

Sacred places in the suburbs

Casual sacrality in the Dutch VINEX-district Leidsche Rijn

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Casual sacrality in the Dutch VINEX-district Leidsche Rijn

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PREFACE

Architecture is basically a container of something. I hope they will enjoy not so much the teacup, but the tea. (Yoshio Taniguchi)

This quote of Japanese architect Yoshio Taniguchi, who is best known for his re-design of the MoMA in New York, captures the content of this book. In this dissertation I did not only study the urban plans and designs that Taniguchi refers to as the teacup but the tea and the people enjoying this tea play an equally important role. The continuous interaction between these three elements constitutes the VINEX-area of Leidsche Rijn, the object of my studies.

When I was writing this preface I could not help but notice the similarities between the building of a suburb like Leidsche Rijn and the writing of a dissertation. Luckily, the size of the project is a little different but both can be seen as a process. After an orientation phase that resulted in a blueprint for the book, the project took off. Over the years the blueprint changed several times as did the design of Leidsche Rijn. At this stage the book may be written, but the research is not finished. In the upcoming years sacrality in Leidsche Rijn will change, taking new forms, as new meaningful places are created. But like the district of Leidsche Rijn, the book already includes numerous stories. Stories that hopefully will give the readers of this book a chance to get to know the places that the residents of the area describe as sacred.

As one person cannot build a suburb, this dissertation could not have been written without the great help of a number of people. I would especially like to thank Johan de Boer who has enthusiastically supported me throughout the project and who has provided me with a lot of information and some of the wonderful pictures that can be found in this book. Also the other “park friends” who have welcomed me into their midst, thereby allowing me to obtain a large amount of research material via their activities. Thanks also to Hanneke Bos for letting me use a number of her great pictures. A special thank you I would like to express for Wouter de Heus, who, being one of the first residents of Leidsche Rijn, took me in tow and introduced me to numerous fascinating places in the area. Over the years

we have spent plenty of afternoons planting tobacco or discussing the latest developments over drinks at one of the new hotspots in Leidsche Rijn.

In addition I would like to thank the women of the interreligious meeting group for letting me attend their meetings, Father Martin Los for the interview and his additional support and information via Twitter, and all the other people I have interviewed and who have allowed me to use information from my participants' observations.

A second group of people that deserves particular attention is the wonderful group of colleagues from Tilburg University: especially my supervisors Paul Post and Maaïke de Haardt, who have supported me throughout the research project; my paranymphs Lieke Wijnia and Laurie Faro for their encouragement and friendship; Logan Sparks, who has carefully read my manuscript and added a million comma's; and Karin Berkhout for transforming this manuscript into a book.

Thanks to my friends, they soon came up with the nickname Inex from the VINEX, allowing me to really identify with my research. And last but not least I would like to thank my parents, Benjamin and Milou, and of course Ignacio for their support and enthusiasm for my work.



Chapter 1

Introduction

Preparations for the outdoor Catholic Church service in the Máximapark with Anafora in the background

Picture: Johan de Boer

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Leidsche Rijn is all lightness, a dream from the drawing board, and on this Monday morning it is so quiet that you wonder if there are people living in this dream. Dead straight asphalt roads and not one human being in sight. Everything is fresh and new and young: the lush grass, the outdoor furniture in the gardens, the shiny and sleek lacquered front doors, the impeccable cycling lanes, the traffic signs, the traffic lights, the bridges with their stainless steel railings, the lampposts standing in line, and that green diagonal, a lawn; it is kilometers long with rustling poplars on both sides – unequaled.¹

Leidsche Rijn: a dream from the drawing board and the perfect place to live. As perfect as this may seem, in reality the VINEX-concept is one of the most widely discussed, criticized and at the same time praised notions in Dutch urban planning history.² Especially in the early years, the critics focused on the alleged massiveness, monotonousness, boringness, and predictability of the VINEX-architecture. They claimed that the neighborhoods often lacked the intended urban character making them neither part of the city, nor a separate village. Now that the neighborhoods are starting to take shape and are in some cases even completed, some of the criticism has become more charitable. An international boost came from a 2004 *New York Times* article with the slogan: ‘Leave it to the Dutch to make Suburbia cool’, in which the author especially praises the high architectural level of the areas.³ This research will attempt to shed a new light on this discussion by showing how the dreams from the drawing board come to life in Leidsche Rijn.

¹ English translation made by the author from part of a newspaper column on Leidsche Rijn: W. BOEVINK: ‘Domweg gelukkig’ in *Trouw* (September 7, 2010).

² The abbreviation VINEX translates as Fourth Memorandum Spatial Planning Extra, which refers to a policy-briefing note of the Dutch ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment released in 1991. The note points out a large number of outer city areas for massive new housing development. Throughout the whole country around 455,000 houses were to be built at solid locations and with financial support from the Dutch government.

³ C. HAWTHORNE: ‘Design dispatch: The Dutch retouch suburbia’, in *New York Times* (January 15, 2004).

1.1 Coming to life

There is something casual about it. It is the summer of 2013, the third year of my research project. I follow some of my respondents on social media and there was something buzzing on Facebook and Twitter. The first tweet that caught my eye was posted on the 24th of May 2013 and it stated: “@heuswaar: spending some time at the garden #dehalteterwijde with @VINEXvrouwtje. We are enjoying ourselves to the max. #VINEXparadise.”⁴ In the following month I was able to follow the growth of @heuswaar’s tobacco plants online and I saw how other residents, inspired by online and offline rumors, decided to join in. Wooden boxes were built, tomatoes, strawberries, and pumpkins planted: *De Halte Terwijde* was taking off. In July I decided to actively participate in the project and started my own little vegetable garden. Participating in the project would make it easier to get into contact with the other participants and observe them. Some of them were informed about my research and others were not.

That summer I cycled to my garden several times a week. Sometimes just to water the plants, other times to meet with other participants, or to take part in an activity. These activities were announced on the group Facebook page: *De Tuinkabouters van De Halte Terwijde* that can be translated as *The Garden Gnomes of De Halte Terwijde*. An activity that stood out was organized on the 22nd of August 2013: a barbeque to eat and share the fresh garden vegetables. The barbeque was a big success. There was a bonfire and a large group of participants brought meat, bread, wine, and salads and everyone ate together on the self-made wooden tables in the garden. People from a variety of backgrounds: old, young, with or without children, but all sharing a love for gardening, had come together on this extraordinary piece of wasteland.

Chapter 6 will give a more elaborate description of *De Halte Terwijde*, a unique art project initiated by a group of residents of Leidsche Rijn. However for this introduction this brief description is sufficient. It gives an impression of the subject, the research method, and maybe even an insight into the conclusion.

1.2 The context

The research described in this book, *Sacred Spaces in the Suburbs*, was conducted in a specific place: a VINEX-location. The meaning of the VINEX concept will be explained below and more elaborate in Chapter 2. For now it is important to note that this specific location played an important role in the way in which the research was shaped. The following short description of the history of urban planning

⁴ @heuswaar: Even met @VINEXvrouwtje op de tuin #dehalteterwijde We genieten ons helemaal suf #paradijsindeVINEX (May 5, 2013), www.twitter.com.

leading up to the VINEX suburbs and the changing position of religious places in cities will function as a context in which the research can be situated.

Urban planning is not a new concept.⁵ In the Roman area rulers already realized that cities did not only play a role in maintaining peace and security; they were centers for business, government, and religion. And most importantly, they realized that they had to be places where people wanted to live. Around the beginning of the Common Era, Rome was already divided into different neighborhoods, and the planners allotted adequate space for houses, shops, squares, and temples.⁶ In the Netherlands and surrounding countries, the demand for urban planning emerged in the Middle Ages. The enlargement of the cities was necessary to house a growing population, and to facilitate the switch from an agricultural to an urban oriented society. In the sixteenth century, military motivations influenced the ideas about urban planning and in the seventeenth century, the embellishment of the cities also started to play a role.

An example of a Dutch city in which urban planning became visible in the early stages, and where the prominence and symbolic meaning of religion was clearly presented, was the Episcopal City of Utrecht. In the center of this city a so-called Cross of Churches (*Kerkenkruis*) emerged with the Dom Cathedral in the center and four collegiate churches as the arms of the cross around it.⁷ Although it is sometimes doubted whether or not the cross shape was intentionally planned, it could also be inspired by the geographical shape of the city. It can be said that church buildings played a central role.

The start of the Reformation in the early sixteenth century caused far-reaching alterations in the construction of church buildings. The Calvinists had come to power in large parts of the Dutch Republic thereby confiscating most of the churches. Catholics were forced to resort to illegal, hidden churches in existing buildings that could not be identified as churches from the outside.⁸ Consequently, in the seventeenth century, for example in Amsterdam, numerous reformed church buildings arose as well as some large synagogues built by the Portuguese-Spanish and German-Polish Jews. A number of these buildings still have a prominent position in the townscape of Amsterdam.

⁵ This introductory chapter will give a short overview of the position of traditional religious buildings in Dutch cities and villages based on I. SCHIPPERS: 'Sacraliteit in de suburbs. De veranderende positie van de sacrale ruimte in de Nederlandse stedenbouw', in P. VERSNEL-MERGRAETS & L. VAN TONGEREN (eds.): *Heilig, heilig, heilig: Over sacraliteit in kerk en cultuur* (Heeswijk 2011) 129-152.

⁶ D. MACAULAY: *City: A story of Roman planning and construction* (Boston 1974) 5; J.F. BALDOVIN: *The urban character of Christian worship. The origins, development, and meaning of stationary liturgy* (Rome 1987) 106-107.

⁷ J. RODING: 'Vande oirdeningh der steden', in E. TAVERNE & I. VISSER (eds.): *Stedenbouw. De geschiedenis van de stad in Nederland* (Nijmegen 1993) 51.

⁸ P. POST: *Space for liturgy between dynamic ideal and static reality* (Groningen/Tilburg 2003) 34-35.

Although in the eighteenth and nineteenth century the freedom of religion increased and the population of the cities started to grow, large scale planned housing remained absent until the early twentieth century. It was only after the Housing Act in 1901 when cities were required to plan their expansions. Churches, at this time, increasingly became part of the bigger picture, as they were shaped along the lines of the popular architectural forms, fitting into their surroundings. This had repercussions on the building materials used for churches. New techniques such as brick walls (and later on also reinforced concrete) and sober designs characterize the newly built churches from the first half of the twentieth century.⁹ These changes resulted in discussions about the design of religious places and whether or not all sorts of materials can be used for their construction. In addition the use of religious characteristics for non-religious buildings also raised questions. Before, it was important that the form of the building meet its function. Now this distinction had become diluted. Office buildings could look like temples, such as the building housing the Dutch trade company (that looked like an eastern temple) and the *Beurs van Berlage* (a commodity exchange), designed by the famous Dutch architect Hendrikus Petrus Berlage (1856-1934) had a clock tower, a typical characteristic for a church. This discussion, albeit in a different form, will also play a role in Leidsche Rijn. The use of the term 'sacred' proved to be problematic. For many people; respondents but also fellow scientists, sacred had to have a specific form, usually a form related to religion. Chapter three, which describes the theoretical framework, will elaborate on a definition of sacredness and its broad meaning.

For now, the timeline continues. Already before the Second World War, the existing urban spaces proved to be too small to house the growing population and the suburbanization began to take shape. About these first suburbs, it is interesting to note the way in which they took shape. Urban planning had transformed from a more intuitive design discipline into a scientific method. And city plans show that a large marketplace, a city hall and especially, at least one (but preferably more) church building were included in the design. There was a correlation between this focus on the church building and the position of the church within Dutch society. The Church as an institution played an important role. Only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century did the welfare state increasingly take over the social role of the churches. It was after this period that the prominent position of the Church started to diminish.¹⁰

In the postwar period the idea of collectivity and belonging to a certain institution slowly but steadily lost more of its popularity, thereby effecting the construction of new churches. These had to raise the social contingency of the cities

⁹ S. DE JONGE: *Kerkarchitectuur na 2000. Het ontwikkelen van grensverleggende typologieën vanuit het samenspel tussen liturgie, architectuur en duurzame ontwikkeling* (Eindhoven 2002) 156-160.

¹⁰ P. NORRIS & R. INGLEHART: *Sacred and secular. Religion and politics worldwide* (Cambridge 2004) 9.

and prevent society from falling apart. The churches built in this postwar period were part of a concept the Dutch refer to as *nijkgedachte* which can be described as follows: the ideal neighborhood, its basic principle being decentralization of the city. The concept was inspired by the study: *Neighborhood and Community Planning* (1929) by the American pedagogue Clarence Arthur Perry. This study describes the neighborhood-unit as the ideal place for a community to take shape. Also, the idea of the garden city as presented by the British urban planner Ebenezer Howard in 1902 inspired the *nijkgedachte*. The new plans located all facilities, including schools, shops and churches in walking distance from the homes, creating villages within the city and making it unnecessary to leave the neighborhood.¹¹ Both the Catholic and the Protestant Church adopted the *nijkgedachte* in the postwar period, which resulted in a short recrudescence of the popularity of the Churches. Eventually, the *nijkgedachte* proved to be romantic fiction and the construction of new churches stagnated in the 1970s.

The developments regarding the design and form of the churches are connected to changes in society and religion. Research has shown that until the 1960s the Netherlands could be described as one of the most church-going countries of Europe. Eight out of ten Dutch people were members of a church in the beginning of that decade and seventy to ninety percent regularly attended church services. On top of that, most people also attended schools, shops, and sports clubs of their own affiliation. The turning point came in the mid-sixties when the non-religious population started to grow. As a result, the influence of religion on (non-religious) domains in society such as the labor market, education, and leisure culture slowly disappeared. The government replaced the church in most cases and functioned as the security net. More and more, religion became an individual matter.¹²

The VINEX-plans show how this changing position of the church in the Netherlands is reflected in urban planning. The VINEX-project is an ambitious project as it consists of the construction of 835,000 houses in or nearby already existing cities in the period between 1995 and 2015.¹³ In total, near to a hundred locations were appointed as construction areas, In order to narrow the subject, as it was impossible to look at all the different locations, I visited a large number of those newly built suburbs: the modern IJburg in Amsterdam, Meerhoven in Eindhoven and Ypenburg in Den Haag, the castles of Haverleij in Den Bosch,

¹¹ C.A. PERRY & W.D. HEYDECKER: *Neighborhood and community regional survey, Volume VII comprising 3 monographs. The neighborhood unit* (New York 1929); E. HOWARD: *Garden cities of to-morrow* (London 1902); T. VAN DE WIJDEVEN: *Doe democratie. Over actief burgerschap in stadswijken* (Delft 2012) 88.

¹² J. BECKER & J. DE HART: *Godsdienstige veranderingen in Nederland. Verschuivingen in de binding met de kerken en de christelijke traditie* (Den Haag 2006) 103.

¹³ MINISTERIE VAN VROM: *Vierde nota over de ruimtelijke ordening extra: op weg naar 2015, deel 1* (Den Haag: Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer 1991) 25-26.

Brandevoort in Helmond, which is designed after a fictitious nostalgic Dutch village, Houten-Castellum, and finally Leidsche Rijn, in which all these different styles and features were combined together. The decision to focus on Leidsche Rijn was inspired by its size; Leidsche Rijn is the largest of the VINEX-areas and will eventually home between 80,000 and 100,000 people. The decision was also based on the variety in styles in which the different sub-neighborhoods are designed.

The urban plans include all the ingredients to make the area suitable for habitation. The houses are spacious, most houses have a garden, and there are shops, schools and playgrounds. But having all the ingredients for habitation does not mean that the area is a great place to live: a sense of belonging, a shared identity, places with additional value, places where residents can go to break out of their daily routines, places that are set apart because they have a special meaning.

After defining the research location, I started my search for the set apart. The intention was to look beyond the traditional religious buildings such as churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples, to new forms of sacrality. The VINEX-areas were very suitable for this search as they were the first large-scale urban expansion projects in which traditional religious buildings were left out of the urban plans.¹⁴ For centuries, Dutch cities, villages, and even neighborhoods have been built surrounding a church and accompanying churchyard. And still, the church buildings with their high belfries and stained glass windows dominate the skylines of numerous Dutch cities and villages.

The previous paragraphs describe how, for a long time, largely until the start of the VINEX-project, it was common for churches to function as the center for Dutch cities, villages, and even neighborhoods. In the new, large-scale urban planning project Leidsche Rijn, the church buildings were left out of the urban plans. What functions as the center of this district, I wondered? And would this center get the same value for the area as churches did in the past? These were the first questions that came to mind when I started this research project. Therefore, the first question I asked Riens Dijkstra, the architect and urban designer who coordinated the design of the Leidsche Rijn's Masterplan, was whether or not sacred places had been included in the design of the district. He replied by writing that the plans include a variety of special places but their design was not motivated by concerns for the sacrality.¹⁵ At first, this statement confused me. Later on in the re-

¹⁴ There are some exceptions. In the late 1960s early 1970s the Bijlmermeer was constructed near Amsterdam. The design only included high-rise condominiums and all the facilities were included inside the buildings. Therefore, no separate religious buildings were constructed. Also, in some of the VINEX-projects churches were included. For example, Houten-Castellum is located within an already existing religious community.

¹⁵ Response derived from two emails received from architect and urban planner Riens Dijkstra, coordinator of the Masterplan design on September 22, 2011 stating: "Religieuze motieven hebben

search process I realized that a sacred place could not be intentionally designed on the drawing board. It emerges in correlation with the way in which the inhabitants use the space and the ideas, ideals and dreams they attach to the space. Therefore, it could be that even though the planners did not intentionally design sacred places, it still emerged in Leidsche Rijn.

1.3 The aim

The aim of this research is based on two central concepts. They will be described more elaborately in the theoretically focused third chapter, but for now it is useful to shortly introduce what is meant when the terms ‘ritual’, and ‘sacred’ are used.

The definition of a ritual that will be used in this research is inspired by an elaborate overview of definitions of ritual in an online appendix of the book *The Craft of Ritual Studies* by the American ritual scholar Ronald L. Grimes.¹⁶ Studying the different explanations given for ritual in this overview resulted in the following definition: ritual is an everyday, possibly repeatable activity (or series of activities) obtaining a special meaning because they are spatially and temporally set apart from the routines of our daily life.

This ‘set-apartness’ that distinguishes ritual from the routines of our daily life also plays a central role in the definition of the terms ‘sacred’ and ‘sacrality’ used in this dissertation. The scholar Matthew T. Evans inspires this definition of the ‘set-apart’ sacred. In line with the ideas of Durkheim, Evans states, in his article ‘The sacred: Differentiating, clarifying and extending concepts’, that everything and anything can be sacred.¹⁷ The concept is not bound to a religion or the transcendent, nor is it determined by a set of rules or regulations. This broad interpretation emphasizes that the sacred is not the same as religion. Religious places and objects could rather be seen as part of a broad sacred field. This research will show that sacrality can take different forms for individuals and groups. Because “as with beauty, what is sacred lies (...) in the eye of the beholder.”¹⁸

This research demands such a broad definition of sacred as it is meant to contribute to discussions about the use and meaning of the term. It would not be possible to give an insight into the changes within the sacred field when only making use of a narrow definition. Thereby, the question arose whether or not to

geen rol gespeeld bij het maken van het masterplan.” And: “Er zijn inderdaad veel speciale plaatsen ontworpen – maar religie en sacraliteit waren daarbij geen motief.”

¹⁶ R.L. GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies* (Oxford 2014) 2-7, online appendix found on <http://oxrit.twohornedbull.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/grimes-craft-appendixes.pdf>.

¹⁷ M. EVANS: ‘The sacred: Differentiating, clarifying and extending concepts’, in *Review of Religious Research* 45/1 (2003) 38-39.

¹⁸ A.L. MOLENDIJK: ‘The notion of the “sacred”’, in P. POST & A.L. MOLENDIJK (eds.): *Holy ground: Re-inventing ritual space in modern Western culture* (Leuven 2010) 87.

use the word ‘the’ when referring to sacrality. ‘The sacred’ implies that there is one sacred. Rather this research attempts to prove, by looking at numerous sacred places in Leidsche Rijn, that there is no such thing as ‘the sacred’ as sacrality can take numerous forms.

The original research proposal described a study of the emergence of sacred places in newly built Dutch suburban areas, the VINEX areas. However, during the research process this aim evolved and expanded. The search for sacred places in the Leidsche Rijn VINEX-area still functions as the core of the research but while studying those places other questions arose. In the previous paragraph the coordinator of the Masterplan design stated that the plans include numerous special elements and places, but that sacrality did not play a role in their design. Therefore, I decided to study the urban plans and visit the area extensively in order to get an impression of these special places. During these studies and visits four elements in the neighborhood design stood out. These four elements will function as the case studies for this book and will be described in Chapters 4 to 7:

- *Religion*. It might seem unusual to start with religion as the first case study of this research when earlier on this introduction stated that its meaning is to look beyond religion to new forms of sacrality. However, religion does play an important role in Leidsche Rijn. Chapter four will elaborate on the position of traditional religion in Leidsche Rijn as religious institutions attempt to define their position within the new and growing community of this VINEX-neighborhood.
- *Nature*. The second element playing an important role in the design of Leidsche Rijn is nature. Larger and smaller green areas and water are spread out through the neighborhood, the most important being the *Máximapark*. This large city park, the largest city park of the country, makes up the center of the neighborhood. All of the sub-neighborhoods of Leidsche Rijn surround this park and are in some way connected to it. It is designed in a way that it can be used for a variety of purposes such as leisure activities, cultural events, weddings, and even birth rituals.
But nature on a smaller scale should not be ignored. A large number of the residents moved to Leidsche Rijn because they wanted to live in the city of Utrecht but at the same time have a private garden or a large balcony. Chapter 5 will describe how these various forms of nature function as stages for ritual practice in Leidsche Rijn.
- *Art*. Art was included in the building process of Leidsche Rijn from the very beginning. Parallel to the urban plans for the area, a second plan was launched for the construction site, a plan for visual arts in the area. By means of public art initiatives, either initiated top-down or (partly) bottom-up, Leidsche Rijn

was to be made more livable. Therefore, throughout the building process (temporary) open or unused space was used for a variety of art projects. The places emerging from those initiatives play a central role in this research as well as a number of longer lasting and planned public art projects.

- *History.* Chapter seven describes the way in which history is used in a suburban setting such as Leidsche Rijn. A newly built suburb, a sea of concrete, with residents moving in from throughout the region, might seem like a difficult place to find history. However, the opposite is true. Borrowed history, invented history, and area-specific history are omnipresent in the area thereby, noting that some places have been more successful than others. History is used to create an identity for a newly built suburb.

Mapping these sacred places, reading about them, and speaking to the residents, planners and politicians involved was done with a triad in mind, an urban triad. Chapter 3 will elaborate further on this triad, but I will now shortly introduce this triad. This way of looking at places was inspired by a quote from the American urban planner and architect Edmund Bacon who states that the shape and form of a city is determined by numerous decisions and elements:

The building of cities is one of man's greatest achievements. The form of the city always has been and always will be a pitiless indicator of the state of his civilization. This form is determined by the multiplicity of decisions made by the people who live in it.¹⁹

Looking at a place from just one perspective, either that of the residents, or that of the planners would be too narrow. Therefore I have attempted to catch these different spheres of influence in an urban triad, by studying the places keeping in mind the three different elements of the triad: *urbs*, *civitas*, and the *genius loci* that are constantly interacting and thereby keeping the place alive and subject to change.

Moreover, instead of just an explorative description of these four terrains (religion, nature, art, and history) the case studies will be analyzed from four different perspectives.

The first perspective is that of the panorama of ritual repertoire as a whole. Do the rituals in Leidsche Rijn relate to the common ritual repertoire in the Netherlands or is it possible to catch new trends and developments?

The public domain is the second perspective that plays an important role. For some time, rituals have not belonged in the public domain. Sacrality and rituality has been considered to be something private. Only more recently has this tendency has been shifting. The places studied in Leidsche Rijn fit into this changing ten-

¹⁹ E.N. BACON: *Design of cities. Revised edition* (New York 1976) 13.

dency as the research focuses on places and accompanying rituals in the public sphere.

Specificity is the third perspective. I have deduced themes from the data that are specific for Leidsche Rijn. The VINEX was chosen as the location for this research, as it was a tabula rasa that still needed to be shaped and formed. Is it possible to catch tendencies specific to these newly built suburbs that run through the different case studies?

Ritual criticism is the fourth perspective. In a suburb such as Leidsche Rijn where everything is new and empty, the invention of traditions and rituals and the tendency to combine them as a bricolage is widespread. When the residents do not share an identity or a history something new needs to be created to shape the new community. These elements will play an important role in the ritual criticism.

Looking at the data from these four perspectives will offer the opportunity to contribute to the subject of sacrality. The title of this book *Sacred Places in the Suburbs: Casual Sacrality in the Dutch VINEX-district Leidsche Rijn* already offers an indication of the direction of the contribution. Looking at sacrality and the sacred from a perspective other than the religious one is, as Chapter three will describe, not a new phenomenon. However, what this research will attempt is to formulate a new way of looking at the shape the sacred can take. This does not mean a change of its value but rather the new form in which sacrality takes shape in our changing society.

1.4 The method

The place is a palimpsest.
(De Certeau: *The Practice of Everyday Life*)²⁰

A place, city, or district can be studied in two different ways: from above and from street level.²¹ The French social scientist and philosopher Michel de Certeau describes the importance of this combination in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*. In the seventh chapter of this book named 'Walking in the city', De Certeau 'reads' the city from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center in New York. Unaware of the way in which these towers would change the world in 2001.²² Watching over the city from on high, he experiences the sense of omnipotence that comes with this perspective. It is the perspective of an all-seeing God. Describing the city from

²⁰ M. DE CERTEAU: *The practice of everyday life* (Berkeley/London 1988) 202 (original title: *L'invention du quotidien. Vol. 1, Arts de faire* [1980]).

²¹ A. REIJNDORP: 'Ruimte voor plaats. Beelden en betekenissen', in A. REIJNDORP & L. REINDERS (ed.): *De alledaagse en de geplande stad. Over identiteit, plek en thuis* (Amsterdam 2010) 12.

²² DE CERTEAU: *The practice of everyday life* 91-110.

this perspective, De Certeau attempts to emphasize the importance of taking a distance from the concrete city life in order to be able to look at the place as a whole, a coherent text.²³ When he leaves the tower to explore the city from street-level he experiences the chaos of everyday life in the city and realizes that the almighty divine view from above has been an illusion.²⁴

In order to make such a complete study of Leidsche Rijn possible I have studied the district from both perspectives. On the one hand from above to get a clear image of the area as a whole: how was it designed, who were involved, what elements influenced this design, how were in the plans implemented? This part of the research included a combination of the study of literature, policy papers and maps, and I conducted interviews and conversations with planners and politicians. However, as De Certeau describes, looking at the district from above together with planners and policy makers would only give a good insight into the way they intended it to be and intended it to function. But for this research in which the experience and perception of the residents plays a crucial role, the chaos of everyday life in Leidsche Rijn played an equally important role. Hence, I immersed myself in the field. Via participant observations, interviews, and informal conversations with residents of the area, I attempted to see how the ideas of the urban planners and policy makers were put into practice. Was the design used the way they intended it to be used or do the residents change the design by shaping it according to their own wishes and demands? With regard to sacred places in a newly built area such as Leidsche Rijn this interaction between design and use is especially interesting. It helps to answer the question of how sacred places take shape.

The following professionals were interviewed:

Annemiek Rijckenberg: Alderwoman in the city of Utrecht between 1994 and 2001 with the Leidsche Rijn, environmental planning, urban renewal, participation, sustainability and architectural policy portfolio (Utrecht, 01-03-2013).

Martin Los: Priest of the *Licht van Christus* parish. Los is the ultimately responsible priest for this parish since 2004. He is also the chair of the parish board and the leader of the pastoral team. From 1987 to 2003 he worked in the *Onze Lieve Vrouw ten Hemelopneming* parish in De Meern (Pastoral Center of the *Licht van Christus* parish in Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht, 16-01-2012).

²³ W. FRIJHOFF: 'Strategieën en tactieken: omgaan met de stad volgens Michel de Certeau', in A. REIJNDORP & L. REINDERS (ed.): *De alledaagse en de geplande stad. Over identiteit, plek en thuis* (Amsterdam 2010) 39.

²⁴ P. HOEXUM: 'De voortuintjeswijk. Ongehoorzame burgerlijkheid in Nederland', in *De Groene Amsterdammer* (Year 139/Nr 3.) 42-45.

Rev. Pieter Versloot: He works at the Protestant National Service Center and focuses on missionary work and church expansion (Utrecht, 19-01-2012).

Idelette Otten: Woman minister leading the *Torenplein* Church. She has been the minister of the protestant local parish of Vleuten since the summer of 2010 (Church-center *Het Baken* in Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht, 17-01-2012).

Azmi Kandemir: Chairman of the Islamic Center Leidsche Rijn and spokesperson of SICN (Utrecht, 24-01-2012).

Spokesperson of the City Life Church Utrecht (Utrecht, 08-07-2012).

Robert Schütte: The *West 8* project manager for the park in Leidsche Rijn (Rotterdam, 19-6-2012).

Johan de Boer: The chairman of the *Friends of the Máximapark Foundation*. He is very active in this foundation and has been involved in a variety of initiatives concerning the park (Utrecht, 16-12-2012).

Wouter de Heus: This respondent is in his forties and has lived in Leidsche Rijn with his wife and two sons since 1998 when the first houses were built. He is a journalist and columnist and mostly writes about Leidsche Rijn and the city of Utrecht. He can be described as the ‘Nestor of Leidsche Rijn’ being one of the first residents of the new neighborhood (Utrecht, 06-06-2011).

Nathalie Zonnenberg: An independent curator and researcher of contemporary art and exhibition history and one of the members of the artistic team of *Beyond* (Amsterdam, 28-07-2012).

Mathilde ter Heijne: One of the artists asked by the *Beyond* team to create a piece of artwork for the sculpture garden in Leidsche Rijn. She currently lives and works in Germany but she was born in France and educated in the Netherlands (Berlin, 20-08-2013).

Wim Ruitenbeek: The regular carillonneur of *De Zingende Toren* and also works as city carillonneur in the Dutch cities Tiel and Velsen (Utrecht, 20 July 2013).

Kees Rasch: The chairman of the *Historische Vereniging Vleuten, De Meern, Haarzuilens* and resident of De Meern. Rasch and the Historical Society managed the watchtower project (Utrecht, 03-12-2013).

Happy Megally: Joint initiator and owner of *Anafora*, the tearoom and restaurant, and the playground located in the heart of the *Máximapark* (Utrecht, 16-07-2013).

In-depth interviews were conducted with the following residents:

Respondent A: A columnist who lives in Leidsche Rijn with her husband and four little children. She writes and tweets about life in the VINEX-area Leidsche Rijn (books, columns and tweets) under the pseudonym VINEXvrouwtje (<http://www.vinexvrouwtje.nl>) (Utrecht, 27-01-2011).

Respondent B: A 66-year-old Slovak lady who moved to the Netherlands over 40 years ago. Her daughter and granddaughter live in the same street in Leidsche Rijn. She has an allotment garden and likes to travel. When she travels she attends the Catholic Church (Utrecht, 11-04-2011).

Respondent C: A woman in her early fifties who partly grew up in the old village of Vleuten and moved back there almost 11 years ago. She lives in the middle of the park in one of the old farmhouses. She really likes her green living environment. This was one of the reasons to move back to Vleuten (Utrecht, 16-05-2011).

Respondent D: A male, 35-45 years old, married and has two kids. He lives in Leidsche Rijn and he is an active member and representative of the *RijnWaarde* church. He has an old-fashioned Dutch Evangelical Baptist background and in his childhood he attended a small home church. Via the Anglican Church he ended up in *RijnWaarde*. Although he likes the community, he does not feel at home in the church and that has mainly to do with its location. “It is difficult to meet God in a school building”, he says (Utrecht, 20-05-2011).

Respondent E: A 65-70-year-old woman who has lived on the *Alendorperweg* in the middle of the park since birth. She is from a farmer’s family and she and her husband had to give up the family business for the creation of the park. She has long been active as a board member of the *Friends of the Máximapark Foundation* (Utrecht, 23-05-2011).

Respondent F: He is a 35-45-year-old male, married and a father of two children. He has lived in Leidsche Rijn for 3,5 years. He is a minister in a small evangelical home church (Huisen, 24-05-2011).

In addition to the in-depth interviews I have also sent out questionnaires among the people who participated in the planting of the Trees of Birth. These respondents will be referred to as: **Boom...**

After the interviews I have met a number of the respondents (professionals as well as residents) again in a more informal setting. These conversations have not been recorded but I made use of field notes to register their contents.

This research method can be labelled both exploratory and qualitative, whereby ethnography is combined with historical and literary research. The aim of qualitative research can best be described as to ‘study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings

people bring to them'.²⁵ Grimes describes this method as follows in his most recent book *The Craft of Ritual Studies*:

The method focuses on contemporary events and those who participate in them, and it assumes going afar into a field, if not geographically, then culturally. Even if I am only going a few blocks across town, I imagine arriving as a stranger or outsider.²⁶

And this is what I did. My research location was cycling distance from my home, but I entered like a stranger, an outsider, observing and participating in this 'other' world. However, this natural setting and active participation should be placed in a proper context in order to make sense out of the findings in the field. This context is sketched by means of historical and literary research.

After the decision to conduct the research in Leidsche Rijn, the second goal was to find a way to enter this large field. Looking at a map of the area, the large park in the center of the district seemed like an interesting starting point. I approached the *Friends of the Máximapark Foundation*²⁷ and as they were looking for a secretary I was immediately welcomed into the group. The position of secretary offered me the opportunity to hear about everything that was going on in the park and participate in the various activities the foundation organized. At the same time this position did not force me to actively participate in the development of new activities and ideas thereby possibly influencing the field I was studying. During and after the activities I had the opportunity to approach the participants and ask them in person, via email, or via a questionnaire, if they were willing to be interviewed. Some responded enthusiastically, others wanted to answer some questions via email and some just filled out the questionnaire or answered some questions during the activity. These responses in all different forms were included in this research.

Of course the park was not the only place of study. The chapters in which the different case studies are described will show that I joined several other initiatives as an observing participant. Among other things, I attended an interreligious female meeting group on a monthly basis for almost a year, I grew vegetables in my own vegetable garden as part of the project described in Paragraph 1.1, I attended a number of concerts at the singing glass towers, mingling with the audience, and I visited other events and happenings in the district.

To broaden my scope I also became active on social media. Over the years a lively Twitter community emerged among residents of Leidsche Rijn via which it

²⁵ N.K. DENZIN & Y.S. LINCOLN: 'Introduction', in N.K. DENZIN & Y.S. LINCOLN (eds.): *The landscape of qualitative research* (Los Angeles 2008) 4.

²⁶ GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies* 12.

²⁷ At that time it was called the *Friends of the Leidsche Rijn Park Foundation*. For the sake of clarity I will use the new name.

was easy to follow almost everything that happened in the district. The ‘buzz’ about an exciting event, or a popular or special place easily reached me via this medium. I used this expanding Twitter network for different purposes. Some people I just followed online in order to find out what was happening in Leidsche Rijn, others I approached with questions about their tweets, and I also used the medium to arrange formal and informal meetings with interesting residents.

One of my respondents once told me that the most sacred of all places in Leidsche Rijn was Twitter, a meeting place for numerous residents that would share important, funny, sad, and intimate moments with their fellow residents (and the rest of the world). This meant for me that it was a specifically interesting place to follow and meet residents. I became a participating observer in their online world.

To get a clear and broad insight in Leidsche Rijn and all its facets it was necessary to combine various research methods. I studied maps and policy briefs, I interviewed planners, politicians and residents, and I conducted research as an observing participant offline but also online. Inspired by De Certeau and his study of New York City, I attempted to study both the all-knowing view from above as well as the chaos of everyday life on the streets. This I undertook in order to find out what places stand out with a special meaning.



Chapter 2

Leidsche Rijn, an exploration of the field

Aerial view of Mocking home at the Alendorperweg
Picture from the private collection of the Mocking family.

CHAPTER 2

LEIDSCHER RIJN, AN EXPLORATION OF THE FIELD

2.1 Picturing suburbia

He became known as ‘The King of Suburbia’. William Laird Levitt, together with his brother Alfred and their father Abraham were the first to produce prefabricated housing in bulk. The significance of this creation could be compared to the invention of Henry Ford’s assembly line in 1913. With a well-considered construction and a smart plan, Bill Levitt was capable of constructing a simple and solid house for a price between 6995 and 8000 dollars with monthly payments as low as 57 dollars. The basic model had two bedrooms and an attic cut out for a young family.

As a result, in a huge potato field in Hempstead, twenty miles from Manhattan, the first Levitt houses were put together in 1946, and within two years a whole city had emerged. At its peak in 1948, 180 houses were produced a week and in 1951 the old potato field had become home to 82,000 people. The ads that were used in an attempt to lure people to the potato field emphasized the great environment, the attractiveness of the houses, and of course, the affordable prices. Levittown was the beginning of an explosion of suburbs, a word that soon became a notion, a symbol for a modern way of life.²⁸

Over the years, numerous movies and books have been produced and written in which the suburb and its accompanying way of life are central. *The Rabbit* novels by John Updike and the popular movie *American Beauty* are just two examples that helped establish the image we have of the suburb and suburban life.²⁹

The Dutch history of urban planning developed differently from the American example. The prefabricated, cheap housing as developed by Bill Levitt and his family never made it to the Netherlands. However, the image of the American suburbs with large numbers of similar houses, in a nice and quiet neighborhood, ideal for a family life with children eventually did make it across the Atlantic, along with the ongoing discussions concerning the subject in the United States. In line with the American credo that the Levitt-town was a symbol of a new and modern way of

²⁸ G. MAK: *Reizen zonder John. Op zoek naar Amerika* (Amsterdam 2012) 11-13.

²⁹ Interesting research on the way in which suburbia is portrayed in science and literature was done by the Dutch cultural scientist David Hamers: D. HAMERS: *Tijd voor Suburbia. De Amerikaanse buitenwijk in wetenschap en literatuur* (Amsterdam 2003).

life, the Dutch VINEX-concept arising in the nineties of the past century, has been referred to as “A prototype for the new Netherlands”³⁰. Interestingly enough, the ads attempting to sell houses in the VINEX-neighborhoods use texts similar to the ones Levitt used to sell his town in the potato field in the 1950s.

This short introduction of the Levitt-towns gives a sneak peek into the place where the research for this dissertation has been conducted: the VINEX-district, the Dutch version of all-American suburbia. The image of the American suburb is what the people in the Netherlands were afraid of, and which still often represents the picture a majority has in mind when discussing the VINEX-district, an image that should be further nuanced.

This chapter will give a brief overview of urban planning in the Netherlands in the twentieth century. The first part will give an overview of urban planning in the Netherlands, in the past century. The shapes and designs of city expansions until the start of the VINEX plans will be described. The second part will explore the VINEX-concept; the way the neighborhoods are set up and the rules and regulations accompanying the concept. The third and last part will focus on the main area of research in this dissertation: the VINEX-district of Leidsche Rijn.

2.2 Urban planning in the twentieth century

Architecture and urban planning in the past century were characterized by large and fast transformations. Of great influence was the rise of functionalism in the early twentieth century. This architectural and urban planning movement followed the credo: *Form Follows Function*, thereby emphasizing that the construction and exterior of a building are to be determined by its function, leaving little room for ‘useless’ decorations. At the same time, a more traditionalist approach arose as a reaction to this functionalism. Dutch classicism from before 1800 and an interest in regional constructions such as farmhouses were the sources of inspiration for traditionalists. In practice, the distinction between functionalism and traditionalism is not as clear-cut as this short introduction implies. Both styles underwent significant changes over the years, making the history of twentieth century urban planning an interesting one.³¹

In a nutshell, the following timeline will show the most significant stages of urban planning in the twentieth century.³²

³⁰ A. GRUNBERG: *Onderduiken voor beginners* (Utrecht 2009).

³¹ H. LÖRZING, W. KLEMM, M. VAN LEEUWEN & S. SOEKIMIN: *VINEX! Een morfologische verkenning* (Rotterdam/Den Haag 2006) 38-39.

³² Overview found in LÖRZING ET AL.: *VINEX! Een morfologische verkenning* 40-42.

- *1920-1940*: In this period functionalism gradually develops, first as a movement in architecture and, later on, also as an influence on urban development. It did not replace traditionalism, rather; the two movements existed side by side, at some points even intertwining. Examples of neighborhoods designed in this period are Tuindorp Vreewijk in the city of Rotterdam and Philipsdorp in the southern city of Eindhoven. Both neighborhoods were built within the urban zone of the city and have a rural appearance; they are low built with pitched roofs and a co-ordinate system of green avenues. Both neighborhoods were inspired by the Garden City concept as the British stenographer Ebenezer Howard described it.³³
- *1945-1955*: The post-war reconstruction of the Netherlands again shows a mishmash of functionalism and traditionalism. Some architects in this period even used a mixture of both styles in their work. Toward the end of this period functionalism starts to take over. In Rotterdam, the Pendrecht neighborhood was built. Its design was based on the previously mentioned Dutch concept of *nijkegedachte*, which translates as, ‘the ideal neighborhood’, its basic principle being decentralization of the city. This means that all facilities (including schools, shops and churches) were located in walking distance from the homes, creating villages within the city and making it unnecessary to leave the neighborhood. People from different ages and social backgrounds would inhabit Pendrecht, stimulating them to work together and support one another. As a result of the housing shortage characterizing Rotterdam after the war, the neighborhood was planned in such a way as to house as many people as possible and, therefore, also including a large number of high-rise blocks.
- *1955-1970*: Functionalism is the dominant movement in urban development in the late fifties and the sixties, or to be more accurate, in the design of large expansion areas. Open construction blocks of various heights, with a significant amount of high-rise blocks and large-scale infrastructural solutions, defined the image. The style used for the construction of Pendrecht together with, for example, Buitenveldert in Amsterdam, can be referred to as postwar functionalism. In this later period that can be described as late-functionalism, large-scale neighborhoods such as Kanaleneiland in Utrecht and the Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam were built. These neighborhoods were inspired by Pendrecht but much larger. Interestingly, the Bijlmermeer was the first neighborhood in which no separate churches, or other facilities, were built as they

³³ A broad description of Garden Cities can be found in H. VAN DER CAMMEN & L. DE KLERK: *Ruimtelijke ordening. Van Grachtengordel tot VINEX-wijk* (Houten 2003) 104-112; E. HOWARD: *Garden cities of to-morrow* (London 1902).

were all integrated into the high-rise apartment building. The idea was that the community areas could be used in various ways, including church services.

- *1970-1980*: This period shows a radical break with the previous period. Social criticism and a rising interest in ecological issues, in the 1970s, resulted in a transformation in the way people thought about their ‘environment’ in the broadest sense, first in architecture and, soon after, also in urban planning. Small-scale designs form the foundation for this period in urban planning. Residential areas with low-rise housing, traffic-calming solutions, and lots of green, characterize this period. There is no generally accepted terminology to describe this period but its style is more traditional and often referred to as ‘frumpish’. One of the largest neighborhoods designed in this period is Haage Beemden in Breda. This neighborhood is characterized by a complicated pattern of residential-areas that typically contain a lot of green and low-rise housing.
- *1980-now*: This period is a difficult one to describe. There is another turning point as architects as well as urban planners reorient their visions on functionalism. As a result, in the late 1980s the ‘hard functionalism’ is replaced by a mixture of styles and shapes which is quite commonly referred to as eclecticism. An overall growing focus on the individual is reflected in urban planning as the more collective ensembles make room for individual residential forms. A second development that is specifically interesting in the light of this research is the historicizing of the living environment. This trend can be seen a part of eclecticism, is sometimes also referred to as ‘historicizing postmodernism’. An example of such a neighborhood is Kattenbroek, near Amersfoort, in the middle of the country. The starting point of the design was to build a neighborhood that was not ‘standard’. The aim of the urban planner was to design a ‘healthy, safe and happy environment, where people feel at home and feel the excitement to dream’. This was to be accomplished by the use of themes and metaphors in the design.

2.3 VINEX: Quantitative and qualitative aims

The previous overview shows suburbanization from its earliest stages. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the available urban space proved to be no longer sufficient to house the ever-growing urban population. The pressure to expand the cities and at the same time a demand for the improvement of the infrastructure resulted in the plans for the first suburbs. These forms of urban and regional planning continuously developed in the build-up to the Second World War. It was no longer merely an intuitive design discipline; urban planning had evolved into a scholarly method that had to result in an increase in production and im-

provement of the quality of life. Economical, geographical and sociological understandings were involved in urban expansion plans and three functions: dwelling, working, and leisure, became central in the designs. Hence, in the post-war period, a number of institutional measures were taken by the Dutch government in order to regulate urban planning. There was a normative dimension to this government influence. The Garden Cities designed before the Second World War, and inspired by those Garden Cities (the post-war *wijkgedachte*) were clearly meant to implement a certain type of lifestyle for residents.

Five days of war and a five-year long occupation of the Netherlands in the Second World War had extensive consequences for the Dutch infrastructure. The post-war reconstruction period, accompanied by an extensive housing shortage, and a notable baby boom, demanded coherent plans for large territories and for the country as a whole. Before 1940, this type of large scale, comprehensive planning by the government would have been perceived as a doubtful violation of civil freedom. But after 1945, planning and regulation were generally accepted as instruments to for economic recovery and egalitarian division of the scarce resources. This change in the public opinion resulted in a plan for the Western part of the country in 1958, soon to be followed by the First Memorandum concerning spatial planning in the Netherlands, in 1960. Six years later the Second Memorandum came out, which can best be described as a master plan for the Netherlands. With these plans, a new period in the development of spatial planning began.³⁴ Clustering and a concentrated building style have since the First Memorandum in 1960, characterized this urbanization policy of the Dutch government. This would later be referred to as the ‘compact city’, a concept that is still central in the Fourth Memorandum Spatial Planning Extra, later abbreviated as ‘VINEX’.

The VINEX-project is an ambitious project, as the Fourth Memorandum describes the construction of 835,000 houses in or nearby already existing cities in the period between 1995 and 2015.³⁵ A majority (66 percent) of these houses have to be constructed in the Randstad area, consisting of the provinces Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland, Utrecht, and Flevoland. In total, almost one hundred locations were appointed as construction areas, the largest one being Leidsche Rijn in Utrecht with a total of around 30,000 houses. Over time the sizes and even the names of the various locations have changed, making it difficult to keep track of the complete operation. Also, as a large number of the areas are still under construction, the VINEX-concept is not solid but rather fluid and constantly changing.

³⁴ VAN DER CAMMEN & DE KLERK: *Ruimtelijke ordening* 163-169.

³⁵ MINISTERIE VAN VROM: *Vierde nota over de ruimtelijke ordening extra: op weg naar 2015, deel 1* (Den Haag: Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer 1991) 25-26.

In addition to the size of the VINEX-operation, the government has also set quality requirements for the new suburbs. First there was a list of criteria regarding the selection of the location of the expansion areas, namely:

1. The Fourth Memorandum Extra follows the rule: ‘proximity over accessibility’.³⁶ Meaning that the building possibilities within the existing urban areas will be utilized, subsequently followed by the outskirts of urban areas, and thereafter areas located further away, with the possibility to be connected to existing centers.
2. Opening up by urban or suburban public transportation or slow forms of transportation. The government hereby attempts to stimulate the option to travel by train or bicycle.
3. Coherence between living, working, facilities, recreation and green structures.
4. Public spaces within the areas should be safeguarded from construction for the purpose of nature, outdoor-recreation and green structures.³⁷

These four criteria show a clear preference for a compact form of urbanization, both to open up the VINEX-areas, and to protect the rural areas. In practice, the second and third points proved to be quite difficult to establish right from the beginning. The accessibility of the neighborhoods greatly depends on a functioning public transportation system that usually takes a couple of years to establish. The lack of facilities, such as schools and shops, in a district under construction, causes practical problems that will be solved over the years when more and more facilities start to take shape.

The idea of the ‘compact city’ as presented in the Fourth Memorandum Extra, was replaced or expanded in the updated version *Actualisering VINEX* (1997) with the introduction of the concept ‘complete city’. As the economy was growing in the 1990s, the demands of the people grew with it. They wanted to live in a spacious and green environment but at the same time also profit from all the facilities the city has to offer. Therefore, the question arose as to whether the compact city model was still sufficient. As the cities were growing and the VINEX-areas were located further away from the centers and were sometimes, for example in Leidsche Rijn, divided from the center by large infrastructural bundles, secondary centers emerged. The term, secondary center, hereby refers to a second city center next to the already existing center of the city, of which the VINEX-district is a part. The importance of those secondary centers in addition to the main cores, as

³⁶ Original in Dutch: ‘Nabijheid boven bereikbaarheid’, in VAN DER CAMMEN & DE KLERK: *Ruimtelijke ordening* 348.

³⁷ MINISTERIE VAN VROM: *Vierde nota over de ruimtelijke ordening extra* 14-15; LÖRZING ET AL.: *VINEX! Een morfologische verkenning* 24-25.

concentrations of employment and especially other facilities, should not be underestimated. Numerous new initiatives arise focusing on those secondary centers. A development that is also visible in Leidsche Rijn.³⁸

The emergence of secondary centers, parallel to the already existing urban space, has consequences for the transportation patterns in the country. These had to be adjusted in order to include the new centers. Work patterns are also changing. People change jobs more easily, they work from home, and they are willing to travel to and from work. Hence, especially for residents of the suburbs transportation and transportation routes are increasingly important. At the same time, the importance of the quality of the living environment is growing. The size of the house, the neighborhood, the daily facilities, the options for recreation, and the social climate, are of greater significance than the proximity of the workplace. What counts is whether a variety of (potential) workplaces is easy attainable. The use of facilities develops in a similar way. People attach increasing value to specialization. Urban facilities no longer need to be clustered together in one urban center. People choose whatever matches their personal needs and preferences and assemble a menu offered to them by a number of urban centers throughout the country. The growing amount of free time one has nowadays feeds this picky behavior and in general the utilization of facilities (especially shopping) gets a recreational additional function: fun shopping.³⁹

The ideas and developments sketched above show that the VINEX-operation did not only entail the construction of a large number of houses, but moreover it was intended to serve a higher purpose than just housing. By means of a sophisticated choice of location, the areas are to contribute to the opening up of the rural areas and stimulate the use of bicycles and public transportation. Whether the intentions of the VINEX-operation were put into practice in Leidsche Rijn will be addressed later on in this chapter.

2.4 From Vicus to VINEX: A short history of the planning area

Van Vicus tot VINEX: Een geschiedenis van Vleuten, De Meern en Haarzuilens is a book on the history of the planning area of Leidsche Rijn, published by the Historical Association of Vleuten, De Meern and Haarzuilens.⁴⁰ Once, Vleuten, De Meern and Haarzuilens were three separate villages, but in 2001 were swallowed up by the city of Utrecht, as they had become part of the extension area, Leidsche Rijn. In February 2013, I visited this historical association, curious to find out more about the history of the area and about the importance of this history for the new sub-

³⁸ MINISTERIE VAN VROM: *Actualisering vierde nota over de ruimtelijke ordening extra, deel 3* (Den Haag 1997/1998) 49-52.

³⁹ MINISTERIE VAN VROM: *Actualisering vierde nota over de ruimtelijke ordening extra, deel 3* 49-50.

⁴⁰ J. LUIJT: *Van Vicus tot VINEX: Een geschiedenis van Vleuten, De Meern en Haarzuilens* (Utrecht 2011).

urb. Its dimensions of sacrality will be addressed in Chapter 7, but in order to understand its importance, a description of this history is essential. This historical overview will start with an ethnographic description of a visit to the Historical Association.

The home of the Historical Association is a documentation center that is housed in a monumental sixteenth century brotherhood house in the center of the former village of Vleuten. Inside, besides a lot of books and magazines, I see a number of artifacts from different historical periods: stones from a Roman road, coins from the Middle Ages, and a number of drawings of churches and castles in the area. Various people are studying the available books or microfiches; the history of the area seems to be very much alive.

I have an appointment with a coordinator of the documentation center and within an hour and a half he fills me in on the 3000 years of history attached to the area. He uses a map that is made to educate the school children of the new neighborhood that is still under construction. The map shows all the archeological findings in the area and divides them into sixteen different categories varying from Roman ships and mammoth bones, to a plane from the Second World War and the greenhouses left over from the rich horticultural history. Of course, there is no time to give an in-depth historical overview of such a large area, but for that he refers to the *Van Vicus tot VINEX* book. However, his story informs me about the importance of this extensive history for the area. The coordinator confirms this assumption when he tells me about the idea to display one of the excavated Roman ships in a nearby town. This, he says, will change the meaning of the boat. This meaning will change when the boat is moved from its original location. Centuries ago it used to sail on the Leidsche Rhine, so that is where it belongs.⁴¹

The history of the planning area of Leidsche Rijn is extensive and was recently published in the previously mentioned book: *Van Vicus tot VINEX* which translates as: from vicus to VINEX. *Vicus* is a Latin term meaning hamlet and was used in the Roman era to refer to a settlement nearby a Roman *castellum* or army encampment, it also referred to a small (trade) town built on the crossroad of important trade routes. The Roman period is not the first period of settlement in the area that we know of, as excavations prove habitation since the late Bronze era (1100 to 800 BCE.), but it will be the starting point of this historical overview. Since it is not the aim of this dissertation to extensively describe the interesting but broad history of the area, the overview will highlight various specific aspects of this history, aspects that link to the present-day design of Leidsche Rijn.

Between 58 and 52 BCE Roman legions led by Emperor Gaius Julius Caesar entered North-Western Europe. After conquering Gallia, the troops move toward

⁴¹ Conversation with coordinator of the documentation center of the Historische Vereniging Vleuten, De Meern, Haarzuilens (February 11, 2013).

the north and occupy the delta of the Meuse and Rhine rivers. On the other side of the Rhine, the largest and most powerful river Caesar had ever seen, laid the unknown territory of the Germans. The area south of the Rhine was assimilated into the Roman Empire but several attempts to conquer the Northern part remained unfruitful. As a result, in 47 CE emperor Claudius decided to leave the German territory and let the Rhine function as the northern border of the Roman Empire. The river could function as a natural barrier and at the same time used as a means to transport goods and military. From that moment on, the Roman activities in the Low Countries focused on consolidation of this border and optimal exploitation of the conquered region south of the river Rhine. On the left banks of the river the Romans built, at equal distance from each other, the Romans built around twenty permanent army encampments, the previously mentioned *castella*. These encampments were used between 40 and 260 CE by the troops to guard the *limes* (borders) of the Empire. One of the *castella* the Romans founded was located at the Hoge Woerd in De Meern, at a place that now has become part of the planning area of Leidsche Rijn. The *castella* were not the only constructions built to guard the borders of the Roman Empire. In the areas between the various encampments, the Romans built watchtowers used to keep an eye on the shipping traffic. The three Roman ships that were excavated in the area prove the importance of the Rhine as a means of transportation.⁴²

This rich Roman history can be discovered and relived in Leidsche Rijn. The *Castellum Hoge Woerd* is being rebuilt and complemented with a modern day theater and museum in which at least one of the ships will be exhibited. One of the watchtowers was rebuilt and the *limes*, a Roman road is under construction and even the original course of the Rhine is partly restored. Chapter 7 will elaborate more in depth on this area-specific history, its authenticity and the possible value it has for the residents of Leidsche Rijn.

The Middle Ages are the second significant era in the history of Leidsche Rijn. In 1220, bishop of Utrecht, Otto II, was permitted by the Emperor Frederik II to build a castle. From that time onward, the number of castles in the province of Utrecht grew significantly. These castles served as defensive works and have a strategic, military character. By means of their location, the castles enabled the bishop to defend his territory against outside attacks, but at the same time the castles posed a threat to surrounding estates. A number of the castles built in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth century found a place in the urban plans of the new VINEX-area. The remains of Castle *Nijevelt* are integrated into the *Milan Viscontipark*, which is part of the *Veldhuizen* area. The location of the royal knight's residence *Den Engh* is still visible despite the fact that the original construction was

⁴² Information on the Roman history of Leidsche Rijn was derived from LUIJT: *Van Vicus tot VINEX* 15-32.

replaced in the seventeenth and nineteenth century by a monumental farmhouse. The place is part of the *Máximapark* and currently under construction. Part of the old farm is renovated and used by a commune. The other buildings will be transformed into a restaurant, a stopping place for the residents of Leidsche Rijn. The tower of the *Den Ham* Castle, probably built around 1260, is still a noteworthy landmark in the area. As it was changed into a dwelling in the twentieth century, the tower is not open for the public but it is still dominant in the scenery.

But the most significant castle in the area is probably *De Haar*. The first castle in this location was built in the late fourteenth century. In the seventeenth century the castle fell into despair and when architect Pierre Cuypers was assigned to make a reconstruction of the design by the rich Rothschild family in the nineteenth century, only ruins were left. Together with the castle, baron Rothschild also built a whole new village: Haarzuilens. This centuries old village was originally located to the south and east of the castle, but was moved further to the east so that it would no longer block the scenic view from the castle. The new castle was designed in a neo-gothic style, as were the chapel and the gardens. Currently the castle is a museum, a popular wedding location, and the gardens are often used for fairs and other activities.⁴³

In the late nineteenth century the technological developments reached the farming communities of Vleuten, De Meern and Haarzuilens. Until that time the horticulture in the area was not meant for commercial use. This situation changed when a number of gardeners settled around Vleuten and Harmelen due to urban expansion especially in the Westland region near the city of Den Haag. The land around Vleuten was fertile, not too far from the city, disposed of good water and railroad connections, and reasonably priced. These farmers from the Westland were used to cultivating vegetables and fruits under glass and therefore, in 1904, the first greenhouse appears in the area. The first products grown in the greenhouses were grapes, cucumbers, melons, and strawberries. Later this selection expanded with peaches, tomatoes, and sweet peppers and a number of gardeners switched to flowers such as chrysanthemums, roses, and freesias. The heart of the gardener community is the *Alendorperweg*, now located in the center of the new neighborhood. The further development of the horticulture was stimulated by the construction of an auction hall enabling the large-scale trade of fruits, vegetables, and flowers.

