many local institutions in Feijenoord are used by a variety of groups in terms of age, lifestyle, culture and ethnicity. However for adults, the purpose of visiting local institutions was almost never explicitly to encounter new people, but rather to participate in activities. Bouchra (59, Moroccan Dutch) participated and volunteered at a community centre where different activities were organised, and different social groups met. She discussed the centre as follows:

> Here, we do not only attend courses … We have Arabic and Dutch language classes

with books, computer, cooking, and knitting classes and we arrange swimming classes ... In the living room I talk with participants such as other Moroccan women, but also with Dominican women. They are lovely. And also five Dutch women, they are also very nice.

For adults, repetitively meeting the same people in local institutions eventually created an intimate and homey atmosphere and stimulated amicable encounters, especially within organised activity groups (Lofland 1998; Peterson 2017). The shared use of semi-public spaces appeared to be catalysers for the development of diverse ties between local acquaintances. Interviewees discussed receiving companionship, informational/advisory support and practical support from these acquaintances. For example, Hannah (62, Surinamese Dutch) visits a local community centre every morning, where she meets Molly, a Hindustani Dutch middle aged lady who lives in Feijenoord as well:

That lady, Molly! We sometimes go there [community centre] Monday to Friday. Every day, just stay a short while. Mostly in the mornings. We sit in the large room, I'll be busy with my clothes [sewing] and Molly will be drawing.

Interviewer: So are these mostly local people whom you meet there?

Hannah: Yes!

Interviewer: Do you ever meet those people outside the community centre?

Hannah: Sometimes. But when I go there it is really just that we do our own thing.

In the interview Hannah clearly indicated that she does not consider Molly to be a friend, but rather an acquaintance. Indeed, relations formed between people of other ethnic and religious backgrounds in these semi-public spaces were seldom translated into the private sphere and seldom became friendships. Furthermore, even within these semi-public spaces adults appeared to bond most easily with people with a similar ethno-cultural background, confirming Peterson's (2017, p. 11) thesis that 'shared [ethno-cultural]

customs, traditions and language provide … [an] emotional bonding factor by letting participants identify with each other more easily'. Another factor that adults mentioned hampered interethnic contact is the fact that people from migrant backgrounds speak their mother tongue, which sometimes caused feelings of exclusion. Rick (45, Dutch) and Sonia (41, Moroccan Dutch) for instance explain how hearing people speaking in a foreign language prevents them from participating in conversation.

Finally, the potential of encounters across difference was also limited by the fact that only a limited group of residents made use of the facilities. Residents with a medium or high SEP appeared to visit local institutions less frequently than residents with a low SEP did. The former made use of spaces that were often further away from their home and more exclusive, such as a sports club, swimming pool or theatre. Residents with a low SEP were more dependent on local facilities and hence more exposed to the neighbourhood's diversity.

For young people, a wider range of semi-public spaces such as community centres, youth and sports clubs and schools acted as meeting spaces for peers of different subcultures, ages, religions, and ethno-cultural backgrounds. Whereas some of the adults visited semi-public spaces outside the neighbourhood, for the majority of the young people the semi-public spaces they used were neighbourhood based. Furthermore, young people spent more time in these spaces than adults, encountering diverse others daily. This made diversity more 'commonplace' (Wessendorf 2014) and perhaps therefore positive for young people than for adults.

The most significant semi-public space where young people met diverse others was the school. The majority of the respondents attended secondary school or senior secondary vocational education in Feijenoord, or at least in the southern – more diverse – part of the city. The young people were generally very positive about the diversity at their school. Aamina (18, Dutch-Surinamese): 'This school was fun, it was mixed. You learn a lot about different cultures, you learn a lot about different religions, and in that way you also learn to live together in society'. Hollingworth and Mansaray (2012), showed that positive perceptions of diversity at school do not necessarily

lead to socially and ethnoculturally mixed associations and friendships. Vincent *et al.* (2017), on the other hand, found that classes had friendship groups largely split along social class and gender lines, but contained friendship groups that were mixed in terms of ethnicity. Yet, the young people in Feijenoord formed mixed friendships in terms of ethnicity and gender, and as most of the young people had a lower SEP, class divisions were not very visible either.