Around 1950, the majority of the damage caused by the Second World War was repaired and the country was ready to return to the international market. The prosperity grew and thereby also the demand for fruits, vegetables, and flowers. This rising demand was accompanied by a growing acreage under glass, as a result

⁴³ The historical description of the castles was derived from LUIJT: *Van Vicus tot VINEX* 49-60 and 149-154.

of which the greenhouse farming area in Vleuten had the chance to grow into one of the largest in the province of Utrecht. The previously mentioned orchards also played an important role in Vleuten in the fifties and sixties. Although a majority of these orchards disappeared in the seventies and eighties (when this farming sector was found to be no longer economically viable) the orchards, as well as the horticulture in the area, played an important role in the development of the new neighborhood.⁴⁴

This is the description of the history of the plan area in a nutshell, mostly emphasizing the elements that still play a role in the VINEX-area, Leidsche Rijn. The Roman excavations, the castles from the period of the Middle Ages and the important role of horticulture (especially greenhouse farming) have all found a place in the design of the new neighborhood, either accidentally or very well planned.

2.5 How to build a city

It was difficult to find a location near the city of Utrecht that could be used for the large-scale extension the VINEX-plans proposed. The only option: Leidsche Rijn, an area located on the western side of the city, surrounding the two villages of Vleuten and De Meern (since 1954 combined in the municipality Vleuten-De Meern) and hemmed by the state highways A2 and A12. The name of the planning area was derived from the canalized river, the Leidsche Rijn, which is partially located in the city of Utrecht and on the territory of Vleuten-De Meern. It was the only area in the proximity of the city of Utrecht available to plan a project this size. The other surrounding areas had already been annexed in previous stages of urban expansion. Therefore in 1991 the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (Ministry of VROM) appointed the area to be the place where a complete 'new city' had to arise between 1995 and 2015.

In April 1994, both city councils ordered the *Project Office Leidsche Rijn* to formulate a master plan for the planning area. In collaboration with all the parties involved, arrangements were made for the workflow, the public access of the documentation, and the timeframe within which the various parts of the plan had to be delivered. Thereafter, within eight months, the project office (led by the well-known Dutch urban planner and architect Riek Bakker) drew up a concept master plan. Bakker was, among other projects, known for her design of de Kop van Zuid, a new neighborhood in Rotterdam constructed in the early nineties. In the first months of 1995 the concept master plan was widely and publicly discussed and both municipalities put the outcome of these discussions to work in the final version of the master plan that was established in June 1995. It has to be noted

⁴⁴ The historical description of the horticultural history of the area is derived from LUIJT: *Van Vicus tot VINEX* 163-168 and 220-222.

that other than being a zoning plan, this master plan had no legal ground. Rather it was meant as a directive for the future urban developments.⁴⁵ However, the approbation of the master plan did not mean the whole project would be completed without any resistance. In the following paragraphs, several of these difficulties will be highlighted: namely, the presence of the farmers in the heart of the planning area, the annexation of Vleuten-De Meern by the city of Utrecht, and also the complicating factors of the area itself.

Facing difficulties

In the first plans, 10,000 of the 30,000 houses were to be situated on the soil of the municipality Vleuten-De Meern, and the additional 20,000 would become part of the city of Utrecht. In order to enable the city of Utrecht to achieve this goal, Vleuten-De Meern was prepared to cede a large part of their agricultural land to their neighbor. This 'border realignment' caused a lot of commotion in the villages and even resulted in the founding of the action group *Vleuten-De Meern Zelfstandig* ('Vleuten-De Meern Independent'). They demonstrated and attempted to influence politics. In May 1994, over seven hundred inhabitants (out of a total of 20,000 inhabitants) of Vleuten-De Meern gathered at an information meeting organized by the municipality. Most of their questions remain unanswered and a few months later it became clear that despite the protests, the realignment plans remained unchanged. In late 1994, the farmers were informed about the Masterplan Leidsche Rijn, which states that in 1995 the city of Utrecht would start building, and that they had to move with or without their farms and greenhouses. In exchange for their willingness to cooperate in the border realignment, the municipality Vleuten-De Meern agreed that there would be no municipal regrouping; this agreement was annulled later on in the process.⁴⁶

As stated, the farmers played an important role in the establishment of Leidsche Rijn. In 1991, around 100 greenhouse farms dominated the heart of the planning area. They had moved to the area in the early twentieth century. And now, the urban expansions that had forced their parents and grandparents to move to this area had yet again become the cause of a forced migration. As soon as the first plans were announced in 1991, the farmers realized that something was going to change. Speaking to one of the farmers still living on the *Alendorperweg*, the road that functioned as the center of the area, it became clear to me the sale of those farmlands had been a long and difficult process.

Respondent E was born in the city of Utrecht and the family had moved to the *Alendorperweg* when she was two years old. She married the son of the gardeners that lived across the street, after which they took over their business and lived in

⁴⁵ P. SPANGENBERG (ed.): *Masterplan Leidsche Rijn* (Amsterdam 1995) 11.

⁴⁶ LUIJT: *Van Vicus tot VINEX* 248-249.

the same house ever since. They cultivated all sorts of summer flowers and all three of their children worked in the farm. She characterizes the period in which the plans for the area were presented as very insecure. For a long time the family did not know what the future would look like. They attempted to start over at a new location, but as the municipality was unclear about when and how much they would get for their old farm, they could not buy anything new. Now, the children had found new jobs and all but one of the greenhouses had been sold. As she shows me the pictures of the area from a few decades ago she says: “It is a lot prettier now. (...) Many people complained, but we couldn’t have asked for anything better. It is the way they did it, which was not nice.”⁴⁷

The planners and municipality were not the only ones causing difficulties. Some of the farmers were also obstructive. After the announcement of the plans in 1991, they attempted to cash in on the situation and built new greenhouses at the last moment. The more greenhouses they owned, the more the municipality had to pay to buy them out.⁴⁸ By the year 2002 the municipality bought the remainder of the former horticultural land.

The protest of the farmers was not the only hurdle the new suburb had to overcome. Right after the construction of the first phase of the new neighborhood had started in 1996, dark clouds gathered over the plans. Whereas both the municipalities of Utrecht and Vleuten-De Meern had both started building, the plans for the creation of a so-called ‘city-province’ were stranded. As a result the Provincial Executive of Utrecht presented plans in June of 1996 suggesting a municipal regrouping whereby Vleuten-De Meern would merge with the city of Utrecht. As mentioned earlier, in the early planning stages the city of Utrecht had promised Vleuten-De Meern that annexation would never happen. Despite this past promise, the Provincial Executive decided it would be best if all the construction sites would fall under the accountability of one administration, in order to enhance the management of this enormous project. And whereas the city council of Utrecht was eager to side with the annexation plans, Vleuten-De Meern was strongly opposed to the plans and immediately decided to take action by shutting down all building activities on its territory.

In 1996, the municipality of Vleuten-De Meern decided to present the annexation plans to its residents by means of a referendum. The results were patently obvious: 84 percent of the people, in a population of 14,000, cast their votes, and

⁴⁷ Respondent E is a 60-65-year-old woman who has lived on the *Alendorperweg* in the middle of the park since she was two years old. She is from a farmers family and she and her husband had to give up the family business for the creation of the park. She has long been active as a board member of the *Friends of the Máximapark Foundation*. This information derived from interview with Respondent E (23-05-2011): “Ik vind dit mooier hoor. (...) Veel mensen hebben ook veel geklaagd maar eigenlijk kan je er nooit beter afkomen. Alleen de manier waarop ze het gedaan hebben dat was schofterig.

⁴⁸ LUIJT: *Van Vicus tot VINEX* 253.

98 percent voted against the annexation.⁴⁹ Subjected to great pressure from the state, the province and an imminent insurance claim from the property developers, the city council of Vleuten-De Meern decided to no longer oppose the construction of the new neighborhood. The city council did attempt to postpone the annexation until the whole neighborhood was finished. This would take several decades, giving both parties time to maybe gain a different understanding of the situation. In the following years, as the annexation had not yet been officially confirmed, the residents grasped at every straw and even organized a two day walk to the parliament in Den Haag to express their dissatisfaction. But their attempts were of no avail. In 2000, the Upper Chamber of Dutch Parliament voted in favor of the plans and on January 1st 2001 Vleuten-De Meern and its 22,000 residents officially became part of the city of Utrecht.⁵⁰

A third and more practical problem the builders and planners of the new neighborhood were facing was whether the area was suitable for such a large-scale project. Asking Annemiek Rijckenberg, the alderwoman who was at that time responsible for the planning of the new VINEX-area, how it could be that such a large area close to the city-center had never been built on before, she commented:

The city had expanded before, but our ancestors were not crazy, it was one squelchy situation, more like a refined swamp, just like parts of *Het Groene Hart*.⁵¹ Actually it was supposed to be part of *Het Groene Hart*. It consisted of meadows and marchland and was therefore very wet. There were a couple of sand bars where housing had been planned in the past and where the borders of the Roman Empire had been located. (...) This was also the case with several of the other VINEX-projects; they were all planned in 'lost' areas, which had not been used for building for good reasons.⁵²

⁴⁹ LUIJT: *Van Vicus tot VINEX* 255.

⁵⁰ IDEM 255-256.

⁵¹ *Het Groene Hart* ('The Green Heart') is a nature reserve located between the cities of Utrecht, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Den Haag. It is an area of wet meadows and marshland. As they were not suitable for building, these wetlands were used for agriculture and peat production.

⁵² Information derived from an interview with Annemiek Rijckenberg. She was an alderwoman in the city of Utrecht between 1994 and 2001 with the Leidsche Rijn, environmental planning, urban renewal, participation, sustainability and architectural policy portfolio (01-03-2013). Original text: "De rest was al geannexeerd. Maar onze voorouders hadden daar nooit gebouwd. Waarom niet? De stad was al eerder gegroeid. Onze voorouders waren niet gek, het was gewoon een grote zompige boel, het was een soort veredeld moeras, net als een groot deel van Het Groene Hart. Het hoorde eigenlijk bij Het Groene Hart. Het was veen/weide gebied voor een deel en het was ontzettend nat. Met een paar zandruggen waar dan de bebouwing was gekomen en waar ook de grens liep van de Romeinse Limes. (...) En dat gold dus voor alle andere VINEX-gemeenten ook, daar was overleg over geweest. Het waren allemaal verloren gronden waar je eigenlijk liever niet bouwde. Maar er waren geen andere mogelijkheden."

The master plan states that: “the physical geography (soil composition) of the area is defined by the former course of the Rhine, which formed a sand bar in the center. Lower basins developed to the north and south.”⁵³ After thorough research in areas with a similar soil composition, the planners and administrators had decided not to buy everything *tabula rasa*, raise the terrain and start building. As an example, Rijckenberg refers to the neighborhood Kattenbroek in the Dutch city of Amersfoort, which had been built in the 1990s. In this neighborhood, the sand bars have become invisible and the identity was fashionably added later in a fairytale type way.⁵⁴ In the plans for Leidsche Rijn, the existing qualities and structure with the sand bars were valued and integrated in the design, as those elements can create stratification and add identity to the planning area.

The composition of the soil was not the only factor they had to deal with before they could start to prepare the construction site for building. In the interview, alderwoman Rijckenberg refers to a meeting she had when the plans were two or three months in the making. Research done in the area showed a large number of archeological findings: “It was a terribly hot day, we saw the map [with the archeological sites] and I was scared out of my wits, all those archeological findings!”⁵⁵ At that time, it was not common to do anything with archeological artifacts. Only if there were no other options were you allowed to excavate the items, and some objects would be put up for display in an exhibition, but preferably they were preserved in the soil. The sites were made into so-called ‘soil archives’. Nowadays, great importance is attached to the importance of archeology. Hence, preferably the objects are excavated and made available for the audience.

A turning point in Leidsche Rijn was the discovery of a Roman ship in 1997. The ship was very well preserved and therefore a unique object. In the following years more ships, two Roman watchtowers, a treasure dating back to St. Bonifatius, and various other valuables were found in the Leidsche Rijn soil.⁵⁶ Several of the excavations were integrated into the design of the neighborhood and came to play an important role in its identity.

The master plan

The Dutch urban planner and architect Riek Bakker drew up the *Masterplan Leidsche Rijn* in 1995. The ambitions and expectations were high for combine living and

⁵³ SPANGENBERG (ed.): *Masterplan* 15.

⁵⁴ Information derived from: SPANGENBERG (ed.): *Masterplan* 15-18 and the interview with Annemiek Rijckenberg.

⁵⁵ Information derived from interview with Annemiek Rijckenberg (01-03-2013). Original text: “Het was bloedheet en we zagen die kaart en ik schrok me echt helemaal wild. Alleen maar archeologische vondsten.”

⁵⁶ Information derived from LUIJT: *Van Vicus tot VINEX* 265-267 and the interview with Annemiek Rijckenberg.

working and to make Leidsche Rijn into a success and a shining example. In numbers, the plans included the construction of 30,000 houses for 80,000 people, 95,000m² shopping area and a central park of 390 acres. In addition, enough space for offices and industry was planned to provide 40,000 people with jobs. Vleuten-De Meern would be located in the center of the planning area and become an integrated part of the design.⁵⁷

The three main notions of the vision underlying the master plan are ‘compactness’, ‘durability’, and ‘identity’. The term ‘compact city’ was mentioned earlier in this chapter as one of the main elements of the larger VINEX-concept. It is a response to the emergence of numerous relatively small urban areas divided by shrinking fragments of nature. The compactness of the VINEX-concept and the *Leidsche Rijn Masterplan* attempts to avoid such fragmentation. Hence compactness does not only refer to houses being constructed ‘closely together’, since this point of view would make every urban area with a high density compact. Rather, it especially concerns a connectedness with already existing cultivated areas. The characteristics of compactness were translated and utilized as follows in the master plan for Leidsche Rijn:

- a new residential area will be located at cycling- or public transportation-distance from a well-developed, already existing city center;
- and so, a category of facilities becomes available for (future) residents for which there will not be a large enough basis in Leidsche Rijn, for a long period of time (for example a theater of cinema);
- the new residential area will not be completely left to its own devices but it will profit from the atmosphere, the character, and the history of the already existing city.⁵⁸

To stimulate the use of public transportation three train stations: *Ternwijde*, *Leidsche Rijn Centraal*, and *Vleuten* were built. Moreover, the demand for compactness also led to a complete integration of the A2 highway, the highway between Utrecht and Amsterdam, in the urban plans. This eventually resulted in a partial (2 kilometers long) concrete covering of the highway, which is now (2013) being transformed into a park.

⁵⁷ LUIJT: *Van Vicus tot VINEX* 252.

⁵⁸ SPANGENBERG (ed.): *Masterplan* 43-45.

Prior to the establishment of the master plan, three possible ways to shape this compact city were extensively discussed by both city councils involved. The first option was to shape Leidsche Rijn as a collection of separate villages (Leidsche Rijn, Vleuten, De Meern). The second model showed the new housing development as a part of the existing city, and in the third model Leidsche Rijn would function independently from the city of Utrecht, which would mean that the newly built area would have its own center and facilities competing with the already existing amenities present in Utrecht: a satellite city, but completely independent.

However, separately none of the plans were found to fit the ideals of the administrators. In their dreams they envisioned a VINEX+; they did not like the idea of just building suburbs, but a real satellite was also beyond their reach and wishes. The choice for VINEX+ implied a combination of the three models. For some of the amenities, the residents of the new neighborhood will have to travel to the city but at the same time the design of Leidsche Rijn would include some unique facilities to attract visitors. As stated previously, the new center of Leidsche Rijn would be complementary to the already existing center of Utrecht. It must be said that the ideas as they were discussed at the onset of the plans underwent some significant changes over the years as the economic crisis significantly influenced the financial possibilities. Some of the facilities got stuck and were not developed as quickly as the initial plans implied or they proved to be impracticable.⁵⁹

The second notion central in the master plan is that of ‘durability’. In essence, the concept of durability emphasizes the preservation of prospects for future generations. Hence, the plans had to meet the contemporary demands but at the same time not thwart tomorrow’s wishes. In practice there was a broad range of techniques that could contribute to establishing this durability: For instance, in the field of water management, the choice for specific types of building materials and the consumption of energy. In this regard, the water management system in Leidsche Rijn is specifically interesting since it is focused on the collection of rainwater. Via roofs and gutters this water runs into shallow trenches (*wadis*) or it is slowly absorbed into the ground via porous paving stones and banks. This system makes Leidsche Rijn self-sufficient in terms of its water usage.

On a more abstract level, the durability specifically demands a high level of flexibility. The current urban plans should be able to absorb fundamentally new developments without losing their strength. Therefore, in addition to the vast elements in the design, the elements that are susceptible to change should also be mapped. The first category includes public components of the design such as infrastructural plans, the most important public spaces, and the facility centers. The

⁵⁹ Information derived from interview with Annemiek Rijckenberg (01-03-2013).

latter category, that is more flexible, mostly entails the detailed filling-in of the program, related to work as well as dwelling.⁶⁰

The third notion in the master plan, identity, is less concrete and therefore, a more difficult one to grasp. The ultimate fear of the planners, the architects, the residents of the area, and the administrators, was that the construction of such a large suburb would result in a sea of concrete: an anonymous grey mass lacking any form of contents or identity. Identity in this regard has a lot to do with character. The specific characteristics of the city of Utrecht and the villages of Vleuten and De Meern had to be taken into consideration, as they were all both very specific and different at the same time. The maintenance and possible strengthening of these characteristics is one of the spearheads of the master plan. The plans would use elements that were already present in the area, for example when it came to its green identity. Original planning structures that made it possible to have a straight view from the north all the way through to the south of the area were maintained. These views were, for instance, created through green ribbons such as the *Groenedijk*. Small adjustments have been made to this concept over the years and the *Groenedijk* (which can be translated as Green dike) is not as green anymore as its name might imply.⁶¹

The following paragraph from the Masterplan Leidsche Rijn clearly sketches the vision of the planners on the creation of an identity for the planning area: “It is not so much the unity in the spatial structure determining the identity. As a carrier of the identity, the special elements, which create a connection between past, present, and future, between here and there, are more important.”⁶² In addition to this top down ideology attempting to create an identity for the neighborhood, the present and future residents of the area were also included in the planning process. Alderwoman Rijckenberg explains how they left room for people to realize their dwelling dreams. This could be done not only by means of individual lots, but in the first year after the master plan was finished they made an appeal to the people to plan collective types of dwelling. This resulted in the realization of a Chinese commune, a commune for Dutch elderly people, the ecological cooperative *De Kersentuin*, and *De Groene Sticht* where the mentally and physically challenged can live and work. It is these projects, she says, that are now the ‘pearls of Leidsche Rijn, they create an identity’.⁶³

⁶⁰ SPANGENBERG (ed.): *Masterplan* 43-44.

⁶¹ Information derived from interview with Annemiek Rijckenberg (01-03-2013).

⁶² Original text derived from SPANGENBERG (ed.): *Masterplan* 45: “Hieruit blijkt dat het niet in de eerste plaats de eenheid in de ruimtelijke structuur is die de identiteit bepaalt. Belangrijker als drager van de identiteit zijn de bijzondere elementen, die een verbinding kunnen leggen tussen verleden, heden en toekomst, tussen hier en daar.”

⁶³ Information derived from interview with Annemiek Rijckenberg (01-03-2013).

The interdependence between the three notions has resulted in a great planological freedom especially in regard to the mapping of the area. The combined action between open and built space, especially, emphasizes the already present qualities of the area. Moreover, the master plan left room for the special and unique elements of the landscape, nature, the archeological findings, and for important monuments. It is those features that provide the suburb with a character of its own, with an identity.

Putting the plans into practice

The master plan provides us with a sketch of the outlines of the planning area. It is a combination of the rules and regulations set out for the VINEX-project by the Dutch government, the planning area and its characteristic features, and the ideas and visions of the urban planners on the way they could integrate those two into one master plan for the entire area. Main elements such as the integration of the A2 highway; the Amsterdam-Rijn canal that separates the planning area from the city of Utrecht; the enormous green area located in the center of the area functioning as a buffer between the new suburb and the old villages; and certain elements of the water-management system, function as a basis for the planning area. Over the years, within the outlines of this groundwork, the details of the neighborhood, houses and facilities are taking shape.⁶⁴

A large portion of the houses is finished, and the area has slowly transformed from a building excavation into a place where people live, an area that is capable of functioning as an independent city. And when cycling, driving, or walking around in this new suburb, several characteristics immediately stand out, characteristics of the design that will play a central role in this dissertation. The first characteristic will be mentioned because of its absence: Whereas for centuries Dutch cities, villages, and even neighborhoods were built surrounding a church and often also an accompanying churchyard, religious buildings are missing from the new neighborhood. The planners, the administration, and the Protestant (PKN) and Roman Catholic churches decided that looking at the changing religious climate, it would not be necessary to build new church buildings.⁶⁵ Obviously some of the new residents will be religiously affiliated, but they will have their meetings in alternative places. Over the years as the neighborhood evolved a lot has changed in this religious field. Plans have been made to build a Hindu temple, a mosque, and a reformed church, but they did not occur without a struggle.

⁶⁴ In July 2013, 20,500 houses were built. It remains unclear when the whole Leidsche Rijn project will be finished (<http://www.utrecht.nl>, consulted on April 2, 2013).

⁶⁵ Information derived from interview with Annemiek Rijckenberg (01-03-2013); LUIJT: *Van Vicus tot VINEX* 256-257.

The second aspect that stands out in the neighborhood is the large 300-hectare park located in the center of the area and functioning as a buffer between Utrecht en Vleuten-De Meern. The design of the park was made to fit into the already existing landscape and follows the historical patterns. As the park is starting to grow, it is used more and more by the residents of Leidsche Rijn. In the park there is room for sports, nature, and relaxation. Also, the restaurant located in its center has grown out to be one of the most popular spots of the neighborhood.

It has become clear that the Leidsche Rijn area has a rich history. A number of these historical elements, varying from a rebuilt Roman watchtower, to a *castellum*, and traditional farmhouses, are deliberately included in the neighborhood design. This means that within the sea of concrete, open space pops up, showing a glimpse of the past. It is these glimpses of the past that create a certain identity or character. It tells the urban dwellers that they were not the first ones to live in this area.

The last element is art and culture. The city of Utrecht finds it important that (amateur) art would be widely present in Leidsche Rijn. As a result, various art works function as landmarks throughout the area. Examples are a high and rusty observatory in the center of the park, a singing glass tower, and glass showcases displaying bronzed objects from the residents of the area. Around these and various other art works, performances are planned demanding the active involvement of the urban dwellers.

Guided by the outlines and regulations sketched in the master plan, Leidsche Rijn slowly takes shape. Of course, throughout the years these plans change, adapt to the spirit of the age, and they are put into practice.



Chapter 3

Locating sacred places:
theories on sacred spaced

Pergola in the Máxima Park

Picture: Hanneke Bos

CHAPTER 3

LOCATING SACRED PLACES: THEORIES ON SACRED SPACE

Notwithstanding the subtleties of theological exegesis, there is no mystery or secrecy concealed in the term 'sacred'. It is obvious that the concept needs its own peculiar logic of understanding, according to the particular system of belief where it is used. But it also has a common-sense aspect, which is readily observable to anyone who bothers to give the concept a second thought.⁶⁶

This citation of the Finnish scholar of comparative religion Veikko Anttonen captures the difficulty of working with the terms 'sacred' and 'sacrality' in this research project. The connection between sacred and religion or the transcendent, that he refers to as 'the subtleties of theological exegesis,' seemed to be somehow embedded in the way most respondents defined sacred and sacrality; As it has for a long period of time, this religious meaning and the history of its use, dominated the popular as well as the scholarly discourse.⁶⁷ However, as this research project attempts to look beyond religion to other forms of sacrality, a clear and broad definition of sacred and sacrality was needed. Meaning that the 'concept had to be given a second thought'. This theoretical chapter will be a description of this 'second thought' given to the concept of sacrality.

3.1 Defining sacrality

When it comes to defining sacrality, it is possible to speak of a dichotomy with the so-called 'substantialists' on the one hand and the 'situationalists' on the other.⁶⁸ Familiar substantial definitions, David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal state, such as Rudolph Otto's 'holy', Gerardus van der Leeuw's 'power', or Mircea Eliade's 'real' – might be regarded as attempts to replicate an insider's evocation of

⁶⁶ V. ANTTONEN: 'Sacred', in W. BRAUN & R.T. MCCUTCHEON (eds.): *Guide to the study of religion* (London/New York 2000) 271.

⁶⁷ ANTTONEN: 'Sacred' 274.

⁶⁸ D. CHIDESTER & E.T. LINENTHAL: 'Introduction', in W. BRAUN & R.T. MCCUTCHEON (eds.): *American sacred space* (Bloomington 1995) 5.

certain experiential qualities that can be associated with sacrality.⁶⁹ “The sacred meaning the mysterious power, the uncanny or the awesome.”⁷⁰ The situational approaches on the contrary claim ‘that nothing is inherently sacred’ and regard the term as a “sign of difference that can be assigned to virtually anything by human labor or consecration.”⁷¹ Although the distinction between the two is not as clear-cut as the previous description might suggest, this research will mainly take the situationalist turn.⁷²

The decision to follow this line of thought was inspired by the ideas the French sociologist Émile Durkheim explains in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912).⁷³ Durkheim assesses sacred as “a category of value according to which any social, religious, ethnic, or national group creates its cognitive boundaries and categorizes itself as distinct from others.”⁷⁴ He writes: “sacred things are those things protected and isolated by prohibitions; profane things are those things to which such prohibitions apply and which must keep their distance from what is sacred.” This means that Durkheim did not use the sacred simply to describe something that we would conventionally refer to as ‘religious’, nor did he claim that there should be a connection between what is sacred and the supernatural in any form. “Sacred,” he states, “should not be taken to mean simply those personal beings we call gods or spirits. A rock, a tree, a spring a stone, a piece of wood, a house, in other words anything at all, can be sacred.”⁷⁵ Those ordinary – or sometimes not so ordinary – objects become sacred, as they are “treated with great care and respect and preserved from any profanation” making them ‘set apart’ and “radically different from any other aspect of the mundane human life.”⁷⁶ Durkheim defines sacrality by the way in which people experienced it and the way in which they behave in relation to it.

The British theologian Gordon Lynch paraphrases the ideas of Durkheim in an online column as follows:

Rather than simply being a particular way of making sense of the world, the sacred was something that evoked deep emotions in people, giving them a deep sense of moral energy and conviction. It was something experienced through special forms of

⁶⁹ CHIDESTER & LINENTHAL: ‘Introduction’ 5; A.L. MOLENDIJK: “The notion of the “sacred””, in P. POST & A.L. MOLENDIJK (eds.): *Holy ground: Re-inventing ritual space in modern Western culture* (Leuven 2010) 57.

⁷⁰ MOLENDIJK: “The notion of the ‘sacred’” 57.

⁷¹ CHIDESTER & LINENTHAL: ‘Introduction’ 5-6.

⁷² For an overview of the ideas on the substantial approach see CHIDESTER & LINENTHAL: ‘Introduction’ 5-9 or MOLENDIJK: “The notion of the ‘sacred’” 74-82.

⁷³ Original title: *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*.

⁷⁴ ANTTONEN: ‘Sacred’ 275.

⁷⁵ All quotes were derived from É. DURKHEIM: *The elementary forms of religious life* (Oxford 2001) 35-46.

⁷⁶ G. LYNCH: *On the sacred* (Durham 2012) 23-24.

collective action that drew groups together around a sacred object in ways that deepened people's sense of group identity and morality. Durkheim's sacred was not some kind of abstract reference to God, or a universal mystical presence. It was a living social reality, dependent on social interaction to charge it up as a powerful force, but which when energized could release a powerful, structuring influence on social life.⁷⁷

Hereby Lynch shows that in addition to the deep emotions the sacred evokes in people, it also has the ability to bring them together as the rituals that are performed around them stimulate a shared identity and morality. In addition, it shows that the sacred can fulfill specific functions in a society and, in this case, in a neighborhood. The different case studies presented in the following chapters of this research will elaborate on these functions mostly in the fields of identity and the construction of a community and neighborhood.

The first chapter already gives a short introduction to the definition of sacred used in this research. It is based on the article 'The sacred: Differentiating, clarifying and extending concepts' by Matthew T. Evans. In this article, Evans elaborates on the theme of the 'set-apart sacred'. In line with the ideas of Durkheim, Evans states that everything and anything can be sacred. The concept is not bound to a religion or the transcendent, nor is it determined by a set of rules or regulations. In my research, I will follow this broad interpretation of the sacred, thereby strongly emphasizing that the sacred is not the same as religion. Evans explains these ideas on the sacred using a matrix that will be described in the following paragraph.

A typology of the sacred

We live in a consumerist society, and looking at the amount of trash a western individual produces, we can say that we throw away almost everything that is no longer of use. Also, moving around is more common than it used to be. A different job, a new relationship, or other changes in living circumstances are all reasons for people to leave their homes and move to a new neighborhood or city. However, despite these more flexible and fast lifestyles, certain objects and places still invoke memories and contain special meaning. And often we would go to great length to protect, obtain, or inhabit that what we consider sacred. It can indeed be said that many people are willing to make sacrifices to hold on to that which is sacred to them. The following chapters that describe the different case studies I conducted in Leidsche Rijn can function as examples of this new lifestyle and its accompanying new forms of sacrality, a sacrality that has not changed when it comes to its value, but is taking a new form, a form that suits our society in motion.

⁷⁷ G. LYNCH: 'Émile Durkheim: Religion – the very idea, part 1: The analysis of moral life', in *The Guardian* (December 10, 2012), available at <http://www.theguardian.com>.

Evans describes this setting apart as a ‘valuation beyond utility’ and that “this mental setting apart of things, sometimes accompanied by a literal setting apart, is largely based on non-rational (which is not necessarily to say *irrational*) features, like their emotional value.”⁷⁸ Evans lets go of inevitable connection between the sacred and religion and goes along with the statement that there are ‘sacred things of every degree’ and that there is a variation in sacred types. This leads him to agree with Durkheim’s idea that “the circle of sacred objects cannot be determined, then, once and for all. Its extent varies infinitely.”⁷⁹

The matrix in which Evans explains his typology of the sacred⁸⁰ consists of four main elements. These are, the sacred sources: natural or supernatural, and the sacred holders: the group and the individual, leading to four different dimensions of the set-apart sacred. Interestingly, the matrix sheds light on a broad spectrum of sacred objects and places. I will not use this matrix as a hermeneutic instrument in which I try to fit my findings, but rather as a way of showing my broad interpretation of sacredness. In my opinion, this wide spectrum offers space to a multiplicity of sacred forms, places and zones that can always be positioned in either one of Evans’ dimensions. It creates the opportunity to speak of a variety of manifestations of the sacred. More importantly, it allows us to look beyond traditional forms of religion and the sacred that are under transformation and slowly making way for new forms of sacrality.

		<i>Sacred Source</i>	
		<i>Natural</i>	<i>Supernatural</i>
<i>Sacred Holder</i>	<i>Individual</i>	Personal Sacred	Spiritual Sacred
	<i>Group</i>	Civil Sacred	Religious Sacred

The first dimension, the *personal sacred* finds special meaning in experiences of the individual that are not related to the transcendent. And using an example that will be elaborated on in Chapter 5 of this research, the personal sacred can refer to a mother planting a tree to remember her daughter who died at birth. This tree was in fact planted in the birth forest in the park in Leidsche Rijn. The planting of trees is a ritual that has been embedded in many cultures and religions for centuries. In this specific case, the tree has sacred value for this specific person: the mother who

⁷⁸ M. EVANS: ‘The sacred: Differentiating, clarifying and extending concepts’, in *Review of Religious Research* 45/1 (2003) 38-39.

⁷⁹ Émile Durkheim cited in: EVANS: ‘The sacred’ 38.

⁸⁰ The following description of the typology of the sacred is derived from the article: EVANS: ‘The sacred’ 40-43.

planted it to mourn her daughter. The tree is sacred only to this individual and maybe some other relatives but not to a larger group. For the mother, the tree is set apart from all the other trees because it has special meaning. Other examples we could add to this *personal sacred* dimension are childhood homes, a marriage location, personal places of retreat, and other significant familial and romantic spots.⁸¹

The second dimension in Evans' matrix is a combination of the individual and the supernatural, and it is named the *spiritual sacred*. According to Evans "things that are sacred because of their *personal* connection with the supernatural seem to be rare nowadays."⁸² But of course there can be places or objects that are sacred for individuals because of their connection with a transcendent reality. This could, for example, refer to the lighting of a candle at an altar in the house or the worship of certain statues or other 'holy' objects.

Evans refers to his third dimension, the civil sacred, as being the most interesting as "much of the sacred in contemporary society has more a civil than a religious nature."⁸³ The civil sacred, refers to places and objects that are named sacred by groups of people not because of their connection to the divine but rather because of their relationship with worldly institutions and natural processes. It is easy to think of American examples of the civil sacred. Every day millions of Americans pledge allegiance to their flag, which is often seen as a sacred symbol, as are the statue of liberty and the former World Trade Centers. They are icons of the American nation state. An example from the Netherlands is the 4th of May; on this day the Dutch commemorate their dead from the Second World War. A large commemoration ceremony is organized at the national monument in Amsterdam and smaller ceremonies take place in other cities, villages, and cemeteries throughout the country. All the ceremonies are organized in a similar way. The *Taptoe* signal is played, there are two minutes of silence, the national anthem is sung, and there is a laying of wreaths by dignitaries, survivors, relatives and others. There are no religious elements integrated into the ceremony, as it should be open to all sections of Dutch society. It is a typical example of civil sacrality.

On a smaller scale than the nation state, the civil sacred can also be found in a neighborhood such as Leidsche Rijn. Research proves that people soon feel attached to their new surroundings. This means that some places, such as the large park in the center of the area, have already generated a sacred status for groups of residents.

The last dimension of the sacred in the matrix Evans made is the *religious sacred*. Evans uses this notion to describe that, which is connected to the divine ac-

⁸¹ Examples mentioned in: EVANS: 'The sacred' 41.

⁸² EVANS: 'The sacred' 41.

⁸³ IBIDEM.

ording to the rules and regulations of some religious collective. Therefore, it can refer to, for example, church buildings, temples or mosques but also religious statues or objects connected to indigenous religions which might seem profane to people not connected to that particular religious group. The interesting aspect of this research is the absence of such spaces in urban plans. The traditional churches in the old villages of Vleuten and De Meern and the plans to build a Hindu temple and a mosque seem to be the only places fit for this category.

I use this scheme by Evans as it opens up a broad sacred domain giving room to a variety of individual and collective sacred places and objects. What all of these 'sacred things' have in common is the way people act in relation to them, and the broad spectrum they cover. In line with the description Durkheim gave of the sacred, "a rock, a tree, a spring a stone, a piece of wood, a house, in other words anything at all can be sacred."⁸⁴ Moreover, it is the way in which most of the places are integrated into our everyday lives. They are all ordinary parts of a neighborhood or society.

After formulating this theory I wondered: If anything has the ability to be sacred, and the objects and places are all integrated into the everyday life in a city or neighborhood: how can I ever grasp those sacred places? Now, I would say that in order to catch a sacred place or object it is crucial to observe the way in which people behave in relation to it. Since, as I see it, the sacred is a label that an individual or a group can attach to, for example, a tree, a specific place, a historical building, a monument or a piece of artwork. Individuals or groups will 'confirm' this sacred meaning with their acts.

In addition to a definition of the sacred, it proves to be necessary to make it operational. Something can be built with the intention to have a special meaning, but when it is not perceived as such and ignored by people, it will not have that sacred value. At the same time it is possible for a fallow lying piece of land to transform into something very special, by means of the way in which it is used. How can I label the sacred and how does this work in relation to the construction of a VINEX-area such as Leidsche Rijn? The following paragraphs will elaborate on these questions as they describe how to label the sacred and on the production of space.

Labeling sacred places

When looking at sacrality in this dissertation, there will be a great emphasis on the sacred character of certain spaces, places, or objects, and the way in which this sacrality can be determined. The matrix by Evans shows a broad sacred spectrum that already implies usefulness in many ways. However, it does not immediately show the way in which the sacred can be attached to a certain place or object. In

⁸⁴ All quotes were derived from DURKHEIM: *The elementary forms of religious life* 35-46.

the previous paragraph I noted that the way in which people behave in relation to certain places or objects is an important indicator when attempting to find sacred places. Some of this behavior can be captured in the term ritual. In the late 1970s, the field of Ritual Studies developed in the USA as a platform on which ritual scholars from a variety of backgrounds could meet. This means that ritual has been defined in numerous ways by scholars not only from the field of religious studies, but also by sociologists, anthropologists, theologians, and historians. American anthropologist and scholar in ritual studies Ronald L. Grimes gives an elaborate overview of definitions of ritual in an online appendix of his latest book *The Craft of Ritual Studies*.⁸⁵ Studying this overview, I was not able to find one that completely fits my idea of ritual. Therefore, the result is a combination of definitions into my own, hopefully workable, view on ritual.

The first definition that caught my attention is by the Australian social anthropologist Bruce Kapferer who defines ritual as:

a series of (...) events, the order of which is [often] known in advance of their practice, and which are marked off spatially and temporally from the routine of everyday life (even though such events might be vital to this routine).⁸⁶

The interesting aspect of this definition is the emphasis on the fact that the ritual is marked off spatially and temporally from the routine of everyday life, but at the same time stating that there is nothing inherently special about these events. Grimes emphasizes the latter when he says that “rites are sequences of action rendered special by virtue of their condensation, elevation or stylization.”⁸⁷ And last, the British anthropologist Jack Goody adds, that in ritual, “the relationship between the means and the end is not ‘intrinsic’”.⁸⁸ Combining these characterizations leads me to define ritual as follows: a ritual is an everyday, possibly repeatable activity (or series of activities) obtaining a special meaning because they are spatially and temporally set apart from the routines of our daily life. Examples of possibly ritual activities are walking, singing, lighting a candle, or keeping something safe.

In addition to the definition of ritual, the location of the sacred, and how this sacred comes into being has also been widely discussed. On one side of the spectrum there is the Romanian-American historian of religion Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) who makes a clear distinction between ‘consecrated’ and ‘non-consecrated’

⁸⁵ R.L. GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies* (Oxford 2014) 2-7, online appendix found on <http://oxrit.twohornedbull.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/grimes-craft-appendixes.pdf>.

⁸⁶ B. KAPFERER: ‘Postscript’ in *Social Analysis* 1 (1984) 194.

⁸⁷ R.L. GRIMES: *Beginnings in ritual studies* (Waterloo 2010) 51.

⁸⁸ J. GOODY: ‘Religion and ritual: The definitional problem’, in *British Journal of Sociology* 12/2 (1961) 142-164.

space, using the following biblical text as an example: “Do not come any closer,” God said, “Take of your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). Thus, Eliade states:

Humans are not capable to decide whether or not a space is sacred nor are they able to consecrate a place by means of acts. The rituals people use to construct sacred space are therefore only valuable when they reproduce the works of the Gods. The sacred is revealed to mankind and should therefore be discovered. It is revealed because it breaches the ordinary.⁸⁹

Eliade’s ideas on the sacrality of space oppose the previously mentioned work of Durkheim who states that “while it is true that man depends on his gods, the dependence is mutual. The gods also need man; without offerings and sacrifices, they would die.”⁹⁰ Hereby Durkheim implies that there is a connection between sacrality and human action, and that one cannot exist without the other. In the statement made by Durkheim, he emphasizes the significance of human actions within the concept of religion. These thoughts can possibly be continued on to sacred places and objects as it, in contrast with Eliade’s ideas, connects sacrality to consecrating actions.

Presently influential with their notions on the relationship between sacrality, place and ritual and partly influenced by the previously described conceptions are the American historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith and Grimes. In line with the ideas posed by Durkheim, both Grimes and Smith share the opinion that the sacred is never inherent to specific places or objects. Moreover, there are no substantial differences between the sacred and the profane. Hence, ritual is not seen as an expression of or as a reaction to ‘the sacred’. “Sacrality,” Smith says, “can be added to a place, an object or a person as an adjective, to indicate an experienced distinction. Places and objects can be made sacred or considered to be sacred by human actions and notions.”⁹¹

Other than Grimes, in the process of creating the sacred, Smith ascribes a crucial part to place. According to Smith, place functions as a lens concentrating our attention. This places objects and actions in a different light. “A ritual object or action becomes sacred by having attention focused on it in a highly marked way,” he says.⁹² For this reason, banal objects become sacred because they are located in a sacred place. As an example, he refers to the singing of the *Song of Songs* from the Old Testament:

⁸⁹ M. ELIADE: *The sacred and the profane. The nature of religion* (London 1987) 20-21.

⁹⁰ DURKHEIM: *The elementary forms of religious life* 38.

⁹¹ J.Z. SMITH: *To take place. Toward theory in ritual* (Chicago 1992) 104.

⁹² *IBIDEM.*

When chanted in the Temple (or its surrogate), they are, perforce sacred; when chanted in a tavern, they are not. It is not their symbolism or their meaning that is determinative; the songs are sacred or profane sheerly by virtue of their location. A sacred text is one that is used in a sacred place – nothing more is required.⁹³

Moreover, he describes the inextricable connection between ritual and place:

Ritual is a relationship of difference between ‘nows’ – the now of everyday life and the now of ritual place; the simultaneity, but not the coexistence, of ‘here’ and ‘there’. Here (in the world) blood is a major source of impurity: there (in ritual space) blood removes impurity. Here (in the world) water is the central agent by which impurity is transmitted; there (in ritual) washing with water carries away impurity. Neither the blood nor the water had changed; what has changed is their location.⁹⁴

Using these examples Smith shows that it is not the ritual that is making the difference, but the place, either mental or concrete (such as the temple in the first example), plays a fundamental role. The example of the temple is typical for Smith’s work and is at the same time one of his points of critique. Smith – and many other ritual experts alike – connects almost all of his examples with classical religious tradition. As I use a broader interpretation of sacrality, one that reaches beyond traditional religion, it is important to widen the scope. The second example of the water and the blood, shows that the meaning of certain acts or elements, when taking place in a ritual setting, change; “The location changes,” Smith states. In my opinion, whether or not this location is specifically religious does not influence its value.

It is this connection with traditional religion that is one of the aspects of Smith’s theory criticized by Grimes, as Grimes emphasizes smaller, recently emerged rituals in the research he conducts. Moreover, Grimes thinks that the emphasis Smith puts on place and spaces, disturbs our view on ritual. He demands attention for the acting aspect of sacred space and stresses the multi-dimensional character of ritual theory. And in this regard, the question is not about defining so much as it is about tracking people’s actions and what they say about those actions. “Sacrality,” Grimes says, “is not a quality of a places, it comes and goes depending on the way people act, what they say, and how they feel about the specific place. Something that is considered to be sacred today can be an ordinary highway tomorrow and vice versa.”⁹⁵

⁹³ SMITH: *To take place* 104.

⁹⁴ IDEM 109-110.

⁹⁵ Information on the opinion of Ronald L. Grimes was derived from a personal email received on December 12, 2010.

In my opinion, despite the difference in approach, Smith and Grimes both emphasize an ongoing movement and interaction concerning the attribution of the sacred label to a place or an object. In the book *American Sacred Space*, Chidester and Linenthal describe this reciprocity in the work of Smith as follows:

Jonathan Z. Smith has shown how place is sacralized as the result of the cultural labor of ritual, in specific historical situations, involving the hard work of attention, memory, design, construction and control of place.⁹⁶

Chidester and Linenthal think of sacrality as a classification that can be attributed by an ongoing interaction between actions, references, objects and design. Moreover, as Smith also emphasizes, sacred places should be seen as arenas in which the balance of power is constantly switching between insiders and outsiders, rulers and followers, old- and young people, men and women. Sacred space is contested space and for that reason it is an active category. In relation to ritual it can be claimed that this active category is not only a category of ritual, but that ritual at the same time is a spatial practice interpreting place and space. Hence, place never reaches a permanent form, but it is constantly in motion.

The reason this dissertation took the spatial turn, when it comes to analyzing the emergence of the sacred in Leidsche Rijn, is because of the idea that sacrality always takes place. This spatial turn is not something completely new, but it is still timely. The focus on space in social and cultural theory, and human geography arose in the mid-1980s following the ideas in the writings of influential intellectuals such as the French philosopher Michel Foucault with his theory on 'other spaces' also referred to as heterotopias; The production of space described by the French, Marxist, sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre; and Michel de Certeau the French historian and philosopher who studied the importance and dynamics of everyday life in a modern urban society in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*.⁹⁷ Their ideas can be helpful in the understanding of a variety of fields varying from urbanization to the construction of identity, and commodification and consumption – all of which are relevant in my search for the sacred in Leidsche Rijn.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ CHIDESTER & LINENTHAL: 'Introduction' 6.

⁹⁷ H. LEFEBVRE: *The production of space* (Malden/Oxford 2008); M. DE CERTEAU: *The practice of everyday life* (Berkeley/London 1988); M. FOUCAULT: 'Des espace autres' (1967) text published on: <http://www.foucault.info> (August 9, 2012).

⁹⁸ K. KNOTT: *The location of religion. A spatial analysis* (London 2005) 1-3.

3.2 Fields of the sacred

The second chapter of this book describes how religious sociological research confirms a decline in the number of church members and churchgoers in the Netherlands in the past decades. This development is reflected in the urban plans of Leidsche Rijn and other VINEX-neighborhoods. Churches, mosques, temples and synagogues were left out of the equation, as the planners assumed that the already present churches in Vleuten and De Meern could fulfill the demands of the religious communities. The new neighborhood was designed as a prototype of the new Netherlands, a country in which life will no longer evolve around religion and churches, mentally as well as physically. Chapter four will elaborate on these developments since, for now, it is more interesting to focus on a bigger picture: a broad panorama of sacrality in society.

For a more detailed setting and analysis of the dynamics emerging from this panorama, I make use of the sacred-ritual fields and zones as the Dutch scholar in religious and ritual studies Paul Post describes them.⁹⁹ Post divides the broad sacred domain into four different fields with a separate identity. The four fields can be described as follows:

A) *Religious field*

The religious field is omnipresent in our culture and society as it includes church buildings, worship, officials, and ritual-religious experts as well as modern and postmodern forms of spirituality. This field can vary on an individual and on a group level from the local church, synagogue, or mosque to the successful atheist church, *Sunday Assembly*, and the wide variety of mindfulness and spiritual groups that arise in our society.

B) *Memorial culture*

This field includes various forms of dealing with the past and commemoration. 'We commemorate and therefore we exist' seems to be its motto.¹⁰⁰ It is a fluent field and made up of different types of places for commemoration such as graveyards, museums and documentation centers, monuments and silent marches. All of these usually have a connection to the location in which they take place.

The crash of airline MH17 in the Ukraine in July 2014 can function as an interesting example for this field. 193 Dutch people died in this attack and in the weeks that followed numerous rituals emerged to honor and commemorate the

⁹⁹ P. POST: *Voorbij het kerkgebouw. De speelruimte van een ander sacraal domein* (Heeswijk 2010) 144-209; P. POST: 'Heilige velden. Panorama van ritueel-religieuze presenties in het publieke domein', in *Tijdschrift voor Religie, Recht en Beleid* 1/3 (2010) 83-85.

¹⁰⁰ Referring to the title of the book by J. PERRY: *Wij herdenken dus wij bestaan. Over jubilea, monumenten en collectieve berinning* (Nijmegen 1999).

victims. People were lining up on the side of the road as the remains of the victims were transported from the airport to the forensic research institute, profile pictures on social media were changed into a picture of a black ribbon, and on the national day of mourning the radio and television channels adjusted their programming. As the original site of the crash was located in the middle of a war zone, a place for commemoration emerged at the last accessible place the victims had been: Schiphol airport. Also, the first places where the coffins with the remains returned to the country: at the military airport in Eindhoven and along the route from the airport in Eindhoven to the forensic research institute the bereaved, and large numbers of people interested paid their respects to the victims of the crash.

The field also includes monuments that arise to commemorate for example cancer victims, war victims, and babies who died at birth. A number of those places are contested and their design often leads to disagreement, as we have seen with *Ground Zero* in New York, the slavery monument in the Netherlands, and the holocaust memorial in Berlin.

C) *Cultural field*

The zone of 'art and culture' dominates this third field. It includes a broad spectrum of architecture, fine arts, film, music events (popular as well as classical), and museum culture. There is a clear overlap with the field of *memorial culture*, as monuments can also be seen as fine arts and museums sometimes function as places for memory. Moreover it is possible to see a connection with the last field in which leisure plays a dominant role.

D) *Leisure culture*

This is the broad and diffuse field comprising our leisure time and attractions. This varies from our Sunday walk in the park, to sports, nature, vacation and traveling, festivals, and the colorful world of amusement parks and attractions. Especially the tourist dimension seems to win terrain.¹⁰¹ As people have more free time, the way they spend this time becomes more important. It can be used to break through the rhythm of working, taking care of the children or the household chores. Post explains that in this field it is about the double process of alienation of our daily lives versus the attraction of the 'other'.¹⁰²

The overlap between different fields, the fluent borders and the dynamics within the zones, shows that sacred space is constantly under pressure and on the move. As the next paragraph on the urban space will show, opinions, ideologies, inter-

¹⁰¹ The connection between religion and tourism is further explained in M. STAUSBERG: *Religion im moderne Tourismus* (Berlin 2010).

¹⁰² POST: 'Heilige velden' 84.

pretations of groups or individuals, and plans of designers, all influence the construction of a place. It is also a constantly moving process. A memorial place for one person can be a tourist attraction to another. This tension is shown in the well-known winning World Press-photo, made in 2008 by the Dutch photographer Roger Cremers. On this picture we see two American tourists, in red tracksuits, taking pictures in the former concentration camp Auschwitz; a concentration camp functioning as a tourist attraction. This tension also shows when I visit the large Dom church in the center of the German city of Cologne. A sign at the entrance shows the so-called *do's and don'ts* of the church, forbidding helium balloons, dogs, smoking and fries inside the church: restrictions displaying the tensions between tourists and people visiting the church for religious purposes.

Our modern globalized society is constantly changing and on the move and so is the sacred. Here I would like to quote the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells who in his book, *The Network Society* describes society as a space of flows: “flows of capital, flows of information, flows of organizational interaction, flows of technology, flows of images, sounds and symbols.”¹⁰³ It is this flow that connects the different sacred fields. Post explains how in our present society for a sacred place to function and to be successful, it usually touches upon various fields at the same time.

A clear example is the Camino or pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. This walking tour is increasingly popular and not only due to its religious character. A growing number of people participate in the Camino for sports or leisure purposes, from a cultural perspective, or to seek answers to life questions. For each of these participants, walking to Santiago is a special experience which most of them would definitely qualify as sacred but for most in a non-religious way, emphasizing the broadness of the sacred domain. And this is something tourist attractions, national heritage locations and museums, nature campsites and city parks, sports stadiums, and centers for silence have in common: they are all places for rites of imagination, mythical places.¹⁰⁴ The sacred fields of Paul Post will not function as an analytical or heuristic instrument in this research. They should rather be seen as an insight into the existing broad sacred domain.

Inspired by those four fields, I have looked at Leidsche Rijn, both on the map and in literature, as well as from a street level, I have selected the four main characteristics from the neighborhood design: nature, history, religion, and art as case studies for this work.

These central elements from the neighborhood design will be studied from different angles: the perspective of the planners and the politicians, and the per-

¹⁰³ M. CASTELLS: *The information age. Economy society and culture. (Volume I) The rise of the network society* (Cambridge/Oxford 1996) 411-412.

¹⁰⁴ POST: ‘Heilige velden’ 89.

spective of the residents, as the way in which the places are designed and the way in which they are used can differ. This difference is especially interesting when studying the emergence of sacred places. The last paragraph of this chapter will attempt to bring the three components involved in this process, the emergence of a sacred place, together: the urban planners, architects, and institutions with their designs; the residents and the way in which they use the space they have been offered, and thereby intentionally or unintentionally labeling certain places as sacred.

3.3 Urban space

The building of cities is one of man's greatest achievements. The form of the city always has been and always will be a pitiless indicator of the state of his civilization. This form is determined by the multiplicity of decisions made by the people who live in it.¹⁰⁵

This quote from the book *Design of Cities* by the American urban planner and architect Edmund Bacon captures the different aspects influencing the shape of a city or as in the case of this research, part of a city. The French sociologist and philosopher Henry Lefebvre theorizes the production of space via a triad, consisting of three influential elements: the physical streams and context of the place, the social relations and the way in which people perceive and use the space, and the symbolic and imaginary layer.

Lefebvre elaborately describes this theory in his book *The Production of Space* and it has been interpreted and used in various ways ever since. In my studies, I came across a Dutch interpretation of this theory in the book *Nederland Stedenland*, which can be translated as 'The Netherlands, a city country'. This book was published in 2012 as the outcome of a large-scale research project on urbanism and city culture in the Netherlands. The chapters of the book are divided into three parts, *urbs*, *civitas*, and *topos*, referring to three dimensions of an urban triad.¹⁰⁶

As I was working with this triad, I found the term *topos* too fixed to describe the soft city it refers to. During the writing process I came across the Latin concept of *genius loci*. This can be translated as: 'spirit of place', thereby referring to its atmosphere. The description of the triad below will show how the meaning of *genius loci* fits into this dissertation.

The first element, *urbs*, refers to both the physical city, which is envisioned by the urban planners and architects, and to the knowledge of the spatial structure

¹⁰⁵ E.N. BACON: *Design of cities. Revised edition* (New York 1976) 13.

¹⁰⁶ E. TAVERNE, S. DEMBSKI, L. DE KLERK & B. RAMAKERS: 'Greep op de stad. Nieuwe wendingen in het stadsonderzoek', in E. TAVERNE, S. DEMBSKI, L. DE KLERK & B. RAMAKERS (eds.): *Nederland stedenland. Continuïteit en vernieuwing* (Rotterdam 2012) 13-15.

and built shape of a city or neighborhood. The *urbs* have a strong public character and are influential and they can even be seen as the foundation, of the construction of a new suburb. *The urbs* provide the residents of the area with their daily living environment, and at the same time determines what is included in this environment. The *urbs*, in my opinion, resembles what Lefebvre describes as ‘representations of space’. In her book *The Location of Religion*, British religious scholar Kim Knott, describes the power of these representations as follows: “this conceived space is at one removed from that which is lived, but is nevertheless public, influential, authoritarian, and invasive in its mastery over the body and everyday spaces.”¹⁰⁷ Saying this, she emphasizes the distinction between conceived and lived space, which is an interesting tension in the case of urban planning, since both perspectives are not always aligned. In addition, it is this aspect of the triad that prescribes the traditional design of a church – as being a building with a clock tower and a rooster on top. The representations create a certain, standardized image, a common way for planners and designers to present buildings or objects with a specific function.

The second element is *civitas*, the city as a place in which political, economic, social, and cultural developments come together and whereby space and place play an increasingly important role. It “denotes the ways people generate, use and perceive space. It structures all aspects of daily life and urban living, from minute, repeated gestures to the rehearsed journeys from home to work and to play.”¹⁰⁸ *Civitas* refers to a broad spectrum of human actions, including walking, gardening, and recreation, but can also – particularly interesting for this subject – include ritual practice. It needs to be emphasized, though, that there is nothing intrinsically sacred or religious about these practices. *Nederland Stedenland* refers to this pillar as the ‘hard city’, that is, the dimensions of the city that can be mapped or shown in statistics.¹⁰⁹

Despite it being described as the measurable and hard city, there are some soft edges to the *civitas*. Of course, the people using the space are influenced by the way the area was planned and most of the time they will behave in ways that can be easily mapped. But this research will show that they also have the power to create their own stories within the framework they have been offered; these stories are ‘inaccessible for planners and scientists’.¹¹⁰ These inaccessible stories have a lot to do with the places this book portrays as sacrality cannot be easily measured and mapped with statistics. For example the actions of people planting a tree in the Birth Forest, or working in their vegetable garden in *De Halte Termijde* are not dif-

¹⁰⁷ KNOTT: *The location of religion* 36.

¹⁰⁸ IDEM 39.

¹⁰⁹ TAVERNE ET AL.: ‘Greep op de stad’ 15.

¹¹⁰ IDEM 39.

ferent from any other person planting a tree or growing a tomato plant. However, it is the story or the additional feeling they attach to this action that makes it special and set apart from the routines of everyday life. It is this specialness overlaying ordinary places and actions with a sacred value that will be further explained in the third element of the urban triad, the *genius loci*.

The Latin term *genius loci* here refers to the rhetorical side of the city, the way it functions in texts, images, and representations. The *genius loci* functions separately from the two other dimensions, while simultaneously encircling or overlaying them.¹¹¹ The term can be used to describe the ideals, ideas, dreams, and visions of people, among which religion and other sacred perceptions should also be placed. *Genius loci* attempts to explain the way in which people understand space, as well as the associations, feelings, and symbolic meaning they attach to it. People often describe a park using terms such as ‘oasis’ or ‘paradise’; This does not mean that the park is actually a paradise or that it was at all designed to be a paradise. The word paradise is used to describe the way in which this person experiences the park.

New York is metaphorically represented as ‘the Big Apple’, but other representations such as maps are understood to be realistic images for every city. In everyday life we fashion and receive countless representations. Of course we all realize that a totally accurate representation... is impossible.’¹¹²

The *genius loci* resembles the element Lefebvre describes as spaces of representation:

Space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’, but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who *describe* and aspire to do no more than describe. This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space, which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects.¹¹³

As mentioned in the quote, this space is used to describe rather than to decipher the worlds we live in, making it different to *civitas* due to the intervention of culture, and separating it from the *urbis*, which should be seen more as an ideology.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ KNOTT: *The location of religion* 37-38; E.W. SOJA: *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and other reals-and-imagined places* (Malden/Oxford 1996) 67.

¹¹² R. SHIELDS: ‘A guide to urban representation and what to do about it: Alternative traditions of urban theory’, in A.D. KING (ed.): *Re-presenting the city: Ethnicity, capital, and culture in the twenty-first-century metropolis* (London 1996) 228.

¹¹³ LEFEBVRE: *The production of space* 39.

¹¹⁴ KNOTT: *The location of religion* 37-38; SOJA: *Thirdspace* 67.

Hence, whereas *civitas* can be seen as the hard city, *genius loci* is the *soft city*, the city of illusions, myths, and aspirations, but also of horror and nightmares. These can be much more real than hard city statistics could ever portray.¹¹⁵

The three elements of the triad, *urbs*, *civitas*, and *genius loci*, play a central role in this research. As they describe the ways in which I studied Leidsche Rijn as a whole and more specifically the different case studies. Soon after this research started I noticed that just looking at the neighborhood that was there, the way the planners and politicians designed it to look, would not be enough in order to find what I was looking for: the places that stood out, the places with special meaning. They cannot just be designed, they have to be used by the residents, (hi)stories and feelings need to be attached to those places in order to make them stand out. It is the correlation between the three elements of the urban triad that make certain places into a (temporary) sacred place. The following four chapters will highlight a number of those places, thereby using the *urbs*, by means of aspects standing out in the neighborhood design as a starting point.

¹¹⁵ TAVERNE ET AL.: 'Greep op de stad' 15.



Chapter 4

A place for religion

Outdoor Catholic Church service in the Máximapark

Picture: Johan de Boer

CHAPTER 4

A PLACE FOR RELIGION

The introductory chapter of this book sketches the changing position of religious buildings in Dutch urban planning. At first sight, when we look at most cities and villages, their skyline is still dominated by large church buildings with a high clock tower and leaded glass windows. Not standing out in the skyline due to their design, but also an integrated part of most Dutch city centers, are synagogues. Moving away from the centers, mosques with their oriental looking sometimes accompany these religious buildings domes and minarets from which a muezzin calls for prayer. Few and far between we also see some Hindu temples. Immigrants from the Islamic world, South Asia and South America brought these places of worship with them when they moved to the Netherlands.

The position of churches and other religious buildings has changed in the past decades. Numerous churches are forced to close due to declining numbers of attendees. These closings often result in discussions about whether to demolish or reuse the abandoned buildings. On the other hand, in large newly built districts such as Leidsche Rijn, religious groups are looking for a place of worship. As the space in urban areas is often scarce, it is difficult to build new places for worship, forcing the new groups to have their services in schools or other locations available on Sundays.

Looking at it from a practical perspective, religious buildings are quite inefficient as they are often used only once or twice a week for a relatively small part of the population. Therefore the planners of Leidsche Rijn assumed that the existing churches in the villages Vleuten and De Meern would be sufficient, also for the new residents of the neighborhood. I took this assumption into account when I searched for sacred places in Leidsche Rijn. As described previously, the interpretation of the words 'sacred' and 'sacrality' in this book is broad and certainly not narrowed down to just religion. Rather, religion is one of the elements making up the so-called typology of the sacred that is used in this dissertation. Hence, the developments in the religious field add to the contribution this research would like to make with regard to the changing shape of sacredness and sacrality in the Netherlands.

This chapter will start with a reflection on the sacred value of religious buildings, followed by a descriptive case study of places for traditional religion in Leidsche Rijn. The correlation between *urbs*, *civitas*, and *genius loci* will play a role as,

in short, the question arises as to whether or not it is possible to organize church or other religious services in non-religious buildings and/or non-religious activities such as concerts in churches. In Leidsche Rijn the Muslims look for a mosque, the Hindus would like to build a temple, and some Pentecostal and evangelical groups are looking for a place to have their Sunday services. At the same time, the PKN (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) and the Catholic Churches have some trouble attracting people to their services, therefore reaching out to the residents via concerts in the church and outdoor services in the park.

4.1 Being a church in the Netherlands

In 2007, the Dutch newspaper *Trouw* informed its readers that the futures of numerous Dutch church buildings were threatened. Since the year 1200 around 19,000 churches have been built in the Netherlands. Currently, around 7,000 of these church buildings are left.¹¹⁶ The first chapter of this book describes the processes throughout history that influenced the construction and destruction of churches. The reformation and a number of wars and armed conflicts were the main reason for the destruction of church buildings until after the Second World War. More recently, secularization has caused the churches to lose members. The shrinking number of churchgoers has had financial consequences for the churches, making it difficult to maintain their often large and costly buildings.

Despite the use of the term secularization, some (mainly evangelical and Pentecostal) denominations are still growing in the Netherlands. A number of these denominations will be discussed in this chapter. An important characteristic of their way of practicing religion is a focus on individual experiences of faith and a personal relationship with God. As the location for their services is of minor importance, these groups are especially interesting to study in relation with their perception of the sacrality of places. However, in relation to place and location of church buildings in cities and villages, secularization is a fair term to use. The Catholic Church and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) that own these buildings are losing their members. Some of them, especially churchgoers with a Protestant background, decided to join the growing evangelical or Pentecostal denominations. But most have moved away from the church.¹¹⁷

Unlike France and Scandinavia, where churches are owned by the state, Dutch churches are owned by the denominations themselves. As a consequence of dwindling membership, the function of a large number of church buildings has

¹¹⁶ A. KLAUS: 'Veel kerken in de gevarenzone' in *Trouw* (April 5, 2007).

¹¹⁷ I. SCHIPPERS: 'Finding a place for religion: The contested position of traditional Dutch religion in a Dutch suburb', in P. POST, P. NEL & W. VAN BEEK (eds.): *Sacred space and contested identities. Space and ritual dynamics in Europe and Africa* (Trenton 2014) 111-112.

changed or the buildings have been demolished.¹¹⁸ Both of these consequences raise questions about the sacred value of the buildings and whether or not the function of a religious building can change. In February of 2007, *Newsweek* published an article titled ‘Why Europe is turning churches into gyms, pizzerias and bars’ in which the author describes a church turned into a pizzeria in Cheltenham, West-England. In this church-turned-pizza-place, the altar had to make room for a pizza oven.¹¹⁹ This article was probably an interesting and surprising read for the more religious American audience of *Newsweek*. However, in the Netherlands, the profane use of former church buildings is a common practice. A church transformed into an apartment building, a club, a bar, or a bookstore is not a strange sight. Sometimes most of the religious elements have been kept safe, other times it is difficult to recognize the former function of the building.

The religious denominations are often not too fond of such transformations. They would sometimes prefer to dismantle the building than to have it be used in a profane way.¹²⁰ Catholics ritually consecrate their church buildings before they can be used for liturgy. Profane use of the building is considered to be a desecration, something that is not preferred. Interestingly enough, Protestant churches have seemed to be following the same line recently, thereby also preferring demolition over re-use, when its new function is at variance with the proclamation message and the signal function of the church building.¹²¹ However, sometimes it is not up to the church to decide. When the building is a monument it is often kept as an important part of the city history. In that case it is often re-used in one of the previously mentioned ways.

What is interesting about this discussion in relation to this book, is the way the church buildings are perceived by the church denominations themselves, and by the often non-religious community in which they are located. The city or village considers some of the buildings to be landmarks; landmarks that have functioned as the physical centers of the community for decades and sometimes even for centuries. Demolishing these buildings would be a symbolic and an architectural loss. A good example to illustrate this loss is the Dom Church located in the center of the city of Utrecht. For a long time, this cathedral has functioned as a religious center of the city and region. Now, in addition to the occasional religious service, its program is filled with concerts, exhibitions, touristic tours, and sometimes even

¹¹⁸ J.E.A. KROESEN: ‘Tussen God en de Mammon Het lot van te duur of overtollig geworden kerkgebouwen in Nederland’, in *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 24 (2008) 7; J.E.A. KROESEN: ‘From monastery to Five-Star accommodation: The Crutched Friars Hotel, Maastricht’, in P. POST, A.L. MOLENDIJK & J.E.A. KROESEN (eds.): *Sacred places in modern Western culture* (Leuven 2011) 89-94.

¹¹⁹ ‘Why Europe is turning churches into gyms, pizzerias and bars’, in *Newsweek* (February 12, 2007) cited in KROESEN: ‘Tussen God en de Mammon’ 70.

¹²⁰ KROESEN: ‘Tussen God en de Mammon’ 80-81.

¹²¹ *IBIDEM*.

fashion shows. However demolishing the building, as it is no longer used in the way it was designed, is unthinkable. The Dom Church is to the city of Utrecht what the Eiffel Tower is to Paris. It also means looking at the context of this research that the church, although it might not be used for religious purposes, can still have a sacred value, due to its position and role in the society. In relation to the urban triad, it would mean that although the church might not be used for liturgy, the way in which it is used also adds a special layer, setting it apart from other places and buildings in the city.

However, some of the churches perceive the value of their building differently, as the description in the previous paragraph shows. When it is no longer used for religious purposes they would rather have it demolished than to have it used in a profane way. This implies that via ritual and due to its design, the church building could obtain an eternal sacred value for believers even when the building has not been used for religious purposes for a long time. As Chapter 3 describes, this research follows a situational approach that states, “that nothing is inherently sacred” and it regards the term as a “sign of difference that can be assigned to virtually anything by human labor or consecration.”¹²² From this perspective, that also links to the urban triad, which emphasizes a correlation between the different elements, this chapter will look at religious spaces in Leidsche Rijn. Thereby also keeping the religious sensitivity in mind that rises when discussing the relation between sacrality and religion. The book attempts to add to the discussion on the concept of sacrality, of which religion is an undeniable part.

4.2 A traditional foundation

The religious zone in Leidsche Rijn has a traditional foundation. Because of its interesting composition, including the old villages of Vleuten and De Meern, the construction area enclosed a substantial number of churches. In the beginning there were seven different churches present in the old villages, varying from Catholic to several different Protestant churches: three congregations of the former Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Roman-Catholic parish *Onze Lieve Vrouwe ten Hemelopneming* in De Meern and the *St. Willibrordus* parish in Vleuten, a congregation part of the Orthodox Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands in Vleuten, and the evangelical congregation *De Fontein*. Over the last decade, the former Reformed Church and the congregations of the former Netherlands Reformed Church in Vleuten-De Meern have merged into one congregation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, *Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (PKN)*. The former Reformed Church in Vleuten-De Meern has been split into two congregations belonging to the former Netherlands Reformed Church in Vleuten and in

¹²² CHIDESTER & LINENTHAL: ‘Introduction’ 5-6.

De Meern, and a third congregation has been founded in Leidsche Rijn Oost. The Roman Catholic parishes developed in a similar way: the teams of the two existing parishes were combined in 2000 and officially merged in 2004, thereafter divided into three branches in Vleuten, De Meern and Leidsche Rijn Oost. This latter branch in Leidsche Rijn Oost was eventually disbanded in 2007.¹²³

Later on, this chapter will elaborate on the developments within the various church denominations. All of these transformations proved to be only the beginning of the reconstruction of the religious zone in this urban area under construction. The original form in which religious institutions were shaped in the villages no longer fit the new surroundings and changing demands from the residents.

Initially, in the early stages of the building process, around the year 2000, plans were made for the development of three new church projects in Leidsche Rijn: *Kerk Zijn* ('Being Church'), *RijnWaarde* and *De Hoeksteen*. *De Hoeksteen* is an evangelizing working group initiated by the former Reformed Church. According to their website, they intend to be a meeting point for everyone in Leidsche Rijn. Their goal is to inform people about the gospel of Jesus Christ. For that purpose they organize a number of activities such as a weekly open house, a bible course, a kids club, and a club for teenagers.¹²⁴ What makes *De Hoeksteen* interesting is the fact that it is not a traditional church because they do not organize services. Their aim is to have a special position within the new neighborhood and they emphasize the open character of their activities, every passer-by is welcomed. The activities are not directly church or religion related, but the fundamentals of this evangelizing working group are based on the five core principles of Christianity and according to the website, they work strictly to those rules.¹²⁵

The *Kerk Zijn* project was set off by an ecumenical collaboration of five of the traditional churches from the two villages as described above (Protestant as well as Catholic) who joined together in IKO (*Interkerkelijk Overleg Vleuten-De Meern*); an interdenominational deliberative body. The project was led by a project group consisting of two people from each of the churches. Later on, the group was expanded with two pastors (a Roman-Catholic and a Protestant one) and a representative from the new residents. The aim of the project was to build a community of faith in which all of the newcomers in the growing neighborhood would feel at home. In 1999, they started with their ecumenical services that were led by the two pastors together. This collaboration did not last long. After various conflicts, the

¹²³ The description of the different churches was derived from: M. VAN DER MEULEN: *Vroom in de VINEX. Kerk en civil society in Leidsche Rijn* (Maastricht 2006) 45.

¹²⁴ This information was found on the website of *De Hoeksteen*: www.hoeksteen-leidscherijn.nl (January 13, 2012).

¹²⁵ According to the website www.hoeksteen-leidscherijn.nl those core principles are: the good Creation, the Fall of man, salvation, the opportunity for people to know God, and the expectations for a new heaven and a new earth in the future.

ecumenical services were replaced by separate denominational services. In 2002, the project group was cancelled all together and two separate Protestant and Roman Catholic parishes were established in the eastern part of Leidsche Rijn. Those parishes had their own separate services in an old farmhouse (*De Hoef*) that was made suitable for church services.¹²⁶ This interesting and turbulent history of *Kerk Zijn* will be addressed more elaborately in a later stage.

The third initiative, *RijnWaarde*, was similar to *Kerk Zijn* but set up by denominations from outside of Leidsche Rijn. A couple of smaller orthodox reformed churches from Utrecht and Maarssen, a neighboring village, joined together in this project. The purpose of *RijnWaarde* was twofold: on the one hand it was meant to offer a spiritual accommodation for the newcomers in the area and on the other hand they meant to spread the gospel in Leidsche Rijn. This project was mainly lead by people who had recently moved to the neighborhood. After two years of preparation the project started in 2001 with two meeting groups and a youth program. In 2003, a monthly family service was added, and in 2005 *RijnWaarde* started having regular weekly services on Sunday morning.¹²⁷ Because of the interesting location of those services, *RijnWaarde* will also return later on in this chapter.

4.3 Taking place

This short overview shows the unique foundations of the religious zone in the VINEX-area Leidsche Rijn. Due to the interesting set up of the neighborhood (incorporating the old villages, Vleuten and De Meern) the first initiatives that arose in the new neighborhood found their origins in the various denominations already present in the area. This did, however, not result in a conventional development of the religious zone. By means of a wide range of spaces and places, this chapter will now describe the process by which the religious zone is taking shape in Leidsche Rijn.

*Licht van Christus*¹²⁸: *Shaping the Roman Catholic Church in Leidsche Rijn*

The Catholic Church has been present in both Vleuten and De Meern since the late eighteenth early nineteenth century. Due to the Reformation, the churches in both villages were forced to exchange their church buildings for so-called conventicles, or house churches. However, since the late nineteenth century, both parishes

¹²⁶ VAN DER MEULEN: *Vroom in de VINEX* 45.

¹²⁷ IDEM 46-47.

¹²⁸ In English: *Light of Christ*.

were restored, the *St. Willibrord* parish in Vleuten and the *Onze Lieve Vrouw ten Hemelopneming*¹²⁹ parish in De Meern, respectively.

Dutch architect Nicolaas Molenaar sr. designed the St. Willibrord Church and the accompanying presbytery in Vleuten in 1884 in a Gothic revival style. This style was inspired by the Middle-Age Gothic style with its romantic outlook and characterized by pointed arches and high glass windows. In 1935, his son Nicolaas Molenaar Jr., designed an extension to the church that doubled its capacity and made room for a baptistery in the back of the building. In 2001, this baptistery, already out of use, was converted into a Lady Chapel.

The church building and presbytery in De Meern, designed by Church architect Hendrik C. van de Leur, were built in a two-year period between 1938 and 1940. Its style is sober and solid, and in line with the expressionistic style of the *Delftse School*. The name of the church has recently changed from *Onze Lieve Vrouw ten Hemelopneming* to *Mariakerk* in order to create more unity in the neighborhood. This short name would be easier to pronounce and prevent people from saying: 'I attended church in De Meern,' since the village officially does not exist anymore and became part of the Leidsche Rijn neighborhood.

This unity within the new VINEX-area was also the reason behind the administrative union of the two parishes. In the year 2000, the two teams were unofficially combined, and in 2004 the *Licht van Christus* was the first merged parish in the diocese. The development in Vleuten and De Meern is interesting in the light of the changing religious dynamics. As described earlier, it has become very common for parishes to unite with others. Usually the reasons for this joining are the shrinking church population, the high maintenance costs of the church buildings, and the lack of priests; In short, these are all negative developments. The cooperation between parishes therefore often comes with problems and struggles.

The situation in Vleuten and De Meern was very different. Both parishes were, and still are, vital, at least considering the current day developments. Also, there were no financial shortages, and both church buildings were well maintained. Hence, there was no real urge for the two parishes to merge. Geographical reasons made the Catholic Church decide to do so nonetheless. With the annexation of the two villages into the new Leidsche Rijn area, it would be inconvenient to hold on to the old divisions. Those borders date back to the agrarian history of the region, which is no longer relevant in this new turn the area had been forced into. Despite the resentment of many villagers who thought of their new neighbors as intruders ('City-people' whom they did not want in their parish) the Catholic Church took a stand. The church was convinced from the beginning that it would be more practical to be able to approach this large group of newcomers emphasizing that the borders of the parish and the changing borders of the city of Utrecht are by no

¹²⁹ In English: *Assumption of the Virgin Mary*.

means related. The parishes reach as far as the canal, and all the people living in this area are possible parishioners.¹³⁰

In January of 2012, I made an appointment with the priest responsible for this new parish: Martin Los.¹³¹ Our meeting took place in the presbytery connected to the St. Willibrord Church in the old town center of Vleuten in Leidsche Rijn. Some years before the new conglomerated parish took this presbytery into use as a pastoral center. The building, as mentioned, dating back to the late nineteenth century, had recently been refurbished combining the traditional stained glass windows with white austere walls and modern carpet. Father Los pointed out some empty spots on the wall. Old paintings, found in the attic of the presbytery, would fill up those spots after they had been restored. The old and the new elements combined creating a unique atmosphere interestingly resembling the multifaceted neighborhood surrounding the church.

The combination of the old with the new that struck me in the presbytery is significant for the shape the Catholic Church took in Leidsche Rijn. Since the early stages of the construction of the new neighborhood, they wanted to be present. Hence, together with the Protestant Church, they started services in an improvised school building (*De Achtbaan*) in 1998. Only a year later the opportunity presented itself to move to the former farmhouse *De Hoef*. This was the start of the previously mentioned *Kerk Zijn* project. From the inside this old farmhouse had undergone a transformation and it was made suitable for church services. The name of the farmhouse was changed into *Hostelry De Hoef*, an amalgamation between the original name of the farmhouse and the concept of the church as a hostelry or an inn.

The Dutch religious and ritual scholar Paul Post mentions this trend in his book *Voorbij het kerkgebouw. De speelruimte van een ander sacraal domein*. It is one of the three ‘Open-Church’¹³² models in which Post describes the new forms the church is taking. The model of the church is that of a hostelry or an inn, meaning that the church, in form as well as in function, is open to passers-by. Post looks at this example from an international perspective and uses the cathedral of the East-German city of Erfurt as an example. This church offers its audience a broad ritual spectrum in an extremely secularized context. Christmas and Valentine’s Day celebrations for lovers or newlyweds, commemoration of the dead, birth celebrations, and an occasional remembrance service in case of large-scale disasters. The identity

¹³⁰ Information derived from an interview with Fr. Martin Los (1946) of the *Licht van Christus* parish. Los is the ultimately responsible priest for this parish since 2004. He is also the chair of the parish board and the leader of the pastoral team. From 1987 to 2003 he worked in the *Onze Lieve Vrouw ten Hemelopneming* parish in De Meern. (Pastoral Center of the *Licht van Christus* parish in Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht, 16-01-2012).

¹³¹ See note 129.

¹³² P. POST: *Voorbij het kerkgebouw. De speelruimte van een ander sacraal domein* (Heeswijk 2010) 117.

of those activities is not always directly linked to the traditional religious rituals. Post defines this as the tendency of the churches, with their building, but also ritually, to find a place in the social and cultural domain.¹³³

The success of this model described in the example given by Post did not have its effect on the project in *Hostelry De Hoef*. Only a small group of about thirty people attended the separate Catholic services at *De Hoef* on a regular basis. Although the participants did not mind the small setting and fact that they had their own pastor, for the church, this group was too small to continue the services.

Several reasons can be noted for the failure of this project. Besides some difficulties that emphasized the differences between the two partners, such as the variety of ways in which the attendees experience the services, Father Los described three main points in the interview: The first reason is in line with the previously described changing religious dynamics and secularization. This especially shows when people move to a new city. Whereas in the place they used to live others might have assumed they were Catholic because they attended Catholic school, in a totally new environment, it becomes clear that they have departed from the church a long time ago. The two other reasons might be more specific for Leidsche Rijn and maybe also other VINEX-locations. The first one was clearly put down by Father Los when he said:

Soon we noticed (...) that everyone who came to the farmhouse, with its re-modeled part, liked it a lot and said ‘oh how nice’ but never came back. They only came to see it once. We asked the people who wanted to be more involved in the church why they only came once. In their answers it always came to the fore that they were all afraid that if they would go regularly they would be overloaded with responsibilities. Most of those people were part of a dual-income household. People have to drive, they have kids and they think that a small church group is always looking for someone to carry the load. Often people living in the VINEX-locations (...) who seek religion are looking for some peace and quiet, and inspiration. They are not looking to get additional responsibilities.¹³⁴

¹³³ POST: *Voorbij het kerkgebouw* 117.

¹³⁴ Original text derived from the interview with Father Los (Utrecht, 16-01-2012): “Wat wij zagen (...) dat iedereen die daar kwam in die boerderij met zijn verbouwde deel, die zeiden ow wat aardig, ow wat leuk maar ze kwamen nooit meer terug. Iedereen ging een keer kijken. En dan bij de mensen die dan toch wat kerk betrokken wilden zijn, zeiden we, waarom zijn jullie maar een keer daar geweest. Toen kwam altijd naar voren iedereen bang was dat als ze nog een keer gingen ze onmiddellijk overladen zouden worden met taken. Want het zijn allemaal tweeverdieners, mensen die moeten rijden, hebben ook nog kinderen en die zien dan een groepje mensen ah, er is weer iemand, die gaat vast de kar trekken. En de bewoners van de VINEX-locaties zien wij (...) als ze met religie in aanraking komen is dat om een stuk rust en inspiratie te vinden en niet om een extra taak erbij te krijgen.”

The ways in which the church used to pioneer in new neighborhoods proved to be no longer suitable in fast developing area such as Leidsche Rijn. Whereas before building was done at a slow pace, some houses here, some shops there, a church on the corner; people felt that it was convenient to take part in this. Nowadays construction is going a lot faster, and whole neighborhoods are built in a couple of years' time. The new parts of Leidsche Rijn change every time I visit; which is about once every two weeks. Also, a community can no longer be compared to the way it used to function several decades ago. People are busy; they, man and women, have jobs, hobbies and other means of passing time. Moreover, thirty years ago, women used to have children around the age of 20-25 and would have more time on their hands around the age of forty. Now they have kids around the age of 30-35 keeping them busy for a longer time.

The second problem specific to Leidsche Rijn was the location of farmhouse *De Hoef*. It is situated in a part of Leidsche Rijn that will be developed last. It was difficult and sometimes even impossible to reach by car or bike. Especially in wintertime or in the evening, people felt reluctant to attend church. Eventually, in 2007, after a trial period of approximately seven years, the Catholic Church decided to leave the project in *De Hoef* and focus on its other locations. The people regularly attending the services in the old farmhouse were divided over the old churches in Vleuten and De Meern.

The two old village churches prove to be sufficient to accommodate the old as well as the new inhabitants of the area. In a regular weekend with services on Saturday night and Sunday morning around 700 people attend one of the two churches. Most of these people don't attend church every week but once every few weeks. This means that approximately 25 percent of the parishioners are regular churchgoers.¹³⁵ On special holidays such as Christmas, the number of people at church rises up to approximately 4,000. But it is not only the services that attract the faithful. In the interview, Los describes two other special and interesting places with their own rituals:

The vitality of both churches is also related to the fact that we have two large cemeteries. Most city churches don't have those anymore. Here, many people visit the cemetery before or after the service and especially also during the week. (...) Here, as well as in De Meern you see people at the cemetery all day. People know that they can walk over to the cemetery and meet people who also lost a loved one and share their grief. It is very important for a community of faith to also function outside of the ser-

¹³⁵ Percentage mentioned by Los (Utrecht, 16-01-2012).

vices. It creates friendships; People will meet up for coffee and share stories about the loved ones they lost. Not only on Sundays but every day of the week.¹³⁶

The second ritual places Los describes are the two Lady Chapels. Both the Maria Church (for 8 years) and the St. Willibrord Church (for 6 years) have a separate Lady Chapel which is open all week. When Father Los introduced the idea of a chapel in the Maria Church 2006 in the parish meeting, his colleagues wondered if it would be a success. Questions and comments were raised like: ‘Who would visit such a chapel?’, ‘People don’t do that anymore’, and ‘People can light candles at home. Why would they come to church to do so?’ But since there was money and space for a renovation, the church went along with the idea and it became a great success. The costs invested in the project, 3,500 euros, were recovered within six months. All day long people, religious as well as non-religious, stop by the chapel for a moment of silence or to light a candle for a loved one. By doing this ritual in the church instead of at home, people have the feeling that they made an effort which makes it worthwhile.¹³⁷

During a short tour through the St. Willibrord Church after the interview, I got the opportunity to take a closer look at the Lady Chapel. It is separated from the rest of the church by a see-through cast iron fence and it has a separate entrance. I could see that several candles are lit. An older woman walked in and sat down on one of the benches. When we left the church, the woman was gone. She had only come in for a moment. Two years later I contacted Father Los again via Twitter. I asked him whether the Lady Chapels were still as successful as they were when we met. He replied by saying: “The Lady Chapel in the Maria Church in De Meern has a high attendance rate. You can tell by the high number of candles and by the book of intentions.”¹³⁸ He also told me not to forget the two churchyards. “There are daily visits, especially in the weekend. Pastoral sacred places.”¹³⁹ As

¹³⁶ Original text derived from the interview with Father Los (Utrecht, 16-01-2012): “Nou wat ik net al zei dat deze kerken ook redelijk vitaal zijn omdat er een grote begraafplaats bij is. Dat hebben natuurlijk veel stadskerken niet. En hier is het toch van even voor de kerkdienst of na de kerkdienst dat mensen even langs lopen en vooral ook door de week. (...) Hier en in de Meern kom je de hele dag door mensen tegen. Mensen weten ook als ze daarheen lopen komen ze altijd mensen tegen die dan ook verdrietig zijn waar ze dan even een praatje mee kunnen maken. En dat is natuurlijk ontzettend belangrijk voor een gemeenschap dat die ook bestaat buiten de vieringen. Daar ontstaan weer vriendschappen uit, mensen gaan een keer koffie drinken, oh hebt u ook uw vrouw verloren. Dat gaat de hele week door en niet alleen ’s zondags.”

¹³⁷ Mentioned in the interview by Father Los (Utrecht, 16-01-2012).

¹³⁸ Tweet by @martinuslos on 17-04-2014: “Mariakapel in Mariakerk De Meern wordt heel goed bezocht. Zie de vele noveenkaarsen. Zie ook het intentieboek.”

¹³⁹ Tweet by @martinuslos on 17-04-2014: “Vergeet ook de beide kerkhoven bij de RK kerken niet. Dagelijks bezocht. Met name in weekend. Pastorale sacrale plaatsen.”

both the Lady Chapel and the churchyard are located so closely together, many people visit both at the same time.¹⁴⁰

In addition to the two old church buildings and their accompanying cemeteries and chapels, the Catholic Church is also affiliated with a third place, a unique and interesting place called *Het Baken*.¹⁴¹ *Het Baken* is located in the *Vleuterweide* shopping center and part of a so-called cultural campus. Long before the building of Leidsche Rijn had started in 1988-1989, the Catholic Church had proposed options for the future building of churches to the municipalities of Vleuten and De Meern, just to make sure that they would not miss out when the plans for the area were made. The figures presented in these proposals of course no longer represented the current demand, but they included, besides *Hostelry De Hoef*, another place within this cultural campus. The plans on what this place, which was to be set up in cooperation with the Protestant Church, should look like have greatly varied over the years; proposals have ranged from a 'crystal palace-like' megachurch to the joined use of an already planned cultural facility. Eventually it was decided that there was no demand for a traditional place of worship. The existing places were easily able to accommodate the churchgoers in the area, Protestant as well as Catholic. Eventually the church center, *Het Baken*, was established. The function and shape of this place will be elaborated on later in this chapter.

The Protestant Church in Leidsche Rijn: A unified church in the making

As with the Catholic Church, the Protestant Church of the Netherlands (PKN) has also been present in the area for centuries. The original set up of the church is similar to that of the Catholic Church, with two traditional local congregations in Vleuten and De Meern. The *Mare* Church in De Meern was built in 1912-1913 whereas the tower of the *Torenplein* Church dates all the way back to the 14th century. Throughout history the late-gothic church had been damaged, rebuild and reattached to the original tower in 1969-1971.

The old original churches in the town center of Vleuten en De Meern play an important role within the Protestant community in Leidsche Rijn. With the development of the new neighborhoods local congregations in Utrecht decided to leave the responsibility of those possible new believers to the two churches in Vleuten and De Meern. They decided right from the beginning to start a local parish in the eastern part of Leidsche Rijn together with the Catholic Church, as described above. Although the collaboration did not work out and the Catholic Church has left *De Hoef*, the Protestant community decided to stay and organizes weekly services in the former farmhouse. This is the third Protestant place for worship in

¹⁴⁰ Tweet by @martinuslos on 17-04-2014: "Er is een wisselwerking tussen bezoek aan Mariakapel en kerkhof omdat ze zich zo dicht bij elkaar bevinden.(...)"

¹⁴¹ In English: *The Beacon*.

Leidsche Rijn. However, a descending membership number and a disappointing growth of income, is forcing the Protestant Church to reevaluate. The books will be balanced in 2012, but for later years, new plans have to be made.

This problem reflects the general trend within the Protestant community. The majority of the 1,800 Dutch congregations are shrinking. What happens in many of the cases is that the churches become little islands of like-minded people, usually also white and with a decent education, who have lost the connection with their surroundings. They are losing the capability to communicate with the community they are part of, making it difficult to attract new people. There are however some exceptions and a small number of congregations is blooming and growing. A nice example is the church in VINEX-area IJburg. In this suburban area there were no traditional church buildings as there were in Vleuten and De Meern. Hence, the Protestant church had the opportunity to establish a whole new church, shaped by the wishes of the IJburg residents.¹⁴²

In 2008, the general synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands decided it was necessary to change its strategy. They decided that they would not try to forcibly renew the old and traditional churches but to focus on VINEX-areas, wards, and cities and villages from where the church had disappeared. The reason for this strategy is the assumption, based on international research, that new congregations are better capable of getting new people involved in the church than the older already existing groups.¹⁴³ Moreover, they wanted to try to create sacred spaces for specific groups of people. In order to adequately anticipate the demands of the new VINEX-residents, the Protestant Church decided to evaluate the potential rank and file of the party. By means of so-called mentality-milieus,¹⁴⁴ a research bureau analyzed what groups within society the church appeals to. The research showed that the church only attracts people from two out of the eight milieus, namely, the traditional middle-class and the post-materialists. The majority of the other six groups are by no means attracted to the ideology and strategy of the church. In order to expand it, it is therefore important to try and integrate more groups into the church community. Minister Pieter Versloot from the national headquarters of the Protestant Church in Utrecht, says the following about the growth of the church:

¹⁴² Information derived from an interview with Rev. Pieter Versloot who works at the Protestant National Service Center and focuses on missionary work and church expansion (Utrecht, 19-01-2012).

¹⁴³ PKN Voortgangsnotitie/uitwerking beleid Kerkelijk Pionieren: *Kerkelijk Pionieren: Het tweede been* (2010).

¹⁴⁴ Research on mentality-milieus has been done by *Motivaction Research & Strategy*. This research divides the Dutch society into eight different milieus varying from the traditional middle-class to post-materialists and postmodern hedonists (<http://www.motivaction.nl/de-acht-mentality-milieus>).

We see that if we use a more unconventional approach it is possible for a community of faith to offer a lot to a large group of people and that people are willing to join this community. The church often emphasizes that secularization is widespread and of course we cannot deny that. The danger is, however, that this becomes an excuse when we say that it is impossible to find Dutchmen interested in a church community. They just shape their spirituality in a different way. Dutch people are leaving institutional religion. However, the number of people who call themselves spiritual or religious barely changes. (...) As a church it is difficult to be this flexible and fully anticipate people's needs. (...) We have started this search and it proves to be successful in various cases especially in VINEX-areas.¹⁴⁵

The case of Leidsche Rijn differs in various ways from the success story in other VINEX-areas such as IJburg near Amsterdam and Wateringseveld near Den Haag. New projects such as *De Hoef* and *Het Baken* have already been launched and have not been as successful as the church had hoped. The number of participants, especially from the newly built neighborhoods, in services and activities is lower than they had anticipated on. Also, the churches function as three separate local congregations. This creates a difficulty when it comes to making decisions that concern the whole Leidsche Rijn area. Therefore the future policy of the Protestant church in Leidsche Rijn will focus on unity and the creation of a single church community for the whole district.

The church sketches five possible scenarios. Two of those five scenarios are intrinsically in line with this future local policy. The purpose of scenario three is to better serve the existing target groups by means of more profiled services and meetings and better cooperation between the three parishes. Scenario four is similar to the previous scenario only explicitly focusing on the attraction of new focus groups. The fifth scenario will be a complete reorientation of the church structure, as it exists in Leidsche Rijn.¹⁴⁶ The working group, which combines representatives of the three different congregations, advises going with the third scenario in which the target groups and activities are central. The church's ambition is to offer a

¹⁴⁵ Original text derived from the interview with Rev. Versloot (19-01-2012): "En we zien wel dat als je het op een meer onconventionele manier aanpakt dat je voor heel veel mensen wat kan betekenen als geloofsgemeenschap en dat mensen zich best graag willen aansluiten. In de kerk wordt er nog wel op gehamerd dat de secularisatie er om zich heen slaat en dat geloven wij ook maar soms kan het ook een excuus worden om dan ook te denken dat het in Nederland helemaal niemand meer betrokken zou willen of kunnen raken bij een geloofsgemeenschap terwijl dat wel gebeurt maar de beleving van spiritualiteit is veranderd. Nederland is veel ontkerkelijker geworden, maar spiritualiteit en religie zijn niet minder geworden. (...) Als kerk ben je dan niet meer flexibel genoeg om in te spelen op waar mensen werkelijk behoefte aan hebben (...) Dat zoekproces zijn wij aangegaan ook in de VINEX-wijken en met verrassend resultaat."

¹⁴⁶ The five scenarios are described in an advising report ordered by the general church council of the protestant community in Vleuten-DeMeern-Leidsche Rijn-Oost: *Leidsche Rijn: Op weg naar één kerkelijke gemeente. Advies financieel en algemeen beleid* (September 2011) 12-16.

broad supply directed by the identity of the neighborhood. The focus will be on both existing as well as new target groups. Those new groups will be offered the space to 'be church' in their own way, to shape the church according to their wishes and demands. This form would be in line with the second church-model Post describes, which anticipates the changing religious dynamics and the accompanying demand for newly shaped places. Moreover, the monumental church buildings in Vleuten and De Meern will be used more efficiently to create a better financial situation. The two new locations will need to become self-sufficient or paid from an economic innovation project.

In January of 2012, I met with Idelette Otten, the female minister leading the *Torenplein* church.¹⁴⁷ She told me about the practical organization of the churches and about the way she experiences the church building. The way this church has been set up, directed toward the east, is of great importance to Otten. Especially during the services she feels that her physical position within this church influences the way she feels and experiences the service.

Minister: 'Where do I want to sit?' Interviewer: 'And how does your position influence the space around you?' Minister: 'Exactly! And how does this space influence me?'¹⁴⁸

She has decided to sit on the first row instead of facing the community in order to feel and experience the service in the same way the community does. The strong feelings she attaches to the location of the church and the ways its set up has made Minister Otten decide that after 20 years of preaching it is time to reevaluate the service. Of course, she says, there is a prayer book but that does not describe the rituals accompanying the ceremonial. It does not describe where to stand, what actions to perform and why. Evaluating the situation in the church in Vleuten might inspire other churches to follow the lead. With this reevaluation, minister Otten feels that with consciously chosen rituals with a long tradition, she has a lot to offer also to people from outside the church. As an example, she describes a recent funeral ceremony held in the church. Contrary to what is common in the Protestant church she wanted the deceased to be located facing east, as one of the community. This habit is more common in the Catholic Church and therefore encountered opposition from the next of kin. However, after a clear explanation of the motivation and thoughts behind this specific location, the family decided to go

¹⁴⁷ Information derived from an interview with the woman minister leading the *Torenplein* Church; Idelette Otten. She has been the minister of the Protestant local parish of Vleuten since the summer of 2010. (Church-center *Het Baken* in Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht, 17-01-2012).

¹⁴⁸ Original text derived from the interview with Rev. Otten (Utrecht 17-01-2012): "Waar wil ik nou zitten?" I: "En welke invloed heeft dat op de ruimte?" O: "Ja precies en welke invloed heeft de ruimte op mij?"

along with it. Minister Otten finds such a renewal of an old tradition inspiring because it touches upon something old, but at the same time it also holds the future.

In addition to the traditional services on Sundays and holidays, the church organizes so-called Sunday afternoon concerts: ‘Music in the *Torenpleinkerk*’. “The attendance rate of these concerts is very high,” minister Otten tells me. A playing of the carillon follows the concerts. As is the case with most church carillons, the sounds of this concert are carried far by the wind, and as the promotional flyer states, the audience can listen to it around the church.¹⁴⁹

Het Baken

Het Baken has been mentioned several times in the previous paragraphs. As part of the larger *Cultuurcampus* (a cultural campus) it is a unique place in the middle of the shopping center of Vleuterweide, Leidsche Rijn. Located around a square, the *Cultuurcampus* provides room for, among other things, a school, a library, a theater workshop, a ‘singing tower’, and the church center. The website states that:

In the *Cultuurcampus*, education, social services, art, culture and knowledge are brought together. It is a place for all the residents of Vleuterweide, Vleuten-De Meern, and Leidsche Rijn, a place to meet, to learn, to inspire, to experience, and to discover.¹⁵⁰

Church center *Het Baken*, a small building located in a corner of the square, looks closed and uninviting from the outside. Besides the name on the window, there is nothing to give away the function of this building. For most activities you even have to ring the doorbell before entrance. It is not meant to be this closed, however. On its website, the *Torenplein* Church is an inviting and open place to visit.

Het Baken is the second collaborative project of the Catholic and Protestant churches in Leidsche Rijn. Whereas in farmhouse *De Hoef* an attempt was made to work together on levels varying from administrative to the contents of the services, in *Het Baken* they just seem to make use of the same accommodation. Most activities are organized by one of the churches but not together. Of course everyone is more than welcome to attend all the gatherings, but most of those are separately announced on the website of either the Catholic or the Protestant parish.

An interesting aspect of this specific place is its use. It is a different form of being church. It is not the services that are important, but other activities such as sociability, creativity and education. These activities are all very much in line with the ideals of the cultural campus the building is part of. Also, the setup of the place is not suitable for services. Whereas, often, places for worship are used during the

¹⁴⁹ Information derived from <http://www.torenpleinkerk.nl> (April 16, 2014).

¹⁵⁰ Quote found on the website of the *Cultuurcampus*: www.cultuurcampusvleuterweide.nl (February 2, 2012).

week for other purposes, or church related activities, this location is not. It consists of a small office, a little pantry and a larger room with a big meeting table in the middle. This room that can fit around 25 people is used for most of the activities. Although the churches are aiming at a wide audience, they mostly attract older people that are already affiliated with one of the churches.

In 2011, one of the groups I joined in their monthly meetings at *Het Baken* was a female interreligious meeting group.¹⁵¹ I found the announcement for the meetings on the website of the council of churches in Leidsche Rijn and it was presented as a joint initiative of Muslim and Christian women. The group mostly consists of older women in their sixties and up, and some younger Turkish Muslim women. Everyone present is in some way affiliated with either Christianity or Islam. Most of the older ladies have a religious background. Some of them still regularly attend one of the churches in Leidsche Rijn, others tell me they no longer feel at home in the church but they do enjoy attending the meeting group. The Turkish ladies are all practicing Muslims and since they partly grew up in the Netherlands they are familiar with Dutch habits, customs and religion.

Every meeting the group organizes has a special theme. Most themes are related to religion but the first time I joined them they had decided to discuss the book *VINEXvrouwen*¹⁵² by Naima El-Bezaz. This book describes the life of a fully integrated Moroccan woman who lives in a VINEX-neighborhood and describes her amazement about the life of women in the VINEX. Of course, the stories are persiflage of the real life in the neighborhoods, but they confirm the stereotypical image of the VINEX. The responses from the group varied. Some women were amused, others were shocked, but they all agreed that life in the VINEX was not as bad as the author wanted us to believe.

In the months after the book review the contents of the gatherings varied from a lecture on extreme unction to a Christmas brunch. Every time, they start with the lighting of a special large white candle. Years ago, at one of its first meetings the group made this candle together. The women made small wax figures, varying from a sun, flowers, clouds, and etc. and those were applied to the candle. The story about the making of the candle is told every time it is lit. Interestingly enough at the end of the morning the candle is carelessly blown out when the table is cleaned up. This ritual is characteristic for the meetings, which greatly emphasize rituals. During the Christmas brunch all the women, including the Muslim women, got a chance to tell the others about the way they used to celebrate Christmas when they were young and how it had changed over the years. The food that was served was derived from those stories. There was rusk with aniseed comfits, differ-

¹⁵¹ I attended several monthly meetings of this group throughout my research period. Also I returned three times to present the progress of my research.

¹⁵² In English: *VINEX-women*.

ent types of sausage rolls, almond filled pastry, and Turkish pastry commonly served at special occasions. Despite the great emphasis on religion and religious customs, the Christian women did not seem to notice the fact that most snacks contained pork and the ham and cheese were served on the same platter that made it impossible for the Muslim women to eat. The candle, the contents of the meetings, and the food at the Christmas brunch show a search for new ritual but very much based on a combination of old religious traditions.

In October 2013, I returned to the group of women. They were curious about the progress of my research and invited me to give a presentation during one of their meetings on Friday morning. The group had not changed much over the years. I saw some new faces and missed some others. They told me that it was difficult to find Muslim women that were interested in joining the group. However the monthly meetings were still very popular and the way they were structured had not changed. The lighting of the candle, the location, the set-up with coffee, tea, and cookies, all the elements were still present. The women were very interested in my research and we had a lively discussion about their lives in Leidsche Rijn, the changes the area underwent, and the places they did or did not find special in their neighborhood. A wide variety of places came up. Some traditionally religious others not, or slightly overlapping with the religious field.¹⁵³

Another more recently started initiative from the Protestant and Catholic Churches together in *Het Baken* is the monthly returning *Beacon of Peace* which transforms the building into a meditation center where people can come in to read in the Bible, light a candle or listen to their own thoughts. According to the website, a beautiful icon is put up to help you get into the right mood. The meditation center only functions on Sundays when the stores in the shopping center are open. It is a means of escaping our busy lives in which we even have to go shopping on Sundays. Even though on those days a banner is put up in front of the building and the door is open, there are no visitors.

Besides these two specific activities *Het Baken* also organizes, for example, courses in (religious) art history, choir meetings, field trips, painting courses, and cycling tours. These activities are all characterized by a religious point of view, but are not in line with liturgical tradition. With *Het Baken*, the church is leaving the religious zone and affiliating with other zones such as art, nature and leisure. It can be seen in line with the third model described by Post where the church attempts to connect with new types of sacrality and appropriation of new forms of pastoral theology, city culture and city pastoral care. However the church center does not completely function in the way it was initially planned. Whereas the church intended to attract groups of new and young people, already affiliated older people

¹⁵³ Presentation at the Interreligious Female Meeting Group at *Het Baken* (October 25, 2013).

attend most of the activities. It can be seen more like a porch for the *Torenplein* Church, but by no means does it fulfill its missionary ambitions.

Anticipating on the demand: Churches in schools and homes

Besides the traditionally present churches, there was a third initiative mentioned in the introductory part of this chapter: *RijnWaarde*. This church has its weekly services in a school building. *RijnWaarde* was initiated by a group of smaller orthodox reformed churches from Utrecht and Maarssen. These roots were, however, not the only determinative factors for the direction this church chose. The members also play an important role. Slowly the church is letting go of the rigid rules of its founders and replacing those with rules that fit in better with its members. Only a third of those members actively attended church before joining *RijnWaarde*. Hence, a large group does have a Christian background, but were no churchgoers or they are completely new to the church.¹⁵⁴ These numbers fit the acclaimed missionary character of the church. They are very outwardly focused. One of the main goals is to tell people about the gospel and they do this by means of so-called ‘Alpha’ courses: introductions into Christianity, and other low-key activities. Moreover, they organize services with attractive people such as the well-known Dutch TV host Andries Knevel of the Evangelical Broadcasting Network, all in order to attract more people to the church. This missionary character makes their location convenient on the one hand and complicated on the other. It is convenient, because it is not necessary to invest a lot of manpower in the financial and practical maintenance of a church building. That manpower and money can be used for missionary activities. On the other hand, does the lack of a recognizable building make it difficult to attract new people? Because the function of the building does not show from the outside, people could feel reluctant to walk in on Sundays, a representative of the church says.

In an interview with an active member, and previously mentioned representative of the church, Respondent D, it becomes clear that the members of the church ascribe no value to the accommodation in which their services are being held. Although they might say the school building is ugly, it does not mean they rather go to a beautiful looking church. The place is totally irrelevant because it is only the message that counts. All a church needs is four walls, a roof and some chairs and for that purpose a school building can be just as suitable as any other

¹⁵⁴ Numbers obtained from an interview with a representative of the *RijnWaarde* Church: Respondent D (Utrecht, 20-05-2011). Respondent D is a male, 35-45 years old, married and has two kids. He lives in Leidsche Rijn and he is an active member and representative of *RijnWaarde*. He has an old-fashioned Dutch evangelical Baptist background and in his childhood he attended a small home church. Via the Anglican Church he ended up in *RijnWaarde*. Although he likes the community, he does not feel at home in the church and that has mainly to do with its location. “It is difficult to meet God in a school building,” he says.

place. The fact that the building is used in a very different way during the week does come with some unavoidable practical difficulties. Every Sunday morning the ‘church’ has to be set up before the service and taken apart afterward, and this is quite a hassle. Two other practical examples are funerals and baptisms. Recently a young member of the church had died and it was the first time someone had to be buried. Of course it is not possible to have someone lie in state in the auditorium of a school or to have a burial service from a school, since there are always students during the week. Borrowing a church building from another congregation solved this problem, but this was not a satisfying solution. The second matter is baptism. It is common within this church community to be baptized by immersion. This means that the preparations start on Saturday when they have to put up an inflatable swimming pool and fill it up with water in order to have it ready in time for the baptism on Sunday.

Baptism by immersion is significant for the character of the *RijnWaarde* services, which can be situated in the more evangelical, *Praise and Worship* category.¹⁵⁵ The fact that there is no room for an organ in the school building is not a problem, since a band, instead of the traditional organ, accompanies the musical intermez-zos. In this type of service the band helps others to express their feelings to God by means of music and with the help of music the congregation can be open to what God has to say to their hearts. It is especially common in evangelical denominations and the aim is on individual experience and contact with God.

Respondent D finds it difficult to imagine that it is possible for the other church members to ‘meet’ God in this setting. While he likes the theological point of view of the church, he does not feel at home in the school. Growing up in a traditional evangelical Baptist Church as an adult Respondent D changed to the Anglican Church in which location and ambiance plays an important role. Due to the children, he decided it was more convenient to attend church in Leidsche Rijn but he misses a nice church building and his religious life is suffering from it. “At some places,” he says, “it is easier to meet God than in other places.” Therefore he tries to attend another church at least once a week. He visits churches that feel special to him, as though they were different from other places, places where one has the feeling that there is ‘more’ between heaven and earth.¹⁵⁶

Where the people are that’s where the church is.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ M. BARNARD: ‘Panorama Zondag. Verbonden en geworteld’, in L. VAN TONGEREN (ed.): *Liturgie op maat. Vieren in het spanningsveld van eenheid en veelkleurigheid* (Heeswijk 2009) 19-23.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Respondent D (Utrecht, 20-5-2011).

¹⁵⁷ Citation from an interview with Respondent F (Huizen, 24-05-2011). He is a 35-45-year-old male, married and a father of two children. He has lived in Leidsche Rijn for 3,5 years. He is a minister in a small evangelical home church. Original text: “Daar waar mensen zijn, daar is de kerk.”

Conducting research in an environment which is still under construction such as Leidsche Rijn is inspiring but at times also slightly unnerving since the research is never entirely finished and the situation constantly changes. In the autumn of 2014, after a long process, *RijnWaarde*, together with the former Netherlands Reformed Church of Leidsche Rijn, will start to build a brand new church building within the borders of the *Máximapark*. For about a hundred years the former Netherlands Reformed Church had been located in a small church building at the *Alendorperweg*. This connecting road between Vleuten and De Meern is now part of the park but it used to be the heart of the greenhouse farming industry in the area.

The plans to build a church together had been made several years ago and then, in 2012, the city of Utrecht held a competition for religious and social organizations. They were given the opportunity to present a building plan. The prize for the two best plans was a building site for the organizations to realize their plan. In June 2012, the winners were announced. The church and a *mandir*, a Hindu temple, would arise at two closely connected building sites next to a brewery and a daycare facility, at a central location in the district. Several weeks later it turned out that the church needed to be disqualified from the competition as the plans exceeded the regulations by three meters. As the city needed to follow the rules they had set for the competition, the plans changed and the church was replaced by an Islamic center initiated by the *Marokkaanse Ouderraad Leidsche Rijn* (MORL), which can be translated as ‘Moroccan Elderly Council Leidsche Rijn’.¹⁵⁸ The construction of the Hindu temple and the Islamic center started in 2014.

After the church had lost this location, the negotiations with the city of Utrecht started in the hope of finding a new place in Leidsche Rijn. Eventually they have been offered the spot at the *Alendorperweg*. In an interview with the local news station, RTV Utrecht, the ministers of the two churches describe what the new building will look like: The two denominations will not merge into one but rather co-exist and collaborate in the new building. From the information given in this interview, I get the impression that the church will not only be used for the traditional services. Richard Roest, minister of the *RijnWaarde* Church mentions, when he talks about the dreams he has for the church, that it would be great to have groups of young people at the church and “to make a nice cappuccino, in a grand café-like setting in the church.”¹⁵⁹ Hence, according to the plans, the building with enough space for 300 churchgoers will not look like a traditional church, but rather like a multifunctional community center.

¹⁵⁸ Information derived from website of the local news channel: www.rtvutrecht.nl: ‘Toch geen nieuwe kerk in Leidsche Rijn’ (June 21, 2012), viewed on April 24, 2014.

¹⁵⁹ Richard Roest in: ‘Bouw kerk Máximapark start komend najaar’ on www.rtvutrecht.nl (May 10, 2014), viewed on May 25, 2014.

A second initiative located at an interesting place, is a small evangelical home church in Leidsche Rijn. I interviewed the minister of this church to see what his motivations are to maintain such a small church and why they do not merge with one of the other existing churches in the neighborhood.

When he uses the word church, he means the community, not the building. A church is a group of people and it does not matter at what location they meet. These are the words of Respondent F who runs a church from his own living room. Approximately ten people attend the services, which take place on Sunday morning. They start with a prayer meeting, followed by singing. It is interesting to note that the churchgoers sing along with songs streamed on YouTube and recorded in the United States and Surinam. The official service ends with a sermon of 30 to 45 minutes. Afterward there is time to talk, eat and drink. Sometimes people stick around all day, other weeks they leave right after the service. Most of the churchgoers ended up in this home church because they did not feel at home in the other churches Leidsche Rijn had to offer. Respondent F anticipated this need and as long as there are people looking for a church like this he will continue his services.

The Turkish Islamic Center

The Turkish community in Utrecht wishes to build a Turkish Islamic Center in Leidsche Rijn. Big plans have been made, the design is finished, and a location has been found and approved by the municipality. The plans were initiated by *Stichting Islamitisch Centrum Nederland*, SICN (‘Islamic Center Foundation of the Netherlands’). This foundation was established in Utrecht in 1972 to meet the wishes of the growing Muslim community that had immigrated to the Netherlands to work. SICN was the first Islamic organization in the Netherlands, and its building was used as the first mosque. Here after various other establishments were opened, first in Rotterdam and Amsterdam and later on throughout the country. Currently there are 42 local centers connected to the national umbrella organization SICN. Although the name implies that the foundation focuses on all Muslims, in practice they only focus on the Turkish community. In Utrecht, this community consists of approximately 12,500 people, about four percent of the total city population.

I met with Azmi Kandemir, the chairman of the Islamic Center Leidsche Rijn and spokesperson of SICN, in the main office in Utrecht, to discuss the plans for the building of the Islamic Center in Leidsche Rijn. Behind us in the interview room there is a large scale-model of the planned center. From the outside, the design does not look like a mosque; there is no dome and no minaret. “This design is chosen on purpose,” Kandemir says:

‘We have discussed the design with the architect of the neighborhood. They wanted something that fits the rest of the neighborhood. First the design was different, more

like a mosque but without the minaret. But that plan was not approved. The municipality and the architect approve this one.' I: 'Does it matter what the building looks like?' K: 'No, SICN has several buildings throughout the country, around 40, and none of them has a minaret. We also use the building for youth coaching, competition, and extracurricular activities for children, a broad spectrum of activities. (...) There are separate prayer rooms for men and women and it is possible to visit the mosque every day of the week. However most people attend mosque on Friday because that is the day we have our special service, just like churches on Sunday.'¹⁶⁰

Already in 1993 SICN had contacted the municipality to take the demand for a mosque in Leidsche Rijn into account. Moreover, they addressed the willingness of SICN to coordinate the planning and building of this mosque. In their response, the municipality said that the planning of a possible mosque would be given a chance in 2008 or 2009, once the construction of the neighborhood had reached its final stage. But the construction of the center still has not started. The protest of the neighbors, especially about the limited number of parking spaces, is one of the reasons of the delay. The neighbors fear that on Fridays and Islamic holidays such as Ramadan, their streets will fill up with the cars of people attending prayer. A large number of the Muslims attending the services live further away and will need a place to park the car.

SICN has thought of ways to solve this problem and Azmi Kandemir explains that an underground parking facility is part of the design of the Islamic center. "This parking that has a capacity of 44 cars should be sufficient to solve the parking problem on Friday afternoons," Kandemir says. The rest of the week the center is mainly used for various schooling programs and there will be a halal store and a small restaurant.

City Life Church Utrecht

It is early on a Sunday morning, when I head to the Utrecht city theater with a friend. The purpose of my visit is neither a theater play nor a dance performance; I

¹⁶⁰ Original text derived from interview with Azmi Kandemir, chairman of the Islamic Center Leidsche Rijn and spokesperson of SICN (Utrecht, 24-01-2012). "Wij hebben ook met de architect van LR gesproken en die wilde een gebouw hebben dat in de buurt past. Heel Leidsche Rijn is op die manier gebouwd. Eerst hadden we gewoon een moskee maar dan net iets anders. Niet met echt een minaret maar een andere vorm. Maar dat plan was niet goedgekeurd. Dit plan is wel goedgekeurd door de gemeente en de architect." I: "Maakt het niet uit hoe het gebouw er uit ziet?" "Nee, SICN heeft meerdere gebouwen in Nederland, een stuk of 40, en daar zijn geen moskeeën bij met een minaret. Onze doeleinden zijn niet alleen moskee maar ook begeleiden van jeugd, organiseren van wedstrijden, en buitenschoolse opvang voor kinderen. Hele brede activiteiten. (...) Er is een aparte ruimte voor mannen en voor vrouwen en die kunnen dan de hele week de moskee bezoeken en de meeste komen op vrijdag middag en dan is er ook een gezamenlijke dienst. Net als bij de kerk op zondag."

am going to church. The church service I am attending is organized by *City Life Church* (CLC) Utrecht. This evangelical/Pentecostal church has been part of a nationwide network of City Life Churches since 2010. This network seems well organized and has branches in Den Haag, Den Helder, Assen and now Utrecht. On the website it shows that they are also connected to the worldwide *Hillsong Network*. This Pentecostal community originates in Australia and they make great use of music, drama, and dance to worship god. Frequently, speakers of this network come over to lead one of the Dutch church services. Although the church in Utrecht is not this large yet, the Hillsong Network and also the CLC churches are, or aim to be, so-called ‘mega churches’ that organize, in addition to smaller scaled activities, large services sometimes attended by hundreds of people. In the services multimedia such as beamers and projection screens are essential, as well as a popular music band, the so-called ‘praise band’ to accompany the service. The musical and verbal idiom is explicitly popular.¹⁶¹ The church caught my attention due to a small article in the well-known Dutch newspaper *Trouw*.

The City Life Church in Utrecht is moving to the city theater in that city. From next Sunday they will have their weekly service in the theater in the center of town. Until now, the church has been assembling in a community center in the recently built Leidsche Rijn area. However, this location lacked ‘ambience and character’ according to a spokesperson from the City Life Church. (...) ¹⁶²

The service is held in the smaller ‘blue’ auditorium and the first things that attract my attention are the band, the colorful disco lights and the large projection screen showing that morning’s program. The first association I have is with a musical show or performance. This feeling is strengthened when the band starts to play, pop-rock tunes fill the auditorium and only the lyrics give away the Godly message of our gathering. This location very much suits the style of the service. It could be described as an experience, and the attractiveness of the building certainly adds to this experience. The following sermon is accompanied by little clips and images projected on the large screen and the morning ends with another song from the band. I now understand a comment the spokesperson made in the newspaper article about the difference between the Saturday night theater performances and the Sunday morning church service: it is “‘The God-factor’. In the church people tell each other about how they met God and how this meeting has changed their lives.”

After the service we all meet in the lounge for coffee. Because we are first time visitors our coffee is free. The regulars have to pay. I look around and see a lot of younger people. Young couples to be precise, with little kids alternated by

¹⁶¹ BARNARD: ‘Panorama Zondag’ 21-22.

¹⁶² Ed.: ‘Utrechtse kerk veruult VINEX-wijk voor schouwburg’, *Trouw* (June 8, 2011).

students and some older people. Looking at the obvious target group of this church I wonder whether Leidsche Rijn, which is filled with young newly married people with one or two kids, wouldn't have been a better location, and whether they had lost members who were not able to attend a church in the city center every Sunday. I decided to ask one of the active church members about this. Luckily the active members were easy to recognize since they all wore the same shirt. The girl told me that for some people it was more difficult to come, but that they also gained new members, students for whom the theater was a lot easier to reach than the community center in Leidsche Rijn.

Several weeks before I attended the church service I interviewed the CLC spokesperson in response to the newspaper article.¹⁶³ When I referred to the quote I read in the paper, he immediately stated that he never said that Leidsche Rijn lacked ambience and character but rather that there was more of it present in the city theater. He also does not see the theater as the church's final destination. The denomination is young and ambitious and their ultimate dream is to build their own church. When I ask him about leaving Leidsche Rijn, he says that he finds this new neighborhood very exciting. He himself lives in Leidsche Rijn with his family and meets a lot of likeminded people there, most of whom are looking to give meaning to their lives but find it difficult to affiliate with a church. Therefore, it is important for a church to be dependable and attractive and have its services every Sunday at the same time and at the same place, which is easy to find and reach. The locations in Leidsche Rijn lacked those aspects. Therefore, when the opportunity came up to use the city theater for the weekly services, they took it.