Also, at youth and sport clubs the ethnic composition was largely mixed. As noted by Lance (14, Surinamese): 'I know a lot of people, but three of them I hang around with most of the time (…) I know one of them from dancing and the other from soccer. One of them is Surinamese and the other two are Cape Verdian'. However, not all young people felt that semi-public neighbourhood organisations were inclusive to them. Some complained that activities tended to focus on younger people, or on those who liked playing sports. Moreover, some of the young people – primarily boys – felt that community organisations were not 'cool' and too restrictive, as many of the rules present in the spaces were determined by adults. Instead, they preferred to be 'free' and rather hang around in public spaces. Finally, some girls indicated that they felt uncomfortable visiting certain places which were primarily occupied by boys, such as the local boxing school or soccer club.

It has to be noted that, particularly for young people, friendship networks at school, youth clubs and in public spaces should not be seen as separate from each other but rather should be seen as relational. Friendships that were formed at school transcended to public spaces and other semi-public spaces. Vice versa, symbolic boundaries and friendship groups at schools were often informed by the (sub-)neighbourhood of residence, and thus indirectly by the social ties that were already formed in neighbourhood spaces. The narratives of adults, on the other hand, showed little overlap between social ties in different semi-public or public spaces. Another way in which different spaces were related, both for young people and for adults, was by experiences in one space influencing behaviour and experiences in other spaces. Several adults,

for example indicated that because they had positive encounters with diverse others in semi-public spaces, such as community centres or as neighbours, this also translated into more positive attitudes towards diversity in public space.

PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF DIVERSITY IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE

When we look at the private space of the home, we found that adults and young people mostly met with close family and friends, who had the same ethno-cultural background and class. Moreover, we found that adults and young people can influence each other's encounters with, and perceptions of, difference. When adults are more positive about neighbourhood diversity, their children are likely to be more positive as well, and vice versa (Allport 1954; Sinclair *et al.* 2005). Furthermore, children can encourage new positive exchanges between parents – or other adult family members – with different backgrounds (Vincent *et al.* 2017). Children interacted with other children and parents in public spaces or shared semi-public spaces and through this brought parents into contact. Vera (41, Dutch):

> The back alley behind our homes has only one exit. From a very young age, the children can play there safely. They will go into each other's gardens. That's how everyone [the parents] easily gets into contact with one another … We invite each other for children's parties, drink a cup of coffee. With some we go for dinner, with or without the children

At the same time, parents could also play a role in encouraging or restricting the encounters of their children with diverse others. Some parents encouraged their children to participate in activities in which they would encounter diverse others on a regular basis, such as participation in youth or sports programmes. On the other hand, the narratives of both the adults and young people showed that sometimes young people were encouraged to participate in more monocultural spaces, such as young people

with Muslim backgrounds attending specific leisure activities organized by the mosque. Moreover, parents might also restrict their children, and primarily their daughters, to hang around on the streets. As argued above, the street is an important space for meeting diverse others, this opportunity might thus be limited by the parents.

DISCUSSION

This paper has examined the different ways in which adults and young people in highly diverse Feijenoord in Rotterdam engage with the neighbourhood's diversity in public, semi-public and private spaces. By investigating how the same neighbourhood is used and experienced in different ways by two age groups we contribute to the literature on neighbourhood, encounters and diversity by adding a generational dimension. Moreover, we add to the literature on generational differences in attitudes towards difference by arguing that it is not solely age and the time in which a person grows up that influence these attitudes, but that the spatial dimension – the differences in encounters with others in different spaces – should not be overlooked.

When discussing positive and negative experiences with diversity in the neighbourhood, adults mostly talked about ethno-cultural diversity which they mostly appreciated, because it made the neighbourhood vibrant and interesting. On the other hand, some long-term residents were negative about changes in ethnic composition in the neighbourhood over time. Adults had little meaningful contact with (diverse) others in public spaces. When they had repetitive contact with diverse others it was in semi-public spaces such as community centres, and particularly for those with a low SEP. These semi-public spaces acted as meeting places in which diverse local ties with acquaintances started off, but these exchanges rarely led to close friendships across ethno-cultural lines. Networks of family and friends appeared relatively homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, religion and class.