This emphasis on place and location brought up another question: When I was talking to people from various other Christian denominations from Leidsche Rijn it struck me that although they were looking for a church building, its appearance never seemed to be of great importance. The word of God was the most important and the building was just 'a roof above some heads'. This respondent emphasized that indeed the building is not the most important aspect, but that they are looking for an attractive place.

When you believe that God had made everything and that God is super creative and that the entire equilibrium is so perfectly balanced and everything is so colorful and beautiful, it is difficult to talk about this God in a dull and grey building.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Interview with spokesperson of the City Life Church Utrecht (Utrecht, 08-07-2012).

¹⁶⁴ Original text derived from an interview with a CLC spokesperson (Utrecht, 08-07-2012): "Als je gewoon gelooft dat god alles heeft gemaakt en dat god echt uber creatief is en dat het hele equilibrium dat is zo perfect in balans alles is zoveel kleur en zo prachtig. En om het dan over god te hebben in het meest afstandse gebouw te zitten wat er te vinden is waar alles grijs is en suf, dat gaat er bij mij dan niet in."

When I attended the church service I remembered this quote and I could image that the experience of the churchgoers would not have been the same if they had gathered in a neighborhood center in Leidsche Rijn, lacking all the theatrical aspects.

Although CLC is very happy to have found this great location in the center of Utrecht, they are still looking ahead into the future and a hoping for their own newly built church somewhere in the city, but preferably in Leidsche Rijn. The respondent emphasizes the importance of a central location for the church. Over the last 50 years churches have moved to the outskirts of the cities and disappeared from the center, he says. We believe that it is important for the church to have a central location in the city but also in society, as the beacon it used to be. The question however remains as to whether its residents are willing to give up their valuable space for a church, or if they prefer a sports center or a playground.

The Leidsche Rijn Information Center

As described in the previous paragraphs, there are various new denominations in Leidsche Rijn such as *RijnWaarde*, the home church, and in a way, also the CLC who are currently happy with the place they have but are also, due to growth, on the lookout for a more permanent solution. For this reason, the Utrecht branch of the *ChristenUnie*, a Christian political party, initiated a roundtable meeting between various members of the Utrecht city council and representatives of the various churches in April 2011, meant to make an inventory of the existing situation and possible problems. Several years earlier, the *ChristenUnie* had already demanded the alderman's attention about the problems the churches were facing regarding accommodation. Despite the measures that were taken at that point, the shortage of facilities had grown over the years. In April of the year 2010, the *ChristenUnie* insisted on a status change for churches from specifically religious to social services, to make them applicable for a wider range of buildings with this particular zoning plan. With this measure and a promise from the alderman to keep a close eye on the future plans of Leidsche Rijn, it seemed to be going quite well. However, an article in the Protestant Dutch national newspaper *Nederlands Dagblad*, published in early 2011, proved differently. The problems were far from solved and the churches were frustrated by the city council's attitude. This article resulted in the round-table meeting in which the churches as well as the various political parties met to map the problems and discuss possible solutions.¹⁶⁵

In the months following the round-table meeting, an interesting development occurred in Leidsche Rijn. The *Leidsche Rijn Information Center*, a large glass and steel construction built in 1998 and used for expositions, neighborhood meeting nights and as a documentation center, closed down. As a consequence the building, with

¹⁶⁵ Report of a round-table meeting at the Utrecht city hall on Tuesday, February 8, 2011.

an estimated value of 2 million euro's, would become vacant. Deciding on a new purpose for this center, the city council decided to meet the churches half way. The building would only be sold to a religious institution and the price was set at 1.8 million euro's.

Interestingly enough, this decision that could, at least at first sight, solve the problem for the church denominations, encountered great resistance. The local section of the liberal party (VVD) was the first to oppose this measure. They claimed that research among the residents of the area had shown that there were demands for various facilities, and a religious institution was not one of them. The people would, for instance, rather have an indoor playground, a sports center or a daycare facility. Secondly they questioned the low asking price. Wasn't it better for the city council to strive for the highest possible price? The city council admitted that using the building for office or catering purposes would probably raise more money but that it is also their duty to facilitate social demands. The VVD did not agree with this point of view and even referred to the low price as a way of subsidizing the churches.¹⁶⁶

The second initiative against the sale of the building to a religious institution came from an anonymous group of people living in the area. This group went as far as starting an online petition to prevent the sale from taking place. The residents felt passed over by the city council and wanted a larger say in the zoning plans of this important location in their neighborhood. They wanted to give the building a fitting function making the area rise in value and anticipating on the direct needs of a majority of the residents and not just of a small group.¹⁶⁷ Later on it also turned out that besides the lack of enthusiasm for a church, the neighbors were also scared that the building would be sold to a Muslim group and be turned into a mosque. They feared that this would cause trouble in the sense of parking problems and loitering youth.¹⁶⁸ Eventually, the problem seems to have begun partly solving itself, since no official bids were made on the building by religious institutions before the closing date. In addition, the city council has decided to conduct a survey of residents of Leidsche Rijn to map their preferences, before they would look into other selling options. This does mean that the religious institutions are still looking for a permanent place. In a response, a spokesperson from one of the larger religious groups stated that the price of 1.8 million was too high.

¹⁶⁶ VVD councilor D. Gilissen cited in: E. HAKKENES: 'Hier liever geen kerk', *Trouw* (August 25, 2011).

¹⁶⁷ HAKKENES: 'Hier liever geen kerk'; The petition and its motives can be found on: <http://www.behoudgrauwaart.nl> (December 13, 2011).

¹⁶⁸ Conversations with people in Leidsche Rijn; Anonymous, *Bewoners Leidsche Rijn mogen meebeslissen over bestemming informatiecentrum* on <http://www.destadurecht.nl> (October 31, 2011).

In March 2013, a large daycare facility, *Kindergarden*, opened its doors in the Information Center. The website of *Kindergarden* refers to the old use of the building and happily makes use of the space available at this location.¹⁶⁹

Churches and the Internet

One aspect of place came up in several of the previously used interviews, namely the importance of a virtual place for churches on the Internet. Due to, on the one hand, the lack of physical space in Leidsche Rijn, and on the other hand, the need to make church spaces easily accessible, the churches are forced to resort to a place on the Internet. Through websites, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts, and YouTube channels, the churches are not leaving any media untapped to reach out to as many people as possible.

The first person to mention the virtual location of the church is Respondent D, representative of the *RijnWaarde* Church.¹⁷⁰ For this missionary church with a focus on young people and families, and its services in a school building, the Internet is one of the few places to create visibility. “It is the only way for people to locate us,” he says. Just opening the doors of the church on Sunday morning is not sufficient anymore. People want to be able to go online and see what the church is about and which activities they can take part in. *RijnWaarde* anticipates this need and has a fresh looking website on which they announce services and other activities. For people who were unable to attend the service or people who are curious about the contents, it has been made possible to download the sermons from the website. The site can be seen as a virtual vestibule of the church; it possibly lowers the threshold for people who plan to attend church. And at the same time, it seems to be a propaganda- and info channel, a way in which the church reaches the residents of Leidsche Rijn.

The newer and ‘younger’ churches are not the only ones making the move onto the Internet. Father Los of the *Licht van Christus* parish also mentioned the importance of presence on the Internet.¹⁷¹ Already in 2004, the parish had launched a website to provide as much information to its visitors as they possibly could. “Of course,” he says, “this is very common now days. But at the time, we were one of the first parishes to provide this for the parishioners.” On the website visitors can look up the customs of this specific parish surrounding baptism, marriage and funerals, but also last week’s sermon and an overview of the activities. It turns out that people, before they moved to the area, tried to get into contact with the church. According to Father Los, it is a big step for people to return to church especially after they have moved to a new area. But via the website they can take a

¹⁶⁹ The website of *Kindergarden*: www.kindergarden.nl (May 25, 2014).

¹⁷⁰ The website of *RijnWaarde*: www.rijnwaarde.nl (February 8, 2012).

¹⁷¹ The website of *Licht van Christus*: www.lichtvanchristus.nl (February 8, 2012).

peek into the church. It is an easy accessible way for people who are having doubts about returning to the church, regular churchgoers who want to know more about the activities, or who missed a sermon.¹⁷² Although it was not specifically mentioned in the interviews, I have noticed that the various Protestant churches have websites comparable to the Catholic one. Interestingly enough, although the three are all part of the PKN, they have separate, unrelated websites, whereas the policy of the PKN is one of moving toward more collaboration between the three churches. However, for now they still have separate places, in reality and online.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter gives an overview of the places for religion in the VINEX-area of Leidsche Rijn. The unique set up of this area, incorporating the two villages of Vleuten and De Meern and its accompanying churches and community, has made Leidsche Rijn different from other VINEX- neighborhoods. As a result, a study of Leidsche Rijn gives us an image of the whole spectrum of the current religious and sacred dynamics, including the developments traditional institutional religion is undergoing. It is interesting to see that the shape the religious zone takes touches upon fields other than the religious, such as memory, art and leisure. The existing institutions such as the Protestant and Catholic churches in Vleuten and De Meern are attempting to expand, and like the newer plans, they tend to reach beyond the traditional church shapes. In a dynamic surrounding such as Leidsche Rijn, the churches have to be willing to adjust their form. Religion has become part of a bricolage. People mix and match in order to optimize their individual experience. Elements of religion are combined with for example: art, music, or nature. The churches have to, and do, anticipate this development or people will start looking for something different. This development also explains to some extent the popularity of the evangelical and Pentecostal churches. These denominations leave room for an individual experience and the services take the form of a show.

The historical overview of the churches originally located in Vleuten and De Meern shows that the village churches underwent great changes since they became part of the large new district of Leidsche Rijn. Both the Protestant and the Catholic denominations merged on an organizational level and they have managed to keep the churches in both villages open. However the attempts to expand in an ecumenical form failed. In 2007, the Catholic Church left the collaborative farmhouse project and decided to focus on the two quite successfully functioning old village churches. There are three aspects of the church, Pastor Martin Los told me about, that are very popular among the churchgoers in Vleuten and De Meern.

¹⁷² Information obtained from the interview with Martin Los (16-01-2012).

The first is the Lady Chapel. This traditional and commonplace space within catholic churches was only recently implemented in the two churches. Now, several years later, the Lady Chapel in De Meern is especially popular. Secondly, the cemeteries attached to the churches are frequently visited throughout the week. This ritual does not seem to lose its popularity, and it is also emphasized and facilitated by the church itself. The visitors often combine visiting the cemetery with the lighting of a candle in the chapel. These are both rituals facilitated by the church, as it provides the place, but at the same time they are rituals that people can individually shape, at the time they want, saying a prayer they like, or not saying a prayer at all. These places do have an additional value in this regard: The cemetery is important for obvious reasons, but it seems the people also give a special sense of meaning to burning a candle in the Lady Chapel, as well. The third popular ritual is the annual Christmas mass, which a large group people with a religious background who do not regularly go to church anymore, attend.

All three of the examples shows that the catholic rituals, as described above, are still popular, but instead of being part of a complete religious lifestyle (including for example regular attendance of the Sunday mass) the rituals rather seem to fit into a more individual interpretation. Here religion mixes with, for example, memory and remembrance, and healing. People use the rituals no longer as part of a larger religious plan, but rather to fulfill a more individual demand.

The Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) has kept the old farmhouse as a place for worship, but is still debating on how to use this unique location to the fullest. The three PKN churches in Leidsche Rijn function as separate unities. This causes difficulties, since the demand for an overall strategy for Leidsche Rijn is growing. Therefore, in order to keep the church alive, the PKN is deliberating upon a change in the approach of the residents in the Leidsche Rijn. The changes the church suggests anticipate the changing religious dynamics and the accompanying demand for newly shaped places. They are also looking into ways to attract people outside of their usual target groups. In order to reach those people, the shape the church takes will have to adjust to their demands.

With *Het Baken*, both the Protestant as well as the Catholic Church try to reach those people who are outside their regular spectrum, by combining religion with, for example, leisure and culture, in the activities they organize. This does seem to appeal to people who have deviated from the church, still feel a connection to institutional religion, but who try to shape their religious life in a different way. But, it does not seem to reach a new group of people longing for a new form of religion. An article in the Dutch newspaper *Trouw*, in response to recent published research results on the position of the church and religion in the Netherlands, grasps the developments within most of the Catholic and PKN denominations as follows:

For a large and always growing part of society, churches function as a public utilities company. They are not meant to gear all of your activities to, but rather something to use when you need to, for example for a baptism, a marriage or a funeral.¹⁷³

This fits my previous observations on the Catholic churches of Vleuten and De Meern that show a similar tendency.

A different development is seen in the more evangelical and Pentecostal initiatives that emerged in Leidsche Rijn. Together with the former Netherlands Reformed Church, *RijnWaarde* now has the permission to build a new church with enough room for 300 churchgoers. In a 12,5-year period, the missionary oriented *RijnWaarde* Church grew out to have around 350 members. Its minister, Richard Roest, who will move to a new VINEX-area near the city of Nijmegen in the summer of 2014, explained that in addition to being a church, he also imagines the new building as a grand-café where people are welcomed to have a cappuccino. “In addition to the services on Sunday, it is those ‘extracurricular’ activities that made it possible for the church to also attract quite a large number of newcomers,” Roest states. Approximately twenty percent of its members are new to this church or to this type of Christianity in general.¹⁷⁴

In addition, the small home church and the City Life Church are still looking for a more permanent spot, a spot to build their own church. The (relative) success of those small churches seems to be explainable through the character of the churches; they all have an evangelical or Pentecostal line of approach and focus very much on the individual perception and experience of the faithful. With their *Praise and Worship*-type services they lay great emphasis on the personal relationship and contact with God. Besides the practical reasons, the church building is not of great importance to those people. The only thing that matters is the word of God. This word can also be brought across in a school building or on the Internet.

This chapter shows that on the one hand the existing churches in Vleuten and De Meern manage to take in most of the new churchgoers from Leidsche Rijn, and that there are some new Christian denominations. On the other hand, we see for example Islamic and Hindu groups that have had difficulty finding a place to build a mosque or temple. The space the municipality and the other residents of the neighborhood are willing to give up for this purpose is very limited. The discussions surrounding the new use of the Information Center and the competition that

¹⁷³ G.J. KLEINJAN: ‘Bijna helft jonge christenen is neo-fundamentalist’, in *Trouw* (April 28, 2014). Original text: “Voor een groot en almaar groeiend deel van de bevolking fungeren kerken als een soort openbare nutsbedrijven: niet bedoeld om je activiteiten er voortdurend op af te stemmen, maar om er gebruik van te maken als dat nodig is, bij doop, huwelijk of begrafenis bijvoorbeeld.”

¹⁷⁴ S. GEUZE: ‘Kerkplanters Nijmegen beroepen Richard Roest’, in *Nederlands Dagblad* (April 24, 2014); G. SCHUURMAN: ‘Leidsche Rijnse kerkplanter Roest naar Nijmegen’, on www.dichtbij.nl/utrecht-en-leidscherijn (April 24, 2014).

was organized to divide two building sites among three religious groups, show how problematic this lack of space can be. It is a difficult process in an environment such as Leidsche Rijn, where the demand for other facilities in the fields of leisure, nature, and culture is much higher. There is no longer space for the religious zone in its purest form. Expansion, and overlap with other fields is needed to survive.



Chapter 5

Grey suburb, green spaces

Planting a “Tree of Birth”

Picture: Inez Schippers

CHAPTER 5

GREY SUBURB, GREEN SPACES

New housing development usually equals desecration; it equals the creation of neighborhoods which are not as pretty as the landscape they are replacing.
(De Botton: *The Architecture of Happiness*)¹⁷⁵

Looking at the map of Leidsche Rijn it is easy to see: its center is green. It is made up of an enormous park. In addition, some smaller green areas are spread out through the rest of the district. I immediately decided that this park would be one of my case studies, if not the only one. And therefore it was the first means by which I entered Leidsche Rijn. I applied for a job as the secretary of the *Friends of the Máximapark Foundation* and once I was hired, my fieldwork took off.¹⁷⁶

My membership in the Foundation offered me the opportunity to participate and observe during events, meet participants, and learn what it is that they do in the park. Can any of the activities in the park be described as ritual practices? By means of interviews, observations, informal conversations, and a questionnaire, I attempted to find an answer to this question. Can nature function as a stage for ritual practice and if so, how do the special places emerge? And what form does sacrality take in this regard? In line with the urban triad, participants, organizers and planners play an equally important role.

The chapter starts with a description of nature and its changing position in society. Due to a growing appreciation of nature, its role in urban plans has grown over the decades, something that is clearly reflected in Leidsche Rijn. After this more general description the focus will change to the VINEX district and, more specifically, to the large park located in the center of this district. This park functions as a starting point for various activities varying from sports, to having tea, to gardening, and it also includes a birth forest.

Focusing on public places, I have decided to leave private gardens and allotment gardens out of this chapter. Although gardens play an important role in Leidsche Rijn, as most of the houses have a garden, and this is the reason many people choose to move to the district, the focus of this chapter is on the public

¹⁷⁵ A. DE BOTTON: *The architecture of happiness* (Vintage 2008) 282.

¹⁷⁶ For more information on the foundation: www.maximapark.nu (viewed on January 2, 2015).

space. Chapter 6 will describe an allotment garden project that was set up as an art project and, thereby, differs from most regular allotment gardens.

5.1 Introduction

Urban planning has evolved in the past century and, as a result, an increasing amount of thought was given to the wellbeing of the people inhabiting the newly planned or redesigned cities, villages and neighborhoods. Studies have been conducted to see what facilities are required to make a neighborhood successful. For a long time, these studies concentrated mainly on community building, social structures within the neighborhood, social capital, and other sociological and psychosocial factors. And although thinking about green in the city is not a completely new concept, as the idea of the *Garden City* already arose in the late nineteenth century, the more recent growing popularity of environmental psychology did result in an increasing interest in the way in which physical characteristics, such as green space, add to the success of a neighborhood and the well-being of its residents.¹⁷⁷

In the post industrialization period, the idea of the *Garden City* attempted to combine the advantages of the countryside with the growing demand for housing in the cities. An idea which, in 1921, the Dutch architect and urban planner Granpré Molière referred to as a form of cultural criticism and an attempt to escape from modern society, which was only possible with the help of the technological developments of this very society.¹⁷⁸ A lot has changed in urban planning since the development of the Garden Cities in the first half of the twentieth century, and the ideas on the role nature should play have been further developed.

The article: ‘Green space as a buffer between stressful life events and health,’ by a group of Dutch environmental psychologists, states that:

like other public areas, parks and other green spaces can support physical activity and facilitate social cohesion. However, green spaces appear to have a special quality that is lacking in other public areas: contact with green space can provide restoration from stress and mental fatigue.¹⁷⁹

The article, furthermore, states that this often-positive response to nature is caused by the fact that nature has the ability to almost effortlessly hold people’s attention.

¹⁷⁷ A.E. VAN DEN BERG, J. MAAS, R.A. VERHEIJ & P.P. GROENEWEGEN: ‘Green space as a buffer between stressful life events and health’, in *Social Science and Medicine* (published online 17 February 2010) 4.

¹⁷⁸ H. VAN DER CAMMEN & L. DE KLERK: *Ruimtelijke ordening. Van grachtengordel tot VINEX-nijk* (Houten 2003) 110-111.

¹⁷⁹ VAN DEN BERG ET AL.: ‘Green space as a buffer between stressful life events and health’ 4.

This form of attention is referred to as ‘soft fascination’ and has a positive effect on pessimistic thoughts and negative emotions. In some cases of extended exposure, it has even been said that natural settings can stimulate reflections on larger life matters.¹⁸⁰ Of course it is necessary to nuance these statements since they might not be as widely applicable as they imply, but their essence, which demonstrates the possible relaxing and inspiring effects of nature and its clear capacity to stimulate physical activity and cohesion on a social level, is interesting in terms of this research.

The ‘type’ of nature generating these positive effects varies for each person depending on taste from remote wilderness to nearby and, often planned, green spaces such as gardens. For this research the latter planned green category is the most interesting. In Leidsche Rijn, the large *Máximapark* and other smaller green spaces in the area are important selling features. As the following description shows, green space tempts and sells.

A large, continuous section of the landscape will be preserved in the heart of the area. Located centrally, the green (landscape) will adjoin the built up area over a considerable stretch of land. The size and scale of the park is spectacular. It offers space for non-public open-air ‘green’ facilities such as sport fields, allotments, a campsite, and recreational tourist attractions such as a theme park. Ribbons of green will connect the park with the surrounding residential areas. This section of the Utrecht part of the plan will form a link with the *Green Heart*. The central park will also act as an ecological corridor connecting the aquatic landscape in the north with the typical elongated fields south of the plan area.¹⁸¹

This text, derived from the Leidsche Rijn Master plan, illustrates the ideas for the creation of a large city park in the middle of Leidsche Rijn. When the Masterplan was written in 1995, the design for this park had yet to be made. In the years that followed, the production of the park started and it grew out to be one of the most fascinating and beloved parts of the new neighborhood. This is especially the case since residents of the area, together with landscape architects and urban planners, are actively involved in the design of the park. The park is taking shape in line with their ideas, ideals and memories. Despite its beauty and the involvement of the residents, the park is also contested. The history of the area in which the park is located, the name of the park, and various other elements (for example, in its design) has caused discussion and disturbance. It’s this ongoing process of production which makes the park specifically interesting.

The park is part of an even larger ecological plan, a plan that is officially made up of a variety of larger and smaller green areas spread throughout the neighbor-

¹⁸⁰ VAN DEN BERG ET AL.: ‘Green space as a buffer between stressful life events and health’ 4-5.

¹⁸¹ P. SPANGENBERG (ed.): *Masterplan Leidsche Rijn* (Amsterdam 1995) 18.

hood. The different green areas are all connected to one another and to the park. This layout is shaped in a way that secures an optimal development of the flora and fauna.¹⁸² In addition to this planned natural part of Leidsche Rijn, the private backyards and allotment gardens should not be overlooked. An important reason for many of the people living in Leidsche Rijn to move to this area was the affordable houses that usually included a (large) garden, a combination that is quite unique in a city like Utrecht.

The meaning of nature has changed over the years. The meaning of the Latin word *natura* originally varied from phenomena people could not grasp, to everything God created. Later on, with the rise of the natural sciences, a distinction emerged between calculable physical nature that became the object of natural sciences, and a poignant, walk able nature for the nature lovers and the artists. Where the first type of 'nature' is a product of the de-mystification of the world after the rise of the natural sciences, the second nature became a retreat for religious experience, now that the personal God of the monotheistic West has evaporated.¹⁸³ In the book *Filosofie van het Landschap* ('Philosophy of the landscape'), Dutch cultural anthropologist and philosopher Ton Lemaire compares the development of the Western perception of landscape with the fading away of the Western God. In line with cultural historicists, he states that art, empirically speaking, can be seen as a symptom of the spirit of a certain period in time.¹⁸⁴ Therefore the following overview of the role of landscape in western painting and photography will give an insight into society's perception of landscape and nature.

Landscape appeared in the fifteenth century as a specific genre in western painting. Lemaire discerns five stages in the development of landscape painting and characterizes them as follows: First, there is exploration of the world, and people became more conscious of the world around them, in the period between 1400 and 1550, resulting in a reorientation of the modern human being. The second stage between 1550 and 1775 is that of establishment, and entailed the definite emancipation of the normal, everyday landscape, thereby surpassing the fifteenth century landscape usually functioning as the background of a religious tableau. Human beings had successfully established themselves in a profane space.

The third phase, called isolation or loneliness by Lemaire, is characterized by the changing relationship between God and nature. It is the time of Romanticism. In this time period, landscapes are increasingly researched and admired. However, strangely enough, they almost disappeared from western painting at this point, but flourished all the more in literature. The lonely, Romanticist individual was situated in a deified nature, expressing its godliness mostly in its beauty. The view of Jean-

¹⁸² Report: *Actualisatie Ontwikkelingsvisie, Leidsche Rijn Utrecht* (March 1999) 58-59.

¹⁸³ T. LEMAIRE: *Filosofie van het landschap* (Baarn 1996) 74-75.

¹⁸⁴ IDEM 21-22.

Jacques Rousseau was characteristic for this period in time. Rousseau was a dedicated walker and he felt that, whereas people used to withdraw in churches or monasteries to be alone with God or to pray; now people ought to be dreaming walkers, who wanted to meet nature in the visible landscape.

The fourth stage is called reconciliation. In the nineteenth century, the previously described romantic period (that only paid attention the exceptional) was replaced by naturalism or impressionism. These art movements portrayed the beauty of everyday life either in nature or in the city. The emergence of the impressionists went hand in hand with the rise and optimization of photography. The photo camera had the ability to mechanize impressionism and publish the profane world as it was.

The last phase Lemaire describes shows a radical break with the previous line of developments. In the late nineteenth century, the landscapes in paintings changed and became, in some cases, almost unrecognizable. Dali, Tanguy and Chirico painted strange, ominous, and inhuman worlds. In this surrealist way of painting, the reconciliation between man and nature seems to have disappeared and landscape fell back to a second-rate genre again. The landscapes paintings became a reflection of the invisible, used to explain a different view on nature and landscape. The estranging character of this phase represents the subconscious and dreams.¹⁸⁵ This last phase does not imply that the beautiful aspects of nature portrayed by previous art movements had disappeared. Both the organic and vegetative space of the impressionists and the estranged and still landscapes of the twentieth century are manifestations of the perception of the world, reflected by the development of the landscape.

It becomes obvious that throughout the centuries the relationship between people and nature and the perception of nature and the landscape has made a 180-degree turn. From being 'the wild' and the opposite of civilization, nature was tamed and became part, and maybe even proof of civilization. People began to understand nature and its rules and became able to grasp nature and integrate it into their lives. This process meant that nature over the centuries more and more became a produced space and no longer remained the unknown other. In line with those developments the definition of nature used in this chapter will be more common: namely; parks, forests and fields, flora and fauna, either wildly growing or humanly created.¹⁸⁶

This changing perception of nature has also caused it to play an increasingly important role in people's lives. With help of a short historical overview, this chapter will try to create an understanding of the importance of nature in the ur-

¹⁸⁵ The five stages are published in LEMAIRE: *Filosofie van het landschap* 21-69.

¹⁸⁶ C.S. OLDENBURGER-EBBERS, A.M. BACKER & E. BLOK: *Gids voor de Nederlandse tuin en landschaps-architectuur. Deel Oost en Midden. Gelderland. Utrecht.* (Rotterdam 1996) 69.

ban plans of Leidsche Rijn. In these plans, nature appears in various shapes. Private home and allotment gardens, smaller parks and the large city park in the center of the plan area will therefore all function as the core of this chapter. Using a number of case studies, this chapter will show how nature can be seen as one of the sacred domains in this suburban area, creating special places for its residents.

5.2 The perception of nature

Thousands of years ago this is what our entire country looked like. Now, the reed, the water, the grassy plains, and the wild animals of the *Oostvaardersplassen* are not only unique to the Netherlands but also to the rest of Europe.¹⁸⁷

This is how the website of the Dutch Forestry Commission describes the nature reserve *Oostvaardersplassen*, located in the Dutch province of Flevoland. Located in the center of the country at the location of the former *Zuiderzee*, Flevoland was created in the twentieth century and established in 1986. The low part of the new *polder*,¹⁸⁸ now known as the *Oostvaardersplassen* was originally meant to become an industrial area, but as the area spontaneously developed into a swamp-like natural park with interesting flora and fauna, the plans changed. Now, the area has become a type of nature reserve. This is a space where, if animals die, which they do in quite large numbers since they are not additionally fed, their carcasses are left for the raptors to eat, and where the openness of the landscape is being maintained by herbivores who can also survive outside on their own during the winter. Of course the herbivores are monitored and ecologists keep a close eye on the way in which the area develops, but the main purpose of the area is to show animals in their natural habitat, and nature is in charge.

To intensify the perception of nature lovers, a nature experience center has been built. Walks and information tours are organized from this center, but it is also used as a ‘natural monument’. Previously, most centers like this were built as heightened, partially hidden huts used for informative purposes only. The observatory built in the *Oostvaardersplassen* has the character of a place of pilgrimage and it was designed to function not only as an information center but also as a ‘chapel’; a nature-experience center. From a room especially designed for this purpose,

¹⁸⁷ Original text derived from the website www.staatsbosbeheer.nl (May 23, 2012): “Duizenden jaren geleden zag ons hele land er zo uit. Nu zijn het riet, water, de ruige grasvlaktes en de wilde dieren van de Oostvaardersplassen niet alleen uniek voor Nederland, maar voor heel Europa.”

¹⁸⁸ Empoldering is a method of reclaiming land from the sea. Empoldering involves the use of polders, and is also a way to control floods. A polder is a piece of land in a low-lying area that has been reclaimed from a body of water by building dikes and drainage canals (source: www.wikipedia.org).

people are offered the opportunity to enjoy the wonderful view and afterward record their experiences in a so called ‘intention book’.¹⁸⁹

As the examples given by Lemaire already implied, people have, since days long gone, enjoyed the attractiveness of flowers and the singing of birds. In literature, paintings and in dreamed descriptions of paradise, aspects of nature are ubiquitous. Also, in the religious context, the belief that the greatness and power of God was reflected by nature in all of her forms and shapes has been common knowledge at least since Francis of Assisi’s *Canticle of the Sun* in the early thirteenth century. In 2012, I visited an exhibition in the Biblical museum in Amsterdam titled: *Belief in nature; Flowers with meaning*, which shows a variety of flower still lifes.¹⁹⁰ The still life paintings shown in this exhibition were produced in large numbers in the Dutch Golden Age. The core of the exhibition was formed by fifteen still lifes, all painted in the seventeenth and eighteenth century and, judging by the title of the exhibition, the aim of the Biblical museum was to show the religiously tinted meaning of the paintings.

The still lifes showed vases with beautiful but impossible flower arrangements; some are too large for the vase, and the bouquets are often assemblies of flowers blooming in different seasons. The flowers and insects are painted in meticulous detail, and the different species are clearly recognizable. Emblems and prints show how scholars and theologians ascribe Christian and moralizing meanings to nature. This attempt is copied in the exhibition catalogue in which the editors surmise the possible symbolic meaning of the painted flowers. Whereas, for example, the white lily supposedly represents Mary, the wild pansy refers to the Holy Trinity, and the carnation is said to symbolize the Passion of Christ due to its shape.¹⁹¹ It remains uncertain whether the artists have their paintings interpreted in this particular religious way, but the exhibition and the way it is shaped does show the popularity of religious interpretation of flower still lifes.

This was the order of human institutions: first the forests, after that the huts, then the villages, next the cities, and finally the academies.

(Giambattista Vico: *The New Science* §239)¹⁹²

Representations of nature such as the flower still lifes and the descriptions of paradise in literature, often reflect the ideal landscape of their deviser: an idyllic picture with colorful flowers, lots of trees, fertile soil and bright creeks. The ideas and

¹⁸⁹ P. POST *Voorbij het kerkgebouw. De speelruimte van een ander sacraal domein* (Heeswijk 2010) 186.

¹⁹⁰ Exhibition: *Geloof in natuur: Bloemen van betekenis*. Bijbelsmuseum Amsterdam (April 27, 2012 – October 30, 2012)

¹⁹¹ B. DE KLERCK: ‘Weelderige cascade van bloemen’, in *NRC Handelsblad* (May 25, 2012) Cultuur 21.

¹⁹² G. VICO: *The new science* (1725) cited in R.P. HARRISON: *Forests: The shadow of civilization* (Chicago 1992).

ideals behind the *Oostvaardersplassen* such as willfully letting fertile soil overgrow, the preservation of possibly dangerous animals such as wolves, and the natural disposal of dead animals, would have been unheard of in previous centuries.¹⁹³ When did man's opinion about nature change and are there any apparent reasons for this changing perspective?

One of the first modern thinkers to promote the intrinsic worth of the wild was Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) when he wrote: "The wilderness pleases. We seem to live alone with Nature. We view her in her inmost recesses, and contemplate her with more delight in the original wilds than in the artificial labyrinths and feigned wildernesses of the palace."¹⁹⁴ Given the previous examples, the pioneering work by Cooper did not immediately change man's opinion of the wild, but over time, new notions of wild nature as a sole and precious type of environment have replaced the traditional ideas which considered wild nature to be unattractive and even evil.¹⁹⁵ This new position wilderness had gained resulted in the protection of wilderness areas throughout the Western world. To that end, the European Union has established the Natura 2000 network, a coherent network of wildlife areas meant to preserve Europe's rich and varied flora and fauna. This is a much-needed measure since the biodiversity on this continent has been declining for years. And since plants and animals do not take notice of borders, it is important to manage nature conservation on a larger level. In the Netherlands, the network includes 163 areas, among which is the *Oostvaardersplassen*.¹⁹⁶

It was in the late nineteenth century that the Netherlands was at the verge of Industrialization and the economic leap forward. The population started growing, cities started to expand and the railway network was growing accordingly. These combined developments lead to large-scale cultivation of savage lands. In the early 1870s, the cutting down of the last remaining primeval forest near the Dutch city of Apeldoorn was celebrated as a victory of human civilization. Although tree planting and landscape gardening had already become a characteristic pastime of the well-to-do, the wild forest was still seen as wild and hostile in this period. Forests were sometimes even interpreted as being the opposite of Western civilization.

In his book *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* in which he describes the history of forests in the Western imagination, professor of Italian language and literature Robert Pogue Harrison, states that forests were seen as the "sylvan fringe of darkness" and since most "places of human habitation in the West were at some time

¹⁹³ D. VAN DER MEULEN: *Het bedwongen bos. Nederlanders & hun natuur* (Amsterdam 2009) 9-10.

¹⁹⁴ A.A. COOPER, third Earl of Shaftesbury, *The Moralists*, 1709/1999 cited in A.E. VAN DEN BERG & S.L. KOOLE: 'New wilderness in the Netherlands: An investigation of visual preferences for nature development landscapes', in *Landscape and Urban Planning* 78 (2006) 362.

¹⁹⁵ IBIDEM.

¹⁹⁶ Information on the Nature 2000 can be found on: www.natura2000.nl (August 10, 2012).

in the past more or less densely forested” it can be said that: “Western civilization literally cleared its space in the midst of [these] forests.”¹⁹⁷ Moreover, human progress had depended upon digging up and demolishing the trees that originally covered most of the land.¹⁹⁸ People thought they were supposed to control nature. On a national scale, this meaning given to the forest could also be applied to the interpretation of landscape.

British historian Simon Schama gives several examples regarding the meaning of forests in different cultural settings. In his book *Landscape and Memory* he presents, “compelling evidence of how forests have embodied particular meanings in different nations: a militaristic spirit in Germany; a passion for order in France; a transcendental connection with the ‘Creator’ in America; a struggle for national freedom in Poland.”¹⁹⁹ Unfortunately Schama did not include the Netherlands in his study. “It would be interesting to get such an interpretation of the history of nature in the Netherlands. Here all nature has been pushed behind fences, it has been shattered due to roads, displaced by suburbs, and replaced by industrial areas.”²⁰⁰

The aforementioned examples show nature as being full of enigmas and paradoxes: its beauty found in the flower still lifes on the one hand, and the forests as the shadows of civilization on the other. Nature can both appear as a place of profanity as well as a place of the sacred. In the Netherlands, all nature has become annexed by culture. Every part of it has been planned and invented, the wild woods have long been gone.²⁰¹ The following paragraphs elaborate on the most common form of (planned) nature in the Netherlands: the park.

5.3 The park: A definition

PARK, a space of ground used for public or private recreation, differing from a garden in its spaciousness and the broad, simple and natural character of its scenery, and from a ‘wood’ in the more scattered arrangement of its trees and greater expanse of its glades. (Frederick Law Olmsted, 1875)²⁰²

The park is a place where nature and culture collides. For centuries, the way to incorporate nature into our civilized society was by laying out parks. The parks are

¹⁹⁷ HARRISON: *Forests* ix.

¹⁹⁸ K. THOMAS: *Man and the natural world. Changing attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London 1984) 192.

¹⁹⁹ Simon Schama explained in O. JONES & P. CLOKE: *Tree cultures. The place of trees and trees in their place* (Oxford/New York 2002) 23.

²⁰⁰ VAN DER MEULEN: *Het bedwongen bos* 10-11.

²⁰¹ S. SCHAMA: *Landscape and memory* (London 1996) 22.

²⁰² Frederick Law Olmsted cited in M.C. ROBBINS: ‘Park Making as a National Art’, in *Atlantic Monthly* LXXIX (1897) 86-98.

used in various ways: as a realm of relaxation on a Sunday afternoon, for our evening walk with the dog or just as a shortcut on our way home from work. Due to their constantly changing nature, parks can be seen as a kaleidoscope of colorful rides.²⁰³ They are places for relaxation for some and protest points for others. For every user the park can have a different purpose. And as with other forms of nature, parks have for long been part of our imagination and are omnipresent in multiple forms of fiction.

Take Central Park in New York for example. This famous tourist attraction featured in over 150 films during the twentieth century, as well as in a large number of novels. For example, Tongariro National Park in New Zealand was used to represent the mythical landscapes of Middle Earth from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Filmmaker Peter Jackson clearly saw this park as a place that might be home to hobbits and fairies.²⁰⁴ Hence fantasy, fiction and film have revealed that the life of the park inspires us in many different ways and can, on the other hand, probably also be seen as an expression of our ideas, ideals and dreams.

The book *The Invention of the Park. From the Garden of Eden to Disney's Magic Kingdom* describes how the meaning of the park has changed significantly over time. From a European hunting reserve in the early editions of the *Oxford English Dictionary* to a prioritization of the democratic city park in the *New Oxford American*. Moreover, most descriptions emphasize the 'public' character of parks putting up notions of freedom and democracy. The book furthermore states that:

Reading down the list of subcategories, the park also emerges as a space associated with nature. It is 'a green area' in the town, an expansive territory preserved in a 'natural state', a zoological collection and country estate. Such locales become 'parks partly due to the quality of their organic features, but also through the process of enclosure. (...) Finally, recreation is a hallmark of park design – 'it is *for* public recreational use, whether for strolling, exploration or simply watching others play in sports stadiums.'²⁰⁵

In the following chapters, the book describes a variety of parks from the Garden of Eden and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, via English landscape parks to Disneyland, showing that it is not possible to speak of one type of park, and also that there is more than one purpose to parks. For this chapter, not all of these parks are relevant since it will be mainly focusing on the *Máximapark* in Leidsche Rijn, believed to be the largest city park in the Netherlands.

²⁰³ K.R. JONES & J. WILLS: *The invention of the park. From the Garden of Eden to Disney's magic kingdom* (Cambridge/Malden 2005) 1.

²⁰⁴ IDEM 1-2.

²⁰⁵ IDEM 3.

5.4 City parks: Bringing nature to the city

When describing the history of development of city parks it is possible to go all the way back to antiquity. The previously mentioned Hanging Gardens of Babylon can be seen as an early example of a city park. Despite this interesting history, however, for the purpose of this chapter it will not be necessary to go that far back in time. In the Netherlands large-scale beautification of the cities was taken on by city councils in the nineteenth century. After the French Revolution, internationally, the power of the middle classes started to grow at the expense of the rule of the nobility. Since the differences between the social classes had always been smaller in the Netherlands, this shift was more gradual. However, consequential trends abroad such as city embellishment did inspire the Dutch higher middle class.

The rise of city parks in the nineteenth century was not a coincidence. The industrial changes sweeping Europe and the United States functioned as a stimulus for the planning of urban parks. The rise of factories, machinery and a rapidly increasing population made the nineteenth century into 'the great age of the city'.²⁰⁶ Green areas previously used for leisure and entertainment purposes had been replaced by the upcoming industrial landscape that was far from green and grand but characterized by factories, railroads and commercial buildings. The new upper class emerging out of this industrial turn, and consisting of factory owners, merchants and bankers, had the money to buy country estates when they wanted to escape the growing cities. However, the middle class residents were often limited to the boundaries of the city. Hence, the idea of the park gained popularity among this group.

There were two types of parks emerging in European cities in the nineteenth century: On the one hand old royal parks were appropriated for public use and in addition entirely new parks were developed. In the Netherlands the first new park designs were inspired by the already present examples of the nobility such as forstresses and castle gardens. At the same time, they were adapted to the financial capacity of the bourgeoisie. In their design, the parks followed romantic trends and were adapted to the style of the landscape. The desire to embellish the cities coincided with fundamental changes regarding the defense of the cities. Due to changing war tactics, cities no longer needed large fortifications. These could now be turned into public green areas.²⁰⁷

The previously described developments in the emergence of publicly accessible city parks in the nineteenth century can be called revolutionary. From a traditionally aristocratic enclave the park changed into a public landscape focusing on leisure activities, such as walking, reading, and bird watching, for the middle clas-

²⁰⁶ JONES & WILLS: *The invention of the park* 43.

²⁰⁷ M. VAN ROOIJEN: *De groene stad. Een historische studie over de groenvoorziening in de Nederlandse stad* (Den Haag 1984) 23-30.

ses. An example of a Dutch nineteenth century city park functioning along those lines is the *Vondelpark* in Amsterdam. This park was opened for the public in 1865. The *Vondelpark* could be described as a 'place of recreation for the elegant world'.²⁰⁸ The *Vondelpark* was meant for the masses, but it did not belong to the masses. It was constructed along the prevailing views of how the public should spend its free time, in a refined manner: drinking tea, rowing a boat, horseback riding, or listening to good music. The masses were welcome to join in on the activities as long as they behaved accordingly. Therefore, despite the fact that the park was meant to be for everyone, in terms of the influence of new ideas on recreation, it was lacking.²⁰⁹

In the twentieth century the ideas about city parks and bringing nature into the city expanded and developed when the old parks were remodeled and new ones created. *The Invention of the Park* describes how "leisure assumed primacy over nature, action superseded ideas of contemplation."²¹⁰ Fritz Schumacher, designer of the *Stadtspark* in Hamburg (1914), elaborated on this idea of leisure when he explained that productive use of the park lay

not in the sense of a passive enjoyment of the scenery, but in an active participation to be practiced in the open air: playing, taking part in sports, lying on the grass, paddling in the water, riding on horseback, dancing; going far beyond the appreciation of music, of art, of flowers and of physical pleasure.²¹¹

There is a clear shift from emphasis on the design of the park to an emphasis on the way in which people perceive and use the park. Whereas the nineteenth century parks had failed to reach out to the masses, the parks of the early 1900s made a great step forward. Also, it was no longer needed to completely eliminate the city from the park. City features became more and more integrated into the park design.

In the Netherlands, where the popularity of city parks had not carried as far as in countries such as France, Germany and the US in the nineteenth century, the approach changed in the early 1900s and a more modern vision was portrayed. Parks officially became part of the public housing plans that were made to house the growing population of the cities. These public housing plans did not only include living accommodations but their location and the amount of fresh air that was able to reach the residential area became important, as well as the accessibility of parks and public gardens, where residents had the opportunity to relax and get

²⁰⁸ S. GIEDION: *Space, time and architecture* (Cambridge 1967) 747.

²⁰⁹ VAN ROOIJEN: *De groene stad* 47.

²¹⁰ JONES & WILLS: *The invention of the park* 58.

²¹¹ *IBIDEM*.

in touch with nature. Green areas of that sort were of great importance for the public health in the cities, a report on parks in Amsterdam stated.²¹²

This development in which the parks became ‘an expected feature of urban life’ and recreation was seen as ‘an essential of life,’ further evolved in the twentieth century.²¹³ Especially the increase in leisure time and growing prosperity in the post-1945 period influenced the park design that came to serve as a multiple-use leisure area fit for all sorts of sports, cultural, and musical events. Besides the attention to recreation, an environmental turn also made its advent. This could be in the shape of butterfly gardens or wild-grass meadows, which offered visitors the opportunity to experience nature. Dutch parks somewhat followed the international trends, but not quite, when trying to combine the recreational and environmental aspects. The parks were designed to be as functional and usable as possible. The vegetation plans focused on plain, native species contrary to the expensive exotic vegetation characterizing parks in the nineteenth century. In the late twentieth century, Dutch parks had become generally accepted cultural artifacts and inextricably bound up with urban planning. They made the city livable and had become vital parts of the urban plans.²¹⁴

However, designing city parks is not as simple and straightforward as it might seem from the previous paragraphs. It is one thing to design a park, but another to have it be a success. Parks are often referred to as wonderful places, blessings awarded to the underprivileged populations of cities. They are beautiful and green, little pieces of paradise where people can go to break out of their daily routine. But, as I mentioned before, the success of parks is by no means a guarantee. As writer and activist Jane Jacobs puts it:

Parks are volatile places. They tend to run to extremes of popularity and unpopularity. Their behavior is far from simple. They can be delightful features of city districts, and economic assets to their surroundings as well, but a pitiful few are (...) there are dozens of dispirited city vacuums called parks eaten around with decay, little used, unloved.²¹⁵

Despite beautiful designs and the presence of great facilities, the success or failure of parks depends on the way in which they are generated, used and perceived by people. It is even possible to turn it around and say that initially city parks are deprived places, which need to be awarded with the blessings and appreciation of their users. As soon as people withhold their use, the parks become subject to

²¹² Report cited in: VAN ROOIJEN: *De groene stad* 83-84.

²¹³ JONES & WILLIS: *The invention of the park* 59.

²¹⁴ IDEM 60-61; VAN ROOIJEN: *De groene stad* 117-118.

²¹⁵ J. JACOBS: *The death and life of great American cities* (New York 1961) 89; JONES & WILLIS: *The invention of the park* 61-62.

rejection and failure. Instead of the expected automatic uplifting of the neighborhood, the parks are greatly affected by the way the neighborhood acts upon them.²¹⁶

In the book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs explores city parks and analyzes their success factors by showing how three similar looking ordinary parks in the city of Philadelphia have developed in totally different directions, varying from a popular family park to a pervert park and a so-called Skid Row park where large groups of homeless people live. Of course, city parks in the Netherlands are not likely to develop in such extreme directions, but the chapter does show how similar looking parks can succeed or fail due to the way they are designed and/or used. In this chapter, Jacobs names a number of characteristics that add to the success of a beautifully designed park: The first aspect she mentions is that: "Greatly loved neighborhood parks benefit from a certain rarity value."²¹⁷ They should not have much competition from other open areas. This way the park will function as a business, offering a unique 'leisure product'. Besides the location of the park, Jacobs mentions four elements included in most designs of parks intensely used in a generalized public-yard fashion: intricacy, centering, sun, and enclosure.

Intricacy in this sense means that the design of the park should be versatile, making the same person return to the park for different reasons at different times: one time to read a book, the next time to play sports and a third time to have a Sunday afternoon picnic with the family. And it is the design of the park that should stimulate all those different types of use. A quiet area, near a little pond, for example, where people can sit and read, a large open area, maybe with some trees, which people can use as goal posts in their soccer game, and an area where you can safely sit with the family and enjoy a picnic. This does not mean, however, that the design of the park has to be extremely complex; the expressions of difference can be subtle and should be mainly located at eye level. The second aspect of centering is an element of intricacy. Typically in order to function, parks include a place commonly understood to be the center or climax. People can be inventive in their use of those park centers.

The third essential element in a park is the sun. Of course in the summer there will be need for some shade, but a high building totally blocking the sun can be fatal for the park. However, a park does need to be enclosed, either by means of buildings or in another way. As Jacobs states: "They [buildings] make a definite shape out of the space, so that it appears as an important event in the city scene, a positive feature, rather than a no account leftover."²¹⁸

²¹⁶ JACOBS: *The death and life of great American cities* 89-95.

²¹⁷ IDEM 102

²¹⁸ IDEM 106.

In general terms, it can be said that the success of a park depends both on its design and on the way it is received, perceived and used. Here a line can be drawn to the urban triad described in the theoretical chapter. The park will only get a special meaning when both the design and the way in which the park is used are in balance. A great design alone does not give a park sacred value.

If successful, a park can add great attraction and value to a neighborhood. In the plans of Leidsche Rijn, nature in general, and more specifically, the large park that was to be located in the center of the neighborhood play an important role. The design of this park, the ideas and ideals behind it, and the way, in which this park is perceived and used by the residents of the neighborhood, is elaborated on in the second part of this chapter.

5.5 Nature in Leidsche Rijn

The Máximapark: The production of the largest city park in the Netherlands

Leidsche Rijn was planned in an area with a long history, as was described in the second chapter. Evidently, the area in which the park was planned has a history of its own. I will elaborate briefly on this history as it plays a role in the design of the park.

The *Máximapark* is largely located in the Old Rhine basin. This river has left behind large packages of sand and clay sediment in the area, making it a popular place of residence for centuries, due to its good natural drainage system and high location. Until the Roman era, habitation was spread out and strongly dependent on the changing circumstances of the dynamic river landscape. In the first centuries of the Common Era the border of the Roman Empire ran through the planning area. In the southeast of the park we find the remains of a Roman army base with amenities of every kind, a *castellum*, safeguarding the Rhine border from the middle of the first century onward.

The period between 800 and 1200 was characterized by large-scale landownership by the provincial chapters of Utrecht and the nobility, for whom vassals supplied statute labor. From the eleventh century onward, the peat lands along the riverbank were made available for agrarian use. The water management was regulated via a system of plot ditches, which floated into rivers such as the Old Rhine and The Vecht through long watercourses.

For centuries, the riverside grounds west of the city of Utrecht were an important supplier of clay. This means that the planning area of the park had to be dug up a few spits deep. As a result, a layer of leaf mold on sand was left behind, which proved to be extremely useful for horticulture. Therefore, around the early twentieth century numerous market gardeners settled in the area. Old boiler

houses, chimneys, and greenhouses remind us of this period which was of great importance for the Dutch economy as a whole.²¹⁹

My nature park.

As a little boy I used to walk here with my father. He taught me the names of the plants on the sides of the ditches and how to imitate the sound of the tawny owl. I still like spending time here. I enjoy the grand landscape, the peace and quiet. Usually I bring my binoculars, there are some special birds here. I love the fact that they will be creating a park in this area. It means that at least it will stay green. Maybe later I can take my grandson to this park. Let's see if I can still imitate the sound of the tawny owl... (M. Jol).²²⁰

This citation was derived from a booklet made by order of the municipality of Utrecht and meant to promote the new park in its city. The park was still in the early stages of its creation at that time. It gives a small peak into the history of the area as well as a wish for the future. This paragraph will further elaborate on this history but especially on the production process of the park, explaining how the design came into being.

In the period April-May 1997, a closed design competition was held to come to the design of a 'central park' of around 300 acres in the VINEX-area Leidsche Rijn. The municipalities of Utrecht and Vleuten-De Meern, on whose territory the park would be located, organized the competition. Designing a plan of this size (in total the park encloses 300 acres) was uncommon in the Netherlands at that time. Until then, the design of parks had been limited to the renovation and renewal of classical city parks, the construction of neighborhood greens and the (culture technical) design of large-scale recreational areas such as *Spaarnwoude*. In the meantime, the design of parks this size has become more common. Functioning as a prototype, the *Máximapark* has had other matching projects such as the *Metropolitaine parken*, which will be realized in the Randstad area in 2040, *Park21* in the Haar-

²¹⁹ Report: *Rijnsche Park, leve het groen! Ontwikkelingsplan behorende bij de inpasingsstudie 10 mei 2000, 1 augustus 2000*, by order of the cities of Utrecht, Vleuten and De Meern, 14-15.

²²⁰ A quote from a frequent visitor to the area that later turned into the *Máximapark* in a promotion booklet: *Leidsche Rijn Park. Uniek Utrechts groengebied in wording*, published by order of the Gemeente Utrecht: Projectbureau Leidsche Rijn (May 2003). Original text: "Mijn natuurpark. Als kleine jongen liep ik hier al met mijn vader. Hij leerde me de namen van de plantjes langs de sloten en hoe je het geluid van een bosuil kan nadoen. Ik kom hier nog steeds graag. Ik geniet van het wijde landschap, de rust. Meestal heb ik wel een kijker bij me, er zitten hier nog wel eens bijzondere vogels. Dat hier een park komt vind ik geweldig. Dat betekent dat het in ieder geval groen blijft. Misschien kan ik straks met mijn kleinzoon naar het park. Eens kijken of ik het geluid van die bosuil nog ken..."

lemmermeer, and *Park Lingezegen*, located between the cities of Arnhem and Nijmegen.²²¹

Six contestants were invited to join the competition and five eventually participated. Despite the open character of the assignment, the plans had to fulfill certain stipulations: First, the existing landscape patterns such as the agrarian subdivision had to be maintained in the design. Secondly, part of the large park had to be designed along the lines of a traditional park with woods, trails and ponds. The third point focused on the connection of the ingenious water system present in the area to the surrounding districts. The last commissioned point was the space that needed to be reserved for organized sports accommodations such as soccer, field hockey and baseball. The competition resulted in five different designs with revealing and inspiring names varying from *Strawberry fields forever*, to *Parkcity* and *Kremlin*.²²²

The winning design, *Kremlin* by the landscape architecture firm *West 8 Urban Design and Landscape Architecture*, introduced an ambitious plan that would function as a binding element and a clear gesture to the environment, the judges' report stated. It respects the environment but also functions as an impulse or catalyst for this environment. The plan includes two main structures that will function as a robust framework and a steering element in the design: the *Jacques P. Thijsen Lint*, a large green area that includes a long ribbon shaped asphalt track, and the *Kremlin*, a court yard within the park surrounded by a large wall. This would make it possible for the park to develop at two different paces inside and outside of the *Kremlin*. The judges thought that *Het Lint*, as well as the planned wall, would function as transition points: the first from the neighborhood into the park and the second as a transition to intimacy and mysticism.²²³ Adriaan Geuze, director of *West 8*, described what people experience as they enter the park, as if it were the entrance of a Mediterranean garden, a sublime experience whereby 'everything slides of your shoulders'.²²⁴

In a later report on a revised version of this *Kremlin* wall, the architects elaborate on the idea of a courtyard within the park. As, in the history of garden and landscape architecture, the courtyard plays an important role. Courtyards are known for their mythological, mystical and even religious references and they have been an important theme in garden design traditions throughout the world and history. The report also states that in our own culture, the courtyard is an allusion to paradise. It is a protected place, excluded from the outside world and repre-

²²¹ M. HENDRIKS & A. SIMONS: *Leidsche Rijn Park. Ontwerp en realisatie van een unieke stadspark* (Wageningen 2010) 16-17.

²²² Report: *Rijnsche Park, leve het groen!* 18; HENDRIKS & SIMONS: *Leidsche Rijn Park* 16-17.

²²³ Information derived from the judges' report: *Centrale Park Leidsche Rijn* (June 25, 1997) and from the entry made by *West 8: Kremlin: Ontwerp prijsvraag Centrale Park Leidsche Rijn* (1997).

²²⁴ HENDRIKS & SIMONS: *Leidsche Rijn Park* 18-19.

senting quietness and contemplation. It demands a peaceful and romantic atmosphere. This concept will be followed in the new park, the report states.²²⁵

The original plans of *West 8* have evolved and changed over the years. First, the name of the park has changed from *Central Park* to *Rijnsche Park* to *Leidsche Rijn Park*, and recently to its final name: *Máximapark*, in line with three other parks in the city of Utrecht which are named after Dutch Queens. Project manager Robert Schütte explains the original name of the park as follows:

We foresaw that the park would be created in the hectic VINEX context. Due to this hectic situation flexibility is required, because things don't always go as planned, especially in the long run. Therefore we added this flexibility to *Het Lint*. But we also stated that a large portion of the park should remain free of this hecticness, a park that can grow for at least 300 years, not disturbed by a sports field or infrastructure, a (more or less) enclosed place with a clear identity. Hereby associations with the Kremlin came into mind. This association was different for everyone and could be interpreted in negative ways by some. This is when we decided to change the name to *Binnenhof*.²²⁶

The final name change from *Leidsche Rijn Park* to *Máximapark*, in the spring of 2011, stirred up a lot of emotions in the neighborhood. The protest started on various social media websites such as Twitter and LinkedIn. In a discussion group on LinkedIn, a heated discussion resulted into 173 comments mostly from people living in Leidsche Rijn, who strongly objected the name change. The thread even includes an exchange of abuse among disagreeing residents. However, most of the participants seem to grieve the loss of the old name, *Leidsche Rijn Park*, instead of really objecting the new name. Moreover, they feel left out in the decision-making process and feel like it was an in-crowd deal between the mayor, the aldermen, and the Friends of the Máximapark Foundation.

²²⁵ Report *West 8: Parkpergola Leidsche Rijn Park, Ontwikkelingskader parkpergola* (April 2009).

²²⁶ Information derived from an email by Robert Schütte (21-08-2012). Robert Schütte is the *West 8* project manager for the park in Leidsche Rijn: "We hebben voorzien dat het park gemaakt zou worden in de hectiek van een VINEXwijk. In die hectiek is flexibiliteit gewenst, omdat zaken nu eenmaal anders lopen dan voorzien. Zeker over een zo lange termijn. Dus hebben we Het Lint die flexibiliteit gegeven. Maar, hebben we gesteld, je moet ook een ruimte vastleggen die gevrijwaard is van die hectiek. Een park, dat 300 jaar oud kan worden en niet wordt verstoord door sportvelden en infrastructuur. Een plek (min of meer) afgesloten, met een duidelijk eigen identiteit. Daarbij hadden we de associatie van het Kremlin. Die associatie was echter voor iedereen anders en werd soms negatief uitgelegd. We hebben de naam veranderd in Binnenhof."

I am also in favor if the name: Leidsche Rijn Park... It feels more like its 'our' name and we were already very much used to it! We practically live in the Leidsche Rijn Park and they did not even ask us about our opinion... it's a shame...²²⁷

It makes me feel like the Leidsche Rijn Park is taken away from the residents of Leidsche Rijn.²²⁸

Why, if the name had to be changed, didn't they choose something which refers to the history of the area (landscape or residents: Romans/limes).²²⁹

It is no longer 'our' park, the park of Leidsche Rijn, but just a park with a meaningless name, somewhere in the Netherlands. It changed from something to be proud of, to something negative.²³⁰

The lively discussion on this networking site finally resulted in a petition against the name change of the park signed by 552 people. The petition stated:

We, residents of Leidsche Rijn and other parties involved establish, that after ten years, without asking the residents for their opinion, the name 'Leidsche Rijn Park' was secretly changed into 'Máximapark' without the support of the majority of the users of the park. Various social media websites show that only nine percent supports this name change. We do not find the explanation for this name change sufficient. We want to keep the name 'Leidsche Rijn Park' because we have been proud of it for the last ten years. It gives Leidsche Rijn a positive feeling. Leidsche Rijn Park is the binding factor between the residents of neighborhoods 9 and 10. Leidsche Rijn Park will always be unique: There will be only one in the Netherlands. (...) ²³¹

²²⁷ Contribution to the LinkedIn discussion group *Help! Leidsche Rijn Park will be Máximapark* (14-05-2011): Original text: "Ik ben ook voor de naam Leidsche Rijn Park... Voelt meer 'van ons' en die naam zat er al helemaal ingebakken! We wonen notabene eigenlijk in het Leidsche Rijn Park en ons is ook niet naar onze mening gevraagd... Beetje jammer..."

²²⁸ Contribution to the LinkedIn discussion group *Help! Leidsche Rijn Park will be Máximapark* (14-05-2011): Original text: "Het geeft mij het gevoel dat het Leidsche Rijn Park wordt afgenomen van de Leidsche Rijners."

²²⁹ Contribution to the LinkedIn discussion group *Help! Leidsche Rijn Park will be Máximapark* (14-05-2011): "Waarom is er, als er dan toch een andere naam moest komen, niet gekozen voor een verwijzing naar de historie van het gebied (landschap of bevolking: Romeinen/limes)?"

²³⁰ Contribution to the LinkedIn discussion group *Help! Leidsche Rijn Park will be Máximapark* (14-05-2011): "Het is niet meer 'ons' park, het park van Leidsche Rijn, maar gewoon een park met een nietszeggende naam, ergens in Nederland. Van iets om trots op te zijn, is het nu een grijze mus."

²³¹ Original text of the petition submitted to the mayor and aldermen of the city of Utrecht on 28-06-2011: "Wij Bewoners van Leidsche Rijn en andere betrokkenen constateren dat na tien jaar, zonder dat de mening van bewoners gepeild is, de naam 'Leidsche Rijn Park' onder geheimhouding veranderd is in 'Maxima Park' terwijl daar geen draagvlak voor is onder veel parkbezoekers. Uit diverse Social Media blijkt dat slechts 9% de naamswijziging ondersteunt. We zien geen enkele reden

Neither the petition, nor the protests on the social media websites influenced the decision. The name *Máximapark* was chosen in line with the other ‘Queen parks’ in the city of Utrecht. These (now) four parks are all named after the Dutch queens, and since her Royal Highness Queen Máxima will be next in line, it was only logical to name the park after her.

Besides the name, the design of the park also underwent some significant changes, and additions over the years. This was anticipated by the *West 8* design team whose strategy was to lie out a main structure and be flexible on the details. This concept seems to have worked. Looking at a recent plan of the park the broad outlines resemble the ones in the original plans but details such as, for example, a lily pond, the location of some of the bridges, and the way in which some of the canals have been positioned, have changed. These changes were either due to practical reasons, or on the request of the residents. *Het Gat van Serton* is an example of the latter. This small natural pond had been used as a swimming pool for the neighborhood children for years. It is the place where ‘grandpa Serton’ had taught them how to swim.

Hence, Schütte stated: “On this level, the design was flexible and open for change, but when you look at the park through our eyes, you can still see the core and *Het Lint*. On that level, not much has changed.”²³² Asking about the previously discussed theory of Jane Jacobs on successful parks, Schütte agrees that it is possible to speak of a number of fixed and attractive ingredients needed to create a successful park:

Space to move and be active, like on *Het Lint*, which can be used for jogging or cycling, but also space to retire from the busy city life, quiet space, water, sunbathing areas, and the one thing we have always demanded is a teahouse and a large playground. (...) You go to the park but also to the teahouse or playground. (...) all those separate elements are ingredients of the park. Water is an important element as well. In case of the *Vikingrijn* we have always said: make sure it is possible for people to rent a boat and peddle on the river.²³³

tot de naamswijziging in de uitleg die achteraf gegeven is. We willen de naam ‘Leidsche Rijn Park’ behouden omdat we hier al tien jaar trots op zijn en het ‘Leidsche Rijn’ een positief gevoel geeft. ‘Leidsche Rijn Park’ verbindt de bewoners van wijk 9 en 10 met elkaar. ‘Leidsche Rijn Park’ zal altijd een unieke naam blijven: er kan er maar één van zijn in Nederland.”

²³² Original text derived from interview with Robert Schütte (Rotterdam, 19-6-2012): “Dus op dat nivo [in de details] was er veel flexibiliteit. Maar als je door je oogbaren heen kijkt zie je nog steeds die kern en je ziet het Lint. Daar is niet veel veranderd.”

²³³ Original text derived from interview with Robert Schütte (Rotterdam, 19-6-2012): “Ruimte om lekker te bewegen zoals op het Lint om te joggen of te fietsen, maar ook ruimte om je juist een beetje terug te trekken uit de stad waar het rustig is, water, ligweiden en waar wij altijd voor gepleit hebben en wat er ook gekomen is: een grote speeltuin en een theehuis. (...) Dan ga je voor het park maar ook voor het theehuis of het restaurant. (...) al die dingen zijn wel ingrediënten van een park. Water is een

In the continuous design process, the following ingredients have become part of the park:

- *The Binnenhof* is the heart of the *Máximapark*. It is a 45-acre classical city park with a natural character; a great are for promenading or picnics. It has lovely decorated bridges, a large lily pond, banks covered in plants, majestic avenues with beeches or sycamore trees but also winding paths that tempt one to discover. The *Vikingrijn* winds about the area. This park of the park also includes a large playground and a restaurant.²³⁴
- *Het Lint* has already been shortly explained earlier in this paragraph. It is eight kilometers long, and on average 30 meters wide, green recreational strip surrounding a majority of the park. In the midst of the green, a 6 meters wide asphalt ribbon was constructed. The strip is decorated with daisies and its smooth asphalt surface makes it perfect for walkers, cyclers, runners and skaters. Because *Het Lint* surrounds the park, it also takes its users along the park's highlights.²³⁵
- *De Buitenhof* is the latest addition to the park. In the initial plans this area was meant for sports fields. When this proved not to be attainable its function changed to housing. These housing plans caused a lot of resistance in the neighborhood, which made the municipality decide to keep this area green. In the new plans, the quiet *Buitenhof* functions as a counterpart for the busy *Binnenhof*. Contrary to the designed parts of the park, in this area nature would take its course and the planners would interfere as little as possible. The maintenance of this part of the park is largely depending on volunteers. Both the *Stichting Vrienden van het Máximapark*²³⁶ and *Landschapsbeheer Vleuten-De Meern*²³⁷ are organizing the maintenance of this part of the park in collaboration with the city.²³⁸

belangrijk element. We hebben bij de Vikingrijn altijd gezegd zorg dat mensen daar een bootje kunnen huren en heen en weer kunnen peddelen.”

²³⁴ Information from: www.maximapark.nu (June 13, 2012).

²³⁵ Report: *Jac. P. Thijsse/Int Randvoorwaarden en uitwerking, inrichtingsplan: Gevenste eindsituatie* (April 13, 2005) in order of Projectbureau Leidsche Rijn.

²³⁶ The Friends of the Máximapark Foundation was founded in 2004 and they devote oneself to the design, maintenance and programming of the park and its activities. They do this on behalf of the residents but in collaboration with the municipality.

²³⁷ Landscape Management Vleuten-De Meern is part of the Landscape Management Netherlands, a large scale volunteer organization working to maintain and develop the landscape. Recently they have opened their own building in *De Buitenhof* which they built with the help of The Friends of the Máximapark Foundation.

²³⁸ The information about *De Buitenhof* was derived from the report: *De Buitenhof. Voorlopig Inrichtingsplan De Buitenhof. Onderdeel van het Leidsche Rijn Park* (August 30, 2006) on behalf of the

- *De Vikingrijn*. A real city park needs to include water to be able to walk past its banks, feed the ducks, row a boat or just sit at its banks emptying your head and staring aimlessly. Therefore, in the *Maximapark* the architects have decided to restore the course of a river that has been part of this area for thousands of years: the Old Rhine. Some parts of this river had been transformed into small ditches, and other parts of the river have completely disappeared. But with the so-called *Vikingrijn*, the original course of the Old Rhine will be restored. With this, the water that has dominated the landscape of the west of Utrecht for so long will return to its original place. For centuries, ships have traveled these waters and the remains of various those ships have been found at the digging places. The ships date back to various time periods from the Roman period to the early Middle Ages. One of the ships has been displayed and another one was researched by archeologists and covered up again, in order to become part of the new *Vikingrijn*. The new river is four kilometers long and its width varies from a small meandering stream to 30 meters at other points. The *Vikingrijn* cuts through the whole park, and it is an important and eye-catching part of its design.²³⁹
- One the elements of special importance in the design are *the teahouse and the playground*. The teahouse/restaurant is located at the heart of the park. Its name, *Anafora* was chosen especially for its meaning. It stems from Greek and literally means thanks offering. The *Anafora* website gives a more free interpretation and describes it as “being grateful and celebrating life with food, friends, and family.”²⁴⁰ Moreover, they refer to the restaurant as a place where people come together to celebrate, a place for contemplation, to appreciate all the good in life.²⁴¹ *West 8* also designed the teahouse, but an old sketch from the well-known Dutch architect Pierre Cuypers (1817-1921) inspired the architecture. The *Rijksmuseum*, the central railway station in Amsterdam, and the nearby castle *De Haar*, are also designed by Cuypers and show similarities in style. On the inside the restaurant has a wide passage way to the playground and the ceilings are up to eight meters high. The glass doors can all be opened to allow the visitors to watch the boats on the *Vikingrijn*.²⁴²

The large playground is located right next to the teahouse which makes it easy for parents to keep an eye on their children while having a cup of tea or a glass of wine

Gemeente Utrecht, Vereniging voor Landschapsbeheer Vleuten-De Meern and Stichting Vrienden van het Leidsche Rijn Park.

²³⁹ Information derived from: www.maximapark.nu (June 14, 2012).

²⁴⁰ <http://www.anafora.nl> (August 23, 2012).

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² <http://www.maximapark.nu> (August 22, 2012).

at the terrace. It is a large and adventurous playground mainly made out of wood, hence its name: *Bosspeeluin* ('Forest-playground'). A subdivision into different parts makes the playground suitable for children from different ages that are stimulated by the design to explore, be adventurous and play together. Several times a year, activities are organized varying from a midsummer night, to a theater play, or a bonfire, with the children participating in the events or using the playground area called *Bosvolk* ('the Forest people').²⁴³

It is interesting to note that from the moment they opened their doors, the playground, but especially *Anafora*, already seemed to be too small, considering their popularity. From ten in the morning until closing, there is a continuous flow of visitors. Especially on the weekend and on sunny days, it is difficult to find a spot on the terrace. In the winter, people have hot chocolate and apple pie, while others ice skate on the *Vikingrijn* and have a cup of typical Dutch pea soup to warm up again. It is also possible to rent the location for weddings, children's birthday parties and other festivities or special occasions.²⁴⁴

In the beginning, the combination of these 'ingredients for success' did not necessarily create the park image. Regarding the way in which people experience a park Schütte says:

A park is a structure of pathways and non-pathways. When machines are working to create the park, people can't feel that it will become a park in the future.

Especially since the bushes and trees had not started to grow yet. But when the first couple hundred meters of the track on *Het Lint* was laid out, people started to realize that a park was arising in the area. This was a tilting moment in the way people experienced the park. This was also the time when people started asking: 'can this park be constructed? Because it was promised to us.' Earlier, they had never thought about it like that, but when they looked back in the brochures and it turned out that there was supposed to be a park they said: 'give us the park!' And that has helped a lot.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ <http://www.maximapark.nu> (August 22, 2012).

²⁴⁴ Information based on observations during a number of visits to *Anafora* in the past year (2011-2012).

²⁴⁵ Original text derived from interview with Robert Schütte (Rotterdam, 19-06-2012): "Een park is een structuur van paden en niet-paden. En op het moment dat je daar aan bezig bent met machines dan hebben mensen niet het gevoel dat het een park gaat worden. Er was ook niet heel veel opgaande begroeiing al. Maar op het moment dat we de eerste paar honderd meter van de track op Het Lint hadden aangelegd begonnen mensen zich ineens te realiseren van ja, daar wordt een park gemaakt en dat was eigenlijk een kantelmoment in de beleving en vanaf dat moment gingen mensen ook vragen: kan dat park gemaakt worden want het is bij wijze van spreken beloofd. Dat hadden ze daarvoor niet eens zo gezien maar toen hebben ze de folders nog eens nagekeken en toen bleek daar een park te liggen en toen zeiden ze: kom op met dat park! Dat heeft veel geholpen."

After the residents became familiar with the park and its possibilities, a process of appropriation started. After the park started to take shape, *West 8* received various requests from people living on the outskirts of the park or in one of the connecting neighborhoods. These questions mainly concerned the appropriation of parts of *Het Lint* for a specific target group or age group: dog owners who demanded a dog walking field, and teenagers longing for goal posts etc. Together with the project group Leidsche Rijn, *West 8* decided not to give in to such requests. If they did, *Het Lint* would have been divided into separate, exclusive spaces. This would change the character of *Het Lint*, which was designed to be for all the users. Moreover, it would make the park vulnerable to changing fashions, while the purpose of the design is to make it timeless and to give it the opportunity to evolve over the years. The character of the park and the available space should stimulate people to be creative. It gives them the freedom to use the park in any way they want, but temporarily. One place can be a sun terrace in the morning, a soccer field in the afternoon, and provide space for a yoga class in the evening. In this park, space does not need to be screened off from the rest; it is large enough for everyone to find his or her way.²⁴⁶

5.6 Trees of birth

While conducting interviews with a number of Leidsche Rijn residents, the park and specific elements in the park were often mentioned when talking about sacrality in the neighborhood. Places where the residents go for recreation and reconciliation, or often a combination of the two had a sacred association. There were also places with a special story attached to them, which most people enjoy telling about, such as the so-called ‘birth forest’.

The ritual planting of trees is not a new phenomenon. In Judaism, the holiday *Tu B’shevat* celebrates the New Year of the trees. And also in Indian religious traditions, the tree plays an important role. “Trees are often considered to belong to the three worlds: the netherworld, the human world, and the sky.”²⁴⁷ In addition to the references in common religious traditions, ‘nature’ in general and more specifically trees, are a returning theme in contemporary commemoration ceremonies. A number of modern day commemoration rituals take place in gardens, parks or forests. In the Netherlands and abroad, a variety of remembrance forests have emerged, the most famous probably being the 9/11 Memorial site in Manhattan, New York. The website describes this memorial as follows:

²⁴⁶ Information derived from interview with Robert Schütte (Rotterdam, 19-06-2012).

²⁴⁷ A. NUGTEREN: *Belief, bounty, and beauty. Rituals around sacred trees in India* (Leiden/Boston 2005) 46-47.

The 9/11 Memorial features two enormous waterfalls and reflecting pools, each about an acre in size, set within the footprints of the original twin towers. The Memorial Plaza is one of the most ecological friendly plazas ever constructed. More than 400 trees are planned for the plaza surrounding the Memorial's two massive reflecting pools. Its design conveys a spirit of hope and renewal, and creates a contemplative space separate from the usual sights and sounds of a bustling metropolis.

Swamp white oak trees create a rustling canopy of leaves over the plaza. This grove of trees bring green rebirth in the spring, provide cooling shade in the summer and show seasonal color in fall. A small clearing in the grove, known as the Memorial Glade, designates a space for gatherings and special ceremonies.²⁴⁸

This short description sheds light on characteristics of the tree that make it suitable to use it for the creation of a memorial site. Not only does the park create a space separate from the busy daily life in New York, also its features change accordingly to the change of the seasons like a lifecycle, moreover the use of trees also symbolizes hope and renewal, aspects that play a central role in the aftermath of 9/11. Why the planners decided to choose this specific type of tree is also explained on the website:

Crews selected and harvested trees from within a 500-mile radius of the World Trade Center site, with additional ones coming from locations in Pennsylvania and near Washington DC (Maryland), areas impacted on September 11, 2001.

Swamp white oaks (*Quercus bicolor*) were picked because of their durability and leaf color. In fall, the leaf color ranges from amber to a golden brown – and sometimes pinks. The trees can grow to reach heights as tall as 60 feet in conditional similar to those on the plaza. The trees will never be identical, growing at different heights and changing leaves at different times, a physical reminder that they are living individuals.²⁴⁹

In the Netherlands, various examples can be named of trees playing an active role in contemporary commemoration. In 1992, a cargo-plane crashed into a block of flats in the Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam, killing at least 42 people from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Soon after the crash a memorial site emerged around *de boom die alles zag* ('the tree that saw everything'). Candles and pictures were placed around the tree and it became an important place for the bereaved and residents of the neighborhood. Later on, the spontaneous monument was institutionalized and shaped into a green area with a mosaic carpet showing personal

²⁴⁸ www.911memorial.org/design-overview (August 24, 2012).

²⁴⁹ www.911memorial.org/selecting-trees (August 24, 2012).

interpretations and memories. Since 1992, the bereaved organize a yearly memorial service around the tree.²⁵⁰

A second example in which the bereaved actively participate in the planting of trees is described in the book *Bomen voor het Leven. Een studie naar een bedendaags collectief herdenkingsritueel voor overleden kankerpatiënten*, by the Dutch religious psychologist Judith Tonnaer. In this book, Tonnaer studies the *Koningin Wilhelmina Bos*: a forest located in the Dutch polder. Once a year, relatives of cancer victims are given the opportunity to plant a remembrance tree and thereby shape the place. This event is called: ‘Trees of Life’ (*Bomen voor het Leven*). By doing so, the participants play an active role in the ritual. This active participation is a popular tendency in modern remembrance rituals: there is a great need among next of kin, mourners, or people who feel otherwise involved to do something, to take action. One lights candles, walks or plants a tree.²⁵¹

Most of the trees in the Leidsche Rijn Birth Forest are planted to memorialize a happier occasion than the ones described above, such as the birth of a child. There are a few exceptions of trees that were planted for babies who died at, or soon after, childbirth.

The Birth Forest project started in the spring of 2008 after the municipality received a request when parents who were inspired by another ‘special’ forest, wanted to plant a tree to celebrate the birth of their son. The municipality referred the parents to the Friends Foundation, and they decided to pick up on the idea. They thought of the forest project as a way to create a relationship between the residents of the neighborhood and the park. Participants of the ritual are, at least since the growing popularity of the ritual, obliged to live in Leidsche Rijn, or have a demonstrable connection to the area. The parents, grandparents or other relatives of the newborn can subscribe to one of the two planting days via the website of the Friends of the Máximapark Foundation.²⁵² Because the trees are planted with a special reason, the foundation has the hope that most of the planters would return to the tree on a regular basis.²⁵³

When asking some of the participants for their reasons to partake in this tree planting ritual, they gave a variety answers:

²⁵⁰ P. POST, A. NUGTEREN & H. ZONDAG: *Rituelen na rampen. Verkenning van een opkomend repertoire* (Kampen 2000) 63-64.

²⁵¹ J. TONNAER: *Bomen voor het Leven. Een studie naar een bedendaags collectief herdenkingsritueel voor overleden kankerpatiënten* (=NSRL 11) (Tilburg/Groningen 2010) 187.

²⁵² www.maximapark.nu.

²⁵³ Information derived from an email of one of the organizers of the planting days in the Birth Forest in Leidsche Rijn (April 26, 2012) and from the interview with Johan de Boer (12-16-2012). Johan de Boer is the chairman of the Friends of the Máximapark Foundation. He is very active in this foundation and has been involved in a variety of initiatives concerning the park.

For the children: I want to educate them about the importance of taking good care of their daily environment and respect and awe for nature. Moreover, I want to create a bond with their living environment: It is their tree; their place and when they grow up they can carve a heart in it for their love. For us: [the parents] we want to settle and root in the area together with the other people who live here.²⁵⁴

It seemed to me like a beautiful symbol for the life that continues, but at the same time also for the vulnerability of life.²⁵⁵

It is a nice way to contribute to a greener living environment.²⁵⁶

A tree is a beautiful symbol which represents eternity.²⁵⁷

*The planting of the trees*²⁵⁸

The general set-up of the planting days has not changed much over the years. The rising popularity of the event demanded some practical adaptations. This rising popularity is reflected in the number of attendees. On the first planting day I attended in November 2010 there were three families planting a tree (one family enrolled but could not attend). However, on the planting day in March 2012,

²⁵⁴ Email from respondent Boom Z (28-04-2012). Respondent Boom Z is a consultant in his forties who has lived in Leidsche Rijn since 2009. He is married and has two kids. The family decided to move to this area because it offered them the opportunity to build their own house and they like the central location of Leidsche Rijn. The children have been baptized and they occasionally attend a church in the center of Amsterdam. Original text: “Voor de kinderen: ik wil ze opvoedkundig meegeven dat je goed met je dagelijkse omgeving moet omgaan. Respect en ontzag voor de natuur. Daarnaast wil ik ze binding meegeven met hun omgeving: Het is hun boom, hun plek en ze mogen er later een hartje in snijden voor hun liefde. Voor mij en Marloes: Wij willen hier settelen en dus ‘wortelen’ in het gebied en samen met de mensen die hier wonen.”

²⁵⁵ Questionnaire by respondent Boom V (28-01-2011). She is a woman in her forties living in the center of Utrecht. She planted two trees: one for her son Abel and one for her diseased daughter Robin. Original text: “Het leek mij een mooi symbool voor het leven dat doorgaat, maar ook voor de kwetsbaarheid van het leven.”

²⁵⁶ Questionnaire by respondent Boom W (27-12-2010). A family consisting of two parents in their thirties and two young children. They have lived in Leidsche Rijn since 2004 and are very happy with the house and the street they live in but the neighborhood as a whole does not yet live up to their expectations. Both of the children have been baptized. Original text: “Een mooie manier om zelf bij te dragen aan een groene woonomgeving.”

²⁵⁷ Information obtained from field notes made after the 14-11-2010 planting day.

²⁵⁸ The information on the planting days was gathered by frequent voluntary participation on these days. As a board member of the Friends of the Máximapark Foundation, I was able to be present at those days without being part of the organizing group. This gave me the opportunity to freely talk to participants and organizers without encouraging bias. At most of the days I was introduced as a researcher from Tilburg University. On some of the days I chose to blend in to the group.

fourteen trees were planted. This number almost exceeded the capacity of the organization to make the planting days a success. Therefore, a limit was set of 10-12 trees on each planting day.²⁵⁹ Until the most recent event in March 2015, all the planting days have been fully booked and the organization even had to start a waiting list.

The planting days are organized twice a year on a Sunday morning in March and November. The group gathers at an old farmhouse on the outskirts of the *Máximapark* that functions as the headquarters of the Friends of the *Máximapark* Foundation. The morning starts with a guided walk through the park to the planting location. The walk takes the participants past several of the previously described highlights. It is interesting to see that a majority of the group does not seem particularly interested in the tour. Due to the size of the group, the guide is sometimes difficult to understand and the people seem eager to get to the planting location.

The planting field has been prepared by the organization. The holes have already been dug and the small trees and the scoops are placed next to a particular hole. Every tree is labeled with the name of the baby and as soon as the group enters the field they start looking for their own tree. The planting of the trees is not a collective ritual. The composition of the planting groups differs from one grandmother planting a tree for a grandson or daughter, to one or two of the parents in combination with one or more children, but often also larger groups, including grandparents, aunts and uncles, and so on. Each group ‘takes care’ of their own tree. In the occasional case when there is only one person planting the tree, one of the volunteers usually steps in to assist but no one from the other groups bothers to help those who are on their own.

Although people are free to shape the planting ritual any way they want, there are a lot of similarities. The camera is always present and pictures are taken of every step of the process. From the name label hanging on the tree, to the hard labor of the planting and the final result, everything is put on film. Of course they try their best to have the newborn present in most of these pictures. In most cases, the child for whom the tree is planted is present and sometimes also an older brother or sister. If possible, the older children are actively involved in the planting process and the parents sometimes even bring a little scoop and a sprinkling can. The group takes turns filling up the hole and playful complaints are made about the hard work they have to do on this Sunday morning. When the hole is filled and the tree is stable, some families tie a little knot in one of the (still flexible) branches of the young tree in order to be able to recognize it when they return. Others hang the birth announcement card from one of the branches. Sometimes the cards are

²⁵⁹ Information derived from an email of one of the organizers of the planting days in the Birth Forest in Leidsche Rijn (April 26, 2012).

carefully covered in plastic to make sure they will last longer. They use the card to mark and identify the tree, as with the knotted branch, to be able to easily locate it. A third ritual recently gaining more popularity is the reading of a poem or a wish once the tree has been planted.

Although the participants have to pay €50 to plant a tree, it is not possible for them to choose what type of tree they plant. The organization, together with the land agent, has picked the common lime tree for the Birth Forest. This typical Dutch tree is often planted as a remembrance tree. It is a tree that symbolizes love, faithfulness, and female grace, beauty and luck.²⁶⁰ This particular type of tree was chosen for its long life expectancy and because it suits the ecosystem in the park. Whereas some of the participants do not seem to care about which type of tree they plant, others find this to be very important. One of the participants stated in a conversation that he was very happy the organization chose the common lime tree. “This type of tree is ‘everlasting’,” he said, “and therefore not as perishable as for example the willow.” If the tree of choice would have been a willow, he was not sure whether they would have taken part in this ritual.²⁶¹

After the planting of the trees the whole group either returns to the old farmhouse or goes to the *Anafora* teahouse for coffee, lemonade and cake.²⁶² It is interesting to note that at this time the groups also do not mingle. The participants sit with their own little group and there is no exchange of experiences with the other families.

This emphasizes that despite the fact that these special planting days are organized; the planting of the trees in the Birth Forest, in my opinion, should not be seen as a collective ritual. When the group arrives at the planting location they immediately split up into separate family groups, often consisting of at least three people, and they then start looking for their own tree, marked with the name of the baby. Each group plants its own tree.

Visiting the trees

After the coffee and cake, the participants go their separate ways. Observing various planting days,²⁶³ I came to know that the most important aspect of this ritual for the participants is the location of the tree. Most participants deliberately made the decision to plant a tree in their new neighborhood, as they want to build a future there for their family. Moreover, after the planting ceremony, everyone receives a certificate with the exact GPS location of the tree to make sure they are always able to find it again. In addition, some people tie a knot in one of the still

²⁶⁰ TONNAER: *Bomen voor het Leven* 189.

²⁶¹ Information obtained from field notes made after the 14-11-2010 planting day.

²⁶² This location varies for each of the planting days probably depending on the busyness at *Anafora*.

²⁶³ I attended four planting ceremonies between March 2010 and December 2012.

flexible branches of the tree. And once the planting day is over it is up to the new 'owners' of the tree to decide whether and how they will return to the tree and what practices will emerge upon these returns. Speaking to the planters after the ritual, they say they have the intention to return to the tree. Most of the questionnaires and interviews confirm this intention. People return to the tree to see how it grows and to show the children their own tree.

The participants are not supposed to put up little signs near their tree, or hang objects from its branches as part of a ritual or just to make it easier to identify their tree. The aim of the organization is to let the trees eventually grow out into a natural forest, and objects or signs could spoil this experience. Interestingly enough, exceptions are being made for the trees that were planted for babies who died at birth. One of the respondents describes how she returns to the tree every year on July 24, the day her daughter Robin was born. "This year we decorated the tree with ribbons and on a bench close by we ate decorated cupcakes," she says.²⁶⁴ The planting of the tree was one of many rituals surrounding the death of her daughter. Children of friends and family decorated the little coffin, her sister read a children's book, and friends sang beautiful songs. To preserve the memory of her daughter, besides planting the tree, the respondent had two necklaces made: one with a hanger with her ashes in it, and the other with a hanger with her thumbprint on it.

One of the other respondents planted a tree for her granddaughter. She tells me: "I also planted an apple tree in their garden (...) and in the front yard a cherry tree. In my allotment garden I also planted two apple trees [and] a plum tree (...)." She often takes her granddaughter to the allotment garden to water her trees, but they never returned to the birth tree in the park. She says she is planning to do so.²⁶⁵

When asking the organization what would happen to trees that get sick or need to be replaced and whether the planters would be informed about this, I received the following answer:

Yes, it has happened... The location of two of the trees in the first field was too wet (...) and they would not grow. The one tree was replanted (...) in consultation with the parents and the other tree did not belong to particular parents. On the new

²⁶⁴ Questionnaire by respondent Boom V (28-01-2011) original text: "Wij hebben dit jaar de boom versierd met lintjes en vlakbij op een bankje versierde cakejes gegeten."

²⁶⁵ Information derived from interview with Respondent B (summer 2011). Respondent B is a 66-year-old Slovak lady who moved to the Netherlands over 40 years ago. Her daughter and granddaughter live in the same street in Leidsche Rijn. She has an allotment garden and likes to travel. When she travels, she attends the Catholic Church. She does not like the churches in Leidsche Rijn because they are only open at certain times. Original text: "In hun tuin heb ik ook een appelboom geplant (...) en in de voortuin een kersenboom. En in de volkstuin heb ik ook twee appelbomen en een pruimenboom (...)."

planting field a tree is replaced as well. This was done without consultation because it was only a short time after the planting day...²⁶⁶

The dots placed after the final statement might imply some sort of doubt. Since the tree was replaced shortly after its planting day, the parents would not notice the difference. The trees were of similar size. But since the tree was ritually planted by the family, it might make a difference if it is replaced by another tree without them knowing. It might change the value of the tree for its planters.

5.7 The park as a place for leisure

Of course an important purpose of the large green space in the middle of the otherwise mostly grey suburb is leisure: making this enormous suburb more livable. Of course, houses, shops, public transportation, schools, and other facilities also add to the livability, but the majority of the residents also long for a place to escape their busy suburban life; they want to step out of their daily routine, find some peace and quiet, a place for recreation. And if possible, all of these features should be located nearby because free time is scarce in our ever-flowing network society.

One of the previous paragraphs gives an overview of the most significant features of the park. These features return in the interviews I conducted with residents of the area and users of the park. It is possible to state that leisure plays an important role when discussing the importance of the park in the neighborhood. Not only children make use of the park as a playground. *Het Lint* is extremely popular among residents who like to go running, jogging or cycling. But also canoeing on the *Vikingrijn*, ice skating in the wintertime or just sitting at the *Anafora* terrace or at a quieter place in the park to read a book is mentioned in conversations about the park.

We bought a canoe last summer. And sometimes we arrange a babysitter to watch the children in the evening and then we throw the canoe in the water and we peddle away together. We peddled all the way to the *Haarrijnse Plas*. And one day, when we arrived there, we took the boat out of the water and walked for a little bit and when we put it back into the ditch we could peddle all the way to Vleuten, passing through the Leidsche Rijn Park. And then I told Roel [her husband] there are only trees and plants here, no houses, no roads, no nothing. (...) It was like we were peddling on the Ama-

²⁶⁶ Information derived from an email of one of the organizers of the planting days in the Birth Forest in Leidsche Rijn (April 26, 2012). Original text: “Ja dat is al voorgekomen... 2 bomen van het 1e veld stonden te nat (...) en groeiden niet. De een is in overleg herpoot (...) en de ander was een boom waarvan de ouders niets van zich hadden laten horen (dus de boom hoorde bij niemand). Ook in het nieuwe veld is 1 boom vervangen. Vervangen is daar zonder overleg gegaan omdat er nog maar korte tijd tussen zat...”

zon River. It looked great! You are ten minutes away from home and you are in a completely different world.²⁶⁷

I am very much looking forward to the playground and the teahouse. This will be a very special place. This will be a place where people love to go. People like me, and people I am friends with, that is where we will be all summer.²⁶⁸

And in the park, I don't see that as one sacred place but there are some really cool aspects. For example that old long-stemmed orchard where they have placed the black stones, you know that? (...) I find that to be very fascinating, maybe even mysterious.²⁶⁹

I think it is a nice moment on my Sunday morning [going to church], but I might as well go running. That is also a moment of self-reflection to me. I often go running on *Het Lint* especially in the weekends when the weather is nice, this is great. Nice and relaxed, everybody is walking, skating or cycling, all very nice and quiet and a lot of people in the park quietly sitting or reading a book. (...) ²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ Original text derived from interview with Respondent A (27-01-2011). Respondent A is a columnist who lives in Leidsche Rijn with her husband and 4 little children. She writes and tweets about life in the VINEX-area Leidsche Rijn (books, columns and tweets) under the pseudonym VINEXvrouwje (www.vinexvrouwje.nl) Original text: "Wij hebben nu bijvoorbeeld vorige zomer een kano gekocht en dan regelen we 's avonds een oppas en dan gooien we die in het water en dan peddelen we weg samen en dan gaan we helemaal naar de Haarrijnse Plas. En toen zijn we daar een keer uit gegaan en een stukje gelopen met de kano. En toen weer in de sloot en toen kwamen we in Vleuten uit en toen kwamen we door het Leidsche Rijn Park En nou ik zei tegen Roel er waren allemaal bomen en planten er waren geen huizen, geen weg, niks. (...) Het lijkt net of je in de Amazone zit! Het zag er super leuk uit. Je bent dan gewoon 10 minuten lopen van huis en je zin in een andere wereld."

²⁶⁸ Original text derived from interview with Respondent A (27-01-2011). Interview was conducted right before the teahouse and playground were opened. Original text: "Ik verheug me ook heel erg op de speeltuin en het theehuis. Dat wordt een hele belangrijke plek. Dat wordt de plek waar mensen die willen gaan komen. Mensen zoals ik en mensen waar mee ik bevriend ben daar zitten we dus allemaal van de zomer."

²⁶⁹ Original text derived from interview with Wouter de Heus (06-06-2011). This respondent is in his forties and has lived in Leidsche Rijn with his wife and two sons since 1998 when the first houses were built. He is a journalist and columnist and mostly writes about Leidsche Rijn and the city of Utrecht. He can be described as the Nestor of Leidsche Rijn being one of the first residents of the new neighborhood. Original text: "En in het park, dat zie ik niet als één sacrale plek maar ik vind bijvoorbeeld wel een paar dingen heel gaaf. Dat is bijvoorbeeld dat oude hoogstam boomgaardje waar ze die zwarte stenen hebben gezet, ken je dat? (...) Dat vind ik iets heel geinigs hebben, bijna een beetje mysterieus."

²⁷⁰ Original text derived from interview with Respondent C (17-05-2011). Respondent C is a woman in her early fifties who partly grew up in the old village of Vleuten and moved back there almost 11 years ago. She lives in the middle of the park in one of the old farmhouses. She really likes her green living environment, which was one of the reasons to move back to Vleuten. Original text: "Ik vind

Numerous activities are being organized in the park for children as well as for adults varying from guided and themed walks, to ice skating tours, an Easter egg search, and a Christmas fair attract large groups of attendees. In February 2012, in the week in which the typical Dutch *Elfstedentocht* ('Eleven Cities tour') skating event was canceled, the Friends of the Máximapark decided to organize an alternative *Elfstedentocht* in the park. The news was spread through the social media and local newspapers and the work was picked up by an enthusiastic group of volunteers. On February 11th, only five days after the plans were made, over 1000 children ice-skated their very first *Elfstedentocht* in the park.

After Alderman Gilbert Isabella and local celebrity, weather lady Helga van Leur, gave the starting shot, the children skated on a 2 kilometers-long track taking them past the eleven Frisian cities. At the eleven stamp posts they had to collect the official *Elfsteden*-stamps, and afterwards the participants were rewarded with a special medal. The reactions of the children and their parents on the day itself and afterwards in emails were very enthusiastic. They were happy that such a great event had been organized in their neighborhood and honored the quality of the organization. The event created a unity in among all the children of the community, and with the supporting parents striving to finish the tour and earn the special medal.²⁷¹

In addition to the previously described more sporty activities, a different range of other leisure activities also attracts a large numbers of visitors. In the weekend before Easter a group of fifty children came to the park to search for Easter eggs together with the Easter Bunny. Moreover, on various Sunday mornings spread throughout the year, volunteers gather in the park for gardening activities. They plant bulbs, pollard willows, create pathways, or make hay.

Every six months I help planting bulbs and laying out pathways. It is a lot of work but it is very enjoyable. We meet up at nine in the morning for coffee with currant loaf and then we plant the bulbs. It is a lot of fun. (...) Those activities make the park into a central point.²⁷²

het zelf wel een mooi moment zo op de zondag morgen [naar de kerk gaan]. Maar ik ga net zo lief hardlopen. Dat vind ik ook een moment voor zelfreflectie. Ik loop regelmatig hard op het Lint. En vooral in de weekenden als het mooi weer is dan is het fantastisch. Lekker relaxed iedereen een beetje wandelen skaten en fietsen. Allemaal lekker rustig en heel veel mensen in het park die rustig zitten of een boekje lezen.”

²⁷¹ Information derived from observations.

²⁷² Original text derived from interview with Respondent C (17-05-2011). “Ik ga ook elk half jaar bollen planten en snipperpaden aanleggen. Heel veel werk maar hartstikke gezellig. Dan zitten we daar met z'n allen om 9 uur aan de koffie met krentenbrood en dan gaan we daarna bollen planten. Hartstikke leuk. (...) Dat soort elementen maken dat het echt een centraal punt wordt.”

A second respondent describes how participating in one of the guided tours through the park made her realize that there is a need among the residents of Leidsche Rijn to take part in activities with others. The large groups of people turning up for such events show this need.

There was a little note in a door-to-door newspaper. I decided to participate [in the guided walk] assuming no one would attend. When we got there, there were over 200 people with children. So we walked through the park in groups of 40, so there was nothing to it. But it made me realize that there is potency, a feeling that we want to experience things together, see things together. It is there. And I am not the only one, with a small group of others, who wants this.²⁷³

In a book about the park, one of my respondents describes her ambivalent opinion of the park. As one of the original residents of the area, she and her husband had to give up their market gardening for the realization of the park. Although she and her grandchildren enjoy the beauty of their new surroundings every day, her husband still has problems letting go of the past. Although, as a gardener, he might also appreciate the beauty of the park and its plants and flowers, the loss of his company has made it too difficult for him to really enjoy it.

‘My grandchildren (...) play in the park every day.’ She smiles: ‘we live in the most beautiful park of Europe.’ And her husband, does he feel the same way? ‘My husband still finds it difficult,’ she sighs. Then, smiling: ‘sometimes he walks outside and spontaneous starts telling people passing by, about the park, and about the past, the way it used to be.’²⁷⁴

In the spring of 2014 an interesting new project opened in the park. In the years before, one of the residents living close to the park noticed a large piece of unplanned land and thought: ‘what if we could make this into our own piece of the park? What if we would ask the famous Dutch landscape architect Piet Oudolf, who is known for the Highline Park in New York and the 9/11 memorial garden, to create a garden here?’ In March 2013, this idea became reality when the city of

²⁷³ Original text derived from interview with Respondent A (27-01-2011). “Er stond een klein berichtje in een huis-aan-huis blad dus ik denk nou dat gaan we doen, daar komt vast niemand op af. Komen we daar stonden er echt 200 mensen met kinderen. Dus we liepen in groepen van 40 door dat park dus daar was helemaal niks aan. Maar toen dacht wel: ow het is er dus wel in potentie. Het gevoel van samen dingen willen beleven of samen dingen zien. Het is er dus wel want daar ben ik wel eens bang voor dat dat er niet is, dat ik de enige ben met een paar mensen die dat erg graag willen.”

²⁷⁴ Respondent E is a 65-70 year old woman who has lived on the *Alendorperweg* in the middle of the park since birth. She is from a farmer’s family and she and her husband had to give up the family business for the creation of the park. She has long been active as a board member of the Friends of the Máximapark Foundation. This citation was derived from an interview in the book: HENDRIKS & SIMONS: *Leidsche Rijn Park* 40-41.

Utrecht assigned the land to *De Vlinderhof* (“the Butterfly Garden”). On the website, the initiator of the project says the following about the realization of his dream:

The VINEX is a paradise for dreamers, since there is room to put their dreams into practice. When you live in the city it is impossible to say: ‘Lets take down the Dom Church, because I have a different and better idea to replace it with.’ Where there is nothing, anything is possible.²⁷⁵

In the months following the permission of the city, a large volunteer project arose. Money was raised, volunteers were mobilized, and people were asked to buy plants for the garden. The result is beautiful. A garden painted by Piet Oudolf was opened for the public in the spring of 2014.

However, coming up with the idea and planting the garden was only the beginning. When the city of Utrecht gave the land to *De Vlinderhof* it was with the proviso that the volunteers would also maintain the garden. Hence, every weekend throughout the spring, summer, and part of the autumn, a group of volunteers gathers in the garden. They garden together and afterwards take time for coffee or a drink. It is leisure, it is nature, and looking at its beautiful plants, flowers and butterflies, I might even say it is art.

5.8 Conclusion

The role of nature in the lives of humans has significantly changed throughout the centuries. However, the early existence of the Gardens of Babylon and the description of the Gardens of Eden in the Bible show that mankind has always acknowledged the beauty of certain forms and aspects of nature. Those forms were often even described along the lines of a paradise; a beautiful place outside the reality of everyday life. Appreciation of nature on a larger scale took flight after the industrial revolution in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. The growing populations in the cities demanded green space to improve their living conditions, resulting in the creation of city parks for public use. Later on, a growing number of people would have private gardens in the back or front of their house or an allotment garden in a complex nearby provided first by the factories they worked for and, afterwards, by the city.

In line with these developments, Leidsche Rijn could not stay behind when it came to the implementation of green spaces in the urban development plans. The largest of these green areas was a park located right in the middle of the neighbor-

²⁷⁵ Citation derived from the website of *De Vlinderhof*: www.vlinderhof.com (January 3, 2015). Original tekst: “De Vinex is een paradijs voor dromers, juist omdat er nog plekken zijn om ze waar te maken. Niemand zal het in de stad in zijn hoofd halen om de Dom om te trekken, omdat ‘ie een mooier groter plan heeft voor die plek. Maar waar nog niks is, kan alles.”

hood connecting the two villages of Vleuten and De Meern and largely replacing the farmland that used to make up the majority of this terrain. It includes a wide variety of features such as sports fields, a running and biking track, a teahouse and playground, a traditional park structure and also a part in which nature could grow more freely. The park was a unique selling feature for the neighborhood. The green space, which is advertised as the largest city park of the country, would breach the feared grayness of the enormous suburb and provide its residents with a place where they can step out of their everyday routine.

I paid numerous visits to the park and spoke to a large number of people all confirming the assumption of the developers. The *Máximapark* is used in a variety of ways by an even larger variety of people. Both the activities organized by the friends of the park as well as the existing features of the park attract large numbers of people. These are people, who describe their visits to the park as a means to reflect on their life, enjoy the silence, work out on a Sunday morning or just appreciate the beauty of nature. The park has a special meaning to them and has taken up a place in their lives and in their world.

The ritual that stands out in this chapter is the planting of the Trees of Birth. This ritual is growing in popularity every time it is organized and, for the most recent planting days, some were placed on waiting lists because a maximum of twenty trees could be planted in order to keep the ceremony workable for the organization.

The tree-planting ceremony shows how the park, that holds a central position in the neighborhood's design, functions as a platform for ritual practice. The plans the designers made for the park are focused on the long term. Only with years, maybe even decades, will it grow out to look the way its planners intended. Therefore, in addition to being a personal ritual to celebrate the life or mourn the death of a child, the tree-planting ceremony is also meant to create a connection between the residents and their new living environment. The participants are thereby included in the growth process of the park. Together with these personal trees, the park will grow out to be a special place connected to the life of children. The residents of the area are using the park to ritually plant trees, thereby changing the park, or part of the park, into a sacred place a place that is set apart because it has a special meaning in reminding them of a newborn or deceased child.

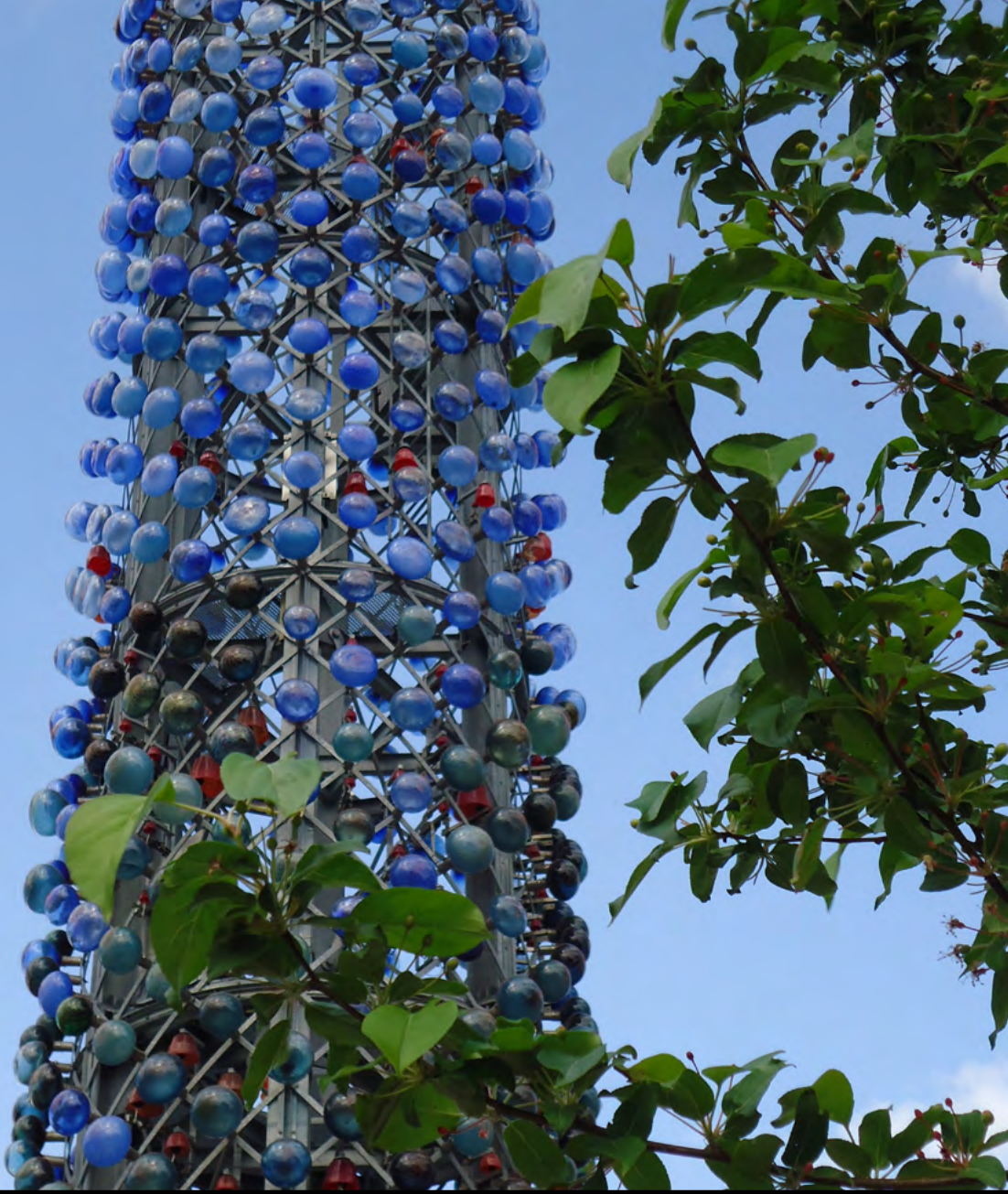
Rituals such as the ones practiced during and after the planting ceremony create a connection between the participants and their tree, and most likely also between the participants and the place of the tree, the Birth Forest. Places like this are important in a newly built suburb such as Leidsche Rijn. It is easy to make plans and build 30,000 houses; to make people feel at home in their new living environment, to make them care about and for it, is much more difficult. Sacred places with additional value help create this soul or content for the neighborhood. This is something that cannot be planned on the drawing board as it strongly de-

depends on the way in which people perceive and use the space. Moreover, the use of space alters the way it is perceived.

This process demonstrates the working of the urban triad as it shows the correlation between the *urbs* (referring to the physical aspects of the neighborhood), the *civitas* (as the residents choose to make use of this design in a certain way, to use the park as a place for ritual practice), and, by these practices overlaying the physical place with their imaginations and so attributing a special meaning to it, the *genius loci*. By planting a tree in the park, the place has come to influence the senses, the memory, and the future practices of its visitors. A symbolic layer overlays the physical environment, setting this Birth Forest apart by virtue of its own special meaning.²⁷⁶

But it's not only an organized ritual place such as the Birth Forest that has the ability to overlay a place with special meaning. Other places in the park, or the park as a whole, can also have a sacred value to some of the residents. Practices such as running in the park every Sunday morning to clear the mind, or visiting or volunteering in *De Vlindertuin* can also create sacrality, a casual form of sacrality.

²⁷⁶ Part of this conclusion is based on the article by I. SCHIPPERS: 'Trees of Birth. Rituals and the emergence of sacred space in Dutch VINEX-areas', in *FORUM. University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & the Arts* 17 (December 2013) (online).



Chapter 6

A singing glass tower,
public art in Leidsche Rijn

The singing glass tower located in the Vleuterwijde shopping center

Picture: Inez Schippers

CHAPTER 6

A SINGING GLASS TOWER

PUBLIC ART IN LEIDSCHER RIJN

We have lost the idea of the sacred in our daily lives. Therefore we want something that transcends the banality of our everyday life. However, the question is whether art is able to offer a contradiction to the ordinary and the banal, and if it is not just a placebo. Offering space for art could also just be some sort of repressive tolerance: a way to offer space to ideas that are detrimental to the ruling powers, in an attempt to make them innocuous. (Bernard Colenbrander)²⁸⁰

6.1 Introduction

Suburban areas do not have a good reputation. In the past they have even been characterized as the negation of the vitality and the heterogeneity of the city. The suburbs would attract large numbers of middle-class families wanting to live in the city but at the same time trying to escape its chaotic and multifunctional center.²⁸¹ All the unknown and unpredictable features had been eliminated from the mono-functional suburban plans that ended up with an individualistic atmosphere, turned away from the world.²⁸²

This perspective has changed in the last decade. Especially in Leidsche Rijn, there is quite a large variety of residents, lifestyles, and behavioral patterns. The residents of Leidsche Rijn originate from surrounding villages, older suburbs, and the city center. Being villagers, suburbanites, and townies, they remain connected to their previous living environments and take this history with them as they move

²⁸⁰ Bernard Colenbrander, Professor of Architectural History and active member of the *Beyond*-team cited in C. WIJN: 'Boksen tegen onbehagen', in T. VAN GESTEL, H. HEEZEN & N. ZONNENBERG (eds.): *Beyond Leidsche Rijn. Kunst als strategie bij verstedelijking* (Rotterdam 2009) 99. Original text: "In ons dagelijks leven hebben wij het idee van het sacrale verloren. Daarom willen we iets hebben dat ontstijgt aan de banaliteit van het alledaagse. De vraag is echter of kunst tegenspraak kan bieden aan het gewone en het banale, en niet slechts een placebo is. Ruimte bieden aan kunst is misschien wel gewoon een soort repressieve tolerantie: een manier om ideeën die voor de heersende macht ongewenst zijn, een plaats te gunnen om ze op die manier juist onschadelijk te maken."

²⁸¹ L. LUCASSEN & W. WILLEMS: 'Een terugblik', in L. LUCASSEN & W. WILLEMS (eds.): *Waarom mensen in de stad willen wonen* (Amsterdam 2009) 266.

²⁸² I. NIO: 'Van clustering naar kleinschaligheid: Flexibele en tijdelijke voorzieningen in Leidsche Rijn', in L. MELIS (ed.): *Parasite paradise: Pleidooi voor tijdelijke architectuur en flexibele stedenbouw* (Rotterdam 2003) 20.

into the new neighborhood. The daily lives of the residents no longer necessarily take place in the residential area, as the suburban world is now a mobile world. This development inevitably influences the emergence of (temporary) facilities in the neighborhood. As a result of the mobility, most residents have the opportunity to make use of facilities outside of their environs. By doing this, they undermine the basis for the presence of facilities in their own neighborhood.

Originally the plans of Leidsche Rijn were inspired by this increase in scale as facilities were often clustered together. But this large scale has its disadvantages as it often excludes surprises, experiments and marginal economical activities. In Leidsche Rijn it specifically led to a delay in the construction of stores. The complaints about this delay eventually resulted in a reorientation within the spatial planning, placing greater emphasis on more flexible and smaller-scale amenities. This letting go of large-scale planning was already questioned by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas in the nineties of the last century and is now replaced by a renewed appreciation of smallness.²⁸³

This smallness seems necessary for the residents in order to feel at home, not only in their new house, but also in their new neighborhood. People demand higher standards for their environs, but in this regard the notion of 'feeling at home' is often missing from planology. As for Leidsche Rijn, its design definitely stands out when it is compared to the average suburb. A lot of attention was paid to the inclusion of the large park located in the center of the new neighborhood, the integration of archeological findings and other historical elements into the design, which will be discussed in the next chapter, and the planning of clusters of facilities. Hence, slowly the suburb is becoming a living organism that adapts to the demands of its residents, as it is more and more appropriated. Empty spaces, or spaces (still) open for interpretation are especially important in this process of appropriation, as they create the opportunity for residents to come up with initiatives which often also stimulate community building in a new neighborhood. Those spaces will trigger initiatives and unexpected usage. One of the points of critique on the VINEX-concept is the lack of such spaces.²⁸⁴

How does this relate to the concept of public art? In the early stages of the planning process, the demand for flexible spaces especially focused on the lack of facilities in the neighborhood. In addition, a renewed appreciation of the direct living environment seems to be emerging. In response to their busy and especially mobile lives, residents are also hoping to feel at home in their new neighborhood. By means of public art initiatives, either initiated top-down or (partly) bottom-up, Leidsche Rijn was to be made more livable. Therefore, throughout the building process (temporary) open or unused space was used for a variety of art projects.

²⁸³ NIO: 'Van clustering naar kleinschaligheid' 20-22.

²⁸⁴ IDEM 23.

The places emerging from those initiatives play a central role in this research in addition to a number of planned public art projects.

Public art

In addition to, and in combination with the emphasis on nature, public art is a second element that stands out in Leidsche Rijn. The term public art is broad and it has for a long time lacked a clear definition and theoretical framework. And although the field of public art has grown extensively in the past two decades, its theory is still widely discussed.²⁸⁵ This research will use the following definition of public art:

The term public art designates artworks, either permanent or temporary, commissioned for sites with open public access. These are located outside conventional [museological or private] locations and settings: city squares, parks, buildings' exteriors, and infrastructural sites such as railway stations, roundabouts and airports. Public art is a visual practice in that it integrates, represents, and communicates vision image and space. (...) public art is an expanding practice that continues to incorporate every medium and discipline from painting to new media, sculpture to design, architecture to performance.²⁸⁶

This definition both specifies the location of the artwork and indicates the broadness of the concept: it is found outside conventional settings and can include a variety of mediums and disciplines. Since this research is conducted at a very specific location (Leidsche Rijn) and a unique context (a newly built area still under construction), the location of the public art plays an influential role. As public art specialist Harriet Senie argues: "In public art, the site is the content," and "every public space has an evolving history of multiple uses, visual, social, and political, that directly or indirectly influence, if not determine, both artistic and audience response."²⁸⁷ Art historian Miwon Kwon also emphasizes the importance of location with the title of her book *One Place after Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*, thereby implying that there is a relationship between a work and its site which is 'inextricable' and 'indivisible'.²⁸⁸

The multi-faceted nature of the definition makes it possible to look at a variety of initiatives present in Leidsche Rijn varying from a sculpture garden, to a community gardening initiative, and a singing glass tower. The broadness is at the

²⁸⁵ C. KRAUSE KNIGHT: *Public art: Theory, practice and populism* (Malden 2008) 23.

²⁸⁶ M. ZEBRACKI, R. VAN DER VAART & I. VAN AALST: 'Deconstructing public artopia: Situating public-art claims within practice', in *Geoforum* 41 (2010) 786.

²⁸⁷ H. SENIE: 'Responsible criticism: Evaluating public art', in *Sculpture* 22/8 (December 2003) online: <http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag03/dec03/senie/senie.shtml>.

²⁸⁸ M. KWON: *One place after another: Site-specific art and locational identity* (Cambridge 2004) 11-12.

same time one of the weaknesses of public art. Hence, Senie states: “It’s unlikely that public art will be recognized as ‘art’ by critics, art institutions, and the general public until it is consciously reframed as ‘art’.”²⁸⁹

The definition of public art given above requires some clarification as its *publicness* and its *artfulness* are often up for discussion. Cameron Cartiere gives a very workable definition when it comes to defining the publicness of the art in the book *The Practice of Public Art*.

Public art is art outside of museums and galleries and must fit within at least one of the following categories:

1. in a place accessible or visible to the public: *in public*;
2. concerned with or affecting the community or individuals: *public interest*;
3. maintained for or used by the community or individuals: *public place*;
4. paid for by the public: *publicly funded*.²⁹⁰

Artfulness is a more difficult term to grasp. Senie formulates three questions; Successful public art has to score on all three, which can be asked in order to determine the artfulness seen from an ‘art-world standard’:

1. Is it good work, according to its type: art, urban design, or community project?
2. Does it improve or energize its site in some way – by providing an aesthetic experience or searing (or both), or by prompting conversation and perhaps social awareness?
3. Is there evidence of relevant or appropriate public engagement or use?²⁹¹

The two definitions of the publicness and the artfulness of public art give an insight in the contents of this chapter, and can function as a measuring instrument to see whether the art works or projects fit the category of public art. However, even if the public art works fit all of the criteria and are public in one way or another, its real effect or success can only be measured by letting the artwork settle into its landscape and by observing how it functions within this landscape.

In the book *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures*, Malcolm Miller explains that when contemporary art is sited in a city, neighborhood, or street, two different kinds of space collide. The first space he describes can be connected to the concept of *urbs*. Miller describes a ‘more or less easy relation of art to the design of the physical site,’ as the art fits into the ‘conceptual spaces of city plan-

²⁸⁹ SENIE: ‘Responsible criticism’.

²⁹⁰ C. CARTIERE: ‘Coming in from the cold: A public art history’, in C. CARTIERE & S. WILLIS (eds.): *The practice of public art* (New York 2008) 15.