The young people spent much more time than adults in public spaces such as streets and plaza's, where they met neighbourhood youth with diverse backgrounds. As with adults, semi-public places formed important places for meeting diverse others. Yet, young people mentioned a wider range of spaces where they encountered diverse others; used these spaces for longer periods of time and more often than adults developed friendships across difference in these spaces. When discussing experiences with neighbourhood diversity, ethnicity was not perceived as the main social divider. Instead, young people distinguished groups based on school, sub-neighbourhood or subculture. They talked about how they valued strong social cohesion and social support and disliked criminality and safety issues in the area, yet did not explicitly connect these issues to ethno-cultural groups. In short, whereas adults tended to construct social boundaries based on ethnicity, young people saw diversity as ordinary part of their everyday lives.

By comparing young people and adults we illustrate that the relationship between encounters with diversity and perceptions of diversity is not as straightforward as often assumed. Public and semi-public spaces are used in different ways by young people and adults. Within these spaces different social ties are formed, which in turn might result in different attitudes towards neighbourhood diversity. Furthermore, our study confirms existing research that semi-public spaces, and most notably neighbourhood localities such as community centres and sports clubs, are important for meaningful encounters with difference. However, we also find that these settings are not visited by all people in the neighbourhood: some of the young people and adults felt that community centres were 'not for them', and particularly adults with a higher SEP tended to look for activities outside the neighbourhood. In addition, we find that particularly for young people, public spaces, such as squares or street corners, also functioned as places to meet meaningful others, whereas for adults these were mainly places to pass through and for fleeting encounters.

Based on our findings we can conclude that we should not look at young people and adults as two totally separate groups, nor should we consider the different spaces they inhabit as separate from each other. Instead it is important to consider them relationally. Restrictions

and rules imposed by adults, for example, can influence young people's use of different spaces and consequently the people they encounter. At the same time, the presence of groups of young people, for example on the streets, can influence adults' use of neighbourhood spaces and perceptions towards diversity. Moreover, also in the private sphere the activities and perceptions of young people and family adults – most notably the parents – can influence each other. Similarly, we should also look at the different spaces as relational to each other. Public, semi-public and private spaces are not separate entities, especially not for young people. Friendships transcended the boundaries of these spaces, and experiences in one space can influence experiences or behaviour in other spaces. We found, however, that for adults the boundaries between the different spaces – and the social contacts formed there – were stricter than for young people.

Our research confirms generational approaches, rather than life course approaches, on changes in attitudes towards diversity. Young people's positive attitudes are likely to be attributed to the fact that at a young age they are confronted with a society that is generally positive towards diversity, as mentioned in the literature on generational effects. However, we add to this that we should not overlook the spatial element: differences in the use of spaces and hence encounters with difference might also be an important exploratory factor in this context. The young people we interviewed are growing up in a neighbourhood where diversity is a normal part of their lives. They have encountered differences since they have been young: in their neighbourhood, youth clubs and schools. Adults, on the other hand, did not grow up in a diverse context when they were young and more malleable for positive attitudes towards diversity. In line with the literature on generational differences in attitudes (Cornelis *et al.* 2009) we show that young people experience many events with the capacity to change their values and attitudes, whereas adults – because of their activity patterns in more homogenous contexts – encountered these experiences with less frequency.

Since today's young generation is the first to experience the increased diversity in cities, we cannot say with certainty whether their positive attitudes prevail when they grow up. However, the following findings point towards a generational effect. First, living in a highly diverse context provides young people with more intercultural friendships and better intercultural competences than previous generations, which can benefit young people in the rest of their social and working lives. Second, among each other the generation of young people will not have to deal with the language deficiencies that adults perceived as a main obstacle for the development of strong ties across ethno-cultural differences. Finally, the friendship ties of young people are more open and dynamic than those of adults, for whom it might be more difficult to change their social contacts. This could result in the continuation of more diverse social ties among today's young people. Longitudinal studies on the everyday practices with and perceptions of diversity of young people in diverse contexts can shed more light on the extent to which growing up in diverse neighbourhoods can bridge social divides in the long-term.

Notes

1. The lower limit of 12 years of age was chosen, because at that age young people normally leave primary school and start secondary education. This change is usually accompanied by a change in activity space. The upper limit was set at 19 years as this is the age at which almost all youths would have left secondary school.
2. For adults, the workplace forms an important semi-public space in which they can meet diverse others. The focus of this study is, however, on the spaces of encounter within the neighbourhood. As workplaces are often situated outside the neighbourhood, these will not be discussed in this paper.

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