²⁹¹ Questions formulated by H. Senie cited in CARTIERE: ‘Coming in from the cold’ 15-16.

ning'.²⁹² The second space is more informal and variable: the *genius loci*. Miller refers to it as 'the space around the bodies of the city dwellers,' which is

always replete with values, personal associations appropriations, exclusions and invitations, and the shared and disputed issues of the public realm, a set of overlaying spaces 'disordered' by users, and, as such, a psychological rather than physical space, which cannot be defined by map co-ordinates.²⁹³

The strange effect of this *genius locus* is "that, like the snow falling in a souvenir snow bubble, representations, blanket the city, changing the way it appears to us."²⁹⁴ Miller suggests that these two separate spaces imply two different roles for public art:

Either public space creates wider access to the privileged aesthetic domain, but requires a level of cultural education if art is to be 'appreciated' just as the statue requires a recognition of its subject or type, recruiting more people to its liberal value-structure; or art, along with street theatre, street music, and carnival, is a form of street life, a means to articulate the implicit values of a city when its users occupy the place of determining what the city is.²⁹⁵

This leads me to believe that the third element of the spatial triad, the *civitas*, cannot be left out of the equation, as the way in which people interact with public art plays an important role in this research. In Leidsche Rijn, the residents are often involved in the creation, the establishment, and/or the continuation of the public art works. Some of the art requires the active participation of the residents or that the residents participate in activities organized around the artworks.

6.2 BEYOND Leidsche Rijn

Beyond is, in the first instance, an arts project. It's about creating scenarios for adding art as an extra layer, over a longer period of time, to the design of Leidsche Rijn.²⁹⁶

²⁹² M. MILLER: *Art, space and the city: Public art and urban futures* (London 1997) 59.

²⁹³ IBIDEM.

²⁹⁴ R. SHIELDS: 'A guide to urban representation and what to do about it: alternative traditions of urban theory', in A.D. KING (ed.): *Re-presenting the city: Ethnicity, capital, and culture in the twenty-first-century metropolis* (London 1996) 228.

²⁹⁵ MILLER: *Art, space and the city* 59

²⁹⁶ P. O'NEILL: 'Beyond Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht, the Netherlands', in P. O'NEILL & C. DOHERTHY (eds.): *Locating the producers: Durational approaches into public art* (Amsterdam 2011) 243.

The completion of the master plan for Leidsche Rijn in 1995 was the beginning of one of the most extensive building projects in the present-day Netherlands. Chapter 2 already describes the size and impact of the plans for the city of Utrecht, as well as for the villages of Vleuten and De Meern. Whereas before, the city was surrounded by a relatively empty hinterland, now, with the addition of Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht is permanently entering the delta metropolis: *Randstad Holland*. In this region, the city has to come to terms with other cores. The polarized relation between the historical old city and the previously eccentrically located town centers resulted in a cultural and spatial diversity within one urban context.

Five years after the condensed ideas of the master plan, a second, but equally meaningful, plan was made for the construction site, a plan for visual arts in the area: *The scenario BEYOND*. It started with a report of the advisory committee for the visual arts of the city of Utrecht titled: *Een sneeumbal van 10 miljoen* ('a snowball that costs ten million guilders'). This report presented a special art program for the VINEX-location Leidsche Rijn. The name of the report was inspired by the 1983 performance piece *Bliz-aard Ball Sale* by the American artist David Hammons. In this piece, Hammons situated himself alongside street vendors on Cooper Square, New York in order to sell snowballs. The balls were priced according to their size. This artwork was symbolic for the ideas the advisory committee had for Leidsche Rijn. Temporariness instead of permanency was the credo. The slogan 'for each project there is a beyond, a domain where no jury will follow,' by the well-known Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, summarized what the artistic team, appointed by the city of Utrecht, had in mind, and offered a suitable name for the project.²⁹⁷

The project *Beyond* was set up to be a ten-year program of temporary public art commissions. Its main ambition was to initiate and promote forms of urban life in Leidsche Rijn, and to create a connection between the new suburb and the city of Utrecht. The art was meant to play an important role in the urbanization of the area. *Beyond* aspired to 'create interventions into a cultural landscape in which the unexpected becomes a catalyst for how local inhabitants think about acting upon their new environment'.²⁹⁸ Ideas of the *Commissie Beeldende Kunst* ('Committee for Visual Arts') of the city of Utrecht served as a guideline for the plans. The concepts of variation, integration, quality and identity had to play a central role in the scenario: variation, hereby referring to the ways in which public art can be presented in a small as well as on a larger scale; integration of the art into the design and construction process; high quality, making it possible for Leidsche Rijn to compete on the national and international market; and identity, as it is possible to

²⁹⁷ T. VAN GESTEL: 'Ter afscheid', in VAN GESTEL, HEEZEN & ZONNENBERG (eds.): *Beyond Leidsche Rijn* 7-9.

²⁹⁸ O'NEILL: 'Beyond Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht, the Netherlands' 244.

create a 'face' for Leidsche Rijn by means of art. Good art at the right location can give the residents the feeling that they live in a special place.²⁹⁹

As stated above, the ideas were developed in the *Scenario BEYOND*. This scenario first of all described local potential leads for a program for the arts: the history of the place, with all of its cultural historical realia, and the drastic changes the landscape is undergoing due to the fast 'descent' of the urban. But also, the broad cultural and cultural political developments are taken into account. Using the 1997 Documenta X in the German city of Kassel as an example, the author of the scenario sketches a trend in culture focusing on multidisciplinary and a broadening of the contents of art, at the expense of the classical autonomy of the artwork. A visible trend in architecture in the early years of the twenty-first century is the shifting emphasis from beautiful things to the motives and ideas, the exchange thereof, and the accessibility of the strange. Art looks at architecture, architecture looks at art, and they both look at the world around them. The cultural policies stick closely to these trends. On a Dutch national level, this influenced the relationship between historical heritage and the culture of the future. Old and new, as well as other opposites, are no longer seen as separate quantities, but rather as qualities in an intense reciprocity. Currently, a clear trend in spatial planning is the flexibility of the spatial design, as it seems more susceptible to unforeseen signals from the outside world. The locations are ever more custom-made. This process is guided from the top down but increasingly fabricated from the bottom up.³⁰⁰

In short, the *Scenario BEYOND* describes how modern-day culture is on the move and the arts adapt to its flow, intrinsically as well as methodically. Subsequently, the previously described trends are melted into a plan of action: a plan that attempts to explore the correlation between the landscape, the urban design, and the arts. But the scenario is not a blue print and the plans only took their final form during the implementation.

During an interview with one of the members of the artistic team of *Beyond*, Nathalie Zonnenberg, she explains that with the project they made an attempt to fill the, at that time, existing hiatus in the implementation of facilities in the neighborhood. A number of the temporary projects responded to this demand for facilities. "What kind of art projects could we initiate that would offer something to the residents?" Zonnenberg and the team asked themselves. "But at the same time," she says, "it is an art project," and as the previous discussion on the definition of public art already shows, "the quality of the works should be safeguarded. It should not just be nice projects meant to entertain people, than it will no longer be

²⁹⁹ Report: 'Naar een kunstopdrachtenbeleid voor Leidsche Rijn', Gemeente Utrecht/Culturele zaken, May 11, 1999.

³⁰⁰ T. VAN GESTEL, H. HEEZEN & N. ZONNENBERG (eds.): *Beyond Leidsche Rijn. Kunst als strategie bij verstedelijking* (Rotterdam 2009) 3-4.

art.”³⁰¹ Therefore, instead of listening too much to the residents of the area, which is of course not one coherent group, the team decided to look for the largest common denominator. “In the case of public art, which is always a complicated process, not responding to all the individual demands usually works best,” Zonnenberg says. “Then, the largest group of people will appreciate the art best.”³⁰²

The scenario gives six approaches as to how the theme of urbanization can be best implemented onto the suburban area with the help of art projects. During the implementation, those six approaches functioned as separate programs, all characterized by the critical way in which *Beyond* was looking at Leidsche Rijn. The dormitory suburb ‘with its specific garden city like boredom, its emptiness and silences and the impressive lack of any form of urban dynamics,’ had to be ‘transformed into a seemingly metropolitan theater’.³⁰³ The scenario describes six parallel categories that had to fulfill this mission as follows:

- *Looping*. The public relations department of *Beyond* aims to involve, and communicate with, Leidsche Rijn residents about *Beyond's* activities and to stimulate a debate on its arts programs through its website, news and publications.
- *Parasites*. A collective term for light, mobile and experimental forms of architecture. During the urban development of Leidsche Rijn, these are commissioned or selected to function as flexible buildings with a social or participatory function.
- *Artists' Houses*. Artists are invited to respond to the urbanization process, with a view to thinking about living in Leidsche Rijn. This has in some cases resulted in real houses that have been incorporated into the existing plans.
- *White Spots*. Sites/spaces have been bought and given to artists, with *Beyond* acting as land and property developers. These spaces are taken out of the master plan during the construction period and used for parallel and future temporary arts projects.
- *Action Research*. A program made up of temporary projects and artistic interventions created by artists during the development, with a view to undertaking research-based interactions that induce participation, reflexive practice and observational responses to the evolution of Leidsche Rijn as an inhabited place.

³⁰¹ Information derived from interview conducted with Nathalie Zonnenberg (28-07-2012) who is an independent curator and researcher of contemporary art and exhibition history and one of the members of the artistic team of *Beyond*.

³⁰² Information derived from interview conducted with Nathalie Zonnenberg (28-07-2012).

³⁰³ D. RUYTERS: ‘Regisseur van het ongeregisserde. Artistieke interventies van *Beyond* in Leidsche Rijn’, in VAN GESTEL, HEEZEN & ZONNENBERG (eds.): *Beyond Leidsche Rijn* 154-155.

- *Directing Artists.* Artists actively contribute their ideas in relation to the infrastructural design of Leidsche Rijn, as part of the design team for the extension, and contribute to a number of large-scale infrastructural projects.³⁰⁴

Over the years, the *Beyond* scenario resulted in a large number of artworks that stirred discussion, praise, and critique in the neighborhood. Zonnenberg says:

it is always difficult to judge [whether the project was successful or not] (...) but it generated a wide variety of response, positive and negative. This, I think is already a positive development. It stirred discussion in the neighborhood stimulating people to have an opinion about it, or do something with it.³⁰⁵

A short overview will give an impression of the wide variety of projects making up *Beyond*.

The first project, *Stadium*, was part of the Action-Research program and typical for the somewhat intrusive strategy characteristic for *Beyond*. In 2002, the American artist Dennis Adams placed bright orange bucket seats, replicated from the FC Utrecht soccer stadium *Galgenwaard*, in the areas Langerak and Parkwijk. The orange seats were placed at seemingly random locations throughout the area, all facing the city of Utrecht. The sophisticated placement system in some cases led to dissatisfaction among the residents, as some of the locations were quite inconvenient. Some were placed in front of a wall or behind a fence. In all the cases, the artist did not mean to focus on the functionality of the benches but rather on their symbolic, cultural meaning. With this project, the artist attempted to create a connection between the old city and the new suburb. At the same time, Adams wanted to know if the residents of Leidsche Rijn would create a new community, like the supporters of the soccer club, or if they would direct their focus on the old city center of Utrecht. The question remains as to whether the message came across the way it was intended, as from an outsider's perspective, the orange bucket seats might have looked like conspicuous quartermasters for an invasive cultural program attempting to inject shots of urbanism into the newly built suburb.³⁰⁶

The second project: *LAND* by the Danish artist group *N55*, was part of the White Spots program and had a similar activist overtone as it aimed to occupy a piece of land in *Ternwijde* and change it into a free zone. As all the parcels were

³⁰⁴ O'NEILL: 'Beyond Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht, the Netherlands' 249-251; VAN GESTEL, HEEZEN & ZONNENBERG (eds.): *Beyond Leidsche Rijn* 5-6.

³⁰⁵ Original text derived from interview with Nathalie Zonnenberg (28-07-2012). "Dat is natuurlijk lastig te beoordelen (...) Maar er is altijd heel veel reactie op geweest, positief en negatief. Dat vind ik op zich al een positief gegeven. Het bracht iets teweeg in de wijk waardoor mensen zich geprikkeld voelden om daar iets van te vinden of iets mee te doen."

³⁰⁶ RUYTERS: 'Regisseur van het ongeregisserde' 155-156; VAN GESTEL, HEEZEN & ZONNENBERG (eds.): *Beyond Leidsche Rijn* 21.

property of the real estate developing companies, N55 aimed to create an area in which everyone was free to do whatever they wanted. This field of freedom was marked in a more romantic way than the previously described *Stadium* project with a globe shaped hill. *LAND* existed for six years and in this period of time the field with the hill was used for educational purposes, the cultivation of vegetables, the celebration of birthday parties, and as pasture for sheep. The project was designed in a way that demanded active participation of the residents of the area, as the *LAND* would only come to life when it was used.³⁰⁷

For a third project that started in 2006, *Beyond* invited the artist Manfred Pernice. Every six months, Pernice selected different sculptures from the collection of the city of Utrecht. These sculptures were placed on concrete plinths designed by the artist, and located at a roundabout on the access road to Leidsche Rijn. This long-term art project named *Roulette* thereby influenced both the place in which the sculptures were positioned in Leidsche Rijn, but, at the same time, also the empty places the sculptures left behind in the city of Utrecht. The empty places cause “indignation, lead to protest or to public display of affection, emotional reactions that demonstrate that art in the public sphere is part of a complex field of force.”³⁰⁸ When the *Roulette* project ended after five ‘rounds’ of art in 2009, the temporary round about where the art was displayed, made way for the construction plans.

“When does a city, really become a city? When it has a museum, that will give the area a certain status, urbanism.”³⁰⁹ Hence, on the place where in a few years the center of the suburb would arise, an exhibition pavilion was built. The *Beyond* team had asked the renowned Dutch conceptual artist Stanley Brouwn to design this pavilion, and the result was simple but very eye-catching: two blocks that cross over each other. The measurements of the building were derived from Brouwn’s own metric system and its implementation was realized in cooperation with the Utrecht architect Bertus Mulder.

In contrast to most of the other *Beyond* projects *Het Gebouw* (‘The Building’) as the pavilion was called, was a temporary design, but it will remain in Leidsche Rijn, as it was incorporated into the future plans for the city center. *Het Gebouw* was part of the Parasites-program and it opened its doors in 2005 when it was used for the visual-arts manifestation ‘Pursuit of Happiness’. This manifestation focused on the so-called software of Leidsche Rijn, on the way the residents live their lives, and on their dreams, ideals and wishes. What does happiness mean in a Dutch VINEX-neighborhood in the beginning of the twenty-first century? In this way, the attempt

³⁰⁷ VAN GESTEL, HEEZEN & ZONNENBERG (eds.): *Beyond Leidsche Rijn* 22-23.

³⁰⁸ IDEM 48-49.

³⁰⁹ Original text derived from interview with Nathalie Zonnenberg (28-07-2012): “Wanneer wordt een stad nu echt een stad? Als er een museum is, dat geeft een bepaalde status aan een gebied, stedelijkheid.”

to connect with the residents of the area was prioritized. After this opening exhibition, *Het Gebouw* has been used for various exhibitions and projects.³¹⁰ Since 2010, an art-location for children named *De Vrijstaat* ('The Free State') manages the building and organizes interactive expositions for children twice a year. In between those activities, artists can use the space to develop their own expositions.

This overview of four different projects gives an impression of the broadness of the *Beyond* scenario. And, as Zonnenberg said, its success is difficult to define. *Beyond* generated plenty of international attention over the years as guests from, amongst others, Belgium, Switzerland, and even the United States came to visit the different projects. On the one hand, the international audience admired the set-up of the project; the fact that they worked with a dynamic long term scenario that could easily adapt to the changing circumstances in the transforming suburb under construction. On the other hand, they were impressed by the scale of the project, the international selection of artists that, supported by the project team, enjoyed a great deal of artistic freedom.³¹¹

In contrast with the international opinion, *Beyond* was often criticized in both Leidsche Rijn and Utrecht. There was dissatisfaction with the approachability of the art, and the residents often found the projects difficult to understand. *Beyond* focused too much on a national and international art-loving audience, instead of on the residents of Leidsche Rijn. This connection was also questioned in response to the *Parasite Paradise* project. *Parasite Paradise* was created as a settlement consisting of twenty-six mobile and flexible dwellings and it was situated on a lawn right across a bridge, next to the Parkwijk area. It was constructed along the lines of a real urban plan of the Belgian architect Luc Deleu, and it contained all the elements that make a village 'livable': a theater, a mobile garden, a bar, and even mounted specimen, artificial grass, and fake birdsongs to top it all off. On the weekends, the residents could eat and sleep in this paradise. *Parasite Paradise* is 'not only a manifestation, but also a manifesto,' and, one of the makers states, "it is a plea for mind-expanding constructions, and a statement against uniformity."³¹² And although the intentions might have been good and some of the constructions very ingenious, the idea remains a little strange. Since, why would the proud new owner of a brand new VINEX-home want to see and experience alternatives for his or her carefully selected new house and living environment? Moreover, the name of the project suggested that it would function as a 'parasite,' infiltrating the newly built paradise, as, in reality, the mobile dwellings were not situated within the

³¹⁰ VAN GESTEL, HEEZEN & ZONNENBERG (eds.): *Beyond Leidsche Rijn* 42-47.

³¹¹ L. HAAGSMA: 'Interactief avontuur: De ontvangst van Beyond in Leidsche Rijn', in VAN GESTEL, HEEZEN & ZONNENBERG (eds.): *Beyond Leidsche Rijn* 77-78.

³¹² A. VAN DRIEL: 'Parasiet naast het nieuwbouwparadijs', in *De Volkskrant* (August 7, 2003).

Parkwijk area but at a safe location on the outskirts of it, on the other side of the water.³¹³

The costs of the *Parasite Paradise* also raised questions. At the time, the residents were surrounded by sand, were missing an infrastructure, and had to go without elementary facilities. This led some of the residents to wonder why the art project was prioritized and how such large amounts of money could be spend on it.³¹⁴

I understand that this money is coming from a different fund, but it still stings a little. Here, an artist village [Parasite Paradise] arises rapidly and our houses are very well designed, but the city will not even sow grass to make sure the sand no longer blows around.³¹⁵

In 2005, the critique on the *Beyond* project came to a head. When the city council decided to drastically cut back on the subsidy for amateur arts in Leidsche Rijn, the residents pointed at the 3,5 million euro the city is investing in *Beyond*.³¹⁶ A columnist wrote about the way in which the *Beyond* money is spend on art the residents did not ask for, which challenges, questions, and disorders, in the local newspaper *AD Utrechts Nieuwsblad*. “What we need,” he wrote, “is culture that creates connections between its residents.”³¹⁷

The commotion had results: The measures on amateur arts were reversed, and although the budget of *Beyond* and the ambitions of the program remained untouched, something did change. From this period onward, the residents of Leidsche Rijn were more regularly involved in the process. They got to pick their favorite artist dwelling and were invited to teach their ‘specialty’ to fellow residents. On the pretext that ‘everyone is an expert’, salsa lessons, workshops and musical recitals are held in one of the *Beyond* buildings.³¹⁸

As the examples show, the concepts of time and place played a significant role in the concept of *Beyond*. The separate projects functioned as a series of short-term interactions with the neighborhood and its residents within a long-term project.

³¹³ VAN DRIEL: ‘Parasiet naast het nieuwbouwparadijs’.

³¹⁴ HAAGSMA: ‘Interactief avontuur’ 78-79.

³¹⁵ Original text derived from: I. VAN DEN BRINK & A. VAN VOORHUIJSEN: ‘Van apekool tot dolle dromen’, in *Utrechts Nieuwsblad* (August 23, 2003): “Ik begrijp best dat het geld uit een ander potje komt, maar het steekt toch een beetje. Hier verrijst razendsnel een kunstenaarsdorp en onze huizen zijn heel leuk ontworpen, maar de gemeente wil niet eens even gras inzaaien zodat al dat zand niet meer door de wijk stuift.”

³¹⁶ W. DE HEUS: ‘Gemeenteraad opent wederom aanval op ruimge vulde Beyond-kas’, in *Ons Leidsche Rijn* (October 26, 2005) 2; HAAGSMA: ‘Interactief avontuur’ 78.

³¹⁷ I. HEYTZE: ‘Containerkunst’, *AD Utrechts Nieuwsblad* (November 21, 2005); HAAGSMA: ‘Interactief avontuur’ 78-79.

³¹⁸ IBIDEM.

These interactions, as well as the long-term plan, developed in tandem with the urbanization process. In the early stages of this urbanization process, when the neighborhood was still under construction, it lacked basic facilities for its residents. In some cases, the mobile architectural designs could fill this gap as they were used for cultural activities, performances, or exhibitions. *Beyond* approached Leidsche Rijn as a hybrid and constantly evolving place shaped by internal as well as external forces.

It comes out of some kind of ideology that you can add something to this area, to an environment where people live and that it really means something and that it effects a specific relation with the people there and it improves their surroundings' by engaging with a place in transition through artistic interventions.³¹⁹

With these interventions, and, "as a cumulative process aligned to the evolution of a community," *Beyond* attempted to, "insert little histories in an area which has no history at all,"³²⁰ as special events and icons have the ability to bring about history and they shape the identity of the area.

6.3 A permanent legacy: The sculpture garden

For ten years *Beyond* was known for its temporary character, and as a program that developed alongside the new suburb. But as over the years the neighborhood took its shape, the possibility arose to create something more permanent, as the temporary projects were no longer sufficient. "As the program progressed and a number of projects were wound up, we felt that it was important to leave something behind, to safeguard the continuation of the project. That was something they did not think of earlier on in the program. We thought: 'if this ends and nothing else is done, all of our hard work would be gone, and nothing will be left behind,'" Zonnenberg said in the interview.³²¹ Hence, on the 11th of September 2009, *Beyond* was brought to its close with a series of permanent public artworks: a sculpture garden that was located in the large park making up the center of the neighborhood.

For this sculpture garden, the artistic advisory team looked at the classical sixteenth century sculpture park in Bomarzo, Italy (*Parco dei Mostri di Bomarzo*). In this park, all the sculptures were based on a book. Inspired by this idea, the team

³¹⁹ Zonnenberg cited in: O'NEILL: 'Beyond Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht, the Netherlands' 275-276.

³²⁰ O'NEILL: 'Beyond Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht, the Netherlands' 274.

³²¹ Original text derived from interview with Nathalie Zonnenberg (28-07-2012): "Naarmate het kunstproject vorderde en dat we meer projecten hadden afgerond begonnen we in te zien dat het wel heel belangrijk was om iets achter te laten. Om die continuering te kunnen waarborgen. Dat was iets waar niet over nagedacht was. (...) We dachten: als dit stopt en er gebeurt verder niets mee dan was alles voor niets en bleef er niets over."

looked for a relevant contemporary writer. The Frenchman Michel Houellebecq was unanimously selected, and his expressive science fiction novel: *The Possibility of an Island* (original French title: *La possibilité d'une île*) was picked to function as the source of inspiration guidance for the sculpture garden.

The book *The Possibility of an Island* conjures an image of a 'new world' built on the remains of human civilization, destruction and decay, an island that will bring about a new community that will one day belong to the past. The motto of the book, and hence of the sculptures, was 'hope and the endless search for love'. The book could be inspiring to the artists, as the landscapes described in it come together in the past, in the present, and in the future. A copy of Houellebecq's book and an extensive summary were distributed to artists to inspire and inform them about the ideas and intentions of the artistic team. Eventually, seven national and international artists were selected to carry through their artworks in the park and several employed the science fiction novel as their starting point.

The first is Rob Voerman's *Untitled* (2009). This sculpture can represent both a beacon as well as a ruin, and it simultaneously symbolizes growth, prosperity, and decay. The futuristic looking ruin is brought to life with the use of light and glass. "Especially at night, the violet colored light gives the artwork a soft appearance and the tower-like shape almost a religious meaning."³²² The work is connected to earlier projects in which the artist seeks a dialogue between the old archaic farmers' life and the highly developed modern society.

Daniel Roth's *Anonymous Monuments* (2009) makes reference to Daniel 25, the main protagonist of the novel by Houellebecq and to the remains of a past civilization. Inspired by a visit to a hundred years old cemetery in this hometown of Basel during which he fantasized about invisible spaces, as if an underground labyrinth was connecting all the graves, Roth designed a chain of 'anonymous monuments'. During their walk through the park, visitors of the park come across constellations of bronzed, rock-like, black amorphous silhouettes embedded in the earth. For the production of these monuments, centuries old gravestones were used as molds. The work is sited in one of the preserved pear orchards in the park, a location that adds to the appearance of the artwork as the "objects appear mysteriously locked somewhere between the past and the future; as if they have either been there longer than the orchard or they have just arrived."³²³ Eventually, the monuments will become overgrown with greens.

The remains of primeval forests found in Leidsche Rijn on the one hand, and the newly planted trees in the park on the other hand, were the main source of inspiration for William Speakman when he designed his *Wood Chapel* in 2009. Originally, the artwork was supposed to function as a storage facility for wood.

³²² VAN GESTEL, HEEZEN & ZONNENBERG (eds.): *Beyond Leidsche Rijn* 62.

³²³ O'NEILL: 'Beyond Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht, the Netherlands' 278.

However, the open, wooden construction was eventually designed to look like some sort of chapel suggesting a cross between an Asian pagoda and an American wooden shed. The inside of the chapel is embellished with wall paintings inspired by nature and folklore by the artist Gijs Frieling, making it suffused with a lofty atmosphere. These types of fine aesthetics often characterizes the work of Speakman as he wants people to ‘feel’ a place, thereby attempting to create a strong individual experience.³²⁴

The fourth piece is an oval water basin with a fountain emanating from its center, designed by the Lithuanian artist Zilvinas Landzbergas in 2009 (untitled). The location of this artwork is specifically interesting as it is placed next to the so-called ‘*Gat van Serton*’. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, this small natural pond has been used as a swimming pool for the neighborhood children for years. It is the place where ‘grandpa Serton’ taught them how to swim. The gardeners, most of whom still live in the park, have fond memories of this place. The basin overflows with water, which, via the rough and unpolished outside of the pool and two little stairs, seeps into the pond. In the center of the polished inside of the basin, Landzbergas placed a small object referring to a lost civilization. This object in combination with the reflecting water surface would create an illusory and unreal underwater world. Unfortunately, due to various technical difficulties, the artwork hardly ever functions and, as it often lacks water, it loses the extra dimension.³²⁵

Fernando Sánchez Castillo’s *Barricade* (2009) is widely discussed, often critiqued and sometimes praised. Castillo, who was born in Spain during the dictatorial Franco regime, created a work that was meant to function as a monument to future democracy and protest. For this he was inspired by images of destroyed and burnt out wrecks after big city riots. He created a life-size barricade made up of blackened bronze flags, car parts, barrels, Molotov cocktails and a central sculpture of an overturned Fiat 500 and a Citroen 2CV. The barrier brings a hint of resistance and bloody struggle into the peaceful park, and at the same time it refers to, and questions traditional monuments that glorify power and triumph. Responses from the residents varied from some describing it as ‘a crying shame’ to others finding it beautiful. But as Zonnenberg said in the interview, “the discussion that is stirred with an art project like this is an interesting and positive one, as it creates a connection between the residents.”

The sixth work demanded active participation of the residents. They had to select it from a shortlist of three designs for interactive sculptures in the playground area of the *Binnenhof*. The winning design: *Observatorium* by the German

³²⁴ VAN GESTEL, HEEZEN & ZONNENBERG (eds.): *Beyond Leidsche Rijn* 63.

³²⁵ M. HENDRIKS & A. SIMONS: *Leidsche Rijn Park. Ontwerp en realisatie van een unieke stadspark* (Wageningen 2010) 48-55.

artist Lucas Lenglet, is a high watchtower composed of a series of connected circle shapes. Herein you can walk endlessly until the path brings you high above the (future) trees. The outside is covered with a rusty steal net that, over the years, will be covered with ivy. As with the water basin, the watchtower also does not function as planned. It was supposed to become part of the playground area and freely accessible. But the construction proved to be too dangerous for children and now it is only open for visitors on special occasions and one Sunday a month.

6.4 Ritual deposition

Out of sight, but not out of mind.³²⁶

Rituele Depositie ('Ritual deposition') is the seventh work in the sculpture garden and was designed by the Dutch artist Mathilde ter Heijne. Via showcases, this work lets the spectator peek at various bronzed objects that are on display several meters underground. The objects are, among others: a photo camera, a t-shirt, a stuffed animal, and a small treasure box. These seemingly ordinary objects, provided to the artist by the residents of the area, each contain a story, a personal story that is related to their life in the Leidsche Rijn area.

When Ter Heijne was asked by *Beyond* to make an artwork for the sculpture garden, they told her that Leidsche Rijn was a whole new neighborhood, and that there was nothing there. "I do not believe that there is nothing there," she replied.

Whenever I am creating art in the public domain it is all about the relation I have with the place, the things I come across. And by this I do not mean that I just look at whether there are trees or a quagmire. I want to know how this place was used in past times, and how it will be used in the future. In addition to this aspect of time, I want to know whether this place is alive and how the people involved feel about this place. And then there is the third element, and that is the spiritual, does the place have a dimension that we cannot see, but something we can only feel.³²⁷

³²⁶ The working title of the project was: *Uit het oog, maar niet uit het hart*. This can be translated as: 'Out of sight, but not out of mind.'

³²⁷ Information derived from interview with Mathilde ter Heijne (20-08-2013). Ter Heijne is one of the artists asked by the *Beyond* team to create an artwork for the sculpture garden in Leidsche Rijn. She currently lives and works in Germany but she was born in France and educated in the Netherlands. Original text: "Dus als ik iets in de publieke ruimte ga doen dan gaat het om mijn verhouding met de plek dat wat ik daar tegen kom. Maar dat betekent ook dat ik niet alleen kijk van is daar een boom of is er een modderpoel. Maar ook wat was in de tijd hiervoor en wat komt in de tijd hierna? Dus het tijdsaspect maar ook wat leeft hier op deze plek, wat leeft onder de mensen. En dan heb je nog de derde factor dat is het spirituele is deze plek, heeft die een dimensie die wij niet zo direct zien maar die wij voelen."

The question of what it is exactly that creates the meaning of a place she finds difficult to answer.

Is this meaning shaped here and now? Is it important that the here and now is connected with the past and with the future? I think that when you are looking to give meaning to something, it is smart to connect this meaning to what is already there. If you enforce something by saying: this has to have meaning now, it won't work. Most people like it better when it feels more natural. It has to feel like something that makes sense for them. Something they can connect to, also on an emotional level.³²⁸

Hence, inspired by the archeological excavations in the area, Ter Heijne came up with the idea for her artwork. The swampy grounds of Leidsche Rijn have long functioned as the burial grounds for treasures from the past; Coins, boats, jewelry and numerous valuable objects have been found during the construction of the neighborhood. In addition to the objects, Ter Heijne was also interested in the active use of the soil by past generations to keep and safeguard valuables and the rituals accompanying this process. The burial of valuable objects often functioned as a rite of passage and as a reminder of an historical event, thereby often creating a feeling of togetherness. Ter Heijne thought that by creating a monument inspired by this idea, the ancient custom of ritual burial would be continued. In a new neighborhood such as Leidsche Rijn with residents from a variety of places and backgrounds that lack a shared tradition, it would be a good thing to try to bring these people together. With the artwork *Rituele Depositie* Ter Heijne attempts to create this feeling of togetherness and of a shared identity.

In the original plans, Ter Heijne proposed a very conceptual piece: The objects would be bronzed and buried ten meters underground and bronze circles would mark their location, in the grass or maybe even floating above the water. The team of curators from *Beyond* could not approve her plans. It would be too expensive and the residents would not understand the artwork if there was nothing for them to look at. The plans were too conceptual for this sculpture garden. In a response she says: "I still wanted my artwork to be part of the sculpture garden.

³²⁸ Original text derived from interview with Mathilde ter Heijne (20-08-2013): "Dat is een beetje de vraag: wat geeft een plek betekenis? Wordt die betekenis in het hier en nu gevormd? Is het belangrijk dat die hier en nu betekenis ook een verbinding aan gaat met wat was en wat gaat komen? Ik denk als je een zin of betekenis zoekt voor iets dan is het slim dat je die betekenis verbindt aan wat voor handen is want dat maakt die betekenis dan sterker. (...) voor de meeste mensen lopen dingen fijner en beter als ze natuurlijk aanvoelen, waar zij op de een of andere manier mee kunnen verbinden, ook emotioneel."

Maybe it was not necessary to keep it this conceptual. I decided to take a step toward my audience.”³²⁹

The next step was to create a solution to this problem: how can one make something visible that is buried several meters underground? Ter Heijne wanted to stick with the concept of ritual burial, as this ritual would give the work part of its meaning. The exhibition of the objects on a pedestal would not have the same connotation. *Beyond* came up with the idea to create peepholes to visualize the buried objects. Ter Heijne expanded this idea and came up with the plan to make it seem like the objects were placed on a large and endless white background, as ‘a sort of consecrated space.’³³⁰ Thus, she designed the underground display cases in a way that made it seem like there were no sides; when you look into the peephole it seems to be an endless white space. “You look into that display case and you cannot see its size. I did this, as it were, in an attempt to visualize the sacred.”³³¹ In the interview she elaborates on her vision of the sacred character of her artwork as follows:

(...) you know that if you bury an object it transforms in your head, it transforms onto a different level and it becomes something spiritual (...). I make this sacred space visible to make it possible for spectators to look at it. Those are two different things, one is visual and the other one is not.³³²

She continues and explains the difficult relationship between art and sacrality, which is often seen as something grimy that does not belong in art. “But,” she says “the sacred is something we can make ourselves. I make my own spiritual space and that can be a place very close to home (...). It is your own perception of the environment, what you share with the people around you.”³³³ This means that it would be possible to create a sacred place by means of a work of art. She at-

³²⁹ Original text derived from interview with Mathilde ter Heijne (20-08-2013): “Ik vond het toch fijn als het werk er kwam. Misschien was het niet echt nodig dat het zo conceptueel bleef. (...) Ik stap af van mij oorspronkelijke plan.”

³³⁰ Original text derived from interview with Mathilde ter Heijne (20-08-2013): “een soort gewijde ruimte.”

³³¹ Original text derived from interview with Mathilde ter Heijne (20-08-2013): “Je kijkt in die ondergrond en je ziet niet hoe ver die ruimte gaat. En daarmee heb ik geprobeerd het sacrale te visualiseren als het ware.”

³³² Original text derived from interview with Mathilde ter Heijne (20-08-2013): “Je weet van ok, als je iets begraaft daardoor transformeert het in je hoofd, het transformeert op een ander niveau, het wordt iets spiritueels (...) Die sacrale ruimte visualiseer ik waardoor de toeschouwer begrijpt dat dat een sacrale ruimte is waar je in kan kijken. Dat zijn twee verschillende dingen, de ene is visueel en de andere niet.”

³³³ Original text derived from interview with Mathilde ter Heijne (20-08-2013): “Het sacrale is iets wat wij zelf ook maken (...) Ik maak mijn eigen spirituele ruimte en dat kan ook heel dicht bij huis liggen. (...) Het is jou belevingswereld, wat jij deelt met de mensen om je heen.”

tempted to add this sacred layer not only for the participants but also for the bystanders, the spectators.

The first aspect Ter Heijne used was the history of the area and the personal stories attached to the objects. Secondly, she emphasized the location of the objects (underground) and the ritual act of burial that goes along with it. A third element is the fact that all the objects are casted into bronze. She came up with this idea, as it used to be common for people to cast little baby shoes into bronze or the rose they got on their first date. It is a ritual. Moreover, Ter Heijne said:

Ritual deposition is all about expensive objects, preferably glaring gold. But using gold was not an option, as people would try to dig up the objects. So now they look like gold and they are made with love. Polishing the objects took a lot of time.³³⁴

The objects

In the autumn of 2008, *Beyond* made an appeal exclusively to the residents of Leidsche Rijn on behalf of Ter Heijne. The letter stated:

Do you have an object that is of special value to you because it is connected to an important event/episode from your life since you have been living in Leidsche Rijn? Than you can send a picture and description of the object to *Bureau Beyond* and maybe your object will be cast in bronze (the original remains in your possession!). The bronzed objects will be entrusted to the soil of the Leidsche Rijn Park for eternity. In especially developed display cases that will be buried, the bronzed objects will remain visible. They will give the park an extra layer, a park that will come to life when its visitors, the residents of Leidsche Rijn, use it.³³⁵

Hereupon *Beyond* received numerous responses, describing touching, funny, and also very sad experiences and events. In February and March of 2009, all these objects and their accompanying stories were being exhibited in *Het Gebouw*. On the weekend of September 11th 2009, a selection of the objects had been bronzed and was donated to the park by the people involved.

The personal stories of the participants play a significant role in this artwork. Most of the objects are ordinary: a stuffed animal, a tinkering of a child, a T-shirt. The personal stories that at the same time connect the objects to the area of Leidsche Rijn make these objects special.

³³⁴ Original text derived from interview with Mathilde ter Heijne (20-08-2013): “Bij rituele depositie gaat het erover dat het dure objecten zijn. Het liefst hoogglans goud (...) maar het kan geen goud zijn anders gaan mensen ze uitgraven. Nu zien ze er uit al goud en ze zijn met veel liefde gemaakt. Het poleren van de objecten heeft veel tijd gekost.”

³³⁵ Paragraph from the letter that was sent out to the residents of Leidsche Rijn in 2008, received from Mathilde ter Heijne on 20-08-2013.

Object 1: a T-shirt

Herman Bode lived from April 16th 1925 until January 10th 2007. He was a former union leader and a resident of De Meern. At the turn of the century, together with other residents and mayor Westra, Herman fought for the independence of the villages of Vleuten and De Meern. A large majority [of the residents] favored this independence and, in their eyes, the government had nibbled on the foundations of our democracy. During the mass parade to The Hague, many residents wore the T-shirt ‘Vleuten-De Meern zelfstandig’ (‘Vleuten-De Meern independent’). But the attempts were of no avail as the Dutch government decided otherwise. With this T-shirt I hope to keep some of his will alive. In my opinion it is a piece of history. Old residents and new ones need to find each other in Leidsche Rijn. The old villages of Vleuten and De Meern make up the foundations of this new VINEX-area. The old residents still see it like this.³³⁶

Object 2: a craftwork of a child

My name is Herre de Heus and I was born on October 4th 2001 at the Klifrakplantsoen [streetname] in Langerak [name of the neighborhood, part of Leidsche Rijn]. Ever since I was three years old I have been collecting stuff I find on the street: little lamps, pieces of plastic and broken glasses, little screws and other rubbish. It took me years to gather this collection. I made an artwork out of it. It is fun to change the rubbish you find on the streets of Leidsche Rijn into art especially since my artwork will be buried in the ground as part of another artwork.³³⁷

Object 3: a stuffed animal

Luc died unexpectedly last year. The doctors thought it was glandular fever at first but after his death it turned out to be a very progressive form of cancer. He would have turned 4 years old on the 18th of December. Our family has been living in Leidsche

³³⁶ *Object 1: a T-shirt*. Original text derived from the website www.beyondrecht.nl (September 4, 2013): “Herman Bode leefde van 16 april 1925 tot 10 jan 2007 hij was oud vakbondsleider van de FNV en bewoner van de Meern rond de eeuwwisseling heeft hij samen met de bewoners en burgemeester Westra veel gedaan om als gemeente Vleuten-De Meern zelfstandig te kunnen blijven. Een overgrote meerderheid was daar tot het laatst voor en er was in hun ogen aan de fundamenten van de demo-cratie geknaagd. Tijdens de massale optocht naar Den Haag hebben veel bewoners het T-shirt van “Gemeente Vleuten-De Meern Zelfstandig” gedragen. De regering sprak echter haar oordeel hierover uit. Het mocht niet baten. Met dit T-shirt blijft hopelijk iets van zijn daadkracht bewaard. Het is naar mijn idee een stukje geschiedenis. Oud en nieuw moeten elkaar hier ook gaan vinden. Het is in deze VINEX wijk tenslotte de oude Gemeente Vleuten-De Meern geweest en de oude bewoners zien het nog een beetje zo.”

³³⁷ *Object 2: a craftwork of a child*. Original text derived from the website, www.beyondrecht.nl (September 4, 2013): “Ik ben Herre de Heus en ik ben op 4 oktober 2001 geboren op het Klifrakplantsoen in Langerak. Vanaf dat ik 3 jaar ben verzamel ik spullen die ik op straat vind: lampjes, stukjes plastic en een halve bril, schroefjes en andere rommel. Het is een verzameling waar ik jaren over deed. Daarvan heb ik een kunstwerk gemaakt. Het is best leuk om rommel van de straat van Leidsche Rijn om te bouwen tot een kunstwerk. Helemaal leuk omdat het kunstwerk weer in de grond wordt gestopt als onderdeel van een ander kunstwerk.”

Rijn Terwijde for three years now. From a little apartment we moved to a house with a garden, wonderful for the kids. The majority of Terwijde is still being developed and the children love to watch the bulldozers, the excavators, and the tractors. It is wonderful to see what all those people are building. The objects we can supply for the artwork are numerous and sometimes very suitable to life in Leidsche Rijn. His entire collection of Bob the Builder, toy trucks and tractors, the little scoop he used to play with in the sand, his dinosaur (extinct but never forgotten) and, hopefully, the same will go for Luc and his favorite stuffed animal. He took his frog everywhere. At one point we even had three frogs: one at daycare, one at home, and a spare one. One of the frogs was buried with Luc in his coffin and the other one sits in what used to be his room.³³⁸

The three objects described above are only a few of the bronzed objects found in the display cases of *Rituele Depositie*. Their stories, however, show the broadness of the contents of the artwork. Ter Heijne described the sculpture garden, as a whole, as a monument to celebrate and mark the birth of the neighborhood.³³⁹ The theme, the science fiction novel *The Possibility of an Island*, was chosen by the curators to, in a very abstract way, represent and emphasize the identity of VINEX residents in general and more specifically in Leidsche Rijn. *Rituele Depositie* was also created as a monument to mark moments of transition, but on a more personal level. Casting the objects in bronze and entrusting them to the soil should be seen as a rite of passage. Also, the way in which most of the participants describe their object and their reason for participation shows that they really see it as a rite of passage and also as a way to show their connection to the neighborhood. Even though many of the objects refer to negative events they have experienced while living in Leidsche Rijn, the participants still decided to bury them as part of ritual deposition because they want to leave this negative episode behind and continue their life in the neighborhood. At the same time this ritual strengthens their con-

³³⁸ *Object 3: a stuffed animal*. Original text derived from the website, www.beyondtuecht.nl (September 4, 2013): “Luc is in juli vorig jaar onverwachts overleden. De doktoren dachten aan de ziekte van Pfeiffer maar na zijn dood bleek het een zeer progressieve vorm van kanker te zijn. Hij zou op 18 december 4 jaar zijn geworden. Ons gezin woont nu ruim 3 jaar in Leidsche Rijn Terwijde. Van een flatje gingen we naar een huis met een tuin, heerlijk voor de kinderen. Het grootste deel van Terwijde is nog steeds in ontwikkeling en de kinderen vermaken zich dan ook prima met het kijken naar de bulldozers, graafmachines en tractors. Het is prachtig om te zien wat mensen hier allemaal bouwen. De voorwerpen die we kunnen aanleveren voor het kunstwerk zijn eindeloos en soms zeer toepasselijk voor het wonen in Leidsche Rijn. Zijn hele collectie van Bob de Bouwer, vrachtwagens en tractors, schepjes waarmee hij altijd in het zand speelde, zijn dinosaurussen: al jaren uitgestorven maar nog steeds niet vergeten, en hopelijk geldt dat straks ook voor Luc en zijn lievelingsknuffel. Zijn kikker moest overal mee naar toe op een geven moment hadden we er zelf drie, voor het dagverblijf, thuis en een reserve. Een kikker is met Luc mee in zijn kistje en de andere staat in wat zijn kamertje was.”

³³⁹ Information derived from interview with Mathilde ter Heijne (20-08-2013).

nection with the area as their very personal object is entrusted to this location for a long period of time.

Since Ter Heijne lives and works in Berlin, she has never returned to see her artwork in action. Hence, during the interview she wonders whether it is used by the participants or even by other residents. As the park is growing and changing, are the display cases still located at a convenient location? And how do visitors of the park perceive the artwork? Do they peek into the display cases?

Observations at various days and times during the year show that visitors do make active use of the artwork and a podcast makes it possible for them to listen to the stories attached to the documents. Of course, not all the visitors look at the artwork every time they visit the park, but every now and then you see people stop and look into the separate display cases.

In addition to the regular park visits, *Cultuur 19* (for art and culture in Leidsche Rijn) organizes, twice a year, a special event involving the sculptures: *Zingende Beelden* ('Singing Sculptures'). On a Sunday afternoon in the early and late summer, scriptwriters, artists and musicians create small performances around the different sculptures and take the visitors on a journey around the sculpture garden. Sometimes the events are focused on children, with stories and songs they can easily relate to, and other times the performances focus on an adult audience. The performances organized around *Rituele Depositie* approached the artwork differently every time, but the performances always emphasize the ritual aspect of safeguarding important objects, the stories behind those objects, and the role this has played in the history of the area. The text on the next page is partly a song performed at *Zingende Beelden* in 2010.

While the song³⁴⁰ was sung, the large group of visitors walked from one display case to the other looking at the various buried objects. This active use of *Rituele Depositie* and the other works of art in this *Zingende Beelden* tour, twice a year, attempts to bring the sculptures to the attention of the visitors in a special way, and it is very successful, with large numbers of visitors every time it is organized. The sculptures, some more than others, make the park special; it is no longer an ordinary park.

³⁴⁰ This text is part of the song *Bear Weer* ('Bear, Again') by the Dutch composer and director Erik Snel (2010) and performed at *Zingende Beelden* ('Singing Statues') a musical and theater festival in the sculpture garden (September 2010). It was especially written for the artwork: *Rituele Depositie*.

<p>(...)</p> <p>Beer is een vondst Een relikwie Een opgegraven 'Zeg, wat is dat nou?'</p> <p>'Wat zegt dit ons?' Wat zegt mijn dier, Mijn knuffeldier, De mensen hier</p> <p>'Ik zie de tand De tand des tijds Die tand verwijst Naar lang geleden</p> <p>Iets klopt er niet Beer is van nu Beer ademt nog Levend begraven</p> <p>Beer van een kindje Van een Romein? Beer is een raadsel Van Leidsche Rijn' Rust Ik wil rust Even tot bezinning komen Even stollen Ik versteen Ik word Geschiedenis</p> <p>Alles is vreemd Ik ben de weg kwijt Dit is niet mijn tijd Ik ben ontheemd</p> <p>Ik ben alleen Ik ben geboren Ik ben bevroren Ik ben van steen</p> <p>Samen met beer Voltooid Verleden Wij zijn niet meer</p> <p>Reis door het heden Val keer op keer T'rug naar beneden</p> <p>Ik pers de tijd In een groot glas Een rijpe vrucht Van twintig eeuwen</p> <p>Samen met Beer In een capsule Halte de oudheid Steeds heen, steeds weer.</p>	<p>(...)</p> <p>Bear is a treasure A relic An excavation 'What is this exactly?'</p> <p>'What does this tell us?' What does my Bear say, My Teddy Bear, To the people here</p> <p>'I see the ravages The ravages of time This ravage refers To a time, long ago</p> <p>Something is not right Bear is not from the past Bear is still breathing Buried alive</p> <p>Bear belongs to a child To a Roman? Bear is a riddle Of Leidsche Rijn' Peace I want peace Time to contemplate Time to solidify I petrify I become History</p> <p>Everything is strange I have lost direction This is not my time I am rootless</p> <p>I am alone I am born I am frozen I am made out of stone</p> <p>Together with Bear Pluperfect We are no longer here</p> <p>Traveling through the present I fall again and again Back down again</p> <p>I press time together In a large glass A ripe fruit Of twenty centuries</p> <p>Together with Bear In a capsule Station: the antiquity Constantly back, constantly forth.</p>
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6.5 Gardening as public art

The introduction of this book describes a special place that I found in the summer of 2013. This chapter will elaborate on this project, describing how it came into being, who participated in it and how it functions.

It was the early summer of 2013 when rumor had it that a new ‘sacred place’ was emerging in Leidsche Rijn. Social media was buzzing and participants were inviting me to come visit this new art project that definitely had to be part of my research. Hence, on the 19th of July 2013 I visited *De Halte Terwijde* for the first time. Inspired by city farming and urban gardening projects in cities such as New York, Paris, and Amsterdam, a group of four people, all living in Leidsche Rijn (an architect, a public space artist, a project coordinator, and an enthusiastic resident of Terwijde) made a plan for the creation of a neighborhood vegetable garden at one of the wastelands close to the train station of Terwijde.³⁴¹ The terrain the initiators had in mind had not been used in the past ten years and it would not be used in the near future either. As the neighborhood is still under construction, several ‘empty’ spaces pop up in between the housing blocks and luckily for the initiators, the city of Utrecht was, after a long period of negotiations, prepared to support the plans for a temporary collective vegetable garden at the *Den Engblaan*.

Enjoying nature and enjoying each other’s company are the main goals of *De Halte* (‘The Stop’): a place to fulfill your fantasies. A beautiful wasteland located in the middle of a suburb under construction, fringed with old walnut trees on one side and a ditch that could provide the gardeners with water on the other: a temporary but exceptional outdoor community center. Probably in the summer of 2015, an ecological, ‘edible’ house will function as the entrance of *De Halte*. The two designers, Architect Txell Blanco Diaz and artist Asia Komanova, picture ‘edible’ walls with plants hanging down like curtains. Moreover, in the middle of the terrain, the design leaves room for a long wooden bridge path that will be the communal part of the garden. A long table made by the participants themselves and used for gatherings replaces this bridge path, for now, as the garden is already fully in use, but the design plans are not all put into practice yet. The communal part was deliberately planned, as it will offer to the participants the opportunity to work together, eat together and relax together. On the left and right side of this center path, individual residents or groups of people can, for a small amount of money, rent a piece of land to build their own wooden box, their private vegetable garden.

After months of planning and negotiations with the city of Utrecht, the project started at the 18th of May, the Saturday before Pentecost. On this day, from 10 a.m. until the evening, a group of twenty participants spend their time building wooden boxes of different sizes, varying from a square meter to eight square me-

³⁴¹ Train station Terwijde is one of the three train stations in Leidsche Rijn.

ters, filling them up with the large pile of garden mold provided by the city, changing the boxes into private vegetable gardens. In the following weeks, radish-, tomato-, pumpkin-, and zucchini plants started to grow next to marigolds, and even the plants in the private tobacco plantation were growing fast.

It was one of my previous respondents, journalist Wouter de Heus, who invited me to *De Halte* for the first time. On Twitter I had seen his tweets and pictures of the wooden boxes, the tobacco plants and the chairs and tables he built for himself and his fellow gardeners.³⁴² When I asked him about it, he immediately invited me over for a tour.³⁴³ A neighbor passing by on her bicycle saw us sitting in the garden and came over with coffee and cookies. After I briefly introduced myself, De Heus said: “I am showing Inez the sacred places in the neighborhood. Hence, *De Halte* had to be part of the tour. It is a wonderful place, one of the most beautiful places in Leidsche Rijn.”³⁴⁴ The enthusiasm of the participants made me decide to adopt one of the empty wooden boxes and start my own vegetable garden, in order to have an excuse to visit *De Halte* on a regular basis and observe the participants of this project. In addition, I joined the Facebook group *De Tuinkabouters van de Halte Terwijde* (“The Garden gnomes of De Halte Terwijde”). The initiators of the project started this closed Facebook group that has 40 members.

During the summer, I visited the project on a weekly basis. And both in the garden as well as on the website I met a wide variety of participants. A group of elderly Chinese people has built a provisional shed where they make their own fertilizer out of manure that they collect at a local farm. Their garden looks very professional, with large pumpkins and watermelons. One father built a wooden box for his children that can be closed with a little fence, and it has a small table and a chair in it for them to sit on. In addition, a large number of parents come to work at their wooden box everyday with one or more of their children, and also at least two teens are maintaining their own little vegetable garden.

Sitting at one of the handmade chairs in the garden I see how mothers and fathers teach their children about the plants, the vegetables and the fruits. But there is also a lot communication amongst the participants themselves; They tell stories about how their garden is growing, share tips and tricks on how to get rid of snails and other bugs, exchange little plants or harvested vegetables and fruits, or ask one another to look after their garden when they go on vacation. During the summer I have seen various signs saying: ‘The people who water my plants can harvest whatever they want’. On the Facebook page I read similar conversations. People post photos of their garden or harvest and others comment on it, or they

³⁴² Wouter de Heus on Twitter: @heuswaar.

³⁴³ First visit to *De Halte Terwijde* on July 19, 2013.

³⁴⁴ Information derived from a conversation with respondent Wouter de Heus. Original text: “Ik laat Inez de sacrale plekken in de wijk zien. Dus dan kan de Halte Terwijde natuurlijk niet ontbreken: een prachtige plek, een van de mooiste plekken in de wijk.”

offer advice or plants to other gardeners. In August, one of the participants wrote: “I could not have imagined that you could get this much joy and pleasure out of such a small piece of land. It is so peaceful and quiet. Nice people cycle or walk by and stop for a chat.”³⁴⁵

On the 22nd of August 2013, the end of the summer is celebrated with a summer harvest barbeque for all the participants. They are invited via email and through a message on the wall of the Facebook group. The aim of the barbeque is similar to the aim of the whole project: collaboration and sharing. Hence the invitation states: ‘bring everything yourself’. When I arrived at *De Halte* that day around 5 p.m., a fire was already burning and the people³⁴⁶ arrived, carrying chicken wings, wine, bread, vegetarian burgers, watermelon, and halal sausages. It turned out most of this summer harvest, except for some tomatoes and radishes, came from the supermarket instead of their own gardens and people jokingly commented on this. All the food and drinks are collected at the large table in the middle and everyone immediately shared whatever they had brought, poured each other wine, and drank and looked after each other’s children.

During the barbeque I talked to the participants and when I informed them about my research on the emergence of sacred places in Leidsche Rijn they replied by saying: ‘you came to the right place’. One of the women who has a vegetable garden with her four children came up to me and said:

I was totally done. I had an operation and a burn out and I told my husband: I am going to be part of this new project. I am getting a vegetable garden. And he did not like this idea at all. But it is delightful! It is so wonderful here. I can completely relax and the kids love it, especially seeing everything grow.³⁴⁷

Meanwhile, the kids were running around and building a fishing pole out of bamboo sticks, rope and rusty nails. I taught them that vegetarian burgers do not taste like cardboard by sharing one of my burgers with them. One of the teens, a 12-year-old Muslim boy, was reluctant to eat anything but when one of the other participants showed him the halal sausages he bought especially for him, his face lit up

³⁴⁵ Original tekst found on the newsfeeds of the Facebook page *De Tuinkabouters van de Halte Tervijde* (August 1, 2013): “Ik had me niet kunnen voorstellen dat je van zo’n stukje grond zoveel plezier kunt hebben. En dan die rust en aardige mensen die op hun fiets of al wandelend een praatje met je maken.”

³⁴⁶ In total approximately 12/15 adults, 10 children and 4 people of the district office attended the barbeque.

³⁴⁷ Original tekst derived from conversation with one of the participants of the *De Halte Tervijde* project (August 1, 2013): “Ik zat er helemaal doorheen, operatie gehad en een burnout toen zei ik tegen mijn man: Ik ga een tuintje beginnen hier. Hij vond het een slecht idee. Maar het is zo heerlijk! Het is hier prachtig en ik kom helemaal tot rust. En de kinderen vinden het ook geweldig vooral om het zo te zien groeien.”

and he shared his sausages with me, meanwhile proudly telling me about his garden and how he is working in it all by himself. As we are cleaning up one of the neighbors stops by to ask about the project. He just moved to the area and only has a balcony in his new home. He misses working in the garden and is looking forward to participating in *De Halte*.

When the garden season ended, the wooden boxes at *De Halte* slowly became empty. The change of the season stimulated some people to plant kale, carrots or other types of winter vegetables but the winter was quiet at *De Halte*. Yet, the next spring it came back to life. The form was a little different. Although the artsy elements, such as the edible entrance were starting to take shape in November 2014, the buzz from the first summer was gone.

De Halte cannot be described as a new phenomenon, but rather as part of a larger trend. In cities throughout the world, so-called urban gardening or guerilla gardening projects have been popping up in the past years. On websites, participants share tips and tricks, and pictures of the various projects.³⁴⁸ Books on how to create your own vegetable garden on one square meter are popular in bookstores, and even sold at museum bookstores.³⁴⁹ In a practical way, the book *Je eigen groentetuin op 1 m²* describes the best ways to arrange your small garden, how to plan the planting process, the different vegetables, herbs and flowers that can be combined together, and information about the nursing and harvest of the plants.

6.6 A singing glass tower

One can hear a soft tingling sound, carried across the shopping center by the wind. People rush by with their weekly groceries or they are on their way to the library with the kids in the carrier tricycle. When they hear the sound they pause, they stop walking or cycling and they look up, up to the tower that produces the sound.

This shopping center is located in Vleuterweide, one of the sub-neighborhoods of Leidsche Rijn, and it includes a so-called *Cultuurcampus* ('Culture Campus') that offers room to stores, a public library, a theater, the church center *Het Baken*, and housing facilities. The *Cultuurcampus* is part of a larger urban plan by the well-known architects Rob Krier, Christoph Kohl and Vera Yanovshtchinsky. Krier and Kohl have a specific style and they are known for basing their urban designs on the context and history of the places in which they build. Their work does not emerge from a void, but builds on existing street patterns as well as traditional building types and facades.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ For example websites such as: www.guerillagardening.org; www.guerillagardeners.nl; and www.farmingthecity.net (October 30, 2013).

³⁴⁹ A. NAGELEISEN: *Je eigen groentetuin op 1 m²* (Stichting Kunstboek Oostbeek 2011) bought at the bookstore of *Van Abbemuseum*, Eindhoven, The Netherlands.

³⁵⁰ Information derived from website: www.archkk.com (September 26, 2013).

The idea of the monastery was used as the inspiration for the design of the campus and this is also connected to the references made to the Middle Ages in the urban plans of this sub-neighborhood. Monasteries often include a similar combination of functions: living, working, meeting, caring, experiencing and inspiring. And to complete the monastery, a clock tower should be part of the plans. This tower was part of the design from the beginning, but there was no room for it in the budget. In order to make the construction of a tower possible, the campus decided to make use of the so-called 1.5%-rule provided by the city of Utrecht, whereby this percentage of the total building costs must go towards artwork. A special committee including the architect, and representatives of the various institutions included in the *Cultuurencampus* chose this specific tower.

The committee approached the Dutch artist Bernard Heesen for the design of the tower and asked him to include a carillon in his plans. Heesen was originally schooled as an architect, but he had been working with glass for the past 30 years. He has been researching the qualities of glass and explores its technical possibilities. His work, which is often inspired by the whimsical character of liquid glass, has been exhibited in various Dutch museums. When he heard about the demand for a carillon, Heesen was not enthusiastic about placing heavy bronze bells in the transparent tower he had in mind. But when he heard the tingling sound of water on glass in his workshop he decided that it was possible to include a carillon if it would be made out of glass. The sound of such a glass carillon cannot be compared to the sound of regular bronze bells, as it is much lighter and softer, which means that depending on the wind the sound can only be heard in the direct proximity of the tower and only partially in the rest of the shopping center.

This decision resulted in a long testing process. Glass bells were blown and tested on sound, strength and durability. Eventually the design included a tuned carillon with a range of four octaves and a number of non-tuned sound scales that can be played simultaneously as well as separately. The making of the fifty hand-blown glass bells was a very complicated and time-consuming process. Hence, this 30 meter high glass carillon is unique in its kind in the world. An advanced wireless control system makes it possible for the bells and scales to be played from a clavier on the plaza so that the carillonneur does not need to climb the tower in order to play it. He can sit surrounded by his audience or other musicians. The tuned bells can be played as a traditional carillon with existing carillon music or an electric keyboard can play on the sound scales. The 1.5% budget was by no means sufficient, and in order to finish the project, which would eventually cost around 1,5 million euros, a large number of external funds had to be found for support.³⁵¹

³⁵¹ Information on the carillon and the Bernard Heesen was derived from the website: www.dezingendetoren.nl (September 27, 2013).

The inauguration concert of the singing glass tower took place on the 23rd of April 2009 with the piece *Torenhoog, Mijlenbreed* (“Sky-high, miles wide”) that was especially written for this unique instrument, and a large group of children playing glass bottles, by the Dutch composer Merlijn Twaalfhoven. Carillonneur Boudewijn Zwart who was the first one to play the bells said: “it sounds more fairylike than a normal carillon.”³⁵² Zwart, who was also actively involved in the earlier stages of the project, explains the choice for this specific design as follows: “we wanted something totally new, but at the same time to create an historical connection. The glass is new, but singing towers, that is a something typically Dutch,”³⁵³ hereby referring to the church towers and accompanying bells still actively present in most Dutch cities and villages. The expectations of the new tower were high. It was the first glass carillon in the world, various national Dutch newspapers reported about the project, and, in an interview for the book *Beyond Leidsche Rijn. Kunst als Strategie bij Verstedelijking*, Martin Mulder, one of the project managers of Leidsche Rijn actively involved in the *Beyond* project, says that art can possibly write the history of a new area such as Leidsche Rijn: “Only special events and icons can accomplish this,” he says. Further, he says, “Maybe later it will turn out that the singing glass tower (...) will be that one special object that will define the way in which people experience Leidsche Rijn.”³⁵⁴

*Playing the Carillon*³⁵⁵

Since the opening concert, the tower has played on a regular basis. The season usually starts early March and it ends in October depending on the temperature, as it is not safe to play the carillon when the outdoor temperature drops below 5 degrees Celsius. The regular play dates are Saturdays between 11 and 12 a.m., some Wednesdays between 2 and 3 p.m. and on special occasions such as Queensday, the 4th of May, and so on. When the weather is nice, the carillonneur sits outside with his clavier and when it rains or it is too cold, he sits inside but with open windows, to facilitate interaction with the audience. It is necessary to note that during most of the concerts, no special arrangements were made for the audience. The spectators sometimes lean against the bike racks located on the square, sit on a

³⁵² H. MEIJER: ‘Carillon van glas klinkt als een sprookje’, in *Nederlands Dagblad* (April 21, 2009) 3. Original tekst: “Het klinkt sprookjesachtiger dan een gewoon carillon.”

³⁵³ MEIJER: ‘Carillon van glas klinkt als een sprookje’ 3. Original tekst: “We wilden iets totaal nieuws, maar wilden ook een link leggen met de historie. Dat glas is nieuw, maar torens die zingen, dat is typisch Nederlands.”

³⁵⁴ C. WIJN: ‘Boksen tegen onbehagen. Bespiegelingen over tien jaar *Beyond*’, in VAN GESTEL, HEEZEN & ZONNENBERG (eds.): *Beyond Leidsche Rijn. Kunst als strategie bij verstedelijking* 104.

³⁵⁵ I attended four concerts of the singing glass tower on: May 4, 2011, July 20, 2013, September 4, 2013 and September 28, 2013. A video of the opening concert is available on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McULjYnQ7W0>.

windowsill, or gather around the clavier when it is outside, but there are no chairs or other facilities provided by the organization. This resembles the play on bells in a church tower. People can hear the bells from afar, sometimes stand still to listen and look up to see where the sound is coming from, but normally they do not 'attend' such a performance as they do a regular concert. As the church bells as well as the bells of the glass tower are played in the public space, it is their sound that creates the space and not necessarily the location of the tower, as such. Hence, the glass tower functions as public art in two different ways: The tower by itself is a work of art and, in addition, it is a musical instrument creating a broader, invisible, musical space around it.

The first concert I visited was in the afternoon on the 4th of May 2011, which is the day on which the Dutch yearly commemorate the victims of the Second World War. The official commemoration ceremony is held at a different location in the neighborhood at 8 p.m. and this was an extra concert organized for the glass tower. Between fifteen and twenty people had gathered on the square to listen to the carillonneur who played songs from the war period by artists such as Vera Lynn and the Andrews Sisters. To me these quite cheery sounding songs seemed a little out of place on this day of commemoration and would have been more suitable for the celebrations on Liberation Day, on the 5th of May. This, however, did not seem to bother the spectators. Most of them listened to several songs and some stayed throughout the concert. For some other people, the tingling of the bells seemed to breach through their daily shopping routine. As they heard the sound or maybe recognized the song, they stopped for a moment, and they looked up to the tower.

This first visit to the tower was part of an orientation tour through the neighborhood, and I also visited a number of other places. In the summer of 2013 I returned to observe the regular performances on Wednesdays and Saturdays to see how the tower functions. Did it become a significant landmark and an identification point in the neighborhood as its founders had intended? Visually the tower stands out. From various points around the neighborhood, the blue glass blubs are visible. The modern, colorful and transparent design of the tower is in contrast with the surrounding buildings with their more historical appearance. The tower seems to be appreciated by the residents of Leidsche Rijn and, in a conversation with carillonneur Wim Ruitenbeek, he tells me that there have been people from all over the country visiting the glass tower concerts. The combination of the design of the tower and the sound it produces is unique as it is the only large glass carillon in the world.³⁵⁶ As the clavier is usually located outside or behind the open win-

³⁵⁶ Information derived from conversation with carillonneur Wim Ruitenbeek (July 20, 2013). Wim Ruitenbeek is the regular carillonneur of *De Zingende Toren* and also works as city carillonneur in the Dutch cities Tiel and Velsen.

dow, a number of the visitors go up to the carillonneur to ask questions about his instrument. Most questions are quite technical and informative. People want to know how the instrument works, how the bells were made and about the concert schedule.

This schedule is quite flexible as Ruitenbeek is free to choose the music he plays at the performances. Sometimes the concerts have a certain theme (Mozart and Haydn, Sing-a-Song Carillon, Orange (Kingsday)). But depending on the audience, the music can be adjusted. When I attended the Mozart and Haydn concert on 28 September 2013, the classical tunes were soon replaced by well-known children's songs as the audience mainly consisted of parents with children in a stroller or babies on bicycle saddles.³⁵⁷ This flexibility is appreciated by the audience, as the following tweet shows:

@cmwillering: Nice! The carillonneur of the @dezingendetoren also plays children's songs on demand #vleuterwijde (...)³⁵⁸

Asking him whether he considers the tower to be a special place in Leidsche Rijn he replies:

@cmwillering: Certainly! Music connects. Moreover: it is the only carillon (in the world?) with glass bells. Also: 'landmark' due to its height. #unique.³⁵⁹

On the 4th of September, a sunny Wednesday afternoon, a woman attends the performance with an old, demented lady in a wheelchair. "I call it the water tower," she says, "and she wanted to listen to it," pointing at the lady in the wheelchair. "From the terrace over there the sound is a little annoying, you can only hear part of it," she says, telling me that she has lived in the area her whole life and is originally from Vleuten, "but I would not want to move back there." When I ask her if there are any places in the area that are special to her, she says no. But the small village of Harmelen that is located nearby she likes a lot.³⁶⁰

After observing a number of the performances it is possible to state that a small group of people deliberately visits the concerts at the glass tower for various reasons: because of the children's songs, the uniqueness of the instrument, or out of curiosity. However, the majority of its audience are just people passing by dur-

³⁵⁷ Information derived from observations on 28 September 2013 and a conversation with Wim Ruitenbeek (July 20, 2013)

³⁵⁸ Tweet by @cmwillering on September 21 2013. Original tweet: "@cmwillering: Leuk! De beiaardier van @zingendetoren speelt ook kinderliedjes op verzoek #vleuterweide (...)."

³⁵⁹ Tweet by @cmwillering on September 21, 2013. Original tweet: "@cmwillering: @ischippers Zeker! Muziek verbindt. Daarnaast: het enige carillon (ter wereld?) met glazen klokken. Ook: 'landmark' vanwege hoogte. #uniek."

³⁶⁰ Conversation with visitor of a performance at *De Zingende Toren* (September 4, 2013).

ing their shopping trip. Some of them stop to listen, look up to the tower or walk up to the carillonneur to ask a question. The sound of the glass bells is an interruption of their daily routine.

6.7 Conclusion

Three very different examples of public art in Leidsche Rijn are described in this chapter, and the first question that rises is whether they all meet the public art criteria as they were sketched in the first paragraphs. Looking at the criteria for publicness as given by Cameron Cartiere, all three cases fit one or more of the categories. *De Halte Terwijde* even fits all four as it is accessible and visible to the public, affecting a group of individuals, maintained by those individuals and paid for by the public as the participants pay for their own garden and for the activities. The artfulness Senie describes is a more difficult term to grasp and hence a more difficult label to allot. And whereas *De Halte Terwijde* scored very high with regard to publicness, its artfulness is doubtful. It is a good work according to its type; that is, as a community project, but is it possible to claim that all community projects are art? However, the other two questions Senie asks can be answered with a yes. Due to its design, *De Halte*, especially once it's finished, will provide the participants; neighbors and people passing by with an aesthetic experience and definitely prompt conversation and social awareness. Moreover, public engagement is what keeps this place alive. Both *Rituele Depositie* as well as *De Zingende Toren*, are good works of art, which, in a sense, expands its size: The tower literally grows as its sound travels meters away. Similarly, the artwork in terms of the stories attached to the objects expands and amplifies their meaning. Thirdly, in both cases, there is evidence of relevant and appropriate public engagement and use.

Whether or not a sacred meaning is attributed to public art does not depend on its artfulness. Observing the three cases rather shows a connection between this sacred character and certain aspects of its publicness. In this regard a clear distinction can be made between the projects.

Rituele Depositie was initiated from the top down as part of the larger *Beyond* project. The team of curators decided that in addition to all the temporary projects, a permanent sculpture garden would be created in the park in the center of the neighborhood. The artists were approached by the team and asked to make an artwork inspired by a book. It was the choice of artist Mathilde ter Heijne to actively involve the residents of the area in her artwork. In consultation, they created artwork based on personal objects and accompanying stories. The stories relate to their life in the neighborhood regarding general topics such as life, death, relationships, change, and indirectly touch upon the lives of a larger group of people. The creation of this artwork involved rituals such as the bronzing and burial of the objects, thereby activating the sacred layer of the artwork. Now, ever since the

artwork was finished, the preservation of the objects in the ground, keeping them safe from harm, and having them out for display are the ritual practices surrounding the work of art. In addition, the description shows that a number of top-down activities were initiated around the sculpture garden and the artwork. These activities are very popular and visited by large groups of people, but it is questionable whether they really touch upon the original stories attached to the artwork, maybe they are only indirectly connected to the larger idea behind it.

The second case, *De Halte Tervijde*, was initiated and planned by a small group of residents and it took them quite some time and effort to get permission from the city to make use of the land. Once the land was available the news was spread on social media and the group expanded, they built their own wooden-box gardens and the crops started to grow. The activities in the summer period were organized and funded by the participants themselves. They share knowledge, plants, and workforce, and the project functions as a meeting point for residents from different parts of the neighborhood. The participants are very enthusiastic about the project and they ascribe great value to it. The project is temporary and hence its sacred character is too. As the summer comes to an end, the wooden-boxes are emptied and it becomes quiet. Most likely the liveliness will return next spring. If not, this piece of fallow land was at least sacred to a group of people in the summer of 2013.

De Zingende Toren was also a top down initiative without any large-scale public involvement during the creation process. Once the tower was finished, the regular performances at the glass carillon usually attracts a small group of people. A larger group passes by and stops to listen to the sound. A majority of the listeners and passersby are parents with little children. They request children's songs and point at the bells as they are being played. There is no place to sit and listen to the concert. People lean against the walls or bike racks or just listen whilst walking by. Other than church bells, due to the irregular playing, the sound of the glass tower has not become part of the sound scape of Leidsche Rijn. Therefore, it does not really function the way a clock tower would. When its sound is not there, it is not terribly missed and when it is played, it is appreciated. It is an interesting piece of art and a unique musical instrument, thereby attracting visitors and listeners, but whether or not the tower will ever mount this status is questionable.

This chapter studies how public art functions in Leidsche Rijn, thereby highlighting three different projects and questioning whether or not these works of art have a sacred value for the residents of Leidsche Rijn, if they function as platforms for ritual practice. All three examples show a different level of involvement of the residents. Often, public art is implemented from the top down. Whether or not it has a special meaning for people depends on the way they can relate to it. Is there a story behind the artwork or did residents take an active part in creating it, or is it

something they just enjoy while passing by? Hence, accessibility and active participation are key elements.



Chapter 7

Wie war es eigentlich?

The trees from the Dom Square at their new location in Leidsche Rijn

Picture: Johan de Boer

CHAPTER 7

WIE WAR ES EIGENTLICH?

Bloss zeigen wie es eigentlich gewesen. (Leopold von Ranke, 1824)

7.1 Introduction

“Human beings are historical creatures by definition. Whether we like it or not we drag history along with us: our own history, the history of our family or our social environment, our church, our country or our continent.”³⁶¹ Dutch historian Willem Frijhof stated this in his 2007 book *Dynamisch Erfgoed* (‘Dynamic Heritage’). He continues by saying that heritage initiatives regarding the way we deal with this history brim over with enthusiasm: historical societies are flourishing, non-scientific books on national, international, and local history, as well as TV shows with a historical theme are very popular, and monuments and remembrance places shoot up like mushrooms.³⁶²

This trend of a growing interest in the past is perceptible also in Leidsche Rijn. The introductory remarks under the heading: ‘unique about Leidsche’ on the website of the city of Utrecht already set the tone:

In the Leidsche Rijn district, the old and the new converge. During the design and development process of each sub-neighborhood, little avenues and ditches, [the borders of the Roman Empire also known as *De Limes*, the remains of old castles, and historical farmhouses – remains from the rich history of the area – were carefully integrated into the plans of the brand-new neighborhoods. This, in order to make sure that each of the sub-neighborhoods will have its own identity and atmosphere.³⁶³

In addition, the page describes the central location of the district and the diversity that characterizes its architectural design. If you scroll down to the bottom of the

³⁶¹ W. FRIJHOFF: *Dynamisch erfgoed* (Amsterdam 2007) 17.

³⁶² IDEM 62.

³⁶³ Description based on text found on the website of the city of Utrecht: www.utrecht.nl (November 18, 2013). Original text: “Leidsche Rijn is een gebied waar oud en nieuw samenkomen. Steeds is gekeken hoe archeologische vondsten, oude laantjes en sloten, bomen en monumentale boerderijen kunnen worden ingebed in de bouwplannen. Nergens is Leidsche Rijn alleen maar nieuw. Zo krijgt elke buurt een eigen identiteit en sfeer.”

website, you find a yellow box informing the reader about yet another addition to the neighborhood referring to its history. As of 2015 it will be possible to experience what life was like in a Roman fortress, “as the city of Utrecht is rebuilding a 2000-year-old Roman *castellum* on its original foundations.”³⁶⁴

Not only on the website and in other marketing tools, but also during a visit to the district of Leidsche Rijn, you will notice that historical elements or elements referring to the history of the area have been integrated into the newly built sea of concrete in numerous ways. Some of the most significant examples are the references made to the Roman period and a number of street names that refer to castles from the Middle Ages, some of the remains of which have been preserved to this day. Not quite as old but certainly very influential in the design, are the historic farmhouses scattered throughout the planning area. Some of them still function as dwellings; others have acquired a new purpose, for example as a restaurant, a day-care facility, or an animal shelter. When visiting Leidsche Rijn, one finds that these historical elements, and elements referring to the history of the area, often stand out in the design, which makes them one of the characteristic aspects of the neighborhood, together with the park and the objects of art discussed in the previous chapters. It is these specific characteristics that make Leidsche Rijn different from other VINEX-projects. The planners made use of the history of the area and emphasized it to shape an identity for this large district.

7.2 History and the creation of a suburb

The title of this chapter: ‘Wie war es eigentlich?’ which can be translated as ‘how was it really?’, refers to the well-known citation “Bloss zeigen wie es eigentlich gewesen” (‘simply show what it used to look like’) by the German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886). Von Ranke was one of the leading historians of the nineteenth century historicist movement. His famous quote was meant to illustrate his conviction that historiography was only meant to give an objective description of the past. Hence, this way of looking at history suggests that it does not teach us anything in the contemporary world, thereby creating a distance between past and present.³⁶⁵ The title was chosen not so much because it was inspired by the historicist paradigm it represents, but more in order to question the way in which history is used in a suburban setting such as Leidsche Rijn. In regard to the urban (the urban space?) and history, French historian François Hartog wrote:

The most authentic modern today would be the historical past, but according to modern standards. Only the façades are preserved. When this past failed to appear,

³⁶⁴ www.utrecht.nl (November 18, 2013).

³⁶⁵ E. JONKER: *Historie. Over de blijvende behoefte aan geschiedenis* (Assen 2001) 21-22.

contributing to the unrest of the suburbs or dormitory-towns, it was made to surface. Urban heritage sites were produced in order to construct identity, by choosing a history, which becomes the history, that of the city or neighborhood: a discovered, re-discovered or exhumed history, which is then displayed, and around which is organized, in every sense of the word, ‘circulation’.³⁶⁶

Hartog is known for his regimes of historicity (*régimes d'historicité*), which can be understood in two ways:

... in a restricted sense, as the way in which a society considers its past and deals with it. In a broader sense, the regime of historicity designates the method of self-awareness in a human community. (...) More precisely, the concept provides an instrument for comparing different types of history.

And Hartog adds: “also and even primarily (...) [it] highlights methods of relating to time: forms of experiencing time, here and elsewhere, today and yesterday. Ways of being in time.”³⁶⁷ According to Dutch theoretical historian Chris Lorenz, Cicero’s formula *historia magistra vitae* captures what Hartog describes as the classical regime of historicity, with the past being exemplary for the present and the future.³⁶⁸ The first regime change Hartog observes is a transition from this classical regime to the ‘modern’ regime, taking place around 1800. This transition was set in motion by the French Revolution, after which the future became the point of orientation, “in the form of a *telos* in the making,”³⁶⁹ meaning that history had become part of an ongoing process instead of being seen as a collection of stories about past times.

According to Hartog, a second change of regimes took place in the course of the last century; He locates this change around the 1990s and connects it with the crumbling of the Berlin Wall and the accompanying end of the Soviet Empire.³⁷⁰ In this new presentist regime of historicity, everything is, as the name implies (already suggests), based on the present. This presentism not only refers to the world of experience of individuals or groups, but also to the way in which we associate with the past: the past is always at hand; it is never over.³⁷¹ This new historicist regime shares a basic diagnosis with the *lieux de mémoire* project of the French histo-

³⁶⁶ F. HARTOG: ‘Time and Heritage’, in *Museum International* 57/3 (2005) 12-13.

³⁶⁷ IDEM 8.

³⁶⁸ C. LORENZ: ‘Unstuck in time. Or: the sudden presence of the past’, in K. TILMANS, F VAN VREE & J. WINTERS (eds.): *Performing the past. Memory, history and identity in modern Europe* (Amsterdam 2010) 75.

³⁶⁹ LORENZ: ‘Unstuck in time’ 75.

³⁷⁰ IDEM 82.

³⁷¹ W. FRIJHOFF: ‘Herdenkingscultuur tussen erfgoed en ritueel’, in *Yearbook for Liturgical and Ritual Studies* 28 (2012) 173.

rian Pierre Nora. In the preface to the first volume of *Les lieux de mémoire*, Nora states the following:

what we are seeking, (...) in substance, through our religious accumulation of personal accounts, documents, images and all the 'visible signs of what used to be', is what is different about us now; and within the spectacle of this difference the sudden flash of an unfindable identity. No longer a genesis, but the deciphering of what we are, in the light of what we are no longer.³⁷²

The *lieux de mémoire* as described by Nora refers to places where historical events or values are being remembered; meaning that those places activate memory, which eventually results in ritual practice.³⁷³ Lorenz describes how the 'obsession with the archive and with heritage that marks our present age,' is characteristic both of the focus on memory, the so-called memory boom as depicted by Nora, and of the presentist regime of Hartog. In the modern regime, identity is sought for in the continuity between the past, our ancestors and the present, us. A search for alterity, or otherness, in the discontinuity between the present and the past characterizes the presentist regime.³⁷⁴

Having explained the ideas of Nora and Hartog, Dutch historian Willem Frijhoff writes that our historical awareness can be captured in three phases. In short, he describes this process as follows: "from the classical narrative history, via memory culture (the *histoire mémoire*) to patrimonization or heritagezation (the *histoire patrimoine*)."³⁷⁵ Ritual is an intrinsic element in the last two phases. Memory (memorial?) culture exists by the grace of active participation, whereas heritage is made possible through a process of acknowledgement and appropriation. A second central notion that Frijhoff refers to in this context is identity. Heritage can only exist when its inheritors embrace it. The way in which the present appropriates heritage determines its meaning. In contrast to its role in the old historicist regime, the authenticity of heritage plays but a secondary part in the new presentist regime, as does the question whether it is really old or original. As Frijhoff states: "it is all about objects, practices, and values that, whether appropriate or not, get imposed with the patina of the past, and subsequently live on as such."³⁷⁶ Frijhoff is thus also saying that authenticity is no longer determined by the history of the object or place, or by its realistic representation, but rather by the current process of experience, perception and appropriation.³⁷⁷

³⁷² Pierre Nora cited in: AUGÉ: *Non-places* 25-26.

³⁷³ FRIJHOFF: 'Herdenkingscultuur tussen erfgoed en ritueel' 176.

³⁷⁴ LORENZ: 'Unstuck in time' 86-87.

³⁷⁵ FRIJHOFF: 'Herdenkingscultuur tussen erfgoed en ritueel' 178.

³⁷⁶ IDEM 181.

³⁷⁷ IBIDEM.

A line can be drawn between presentism and the concept of invented tradition as the British historian Eric Hobsbawm introduced it in 1983. Here, a connection can be made to the new situation that large scale VINEX-areas find themselves in, as observed by Hobsbawm: “In short, they [invented traditions] are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to an old situation, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition.”³⁷⁸ Therefore, it can be said that in order for historical elements to successfully function in a new urban setting, they do not necessarily need to relate to the memories of the residents. In addition, they do not even have to refer to real memories or an existing history. The presentist regime “tries to shape both the future and the past according to its own image, so to speak, as a-temporal replicas of itself.”³⁷⁹ Frijhoff states that history may concern traces from a past long gone. The current carriers of this memory, the residents of Leidsche Rijn, did not experience this history themselves. The memory was passed on to them within their concrete community. These traces from the past come together in a group-bound collective memory. As they go further back in time, the memories rarefy into an objectified form of cultural memory embedded into the broad culture and available for everyone to assimilate as their own memories.³⁸⁰ Moreover, the process of memory can add new elements to the cultural memory when this stimulates the appropriation of this history by new groups.³⁸¹ The existence of invented traditions however proves how a nation, a region, or in the case of Leidsche Rijn, a community or neighborhood, strengthens or sometimes even shapes its profile or identity by means of historical elements. This especially happens when this identity is lacking or under pressure. Objects will be made part of the heritage cult to function as anchor points in the present.³⁸²

The creation of a shared identity plays a significant role in the development of the Leidsche Rijn district, as currently everything is speeding up and spreading out. The times when coherent and homogeneous communities inhabited cities or countries are long gone, as more people travel more frequently for both work as well as leisure. Most of our clothes are manufactured on a different continent, the shelves in our supermarkets are filled with products from all over the world, and it is possible to reach someone on the other side of the planet in seconds via email, skype or Facebook.³⁸³ Accompanying terms such as ‘time-space compression’ and

³⁷⁸ E. HOBSBAWM: ‘Introduction: Inventing traditions’, in E. HOBSBAWM & T. RANGER (eds.): *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge 1983) 2.

³⁷⁹ Hartog cited in LORENZ: ‘Unstuck in time’ 88.

³⁸⁰ W. FRIJHOFF: *De Mist van de geschiedenis. Over herinneren, vergeten en het historisch gebeugen van de samenleving* (Nijmegen 2011) 13.

³⁸¹ IDEM 14.

³⁸² P. POST: *Voorbij het kerkgebouw. De speelruimte van een ander sacraal domein* (Heeswijk 2010) 171.

³⁸³ D. MASSEY: ‘A global sense of place’, in *Marxism Today* (June 1991).

the ‘network society’, both referring to the growing connectedness between places and effectively making these places grow closer, were already introduced in the 1980s and 1990s respectively by the authors David Harvey and Manuel Castells.³⁸⁴

French anthropologist Marc Augé refers to this shifting of spatial parameters as spatial overabundance. This, he says, “is expressed in changes of scale, in the proliferation of imagined and imaginary references, and in the spectacular acceleration of means of transport. Its concrete outcome involves considerable physical modification: urban concentrations, movements of population and the multiplication of what we call ‘non-places’.”³⁸⁵ Current affairs and the urgency of the present moment reign in these non-places of super modernity, meaning that there is no room left for history unless it has been transformed in such a way that it has become an element of spectacle usually shaped as an allusive text.³⁸⁶ Hence, the user of a non-place does not develop a personal, individual relationship with the place – which is often formed in relation to certain ends such as transport, transit, commerce or leisure – or with the powers that govern it, but merely a contractual one.³⁸⁷ Combining all of those characteristics makes the non-place into a place that really exists, but at the same time does not contain any organic society. These societal changes inevitably have had repercussions on the way in which large new building projects have been shaped in the past decades.

However, simultaneously to the developments within the previously described fields of information production, labor specialization, and social connectivity processes of spatial concentration were taking place. This concentration is expressed in the embedding of activities but also in urban plans in a cultural-historical and socio-economic context. As Augé states: “if a place can be defined as relational, historical, and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place.”³⁸⁸ Needless to say, urban planners are likely to avoid designing new neighborhoods intended to function as homes for large numbers of people and have them be non-places. Hence, in a number of the VINEX projects (among which is Leidsche Rijn), attempts were made on all sides to add ‘sense’ to new urban living spaces for residents as well as visitors. American urban planner and author Kevin A. Lynch wrote the following about the ‘sense of settlement’ in his book *Good City Form*:

The Clarity with which it can be perceived and identified and the ease, with which its elements can be linked with other events and places in a coherent mental representation of time and space, and that representation, can be connected with non-spatial

³⁸⁴ M. CASTELLS: *The rise of the network society* (Oxford 1996); and D. HARVEY: *The condition of post-modernity. An enquiry into the origins of cultural change* (New York 1989).

³⁸⁵ M. AUGÉ: *Non-places. Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (London/New York 1997) 34.

³⁸⁶ IDEM 103.

³⁸⁷ IDEM 94-101.

³⁸⁸ IDEM 77-78.

concepts and values. Sense depends on spatial form and quality, but also on culture, temperament, status, experience and current purpose of the observer. The sense of place will vary for different observers.³⁸⁹

Hence, this sense of settlement can be described as the way in which the planners of an area attempt right from the start to create a bridge between the *urbs* and the *topos* by deliberately adding an additional layer to the design, making it easier for residents to give meaning to their living environment, for example through the use of shapes that evoke memories such as historical elements or by making use of shapes, objects or buildings that already have a story attached to them. Neo-traditional neighborhoods such as Vleuterweide make use of planning forms that were passed down through the ages. The design is filled with nostalgia for the times gone by: Safety, identity and the closed atmosphere of historical village squares and dwellings.

The book *VINEX! Een morfologische verkenning* ('VINEX! a morphological exploration') describes the shape of several of the other VINEX-areas that were developed in the same time frame as Leidsche Rijn. Central to this description are consciously chosen themes, often based on a historic element of some sort, implemented in the areas by developers and planners. Quite typical of the presentist regime, it is an identity invented on the drawing board and based on a story or history, either real or invented. The book distinguishes between three forms of identity: 'area-specific identity', 'borrowed identity', and 'chosen identity'.³⁹⁰ Looking at Leidsche Rijn and the broad description of its history as given in chapter two, it can be said that in it all three of these, identities play a role in the choices made by developers and planners with regard to the use of historical elements in the district. Considering this prominent position of the historical background of the area in the newly built neighborhood, its history should be part of this research. Hence, a number of specific historical sites or sites referring to history will serve as the point of departure for this chapter. 'Historical' sites from all three previously described categories have emerged over the years in Leidsche Rijn and the way in which the residents perceive and use these sites can inform us about the possible sacred value they carry.

The word identity has been used several times in the first few pages of this chapter. British sociologist Steph Lawler has given an interesting perspective on this term:

The root of the word 'identity' is the Latin *idem* (same) from which we also get 'identical'. One important meaning of the term then, rests on the idea that not only are we

³⁸⁹ K. LYNCH: *Good city form* (Massachusetts 1984) 131.

³⁹⁰ H. LÖRZING, W. KLEMM, M. VAN LEEUWEN & S. SOEKIMIN: *VINEX! Een morfologische verkenning* (Rotterdam/Den Haag 2006) 165-169.

identical with ourselves (that is, the same being from birth to death) but we are identical with others. That is, we share common identities (...) At the same time, however, there is another aspect of identity, which suggests people's uniqueness, their difference from others. Western notions of identity rely on these two modes of understanding, so that people are understood as being simultaneously the same and different.³⁹¹

This definition implies that identity refers to uniqueness on the one hand and to similarity on the other. Where Leidsche Rijn is concerned, this is an interesting and very apt description as on the one hand historical elements are being used to create a shared past, to create something that connects the new residents, while at the same time the historical elements are used to emphasize the uniqueness of the neighborhood. Of course history is not the only element that plays a role when it comes to the construction of an identity in an area such as Leidsche Rijn, but it is certainly an important ingredient

7.3 Reconstruction and re-enactment: area-specific identity

The first category of identity that will be described is area-specific identity. As a result of a number of archeological discoveries in the area, there is a tendency to emphasize, explore, and document the historical habitation of the place under consideration. The archeological findings are then used to show that Leidsche Rijn is not just a newly built district without any history. Instead, the history of the area is presented as dating back centuries. In line with the theory connected to Hartog's presentist regime, this history and its accompanying memories live on in the present. Hence, the Romans are no longer strangers from a foreign country but inhabitants of Leidsche Rijn, as the residents can walk on the same roads as the Romans did, and imagine themselves in a different time-period. Via reconstructions of Roman structures and re-enactments of Roman life as it would have taken place centuries ago, the feeling of a shared living space is deliberately stimulated. In this section, a description will be given of the reconstruction and re-enactment of, particularly, the Roman history in Leidsche Rijn.

Herre Wynia, one of the archeologists involved in the archeological research in the Leidsche Rijn area, says in an interview:

It can tell us a lot about the way in which people used to live and how they dealt with the landscape (...) If you give people history, you also give them identity and pride, and that is very important for Leidsche Rijn.³⁹²

³⁹¹ S. LAWLER: *Identity: Sociological perspective* (Cambridge 2008) 2.

³⁹² M. HENDRIKS & A. SIMONS: *Leidsche Rijn Park. Ontwerp en realisatie van een unieke stadspark* (Wageningen 2010) 94.

Wynia describes Leidsche Rijn as one of the oldest places of Utrecht. Various historical periods come together in this area, from the distant past to the near present, as is testified by bear skulls dating back to the Bronze Age and greenhouses left over from farms from the 1920s. Through a number of projects, a majority of them focusing on the Roman Era, archeologists have attempted to provide the new residents with a sense of the history of the district, thereby serving a social purpose. This choice to focus on the Roman period in the history of Leidsche Rijn meant that other parts of the history were left out. Wynia confirms this when he says: “the real hits from the early Middle Ages were somewhat overlooked. For every special location, we have pointed out the strength of the place.”³⁹³

From the extensive list of historical sites drawn up by the archeologists, the planners and designers eventually had to choose which sites or stories from what historical period would be emphasized and be chosen to play a role in the new neighborhood. (An overview of the more complete history of the area was already given in earlier chapters). One of the historically very significant facts and one that, therefore, stood out in this region was that in the first centuries of the Common Era the river Rhine functioned as the northern border of the Roman Empire. As a result, the Romans extensively developed the area south of this natural frontier. Now, almost 2000 years after the Romans left the Utrecht region, the Roman Empire is coming alive again as parts of it are rebuilt based on the remains found in the soil of Leidsche Rijn. Sometimes the memories of this long gone empire take a modern form, for example as little white helmets integrated into the asphalt of *Het Lint*, but close to this modern expression of history we find the past revived in a wooden watchtower overlooking the newly built suburb, and in 2015, a Roman style *castellum*, or fortress, will arise in the neighborhood. The plans for this *castellum* are based on the archeological remains of such a fortress found in the Hoge Woerd area. Among other things, the *castellum* is intended to function as a museum, to display the archeological findings dug up in the region.

These phenomena of reproduction and reconstruction are not new and they cover a broad spectrum. Not only are they popular in the fields of archaeology and (art)history, but they can also be encountered in tourism, leisure studies and heritage studies.³⁹⁴ Numerous buildings, monuments, and even entire cities have been copied, reproduced or reconstructed in order to experience them once again at a different location or in a different time. An obvious and well-known example is of course the Holy Land. When visiting Israel, we find countless shops selling miniature replicas and maps of the Holy Land as a whole, the city of Jerusalem or specific churches or other (often religious) buildings and monuments. Often the repli-

³⁹³ HENDRIKS & SIMONS: *Leidsche Rijn Park* 94.

³⁹⁴ P. POST: ‘Pilgrimage research in the network society’, paper presented at Religion & Tourism Symposium II (Tilburg University, October 2013) 4.

cas include water from the Jordan River, sand and rocks from Jerusalem, or an olive branch from the Holy Land. Moreover, since the times of the Early Church it has been common in cities and villages throughout Europe to copy the ‘original and true’ way of the Cross, as described in the traditions, with respect to both place and ritual act.³⁹⁵

In the Netherlands, a number of museums are based on reconstructions of history. Museum Park *Orientalis*, formerly known as the *Heilig Landstichting* (‘Holy Land Foundation’), is located in the small village of Berg en Dal near the city of Nijmegen. The park contains replicas of various sites from the Holy Land and re-enactment groups make these replicas come alive.³⁹⁶ The *Eindhoven Museum* can function as an example along the lines of the plans made in Leidsche Rijn. In this heritage park, which is located in the city of Eindhoven, visitors can, as the website states: ‘meet’ the inhabitants of Brabant from prehistoric times and the Middle Ages, as a lost city will be brought to life.³⁹⁷ In addition, all 43 buildings, farms and huts in the *Archeon* amusement park in the city of Alphen aan de Rijn are authentic reconstructions based on archeological findings from all over the Netherlands from prehistoric times, the Middle Ages and the Roman period.³⁹⁸ In all three examples, as in the case of Leidsche Rijn, the emphasis is on getting acquainted with the past, ‘meeting’ the people that lived in the past, and becoming part of this past, or integrating the past into the present. The past is never over, it lives on.

The book *Von Rom nach Las Vegas. Rekonstruktionen antiker Römischer Architektur. 1800 bis heute*, by German author Anita Rieche, gives an interesting overview of archeological reproductions. She describes reproductions ranging from *Orientalis* in the Netherlands and the Roman city walls in Cologne (Germany) to the bombastic copy of the Roman Coliseum in the American city of Las Vegas. This wide range shows that the form or type of reproductions varies greatly. Some reproductions are built on a 1:1 scale or on the still existing foundations, some are models built to scale, some may even be copies without a true original. The difference in type and form is often inspired by the intended purpose of the reproduction. Some have an academic or didactic function, whereas others have a more religious or devotional character, and the tourist and commercial category is also quite common.³⁹⁹ The Roman examples explored in this section fall in the didactic as well as in the tourist and the commercial categories.

³⁹⁵ POST: ‘Pilgrimage research in the network society’ 4-5.

³⁹⁶ A. RIECHE: *Von Rom nach Las Vegas. Rekonstruktionen antiker Römischer Architektur. 1800 bis heute* (Berlin 2012) 163-168.

³⁹⁷ www.museum eindhoven.nl (March 11, 2014). Original tekst: “Een verdwenen stad komt tot leven (...) In het erfgoedpark in Genneper Parken ontmoet je Brabantse bewoners uit de prehistorie en middeleeuwen.”

³⁹⁸ www.archeon.nl (March 11, 2014).

³⁹⁹ RIECHE: *Von Rom nach Las Vegas*.

Roman rituals and concrete obelisks

The process leading up to the construction of the *castellum* started on the 9th of September 2006 under the name *De Hoge Woerd Ontwaakt*, which can be translated as: ‘The Hoge Woerd [the name of the location, ed.] Awaken’s. On this day in September, a Roman sacrificial ritual was carried out near one of the concrete obelisks that had been constructed earlier that year. The obelisks mark the entrance and the center of the terrain. In the first few (drafts of the) plans they were designed to look like large grey concrete colossi. Later the idea arose that it would be nice to paint the concrete to make it look more like natural stone, more like black granite. Two of the three obelisks, the ones situated on either side of the entrance, are covered (inscribed?) with Latin texts referring to the Roman history of the area. Most of the words or lines refer to coins, potsherds, or tiles found at the various excavation sites in Leidsche Rijn. Other terms refer to names found on maps, for example Fletione, a name that is mentioned on the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, a map from the 12th century. It has often been said that Fletione can be translated as ‘Vleuten’, which would then refer to the *castellum* on the Hoge Woerd, but it can also be a slip of the pen, in which case it would stand for Fectione, interestingly enough making it refer to a completely different fortress on the other side of the city.⁴⁰⁰

The third obelisk was festively unveiled on the 9th of September 2006 by the alderman responsible for Leidsche Rijn, Harry Bosch. The initiation inscription on this reminds the visitors of this festive occasion. In a series of articles in the magazine of the Historical Society Vleuten, De Meern, Haarzuilens, the chairman of the society states that the texts on this obelisk remind him of a milestone. In the Roman period, the inscriptions on these milestones would indicate the distance to the next or previous place. Often the texts on these milestones would be very elaborate and give clear directions to passers-by on how to get from one place to the other. At the bottom of the pillar a plaque with an engraving is positioned as a reminder of the official opening of the Hoge Woerd. Surrounded by a re-enactment group dressed up like Roman warriors and citizens, Alderman Harry Bosch unveiled this obelisk with the plaque. The text on the plaque is in Latin and the top half describes how this pillar was erected through the efforts of the residents and the rulers on the occasion of the awakening of the *Castellum Hoge Woerd*. The text on the bottom: ‘*Dedicatus duoviro civitatis traiectensis Henrici Silva*’ can be translated as: ‘Initiated by Harry Bosch, alderman of the city of Utrecht,’ followed by the date: 9th of September 2006, in typical Latin script.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰⁰ C.W.M. RASCH: ‘Obelisk op de Hoge Woerd (2)’, in *Tijdschrift Historische Vereniging Vleuten, De Meern, Haarzuilens* 3 (2009).

⁴⁰¹ C.W.M. RASCH: ‘Obelisk op de Hoge Woerd (3)’, in *Tijdschrift Historische Vereniging Vleuten, De Meern, Haarzuilens* 6 (2009).

The public weblog of Respondent C delivers a report on the initiation ceremony:

A large number of people, from the new districts as well as from the old villages, experienced a wonderful show in which numerous offerings and aubades were made to please the old Roman gods as they were about to awake this 2000-year-old *castellum*. Alderman Harry Bosch eventually performed the final sacrifice and this is how the old pillar, in which, in Latin and with Roman numerals, the cities and distances of the Roman Empire were engraved, was unveiled. The best part was the aubade to the place and to archeology delivered by the city archeologists Herre Wynia and Erik Graafstal.⁴⁰²

This report on the events organized to celebrate the opening or awakening of the Hoge Woerd shows how the audience was involved in the enactment of Roman rituals to placate the Roman gods. Although probably all the participants and members of the audience will have perceived this as a performance, showing that the ritual and participating in it does bring the history and the place to life. Experiencing the way in which the Roman ancestors lived and performed their rituals makes it easier to relate to this history. Instead of just cutting a tape, the re-enactment creates a second layer.

These re-enactments are a recurring theme in the activities organized at the Hoge Woerd. In 2013, Roman soldiers were involved in the unveiling of the wooden watchtower. Initially this watchtower was supposed to be finished earlier, but a long struggle preceded its construction. In an interview,⁴⁰³ Kees Rasch the chairman of the Historical Society of Vleuten, De Meern, and Haarzuilens, gave an explanation of the process surrounding this construction process. The legal issues which drew out the project and made it much more expensive are not very relevant for this research, but the decisions that ensued as a result had quite some repercussions for the design of the watchtower. Already in 2006, the city of Utrecht had become familiar with the plans for the Hoge Woerd as it had been decided that in addition to a center with shopping facilities, Leidsche Rijn, which would eventually have the size of a small city, would also need a cultural heart. This cultural heart

⁴⁰² Original text found on www.gerdaoskam.com (December 23, 2013): “Heel veel mensen uit de nieuwe wijken en oude dorpen maakten een prachtige show mee waarin volop offers en aubades gebracht werden aan de oude Romeinse goden om hen gunstig te stemmen over het ontwaken van deze 2000 jaar oude Castellum. Wethouder Bosch verichtte uiteindelijk het laatste offer en zo werd de oude zuil, waarop in het Latijn en met Romeinse cijfers, de steden en afstanden van het Romeinse Rijk staan, onthuld. Het leukste was misschien nog wel de aubade die stadsarcheologen Herre Wynia en Erik Graafstal samen brachten aan de plek en de archeologie.”

⁴⁰³ Interview with Kees Rasch (03-12-2013). Kees Rasch is the chairman of the *Historische Vereniging Vleuten, De Meern, Haarzuilens* and resident of De Meern. Rasch and the Historical Society managed the watchtower project.

was to be Hoge Woerd. The remains of the Roman fortress that were found here would function as the foundation of this project, and in 2015 the fortress was to be rebuilt.

In the meantime, a wooden watchtower, which could be built faster and at far lower costs, was meant to precede the *castellum*. The archeology department of the city of Utrecht had already organized excursions to Hoge Woerd and a watchtower would be a nice addition to the program. The remains of two watchtowers had been found during archeological research done in the early years of the twenty-first century. The first tower dates back to the middle of the first century CE. This early date and the extremely good conservation of the traces made this excavation a very interesting one. Later on, for unknown reasons, a larger and stronger tower was built to replace the first one. The remains of this second tower have been found in the same area.⁴⁰⁴

The realization of the reconstruction of one of these watchtowers was easier said than done. The design of the original tower proved not to be sufficiently sound according to modern day construction standards. Rasch said the following about this process:

We thought it would take a year, two at the most. But due to the rules and regulations, and what it took to get the plans approved, it ended up costing as much as 30,000 euros [and taking up a lot more years]. And all that for four poles and a few cross braces. It is a ridiculous amount of money.⁴⁰⁵

The most significant changes made in the design were the stairs. Where the Romans used a ladder that they could pull up through a trapdoor in case of emergency, this was not considered safe enough for present-day visitors. Now, instead, a large iron staircase has been installed on one side of the tower. “This was a suggestion of the archeologists,” Rasch says, “as it is quite common to have something that contrasts with the original, to make clear that it does not really belong in the design. The gaps in the balustrade have been filled with Plexiglas to prevent visitors from falling down.” When I asked Rasch whether he finds the changes in the design disturbing his answer is that he does not. The fact that it took such a long time before the tower was finished bothered him more.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ J.S. VAN DER KAMP: *Vroege nacht. LR13 Zandweg: Archeologisch onderzoek van twee eerste-eeuwse houten wachttorens in Leidsche Rijn. Basisrapportage archeologie* 16 (Utrecht 2007) 7-8.

⁴⁰⁵ Original text derived from interview with Kees Rasch (03-12-2013): “We hadden gedacht dat het een jaar zou duren, hooguit twee. Maar door de hele regelgeving er rond omheen en het goedkeuren van de plannen heeft het 30.000 euro gekost. Vier palen en een paar dwarsverbindingen. Een belachelijk bedrag voor dat gebeuren.”

⁴⁰⁶ Interview with Kees Rasch (03-12-2013).

The visitors of the Hoge Woerd in general and, more specifically, the watchtower, can be divided into different groups. January 2014 an interactive DVD was sent distributed to 350 schools in Utrecht and the surrounding villages. This DVD informs the children about the life of a Roman soldier living in a watchtower. This will bring the tower to life, and when the kids visit the tower, later on, often also as part of their classes, they will know a lot more about it. Rasch heard that, even without having seen the DVD,⁴⁰⁷ the children were very enthusiastic about their visits to the tower. They find it wonderful to be able to see what life was like in the Roman period especially since it all happened so close to home.⁴⁰⁸

As the tower is open to the public four days a week, including Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., it also attracts quite a lot of visitors other than school children. They climb up the tower and take a look around. Twice a year all the organizations involved in the Hoge Woerd organize a themed activity day on the grounds. Although the theme is not always linked to the Roman history (one of the recent themes has been the environment, for instance), they almost always invite a Roman re-enactment group. They are easy to rent and they truly make history come to life. Rasch hopes that the fortress will be finished in the summer of 2015. That summer, the Tour de France starts in Utrecht, which means that images of the new *castellum* will be broadcast worldwide.⁴⁰⁹

Our Roman history?

A Roman fortress as the cultural heart of a newly built suburb sounds like a great marketing strategy, a way to make it seem like a neighborhood built in the past ten years has a history dating back almost two thousand years. Far from it being a non-place without history or identity, people have been living in this area for ages, and the new present-day dwellers, although in newly built houses, are just continuing this habitation pattern.

During the interview conducted with Wouter de Heus he tells me that one of his dreams was to be an archeologist and for a long period of time since 1995, he used to spend one day a week participating in archeological excavations in the area.

When you look at the urban planning, and the way in which the Roman past was integrated into the plans, of course it did not work out well in all the places. It is still possible to be in contact with the Iron Age, if you can see it. Looked at from a very personal perspective, The Roman road and the *castellum*, those are what I would consider my sacred places.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ The DVD was not released yet, at the time this interview was conducted.

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with Kees Rasch (03-12-2013).

⁴⁰⁹ Idem.

⁴¹⁰ Original text derived from interview with Wouter de Heus (06-06-2011): “Als je kijkt naar de stedenbouw en de inbedding van het hele Romeinse verleden (...) nou ja het is niet op iedere plek

De Heus is bothered by the fact that in large parts of the area the terrain has been leveled or raised. In that way, the connection people can have with the history of the area disappears, as its historical structures are no longer visible. “I still believe that if you immerse yourself in the history of Leidsche Rijn and you drive around in the area, it is possible to feel the Roman soldiers walking around,” he says.⁴¹¹ Because the Romans lived in this region for quite a long period of time, archeologists have found a wide variety of objects from this period, varying from military pieces to jewelry and pots and pans. “And this, finding these old places again, is sort of sacred to me,” De Heus says.⁴¹² He shows me a glass showcase in his study, the shelves filled with a wide variety of potsherds, coins and other objects that he found digging around in the area. For centuries nothing happened in this area, which means that everything remained contained in the soil. Now that the top layers of the soil are being removed, the Roman history emerges.

More recently, I had an informal meeting with a man who calls himself *De Romein* (“The Roman”), a poet living in the area who has written a number of poems on its history. During this meeting in one of his favorite locations, the local beer brewery Maximus, he tells me that he finds the history of this area super special and definitely something that should be emphasized. It does not matter to him that the design of the watchtower needed to be changed to fit the modern building criteria, and the re-enactment groups do not bother him either. It is a great way to show the residents of Leidsche Rijn what life was like in the Roman era, and the places come to life when they are used. De Romein tells me that there is a lot more history hidden in the area surrounding the new *castellum*. Because there is currently not enough money to excavate the objects, the castle moat is replaced by undulating grassy land to protect the objects while at the same time simulating the idea of flowing water.⁴¹³

The most recent book of poetry written by De Romein, *De Limes liefhebben* (“Loving the Limes”), includes a song titled *De Romeinen* (“the Romans”), written on the occasion of a Roman feast for children (ages 4-8) which was organized in the recreation area in the *Máximapark*. The following short citation from this song reflects the way in which the story of the Roman history is told, in this specific case to the children living in the area.

goed gegaan maar in feite heb je nog steeds contact met de ijzertijd als je het ziet. (...) de Romeinse weg, het Castellum dat zijn meer mijn sacrale plekken als ik heel persoonlijk kijk.”

⁴¹¹ Original text derived from interview with Wouter de Heus (06-06-2011): “en ik vind nog steeds in Leidsche Rijn als je je er ietsje in verdiept en je rijdt rond dan kan je nog de Romeinse soldaten voelen lopen.”

⁴¹² Original text derived from interview with Wouter de Heus (06-06-2011): “Maar dat, dat terugvinden van die oude plekken dat vind ik wel sacraal.”

⁴¹³ Informal conversation (no recordings) with De Romein (December 27, 2013). De Romein is a poet and an active resident of Leidsche Rijn.

<p>(...)</p> <p><i>Stel dat ik Romein zou zijn – en nooit was weggegaan. dan waren al die gevonden spullen het bewijs van Mijn bestaan!</i></p> <p><i>Onder deze grond ligt veel helmen, munten en knopen. Het geld is dan al van metaal want alleen daar kon je iets mee kopen.</i></p> <p>(...)</p>	<p>(...)</p> <p>What if I were a Roman – and I had never left [this area, ed.] Then all things excavated here would be proof of My existence.</p> <p>A lot is buried in this soil helmets, coins, buttons. The money is already made out of metal That was the only valuable material.</p> <p>(...)⁴¹⁴</p>
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Not all responses were this positive, however. In the interview with Respondent A, she says that instead of all this focus on a history long gone she would like to see more of a focus on the preservation of what is present in the area now. To illustrate this she tells me about the local pumpkin farmer who sells his pumpkins every fall but is about to lose his business.⁴¹⁵ This pumpkin farmer creates a new tradition in a new neighborhood: in the fall you buy pumpkins from the pumpkin man and you can pick out your own pumpkin in the field.

7.4 A borrowed identity

<p>THE TREES</p> <p>Dombomen <i>Samen zes keer is meer dan duizend jaren geschiedenis in onze kluiten.</i></p> <p><i>Respect voor jou nieuwe belevenis.</i></p>	<p>Dom Trees Together six times is over a thousand years of history in our lumps</p> <p>Respect for your new adventure⁴¹⁶</p>
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“The Dom Square⁴¹⁷ [in the old city center of Utrecht, ed.] is a place where past, present and future come together. Two thousand years of history is hidden under-

⁴¹⁴ DE ROMEIN: *De Limes liefhebben. Eén Utrecht voor wie het durft te zien* (Vleuten 2013) 26.

⁴¹⁵ Text derived from interview with Respondent A (27-01-2011).

⁴¹⁶ DE ROMEIN: *De Limes liefhebben* 27.

⁴¹⁷ The Dom Square is located in the center of the city of Utrecht. It is an open space between the large Dom Church and the Dom Tower. The Dom Tower is the most famous building in the city of Utrecht and has a prominent position in its skyline. It is not allowed to build anything higher than the Dom Tower.

neath the Dom Square.”⁴¹⁸ Since 2005, the *Stichting Domplein 2013* (‘Domplein Foundation 2013’) has been working to bring the long history buried underneath the Dom Square back to life and make it visible. Over the years, a number of projects have taken shape on, underneath and around the square. The projects are meant to take visitors back to the origins of the city of Utrecht, and in 2010 the first treasury opened its doors. Here visitors get a chance to go down into cellars dating all the way back to the Middle Ages and to come face to face with the remains of a Roman *castellum*.⁴¹⁹ In 2014, opening of the second underground treasury was scheduled. This unique center makes it possible to take an underground tour of the remaining foundations of the Romanesque and Gothic Dom. For the realization of this project underneath the Dom Square, six monumental plane trees had to be chopped down. The trees were in the way, and they were harming the underlying archeology.

When Johan de Boer, chairman of the *Stichting Vrienden van het Máximapark* (‘Friends of the Máximapark Foundation’) heard about the possible removal and destruction of those large trees he came up with an idea and they approached the initiators of the Dom Square plans to investigate whether it would be possible to retain those large plane trees by moving them to the park in Leidsche Rijn.⁴²⁰ Research showed that it was indeed possible to move at least five, and maybe even all six of the trees, and in consultation with the municipality of Utrecht a special new location was found for the trees in the park, next to *Het Lint* and close to the entrance of the *Haarrijnse Plas*, a lake on the outskirts of the park. Here the trees could be planted in an ‘archeological mound’, making them very well visible to the public. Both the city of Utrecht and the Public Service Cultural Heritage approved the ideas and the operation could be planned.

In a memorandum about the move drawn up by the Friends of the Park Foundation, I read that, in addition to the history of the trees themselves, the moving of trees to the area close to the *Haarrijnse plas* is not a new phenomenon either. It is presented as history repeating itself. In the late nineteenth century, castle *De Haar*, which is located close to the lake, was rebuilt, and since the new owner did not like to have small young trees in his new garden, 7000 mature trees were transported to this, his new garden, from all over the province of Utrecht. Most of the trees had been transported through the city of Utrecht on special carts called *Mallejannen* and this massive operation, be it on a smaller scale, would now be repeated with the trees from the Dom Square.⁴²¹ The operation took two days

⁴¹⁸ Memorandum: *Domplein – Maximapark: zes monumentale bomen van oude naar nieuwe stad*. Written by *Stichting Vrienden van het Máximapark* (Utrecht, March 2013).

⁴¹⁹ In addition to the remains of the *castellum* found in Leidsche Rijn and described in the previous paragraph, a second roman fortress has been found in the center of Utrecht.

⁴²⁰ Memorandum: *Domplein – Maximapark* (Utrecht 2013).

⁴²¹ *Ibidem*.

(2nd and 3rd of April 2013) and it was successful. In an interview with *De Boer*, a local newspaper, one of the initiators states: “The Dom Square will be revived in the *Máximapark*. The trees will be replanted in the shape of a cross.”⁴²²

The poem heading this section was written to mark this special occasion and will be inscribed on a plaque near the trees, to share their story with the public. The poem emphasizes the long history of the trees which, having stood together over a thousand years, have now been given a second chance in the new part of the city.

The moving of six trees from the old center of Utrecht to the newly built part of the city is special in a number of ways. First, there is the connection between the old part of town, the part that has a long history, and the new suburb that is looking for one. As the suburb is part of Utrecht, it might be possible to borrow this history in order to create one of its own. Trees that have stood in the Dom Square for over a hundred years, ‘seeing’ time pass by, have been through a lot more than new, young trees fresh from a nursery. Also the preservation of the trees can be described as a good deed. Often, protests arise when old trees have to make way for new plans. This way it was possible to rescue the trees and in the process make their new location even more special as a result. As a reminder of the history of their original location, the square in between the Dom Church and the Dom Tower, the trees have been replanted in the shape of a cross.

As the memorandum stated, in addition to the history attached to the trees due to their age and original location in the heart of the city, moving trees is also described as a tradition in the city of Utrecht. As was the case in the late nineteenth century, the trees were transported through the city center, something that can be considered as a large and special operation. The emphasis on this history almost seems like a way to legitimize the operation by showing that it is a continuation of history and tradition.

The bridge

After almost a hundred years in the South of Utrecht, at least another century in Leidsche Rijn!⁴²³

The trees are not the only historical objects in Leidsche Rijn that find their origins in the old city of Utrecht. The previous chapter on public art describes how during the *Beyond* project, a number of the projects used works of art, or for example seats from the soccer stadium, to make a statement. However, those were temporary

⁴²² Johan de Boer cited in: ‘Op weg naar het Máximapark’ in *AD Utrecht* (April 3, 2013) 1.

⁴²³ The motto of the *Stichting Vrienden van het Máximapark* for the Jeremiebrug quoted in D. VAN DIJK: “Gratis” brug toch niet helemaal welkom in Máximapark’, in *VAR* (September 6, 2012) 3.

projects and all the objects have returned to their original locations.⁴²⁴ An object that, in line with the trees, is supposed to find a new future in Leidsche Rijn is the *Jeremiebrug* (Jeremie Bridge). Since 1912, this listed monumental drawbridge was located across the Kruisvaart at the Westerkade at the border of the city center next to the railroad tracks entering the city from the south side. In 2003, when it became clear that the bridge had to make room for the expansion of the railroad tracks and the construction of a new railroad station, plans were made to relocate the bridge. Neighbors of the bridge pleaded for a new location within the area but as this turned out not to be possible, the *Stichting Vrienden van het Máximapark*⁴²⁵ came up with the idea to move the bridge to Leidsche Rijn.⁴²⁶

In order to raise broad-based support for this idea, the foundation and the city of Utrecht organized a presentation for all the people concerned in December 2010. That evening, after a detailed discussion, the idea to move the bridge to Leidsche Rijn was approved by a majority of votes: 'The idea became a plan!'⁴²⁷ Part of this plan was to unveil the bridge at its new location in 2012, exactly 100 years after it had been put into use for the first time. But the years went by and in January 2014 the bridge was still in storage. Due to problems with the legal permission to fell 3-5 trees to make room for the bridge, and due to protests from the new neighbors against the intended location of the bridge, the plans lay idle for almost two years. Although the neighbors like the idea of this old bridge being moved to their part of town, a long discussion about its final location and its height and width followed.⁴²⁸ Eventually the neighbors took legal action against the city to prevent the arrival of the bridge, which was eroding away, as it already had been removed from its original location.⁴²⁹ In September 2013, the parties came to an agreement. The bridge would be lowered and attempts would be made to transplant the trees or to plant new trees to replace the ones that would be lost. Hence, in the spring of 2014, the reconstruction of the bridge was scheduled to start.⁴³⁰

This case shows that the historical value of the bridge did not outweigh the practical concerns people had about the plans. Even though a bridge was required

⁴²⁴ I do not know what happened to the seats from the soccer stadium. I am guessing they were either sold, demolished or used in a different project.

⁴²⁵ At this time the name of the park was *Leidsche Rijn Park*. Hence, the name of the foundation at this time was: *Stichting Vrienden van het Leidsche Rijnpark*. This is the same foundation. Its name changed as the name of the park changed.

⁴²⁶ J. DE BOER & E. PELDERS: *Kom over de brug! Een nieuw leven voor de Jeremiebrug in het Máximapark* memorandum (Vleuten, May 21, 2013) 5.

⁴²⁷ IBIDEM.

⁴²⁸ R. CAZANDER & W. LANGEJAN: "Cadeau verliest glans". PvdA kritisch over gehannes rond Jeremiebrug', in *AD Utrecht* (November 30, 2012) 5.

⁴²⁹ W. DE HEUS: 'Mooie brug, foute plek. Bewoners zijn tegen komst Jeremiebrug', in *AD Utrecht* (August 31, 2012).

⁴³⁰ D. VAN DIJK: 'College besluit tot bouw Jeremiebrug in 2014', in *VAR* (October 3, 2013).

at this specific location, the protesting group of neighbors stated that they would rather have a new and lower bridge designed similarly to the other bridges in the park.⁴³¹

7.5 Like a fairytale: an example of a chosen identity

“Proudly, initiator Happy Megally shows the sketches of the playground [inspired by the stories of Peter Pan ed.] (...), the sketches of the tearoom designed by Adriaan Geuze, and those inspired by a never implemented design of the famous architect Cuypers.”⁴³² At the time of this conversation with Happy Megally (the initiator of this tearoom named *Anafora* and playground) neither had been constructed yet but the plans and designs sounded and looked promising. His ambition was that “they [the tearoom and restaurant ed.] should contribute to the social cohesion, the well-being of the residents of this new part of town, and give an impulse to the identity of Leidsche Rijn.”⁴³³ And before the opening, things were already buzzing in Leidsche Rijn as the news about this new hotspot spread. During my interview with Respondent A in January 2011, she told me she was very much looking forward to the opening, which was planned for later that year:

I am eagerly looking forward to the playground and the tearoom. It will become a very important place. It will be the place for people to go to, people like me, and my friends. So that is where we will all be in the summer.⁴³⁴

To create a meeting point based on the idea that freedom and awareness, love for the other, and respect for everything around you is every human being’s destiny, that is what Megally had in mind when he moved to Leidsche Rijn. Once he was settled in his new neighborhood he made an inventory of what it was that people were looking for in this newly built suburb. Soon it became clear to him that this would have to be a place to meet others, children as well as adults, and that it would have to be a place to be proud of. Leidsche Rijn lacked a soul and this is something the residents have to develop together, something that emerges once

⁴³¹ DE HEUS: ‘Mooie brug, foute plek’.

⁴³² M. HENDRIKS & A. SIMONS: *Leidsche Rijn Park. Ontwerp en realisatie van een unieke stadspark* (Wageningen 2010) 66-67. Original text: “Trots laat initiator Happy Megally de schetsen zien van de speeltuin (...) de schetsen van het theehuis, ontworpen door Adriaan Geuze en geïnspireerd op een nooit uitgevoerd ontwerp van de beroemde architect Cuypers.”

⁴³³ IBIDEM. Original text: “Deze moeten een bijdrage leveren aan de sociale cohesie, het welbevinden van de bewoners van dit nieuwe stadsdeel, en een impuls geven aan de identiteit van Leidsche Rijn.”

⁴³⁴ Original text derived from interview with Respondent A (27-01-2011): “Ik verheug me ook heel erg op de speeltuin en het theehuis. Dat wordt een hele belangrijke plek. Dat wordt de plek waar mensen die willen, gaan komen. Mensen zoals ik en mensen waar ik mee bevriend ben. Daar zitten we dus allemaal van de zomer.”

the neighborhood is being lived in and used, as Megally tells me in an interview.⁴³⁵ His idea was fed by what he calls a, ‘Christian impulse rather than Christianity’.⁴³⁶ The name, *Anafora*, has its origins in Christianity and it can be translated as an offering of gratitude.

The previously mentioned motto of freedom, love and awareness is painted above the bar area in the heart of *Anafora*. A poem on another wall refers to all the things visitors experience at *Anafora*, for example: “understanding one another, listening to one another, talking to one another, whispering to one another.”⁴³⁷ The togetherness is emphasized, as *Anafora* is a place to meet others, a place to belong to. This motto that Megally set for his tearoom and restaurant proved to be a difficult one to put into practice. He explains to me that he attempts to implement it by adding spirit to matter, and matter to spirit. In a business like this, it is about paying attention. Are we just serving tea and food, or are we adding something extra? This is where adding spirit to matter comes in: On the other hand, when people want to organize their wedding at *Anafora* or organize a memorial service, this can be seen as adding matter to spirit. As love and grief are such strong concepts, *Anafora* attempts to provide a place to celebrate and to remember. When you dwell on special moments they get additional meaning.⁴³⁸

Since the opening in the summer of 2011, *Anafora* has been functioning as a meeting point and a center for numerous activities. In the summer, parents with young children meet and sit and drink together at the tables outside the restaurant as the children play in the playground. Twice a month, young mothers can meet at the mamma café, and on a monthly basis the *InBetweenCafe* brings together people looking for a new job. In addition, the writers’ dinners also organized once a month and the occasional dance nights attract large groups of enthusiastic residents.⁴³⁹ Further, on holidays, *Anafora* organizes special activities often focusing on the story behind the holiday in question in order attempt to create an additional layer.

The previous description elaborates on the activities organized at *Anafora* and on the way it functions. Being one of the few facilities where people could meet for food and drinks, in the district, *Anafora* was unique, and it immediately became popular after its opening in 2011. Now that more and more people have moved into the area, and a few other cafés have opened their doors, the uniqueness is

⁴³⁵ Interview with Happy Megally (July 16, 2013) joint initiator and owner of *Anafora*, the tearoom, restaurant, and playground, located in the heart of the *Maximapark*.

⁴³⁶ Original text derived from Interview with Happy Megally (July 16, 2013): “veel meer vanuit een christelijke impuls dan vanuit het christendom.”

⁴³⁷ DE ROMEIN: *De Limes liefhebben* 32. Original tekst: “Samen begrijpen, samen luisteren, samen spreken, samen fluisteren.”

⁴³⁸ Interview with Happy Megally (July 16, 2013).

⁴³⁹ Information about the activities can be found on the website www.anafora.nl (January 21, 2014).

wearing off and *Anafora* has become one of the places to go to. It seems as if its specialness, which was definitely present in the beginning and even before it opened, has changed in a matter of years.

In addition to its function, a second significant aspect of *Anafora* is often overlooked. Whereas for the other examples described in this chapter, the history is very much emphasized: the fact that Dutch architect Pierre Cuypers bases *Anafora* on an old sketch is not mentioned very often. Cuypers (1827-1921) designed a number of Dutch architectural landmarks such as the Central Station in Amsterdam, the *Rijksmuseum* in Amsterdam, a large number of churches throughout the country, and the previously mentioned castle *De Haar*, which is located close to the park. Cuypers reconstructed this castle in the 1890s-1910s and based his design on the romantic ruins of the original castle that dates back to the fourteenth century. Currently, the castle functions as a tourist attraction and it is a popular location for fairs and weddings. Contrary to drawings of the original castle, the design by Cuypers looks like it came straight out of a book of fairy tales as it is built in a style similar to *Anafora*. Adriaan Geuze, of architects' firm *West 8*, the lead-architect of the park, found the old sketch by the architect, which had never been used or changed into a detailed plan, in the Cuypers archive at the Dutch Architecture Institute (NAI). Hence, we could speak of a chosen identity, as there is no apparent historical connection with the city of Utrecht or *Máximapark*.

For the architectural team, the main motivation to choose this design was the atmosphere it radiated. The design by Cuypers functioned as a source of inspiration for the fairytale-like character of the park. Robert Schütte, the *West 8* project-manager for the park in Leidsche Rijn, emphasizes that the choice was not an architectural statement. Whereas other architectural styles would have probably also looked wonderful in the park, they would have looked rather like independent structures. Now, the romantic style in which *Anafora* was designed strengthens the fairytale-like character of the park. This style supports the choices the team of architects made in other parts of the design: the modeling of the paths, the plants, the bridges and lighting, and the incidentally recurring owl ornaments that symbolize wisdom and freedom.⁴⁴⁰ In addition to the atmosphere that the building creates, Schütte adds that this design is also very different from what is created presently. This meant that during the realization of *Anafora* no one could fall back on familiar practices or paths. Therefore, they not only opted for a specific result but also for a challenging and stimulating process.⁴⁴¹

Whereas the cases described in the previous two sections clearly refer to the local history of the area, the origins of *Anafora* are unclear. It is quite easy to describe the function it fulfills in Leidsche Rijn and how this function is changing as

⁴⁴⁰ Information derived from an email by Robert Schütte (January 6, 2014).

⁴⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

other similar facilities such as the *Brouwerij Maximus* (which is a local brewery) and Restaurant *De Baai* emerge. However, the typical design of the tearoom based, on an old sketch by a famous Dutch architect in a style that has not been used for a long time, raises questions. When I first heard about this story behind the design, I figured that the historical character of the design was meant to create something extraordinary. But this history is not widely emphasized, the way the history of the *Jeremiebrug*, the trees, and the Roman elements were. In the case of *Anafora*, the focus lies on the atmosphere the design creates. In line with the style used in the rest of the park, *Anafora* looks like a structure from a fairytale. This is emphasized inside where the chandeliers are decorated with artificial flowers, and curly ornaments and owls dominate the space. The fact that the design of *Anafora* was based on old sketches made by Cuypers, in a way legitimizes this style. As Schütte confirmed, they did not mean to make an architectural statement, and this style is no longer used in architecture.⁴⁴² However, as the architects were looking for a design that would blend into the park atmosphere instead of something modern that would stand out as an independent structure, they decided to use the sketches of Cuypers, himself a famous architect. In my opinion, the use of the work of Cuypers legitimizes the style chosen for *Anafora*: a style that belongs to the past but that is very appropriate in this setting, a romantic tearoom in the center of a large park.

7.6 Conclusion

Therefore, the ‘memory’ being referred to under the presentist regime of historicity is not a real memory at all: ‘Heritage associations demonstrate the construction of a memory that is not given and therefore not lost. They work toward the constitution of a symbolic universe. Heritage should not be studied from the past but rather from the present and concerning the present’.⁴⁴³

This citation from the article ‘Unstuck in time; or: The sudden presence of the past’, by Lorenz, captures the main argument of this chapter. Historical elements are present in Leidsche Rijn in various forms. The examples show that the (hi)story and memories attached to those elements, as is typical of the presentist regime of historicity, do not have to be real, nor do they have to belong to the residents of the area. They can be remains from a very distant past, they can be borrowed, and they can even be invented. Hence, the purpose of this chapter was to study those historical elements from the present and concerning the present. What reasons do the urban planners, the historical society and the residents in a newly built subur-

⁴⁴² Information derived from an email by Robert Schütte (January 6, 2014).

⁴⁴³ LORENZ: ‘Unstuck in time’ 88.

ban area have to seek historical legitimization by emphasizing the Roman history of the area, by borrowing an identity from the city of Utrecht, and by using a seemingly unrelated design by the architect Cuypers?

In relation to the theory by Augé, in which he describes how the lack of identity and history will result in a non-place, the creation of a history, or the emphasis on an existing history for the area, makes sense. The three different forms of history based on an area-specific identity, a borrowed identity, and a chosen identity show an inevitable connection between the two notions of history and identity. The different historical identities are emphasized in order to create a feeling of unity in the district. As the previously given definition of the word identity described, it is both about uniqueness – the history of the area makes it unique and makes it stand out from other VINEX-projects – and about similarities and sharing. It is not about what the bridge, the trees or the *castellum* have done in the past but about the function they can fulfill in the present and in the future. Is the fact that there is some sort of (hi)story attached to them enough to make the elements worthwhile and meaningful?

The emphasis on the Roman history of the area is a recurring theme in both the design of the area as well as in a number of activities that are organized in Leidsche Rijn. For example, in addition to the activities on the *castellum* grounds, a Roman walking tour is organized that starts and finishes in an artificial Roman village that will be put up for the occasion. The tours take the participants along the former borders of the Roman Empire and past other historical sites such as castle *De Haar*. The website describes how the participants can relive the Roman history. A roman re-enactment group will be present to strengthen this experience.⁴⁴⁴ Over the years, as the Romans pop-up at various activities in the district and now that the *castellum* will be built to function as the cultural heart of the neighborhood, it can be said that this area-specific identity is gaining ground in Leidsche Rijn. Although probably not for all the residents, the intention to have Leidsche Rijn be known for its history dating back all the way to the Roman period, seems to be working.

In the case of *Anafora*, it seems that although the building fits very nicely into the park environment, its function outweighs the historical connotations of the design. At the time when this park restaurant was constructed, the demand for such a meeting point was high as it was one of the first bar/restaurants in the district. Now, its uniqueness and popularity seems to be dependent on the activities organized there. The *Maximus Brewery* and Restaurant *De Baai* both also have unique features, making them attractive for the residents of the area.

The third notion discussed in this chapter is the borrowed identity. The bridge and the trees that were moved from the city of Utrecht to its new part

⁴⁴⁴ www.romeinsevoettochten.nl (March 13, 2014).

Leidsche Rijn were received with mixed feelings. While some of the residents are very enthusiastic, others seem indifferent or sometimes even opposed to the plans, especially those related to the bridge. A bridge in the same style as the other bridges in the park might even have been better. So maybe it can be said that Leidsche Rijn does not need to borrow an identity via the historical elements from the city of Utrecht, as it is creating an identity and a history of its own.

Combining all the elements together, it can be said that the history of Leidsche Rijn is a bricolage. It is a combination of bits and pieces taken from different centuries: Roman watchtowers, boats and castles find room next to nineteenth century bridges and trees borrowed from the city of Utrecht. And all of these elements are combined into a broad reference to the past. Whether or not these elements relate to actual memories of the residents does not really matter. Their authenticity is not determined by the history of the object or place or by its realistic representation. Rather, it is all about the experience, perception and appropriation in the present. And this bricolage seems to work in Leidsche Rijn. Residents can pick and choose, and use the elements they like and integrate them into a personal hi(story).



Chapter 8

Bringing it all together

A volunteer working in de Vlindertuin in the background one of the old farms on the Alendorperweg

Picture: Hanneke Bos

CHAPTER 8

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

*Wanneer de regen daalt op straten, pleinen, perken
Op dak en torenspits van hemelhoge kerken
Die in dit vlakke land de enige bergen zijn.*

[‘When the rain pours down on streets, squares, courts
On the roof and steeple of sky-high churches
Those are the only mountains in this flat country.’]

*(Mijn Vlakke Land, Jacques Brel, 1962)*⁴⁴⁵

The song *Mijn Vlakke Land* (original French title: *Le Plat Pays*) by the Belgian singer Jacques Brel describes the flat land of his native region: West Flanders in Belgium. As the Belgian flat land of which Brel sings strongly resembles the Dutch landscape, the song was also very popular in the Netherlands. The description given by Brel of a flat country with churches sticking out like mountains is significant for this research, as it can be seen as a starting point. For centuries, church buildings held a central position in the centers of Dutch cities, villages and neighborhoods. More recently, the atmosphere is changing. In most of the newly built areas, traditional church buildings are left out of the plans and old, existing churches close down or are used for non-religious purposes. This change is visible in Leidsche Rijn; Instead of surrounding a church and accompanying churchyard, the eighteen different sub-neighborhoods in the design are built around an enormous park, several historical heritage sites, a sculpture garden and a singing glass tower.⁴⁴⁶

These four examples resemble a pattern in the design of the Leidsche Rijn district, as art, history, and nature are frequently used in an attempt to create something special. Hence, the heart of this research evolves around these three themes. Religion was added as a fourth theme, since Vleuten and De Meern and

⁴⁴⁵ A phrase from the song *Mijn Vlakke Land* (*Le Plat Pays*) by the Belgian singer Jacques Brel (1962).

⁴⁴⁶ I. SCHIPPERS: ‘Sacraliteit in de suburbs. De veranderende positie van de sacrale ruimte in de Nederlandse Stedenbouw’, in P. VERSNEL-MERGRAETS & L. VAN TONGEREN (eds.): *Heilig, heilig, heilig. Over sacraliteit in kerk en cultuur* (Heeswijk 2011) 147-150.

their churches were integrated into the urban plans, and the developments in this field are interesting to illustrate the present day trends in religious and ritual studies. Using the urban triad as a framework for this research, the places were studied from three perspectives: *urbs*, *civitas*, and the *genius loci*. Did the places emerge bottom up or top down? How are they used? Are they successful? And why or why not? Do rituals emerge around these places and can some of them be seen as sacred or as set apart with special meaning?

The elaborate descriptions of different places in the fields of religion, nature, art, and history given in the different chapters, form the basis for this conclusion, which will analyze this data from four different perspectives.

- First, it will be situated in the panorama of ritual repertoires as a whole. How do the rituals in Leidsche Rijn relate to the common ritual repertoires in the Netherlands?
- The second perspective is that of the public domain. For a long time, rituals did not belong in the public domain, but were rather practiced indoors. This research focuses on a possible change in this tendency, as it studies outdoor rituals in Leidsche Rijn.
- The third paragraph will try and deduce themes from the data that are specific for Leidsche Rijn. Is it possible to catch tendencies that run through the different case studies, especially from a spatial perspective?
- The fourth perspective is that of ritual criticism. The tendency to invent traditions and rituals and combine them as a bricolage will play an important role in this criticism.

The analysis of the data from these four perspectives will lead me to introduce a new form of sacrality in the fifth paragraph of this chapter.

8.1 A panorama of ritual repertoire

On a regular basis, the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Agency (*Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau*, SCP) publishes reports on the changing religious situation in the Netherlands. A phrase in the most recent report: *Religie binnen en buiten verband*, published in 2014, caught my attention. It states:

For a large part of the [Dutch] society, churches seem to function as a utility company. People do not tailor all of their activities to the church, but rather, they are useful in times of need, such as during biographical times of transition, national events, or situations of collective bereavement.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁷ J. DE HART: *Geloven binnen en buiten verband. Godsdienstige ontwikkelingen in Nederland* (Den Haag 2014)
9. Original text: “Voor een groot deel van de bevolking lijken kerken als een soort openbare

The present book contributes to the report by the SCP and takes an additional step as it disconnects ritual from religion, and sketches a wide range of rituals currently taking place outside of the field of traditional religion. It shows that large numbers of people in the Netherlands no longer want to take part in a set of rules, regulations, and rituals set out by the churches, or by any other institution. Rather, they like to create their own combination of rituals, sometimes borrowing elements from religion, but always uniquely fitting their individual situation.

The conversations with Father Martin Los of the Roman Catholic Church in Vleuten and De Meern confirm this tendency. Los explained that at the Lady Chapel, in combination with the graveyard, a combination of religion and remembrance takes place, and that Christmas services are very popular. This is in contradiction to the situation at the regular Sunday church services and the new ecumenical projects the church has attempted to start up. The Protestant Church of the Netherlands in Leidsche Rijn is facing similar problems. New ideas, such as *Het Baken*, are not as successful as hoped, and the ambition to expand was not very successful, either. It is interesting to note the success of the concerts the *Torenplein* Church organizes on Sunday afternoon. In this activity, religion overlaps with leisure, making the concerts attractive to a larger group of people.

In addition to these Catholic and Protestant churches, chapter four also elaborates on the growing popularity of a number of Pentecostal and evangelical denominations in the area. In line with the developments in other Dutch regions, these churches could count on a substantial growth of membership. Contrary to the members of the Catholic and Protestant churches, the members of the Pentecostal and evangelical churches are not ageing. It can probably be said that the average age of their members is close to the average age of the residents of Leidsche Rijn. The successful churches share a number of characteristics: First of all, they are often imported and inspired by American churches. In addition, they offer a lot of room for emotions and a direct and individual connection to the holy, and the Holy Spirit. The churches are embedded in the local communities, the believers maintain personal relationships, and the group life is very important.⁴⁴⁸ Also, some of the churches have a strong missionary character and reach out to the residents of the area via a number of activities such as, for example, the singing of Christmas carols in the local shopping center, thereby expanding into the public domain.

nutsbedrijven te fungeren: niet bedoeld om je activiteiten voortdurend op af te stemmen, maar om gebruik van te maken als dat nodig is, bij biografische overgangsmomenten bijvoorbeeld, nationale gebeurtenissen of collectieve rouwverwerking.”

⁴⁴⁸ DE HART: *Geloven binnen en buiten verband* 67.

In a 2009 article on ritual and religious identities in Europe, Paul Post sketches an overview of a number of developments in the ritual field.⁴⁴⁹ Here I would like to follow the line of thought of this article, as through the trends Post describes, he presents a broad ritual panorama. Hence, in the remainder of this paragraph the broad ritual spectrum present in Leidsche Rijn, as sketched in Chapters 4 to 7, will be analyzed by means of this panorama.

The first development Post sketches is the popularity of rituals, old, reinvented, and new, in present-day Dutch society. In the 1960s and 1970s ritual had ended up in a crisis. It was seen as something traditional, boring, and a useless repetition. Rituals belonged to the church, an institution that was losing ground in this period. After a period of searching and scanning, rituals returned to Dutch society in the 1980s and 1990s in new, and more time appropriate forms.⁴⁵⁰ Now, a few decades later, ritual has completely regained its position in our society and people are very comfortably practicing numerous rituals in their daily lives. Some based on traditions, some adapted to the time period, and others newly developed, as a hiatus in the ritual repertoire demanded something new.

The case studies in my research describe a number of places and events that are ritualized in some way. Two types of rituals stand out: First, there are the rituals to mark life events, seasonal rituals such as Christmas and Easter, and other activities returning on an annual or seasonal basis. Secondly, we have looked at rituals related to the growing field of memory culture. This broad field includes commemoration of the dead via funerals, monuments and other memorial services.⁴⁵¹ But in addition, I would like to argue that it also includes the growing emphasis on historical events and places, remembering what once was there, as everything from the past is perceived to be significantly safer, better and nicer than the modern world we currently live in. As the examples in chapter seven show, this past and/or the traditions connected to it, are often constructed or borrowed. A connection with a person or place is no longer a requisite; people mix and match to create a historical bricolage that fits their wishes.

The popularity of the Trees of Birth, as a means to celebrate the life of a newborn child or mourn a deceased baby, is a typical example of a new rite of passage. For some of the participants it is a ritual in addition to a baptism. In other cases it is the only ritual, or one in a series of (often) non-religious rituals to celebrate a birth. The specific location of the ritual, in the new park in their new neighborhood, as well as its permanent marking by means of the tree, is of great

⁴⁴⁹ P. POST: 'Rituele en religieuze identiteiten in Europa. Casus: Actuele en religieuze dynamiek in Nederland', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 25 (2009) 125-155.

⁴⁵⁰ G. LUKKEN: *Rituelen in overvloed: Een kritische bezinning op de plaats en gestalte van het christelijk ritueel in onze cultuur* (Baarn 1999); P. POST: 'Nederland is ritueel competent', in *Brabants Dagblad* (July 29, 2014) 32-33.

⁴⁵¹ POST: 'Rituele en religieuze identiteiten in Europa' 135-137.

importance for the participants. They receive the GPS location of their tree and most of them return to their personal tree occasionally and small personal rituals emerge during those visits.

A second place, discussed in Chapter 6, is the artwork *Rituele Depositie*, which can also be seen as the permanent relic of a rite of passage. The artwork is a reminder of the changes the area underwent for its old, as well as for its new, residents. As with the planting of the trees, the valuable objects buried in the ground mark this location and give the place a special, significant meaning. The ritual way in which the places discussed in chapter seven are brought back to life in order to remember the stories behind the area and its inhabitants, are a third example that fits into this trend. The nature of this history plays a role in terms of the extent to which residents appropriate this history as their own. The memories of the Roman forefathers are emphasized and in some cases even commercially exploited. Although this history is long gone and most of the residents do not even originate from the region, they still very much relate to it. They feel connected to the Romans and the fact that they can, for example, walk on the same roads as the Romans did, does make a profound impression on the residents.

The historical elements borrowed from the city of Utrecht are appreciated by a smaller group of people. Despite the great stories attached to the Jeremie Bridge and the trees from the Dom Square, some residents of the area would rather develop their own unique elements, and write their own history. These examples show the importance of the (hi)story attached to place, an extra layer making a certain place set apart from its surroundings. This set apart status then calls for rituals.

Secondly, Post describes the contested character of places for ritual practice in modern society. He sees the public domain as an arena dominated by tensions.⁴⁵² Since the public domain is shared amongst everyone, protests can arise when groups or individuals claim certain parts of this public space. The nature of those claims can vary from, for example, actually building something, to using it on a regular basis, or producing a sound or noise that invades the public space. When part of this public space is considered to be sacred for a group or individual, they are often willing to protect it. In Leidsche Rijn this tension becomes visible when the name of the park was changed from *Leidsche Rijn Park* to *Máximapark*. Residents were furious. They started a petition and a group on the social media website LinkedIn and the friends of the park foundation; One of the parties involved in the name change received threats from angry residents. They stated that the old

⁴⁵² POST: 'Rituele en religieuze identiteiten in Europa' 140; I. SCHIPPERS: 'Finding a place for religion: The contested position of Dutch traditional religion in a Dutch suburb', in P. POST, P. NEL & W. VAN BEEK (eds.): *Sacred space and contested identities. Space and ritual dynamics in Europe and Africa* (Trenton 2014) 114-115.

(working) name of the park referred to the name of the area. With this name, everyone would know where this beautiful park was located. Now, with the new name *Máximapark*, which refers to the Dutch Queen, the park could be located anywhere the angry residents stated. They felt like the park was taken from them. Interestingly enough, besides the name, nothing about the park changed.

A second example that seems to fit into the category is the struggle of traditional religious groups to find a permanent place for their services. The available space in Leidsche Rijn is scarce and expensive, and non-religious residents do not willingly give up space that can also be used as a day-care center, a health club, or a (movie) theater. Chapter 4 describes the case of the Leidsche Rijn Information Center. In 2011, the idea arose to sell this center to a religious denomination for 1.8 million euro. This low price caused protest among residents and the VVD, the liberal political party in the city council. As commercial parties were also interested to buy the building, the city could earn a lot more money from the sale of the center.⁴⁵³ I would like to claim that due to its scarceness, in the case of Leidsche Rijn, the concept of space in itself can be considered sacred. Various examples show that residents add great value to the available space in Leidsche Rijn and would like to take part in the decision-making process regarding the allocation of the space. Protests and petitions are started frequently. In my opinion, residents would like to influence the public space around them since they see it as an extension of their personal space.

A final example that has already come up once before in this conclusion is that of the borrowed historical sites. The trees from the Dom Square were relocated at a remote site in the park. However, the bridge will be situated at a central location; the old *Alendorperweg*, a busy road in the park sided by old (farm)houses. The future new neighbors of the bridge fear that it will interfere with their privacy and they worry about the trees that need to be chopped down to make room for the bridge. The protests resulted in a long battle between the residents and the city of Utrecht. The additional difficulty in the contested character of this location is the fact that a majority of the residents of the *Alendorperweg*, contrary to most of the residents of the new parts, have lived in this place for decades, long before the plans for Leidsche Rijn had been made. The plans for the bridge, on top of the changes their living environment already underwent in the past years, might have been the last straw.

When looking at the urban triad, it can be said that the contested nature in all three of the given examples can be situated between the level of the *urbs* on the one hand and the *civitas* and *genius loci* on the other. Especially in a newly built suburb such as Leidsche Rijn, the residents seem to want to have an influence on their

⁴⁵³ Information derived from the online newspaper *DUIC*. Available at <http://www.duic.nl/wonen/2808/informatiecentrum-leidsche-rijn-wordt-toch-kerk/> (August 6, 2014).

habitat. This is possible because the district was a tabula rasa and stories still had to be written. Now that over the past few years the residents have appropriated the space, they have trouble accepting changes implemented from above. When you move into an old village or neighborhood you know that most of the rules have been set and you will have to adjust to those rules, to some extent, in order to fit in. In a new suburb, the influence individuals can have is more extensive. If their plans and projects are influenced or changed from the top down, emotions are stirred.

A fourth and, for this conclusion, last development that Post mentions is the relationship between the individual and the community regarding ritual practice. He describes this relationship as a flowing interference between the individual and the community that can also be referred to as a network community. In Post's description,

Individuals meet each other very consciously for collective memorials and parties. But this is an instantaneous and temporary community. Often they know that after the celebration, they will never meet again. Simultaneously, people yearn for an authentic group culture, a real group.⁴⁵⁴

A counter effect of the rise of such instantaneous communities is the success of the evangelical and Pentecostal church communities in Leidsche Rijn and, more generally, in the Netherlands. Although the way of believing and worshipping in these churches is very much focused on an individual experience and relationship with God, these church communities are very inclusive. Post continues by stating that when observing the ritual act, this changing dynamic is also visible. There is a strong need for listening, calmness, tranquility, and contemplation. Especially in commemorative rituals, there is a tendency toward the personal and the inductive.⁴⁵⁵

Looking at the results from my research in Leidsche Rijn it is possible to state that a dynamic and loose community of Leidsche Rijners exists. Within this community residents find their own way. It is interesting to note that a number of collectives take shape online. Sometimes these online meetings result in a meeting in an offline place, other times the online group, for example on Twitter or Facebook, exists simultaneously to the actual place. For example, in the art and gardening project *De Halte Tervijde*, the participants attend the gardens at whatever time they find convenient and when they want to be in contact with fellow gardeners they turn to the Facebook group to ask their questions. The participants like to be part of this project, but shape it on their own terms.

⁴⁵⁴ POST: 'Rituele en religieuze identiteiten in Europa' 141.

⁴⁵⁵ IBIDEM.

A connection can be made with the tree planting ritual that is organized in the park twice a year at which around twenty families participate. However this cannot really be seen as a collective ritual. Observing the participants during those mornings showed that there was hardly any form of communication between the different planting groups. Everyone planted their own trees and developed their own little rituals surrounding the planting process: reading a poem, tying a knot. The organizers were facilitators in this ritual as they took care of all the practicalities surrounding the planting, and offered a helping hand every now and again, but they did not take part in the rituals themselves. Yet, the participants prefer to take part in this planting ceremony together with the other families instead of individually planting a tree in their own backyard.

I find this interaction between the individual and the community an interesting aspect of this research. Being a newly built suburb, Leidsche Rijn started off as a group of strangers. As everyone was new to the area, no community was shaped yet. However, as soon as people moved in, groups were formed. There are groups of people who like to knit, a gardening group, people who like to participate in a pub quiz, pregnant women, etc. Most residents immediately seek likeminded people in their new living environment. They seek an individual path but every now and again companions join you on the way. This temporality and finding of people and activities for shorter periods of time, is also, as Paragraph 8.5 will discuss, a characteristic of the casual sacred.

8.2 The sacred in the public sphere

The term 'public' signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it. (Hannah Arendt, 1958)⁴⁵⁶

The definition of the public, as given by the German-American philosopher Hannah Arendt in the previous quote, describes how it refers to places that are common to all of us, meaning that public places are not privately owned and in principle accessible for everyone. The research for this dissertation was conducted in the public domain, thereby leaving out places and accompanying rituals people conduct in the privacy of their own home. This was a deliberate choice, as the public sphere and the way it is shaped in Leidsche Rijn is the one thing that is specific for a newly built suburb. People take their indoor rituals from one home to the other. However, the new and only partly shaped public domain in Leidsche Rijn demands from the residents to take action and shape and own their new environment.

⁴⁵⁶ H. ARENDT: *The human condition* (Chicago 1958) 52.

For a long time, it was common for people in Dutch society to think of society not as a group of individuals but rather as people connected by means of their religion. Faith was a *vinculum societatis*, a bond holding the Christian community together. In the sixteenth century, due to the Reformation, this community fell apart into three large blocks: Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism. And as religion prescribed life in Early-Modern Europe, and Church and State were inextricably interwoven, the consequences of this split were far reaching. At that time, homogeneity of religion was of the utmost importance for the European rulers and harsh methods such as forced conversion, exile, and in some cases even physical destruction were not shunned. However, in the Netherlands it proved to be impossible to reach religious unity and a different solution had to be found in order to end the continuous violence between the different religious groups. Consequently, in order to create stability in the Republic, the correlation between the individual, the state, and religion had to change. The core of this new relationship was the distinction between the public sphere and the private domain. Indoors everyone was free to believe whatever he or she pleased, but the public sphere was controlled by one single religious denomination. Hence, from the late sixteenth century onward the Dutch republic was a Calvinist country.⁴⁵⁷

In the second half of the nineteenth century the situation slightly changed. This shift was caused by a growing interest in the similarities between the different protestant denominations and a slightly milder approach toward Catholicism. Eventually this changing atmosphere led to the decision to separate Church and State. As a result, all religious expressions had to be limited to the church and private sphere meaning that all religious rituals including, for example, the ringing of the church bells, were banned from the public domain.⁴⁵⁸ The political developments in the Netherlands in this period were extensive and interesting, but for the purpose of this conclusion it will not be necessary to describe them in great detail.

The story continues in the late twentieth century. In 1983 the ban on processions was removed from the Dutch constitution, a measure that was significant for this time period. In the sixties, this law was already considered to be totally obsolete. And as over the years the pillarization of Dutch society phased out, the character of the public domain also changed: it became expressly secular and religion had become an individual matter. More recently, especially after the turn of the century, religion is returning to Dutch society, at first on the outskirts but also increasingly in the center of collective attention.⁴⁵⁹ The re-use of old church buildings, the ringing of the church bells, the building of mosques in Dutch cities,

⁴⁵⁷ P. DE ROOY: *Openbaring en openbaarheid* (Amsterdam 2009) 10-13; P.J. MARGRY: *Teedere quaesties: Religieuze rituelen in conflict* (Hilversum 2000) 19.

⁴⁵⁸ IDEM 17-21.

⁴⁵⁹ W.B.H.J. VAN DE DONK, A.P. JONKERS, G.J. KRONJEE & R.J.J.M. PLUM (eds.): *Geloven in het publieke domein* (Amsterdam 2006).

whether or not it is allowed to wear a burka in the public space, and so on, are all topics that are discussed widely.

This long, ambivalent attitude toward religion in the public sphere has had its repercussion for the presence of rituals in the public domain. Only in the last two decades, the public domain has been filled with rituals such as the planting of trees, silent marches, the sending up of balloons. Although some of the rituals find their origins in religion, most of them are secular rituals. These individual or collective secular rituals match the theory described in Chapter 3. In this chapter, the scheme based on the theory of Evans shows two categories: the personal sacred and the civil sacred, which are not related to the supernatural.⁴⁶⁰ The rituals related to these forms of the sacred are what I would like to call secular rituals. The act (or acts) the secular rituals consist of can be similar to those making up religious or ‘supernatural’ rituals, but the intention and outcome are different.

This short historical overview shows the uncomfortable attitude in the Netherlands regarding rituals in the public domain. Only more recently, is the public domain filling up with rituals again. The examples from Leidsche Rijn show that there is a demand for public rituals even to mark personal life events such as birth and death. Also, places to meet other people or ‘alone-time’ are sought in the public domain. On a Sunday morning, residents go running in the park to empty their mind, they plant a tree in the park to celebrate a birth, a deceased child is memorialized via a bronzed teddy bear captured in a work of art, and instead of growing vegetables in your own backyard, people participate in a collective vegetable garden project. People increasingly seem to see their garden, but also their street, and neighborhood, as an extension of their home. Pots and plants are located in front of the house, and poems are hung from the windows in an attempt to reach out to the people passing by. It is with good reason that the *Máximapark* is one of the main selling points of the Leidsche Rijn district: An enormous garden that can be used for a wide variety of activities is found there.

In addition, a very recent example of ritual practice in the public domain is an open-air Catholic mass that was organized on the multi-purpose field in the *Máximapark* on June 22nd 2014. Open-air liturgy is not uncommon in Roman Catholicism. The church has a long tradition of public processions, pilgrimages, relic displays, and harvest thanksgiving celebrations. The mass in the *Máximapark* was an intentional outdoor celebration, as the location was not picked out of necessity or due to a specific place bound event.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰ M. EVANS: ‘The sacred: Differentiating, clarifying and extending concepts’, in *Review of Religious Research* 45/1 (2003) 40-43.

⁴⁶¹ P. POST: *Ritueel landschap: over liturgie-buiten. Processie, pausbezoek, danken voor de oogst, plotselinge dood*, (=Liturgie in perspectief 5) (Heeswijk-Dinther 1995) 9-15.

Around 150 churchgoers and other interested spectators attended the service on a terrain that was decorated with yellow, white and beige banners and balloons. Music was played by the local brass band in collaboration with the church choir. The video clip on the website of the church shows a service as usual with the people on chairs divided into two blocks just like in a regular church. Other spectators who did not actively participate watched the service from a distance sitting in the grass. I was surprised to see that at the end of the mass, yellow balloons with little cards hanging from their ribbon were sent up. When I asked Father Los about this practice on Twitter, he told me that during the service, children could write a wish on a little card that was attached to a balloon before the service ended.⁴⁶² This act, that is quite common in secular rituals, is an interesting element in this particular setting.

The balloons, and a number of other examples from chapter four, show that when the churches enter the public domain they often do so with rituals that are not directly linked to traditional liturgy. Singing Christmas carols in the local shopping center, organizing concerts with non-religious music either in the church or via the church bells, and sending up balloons during an open-air service all broaden the religious field. The churches are claiming their space in the public domain, thereby combining traditional liturgy with rituals that appeal to a large audience. Sitting, listening, and watching common church practices are losing popularity, as people like to be involved in the rituals and actively participate. This can also explain the growing popularity of evangelical and Pentecostal denominations. Their services focus more on individual perception and experience.

The ambivalent attitude of the residents towards the church, expressed in their unwillingness to giving up space for religious purposes, shows that the churches, but also other religious institutions, should not take their position in a neighborhood such as Leidsche Rijn for granted. By means of rituals that non-believers more easily relate to, it could be possible for the churches to stabilize their position in the neighborhood, as this can help them in creating a larger community.

8.3 Sacred places in Leidsche Rijn

The first and second sections presented here situate the rituals that take place in Leidsche Rijn and the sacred places accommodating those rituals in a broader ritual panorama, and place them along the lines of the developments in the public domain. In addition, this section will try and deduce trends from the data that are

⁴⁶² Information derived from the church website www.lichtvanchristus.nl (July 2, 2014) and a Twitter conversation with the priest of the parish, Martin Los. “@martinuslos: @ischippers kinderen schreven zelf tijdens de Openluchtmis wensen op een kaartje. Dit werd voor het einde van dienst aan de ballon bevestigd” (July 2, 2014).

specific for Leidsche Rijn, and catch themes that run through the different case studies, especially from a spatial perspective.

The places described in the four chapters on religion, nature, art and history are studied by means of the urban triad. Three elements: *urbs*, *civitas* and *genius loci* produce urban space, and these constantly change, move, and interact while doing so. Looking at the sacred places studied in Leidsche Rijn, it is possible to state that the places that emerge bottom-up or through active involvement of residents, are more often described as having special meaning or being set apart, than the places implemented from the top down. Residents like to either be involved in the plans or in the creation of the place. Examples are the Birth Forest, *De Halte Tervijde*: the urban gardening project, and the artwork *Rituele Depositie*, but also, the *Máximapark* as a whole can be placed in the bottom up category as the design of the park leaves plenty of room for the residents to use it in various ways.

There is a difference between getting a tree assigned in a park or forest, and planting it yourself. Although the *Friends of the Máximapark Foundation* facilitate the planting days, the participants themselves are free to plant the tree any way they want to. Only its location is set. The idea behind the urban gardening movement is also the active involvement of participants. Through this involvement, people will have the feeling that it is really their tree, their garden or their bronzed object in the artwork. A personal story is attached to this specific place making it more likely to be set apart and sacred. Maybe it could even be said that if this story marks an important life event, or if it symbolizes a transformation in life, the attachment to the place grows.

A second trend in Leidsche Rijn that can be directly linked to this first one is the individual freedom the participants have in these places. The planting of the trees is collectively organized but all the families get to plant their own tree and shape the rituals in the way they prefer. This is also the case with the urban gardening project. They could have decided to go with one large communal garden, but instead the terrain is divided into individual gardens centered round some communal facilities. This means that most of the time people work in their own garden and if they like they can occasionally participate in a communal activity. People want to be part of a group and of communal projects, but they want to keep the way in which they participate in their own hands. During the interview with Robert Schütte, the project manager of the park, he told me that the planners of the park deliberately did not ‘overly plan’ the park. Hence, when some residents asked for a soccer field with goalposts, the planners refused. The residents are free to play soccer and use coats or ninepins as goalposts, Schütte tells me. This will temporarily change the grass into a soccer field. However the next day it can func-

tion as something completely different.⁴⁶³ This example shows that the way in which an area is used greatly influences the way it will be perceived.

When looking at the three elements of my spatial triad it can be said that in Leidsche Rijn the emergence of sacred places, the *urbs* (the physical city as it is envisioned by urban planners and architects and which refers to the knowledge of spatial structure and built shape of a city or neighborhood) is often subordinate to the other two parts: *civitas*, and *genius loci*. An urban planner or an architect cannot design sacred places as their sacred value specially depends on the way in which the places are used. Rituals, such as sharing bread and wine, can happen at a wasteland turned into an art project, whereas, at the same time, *Het Baken*, a planned meeting point and meditation center, is empty most of the time. There are always exceptions when a place is designed to be sacred and, due to the ritual actions and the spirit of the place, it is also perceived that way. Some monuments can function as an example.

The French anthropologist Marc Augé in his book *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* describes this theory in reverse. Augé describes the non-place as a place of transiency that does not hold enough significance to be regarded as a real place. Examples of a non-place could be a train station, an airport, or a supermarket.⁴⁶⁴ Augé states that “If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place.”⁴⁶⁵ These non-places are often overly planned, and visitors have to follow signs or aisles in order to achieve their goal or reach their destination. Consequently, there is little or no room for individual interpretation or freedom.

When the VINEX-plans were presented in the early 1990s, an avalanche of criticism arose among experts, urban planners, realtors, and architects. In 1999 RIGO, a research and consultancy company, published a report on the quality of VINEX-area. The critique mainly focusses on the alleged massiveness, monotonousness, dullness, and predictability of the VINEX-architecture. The report includes a number of these comments: “the houses are too small, too boring and offensively monotonous (...) The VINEX-districts offer, superficially speaking, a sample sheet of shapes, behind which a soporific uniformity is hidden.”⁴⁶⁶ Comparing these critiques with the description given of a non-place by Augé, it can be said that the main fear of the critics is that the VINEX-districts will turn

⁴⁶³ Information derived from interview with Robert Schütte (Rotterdam, June 19, 2012).

⁴⁶⁴ M. AUGÉ: *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (London/New York 1995).

⁴⁶⁵ IDEM 77-78.

⁴⁶⁶ R. DE WILDT ET AL.: *De kwaliteit van VINEX-wijklocaties, kijkers op het Berlagehof*: RIGO Research en Advies (Amsterdam 1999) 12. Original tekst: “De woningen zijn te klein, te saai en beledigend eentonig (...) De VINEX-wijken bieden oppervlakkig gezien een staalkaart van vormen, waarachter een sufmakende eenvormigheid schuilgaat.”

into non-places. By means of the developments within three of the domains described in this research (nature, art, and history) the planners in Leidsche Rijn have made an attempt to add history, and identity to the design, hoping that this would increase the livability of the area. The results presented in this book show that they succeeded in some cases and failed in others. Overall, Leidsche Rijn did not turn into the non-place the critics feared. The district is constantly changing and developing. A large number of initiatives are developed and succeed sometimes within the boundaries of the design but more often outside of this, as the residents do not always use their surroundings in the way the planners intended it to be used.

8.4 Ritual criticism

The Greek root of ‘criticism’ means, ‘to judge’. The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that Dryden in 1674 linked the term to Aristotle’s *Poetics* and used it to denote the observation of the ‘excellencies’ of a work. When Matthew Arnold used it in 1865, he meant the disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate ‘the best’. And when Dowden used it in 1878, he was referring to the ability to see things as they are, without partiality, without the intrusion of personal likes and dislikes.⁴⁶⁷

Ritual criticism, the title of this paragraph, might sound negative, judgmental, or normative. But the citation underneath the title shows that the meaning of the word criticism is subject to change. American ritual theorist Ronald L. Grimes defines ritual criticism as follows in his book *The Craft of Ritual Studies*: “Ritual criticism is the documentation and analysis of negative and positive evaluative claims about a ritual. Ritual criticism is the act of interpreting a ritual with a view to implicating its practice.”⁴⁶⁸ We might not realize it, Grimes states, but ritual criticism goes on informally all the time, both on a popular as well as on a scholarly level. People leave a funeral commenting on the music, the speeches, or the color of the flowers. They walk out of a wedding saying that the ceremony was too long, too short, or not personal enough. Also within the various religions constant debates take place on the way things should be done.⁴⁶⁹

Putting ritual criticism into practice, Paul Post formulates three frames.⁴⁷⁰ The first frame, inspired by Grimes and his book *Ritual Criticism*, is that of critical reflection of the practices and performance. The criticism resulting from this is di-

⁴⁶⁷ R.L. GRIMES: *Ritual criticism. Case studies in its practice, essays on its theory* (South Carolina 1990) 15.

⁴⁶⁸ R.L. GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies* (Oxford 2014) 71-72.

⁴⁶⁹ GRIMES: *Ritual criticism* 17.

⁴⁷⁰ P. POST: ‘Ritual criticism: Een actuele verkenning van kritische reflectie ten aanzien van ritueel, met bijzondere aandacht voor e-ritueel en cyberpilgrimage’, in *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 29 (2013) 173-199.

rectly linked to the ritual practice, thereby making the rules and qualities of the ritual and its effects central themes of this first frame. Post describes this type of criticism as being mainly intuitive, and usually connected to the people directly involved in the ritual performances.⁴⁷¹ The second frame Post describes is less focused on the ritual itself but more on its external contexts. This type of criticism emerges from various normative frameworks.⁴⁷² In the third frame, the perspective of theorizing ritual is used to practice ritual criticism.⁴⁷³

The first and second frame Post describes will be used in this section to discuss the rituals I have observed in Leidsche Rijn in the past years. A number of the rituals this dissertation elaborates upon are ‘new’. Although they might be inspired by already existing rituals, they were given a new look in Leidsche Rijn. I am thinking of the Birth Forest, the piece *Rituele Depositie*, and the borrowing of historical objects. In the interview with Mathilde ter Heijne, the artist who made *Rituele Depositie*, she explains that the bronzing of valuable objects inspired her as well as the ritual burial of objects, which dates all the way back to the Roman period. In her artwork Ter Heijne combined the different elements into one new ritual.

The planting of the trees in the Birth Forest can be viewed in a similar light. The planting of trees to celebrate or remember is by no means a new phenomenon. However, the design of the ritual as it takes place in Leidsche Rijn had to be developed by the organization and the participants themselves. And whereas various elements return every time, others are changed as the organization learns from previous experiences. The ritual is organized in a similar way to the other activities in the park (e.g. polling of the willows, planting of the reed mace). Consequently, most decisions about the form and possible changes of the ritual are practical.

I say ‘most’ because during one of the last planting days at which I volunteered, three special participants changed the contents of the ritual.⁴⁷⁴ On this day, the 100th tree was planted. This tree will belong to the grandchildren of Theo Kuipers, one of the founding fathers of the *Maximapark* who recently passed away. An elderly couple mourning their grandson, who died at birth, planted the second tree. The third tree belonged to a family of which the mother had died soon after giving birth. The remaining seventeen trees were all planted to celebrate birth.

Before the planting started, the organization said something about the 100th tree and because of the two other special trees the chairman of the ‘Friends of the park’ read a poem by the Dutch poet Toon Hermans:

⁴⁷¹ POST: ‘Ritual criticism 177.

⁴⁷² IDEM 178.

⁴⁷³ IBIDEM.

⁴⁷⁴ Information derived from field notes made after the planting of the Trees of Birth on November 25, 2012.

Tuin ⁴⁷⁵	Garden
<p><i>De bomen komen uit de grond en uit hun stam de twijgen en ied'leen vindt het heel gewoon dat zij weer bladeren krijgen we zien ze vallen naar de grond en dan opnieuw weer groeien zo heeft de aarde ons geleerd dat al wat sterft zal bloeien</i></p>	<p>The trees grow from the ground and from their stem the twigs and everyone thinks this is ordinary that the leaves will grow back we see them fall to the ground and they grow back again this is what the earth taught us everything that dies will bloom</p>

After the reading of the poem there is a moment of silence. During the reading of the poem, I see an older couple listen with tears in their eyes. They recently lost their grandson and they are present to plant a tree for him. As they clearly have a difficult time, one of the members of the organization offers a helping hand and together they plant the tree. Afterward I ask them what they thought about the ritual. “We appreciated the moment of silence and the poem,” she tells me. But the presence of all the happy people with their newborns makes it difficult for them to be there. Their daughter already went home before the planting started; she could not handle it. They did not expect that they would be planting their tree surrounded by all the others. I could also see tears well up in her husband’s eyes again, and I ended the conversation. The old couple is the first to leave; they do not join the group for coffee and cake.⁴⁷⁶

The ritual of the trees of birth was already described quite extensively in chapter five. This example of one of the ceremonies I attended after I finished writing the chapter is an interesting addition and relevant in the light of ritual criticism. As with the artwork, the planting of the trees of birth is a combination of various traditions into something new. And whether or not this new tradition will succeed one can only find out by trying. In general, the planting days are happy occasions. However, as some of the participants in the ritual on this specific morning were different from the regular crowd, adjustments had to be made. The organization decided to pay special attention to those trees by reading a poem and having a moment of silence. Yet the participants concerned felt misplaced in this cheerful and happy group of people. Their grief was directly connected to the happiness of the other families.

⁴⁷⁵ *Tuin* is a poem by Toon Hermans from the book *Liggen in het gras* (1978).

⁴⁷⁶ Information derived from field notes made after the planting of the Trees of Birth on November 25, 2012.

A third example I would like to refer to in this regard is the ritual use of historical elements from the city of Utrecht. Trees, a bridge, and, for past projects, several works of art, have been transported from the center of Utrecht to Leidsche Rijn. It seems like an attempt to ritually implement the history of Utrecht into its new suburb. History tells the residents that the moving of the trees has been done before; it is a tradition that will be carried on. In the case of the bridge, the tradition will continue, for a hundred years in Utrecht and the next century in Leidsche Rijn. Although some residents are very enthusiastic about this borrowed history, both were bottom-up initiatives and a second group comments that Leidsche Rijn can create its own history and traditions, and there is no need to borrow them. Hence, for a small group of residents who have been actively involved in the plans and the move of the trees and the bridge, the special value will remain. But for the majority of the residents, it is difficult to relate to and to get involved with.

The commonality between the three rituals discussed above is that they have all been either newly developed by residents, or actively involve them. Moreover, all are constructed based on, or combining, already existing traditions. This existing tradition is accentuated in order to create additional value for the rituals. The data shows that such rituals can be successful, such as the *Rituele Depositie* and the Birth Forest. At the same time, as is the case with the Birth Forest, a new ritual such as this can fail, at least for some of the participants, if the conditions change. The new rituals in Leidsche Rijn change and adapt to their new, changing and developing environment. The ritual emphasis on history, either borrowed from Utrecht or invented, appeals to some, whereas others prefer to develop or construct new traditions such as the Birth Forest or the artwork. These are new rituals and traditions that make Leidsche Rijn unique. Their flaws will disappear and reappear because new rituals are as dynamic as their environment and the time they emerge in.

8.5 The casual sacred

When past social ties break, individuals tend to find new ways to connect and commune with others. (Alexis de Toqueville)⁴⁷⁷

In the final stages of my research I came across this citation by the French philosopher, sociologist and politician Alexis de Toqueville (1805-1895). It describes the situation in Leidsche Rijn, where most of the new inhabitants moved in from various places, thereby breaking the ties with their past living environment and seeking connections with their new surroundings. An additional dimension of the situation

⁴⁷⁷ Alexis de Toqueville cited in D.J. MONTI, M.I. BORER & L.C. MACGREGOR (eds.): *Urban people and places. The sociology of suburbs, cities, and towns* (Thousand Oaks 2014) 68.

in Leidsche Rijn, making it especially interesting for this research, is the fact that all the inhabitants, as well as the neighborhood they live in, are new. People have not moved into an existing situation, but into a completely new environment, without previously existing social structures they can join. As a result, I attended and observed numerous rituals and places that popped up and existed for longer or shorter periods of time. In addition to conversations and interviews with residents, I was also able to follow the sacred trends on Twitter and other social media.⁴⁷⁸ And as I am attempting to finish my writings, numerous new initiatives emerge that would have fitted wonderfully into one of the chapters.

Despite its unavoidable incompleteness, this book describes a wide variety of places and rituals. In the first paragraphs of this conclusion, the research results are analyzed from four different perspectives, namely: the data was situated in the panorama of ritual repertoires as a whole; the sacred in the public sphere; the sacred in relation to the specific setting of Leidsche Rijn; and the rituals and places were observed from a ritual critical angle.

While writing this dissertation and, even more so in working on this conclusion, the term sacred did not always turn out to be the most suitable for the cases I studied. When I interviewed residents or presented my cases at conferences, the interviewees and fellow academics often linked the sacred directly to religion. This made it difficult to present my case. However, finding a new concept that could replace the sacred in this research, proved to be difficult. Still I wanted to make an attempt to grasp my findings from Leidsche Rijn in a single concept, as the case studies shared a number of characteristics that are too significant to ignore in this study.

I am not the first scholar to try to expand the concept of the sacred. The meaning of the sacred was described in the theoretical framework sketched in chapter three in line with the broad definition of Matthew Evans. However, in addition to this definition I was looking for a word that would encompass the new shape of the sacred I found in Leidsche Rijn. The meaning of the sacred does not change by the way in which it is expressed, rather, the shape it takes does. The case studies describe low-key rituals and places that residents can easily participate in, and relate to. No special clothing, training, or background is required for participation. Therefore, 'ordinary' was the first word that came into mind in an attempt to describe the new form. The ordinary sacred was not a new concept, though. Already in 1982, the American scholar of Humanities, Lynda Sexson, published a book titled *Ordinarily Sacred*. In this book she attempts to 'illuminate the sacred

⁴⁷⁸ One of my respondents even told me during informal drinks on a Friday afternoon that social media should also be considered as one of the sacred places of Leidsche Rijn, as that is the place where everyone 'meets' nowadays.

quality of experience which on the surface is considered mundane or secular.⁴⁷⁹ Therefore, the term generally does not refer to the form in which the sacred is expressed but rather to ordinary places and objects in which the sacred can be found, making it not quite the concept I was looking for.

In 2008, religious scholar Goedroen Juchtmans published a dissertation in which she presented the term ‘basal sacred’, thereby referring to rituals inspired by the Christian repertoire, but no longer explicitly referring to God and Christ.⁴⁸⁰ Although this definition could be useful in some of my cases, it is not broad enough to include the entire field I am trying to describe, as Juchtmans still describes a strong connection to the transcendent. I studied a sacred field varying from, as Evans describes it, the personal and civil sacred on the one hand, to the religious and spiritual sacred on the other. The transcendent appears every now and again, but more often the places people find sacred have nothing to do with the supernatural. Hence, I have made an attempt to expand the concept of the sacred into a different direction. The word I choose to use, as the title of this paragraph already gives away, is ‘the casual sacred’. Hereby, the casual purely refers to the design, whereas the meaning, emotion, and appreciation of the sacred remain unchanged.

The design of the sacred as I perceived it in Leidsche Rijn has a number of characteristics that have led me to define it as casual. These features are at odds with the traditional characteristics of the sacred and ritual, therefor proving the need for a broader term. Scripts, experts, special clothing rules, specifically shaped places, and regulated actions are only a few of the characteristics that come to mind.

I would like to emphasize that this terminology does not apply to every specific place and ritual described in this book, but it should be seen as a new trend on the sacred ‘marketplace’. In Chapter 3, the sacred is defined along the lines of the theories of Émile Durkheim and Matthew T. Evans as “set apart with special meaning.”⁴⁸¹ This definition still applies, but an additional description is added as to the types of sacred places that have popped up in Leidsche Rijn, and how the residents of the area use these specific places. I would like to list a number of characteristics that I found striking from my observations and that all combine together as this new form of casual sacred.

⁴⁷⁹ L. SEXSON: *Ordinarily sacred* (Virginia 1992) 2.

⁴⁸⁰ G. JUCHTMANS: ‘Rituelen thuis: Van christelijk tot basaal sacral’, in *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 24 (2008) 225-230.

⁴⁸¹ É. DURKHEIM: *The elementary forms of religious life* (Oxford 2001) 35-46; M. EVANS: ‘The sacred: Differentiating, clarifying and extending concepts’, in *Review of Religious Research* 45/1 (2003) 38-39.

- Temporality is a first characteristic of the casual sacred. People invest a lot of time and effort in a specific place or ritual, but as the seasons or their environment changes, they move on to the next thing. A great example is *De Halte Terwijde*, the public gardening art project described in Chapter 6. In the summer of 2013, *De Halte* was a trending topic on Facebook and Twitter. The participants had obtained the piece of land and changed it into their own gardening project. It was the place to be that summer. This year, as the gardening season took off ‘the buzz’ seemed to have disappeared. Although the art aspect of the project is taking shape and the wooden gardening boxes are very much in use, the character of the place has changed. In the summer of 2014, it has turned into a more ordinary vegetable garden project. And although the place could still be sacred to a number of users, its public significance has changed.

This temporary character of some of the places does not change the meaning, emotion, and appreciation of sacrality. At that specific time, that particular place has great meaning for the participants. As time goes by, they move on to the next thing and its meaning changes.

- This can be directly linked to a second characteristic, the trend-sensitiveness of the casual sacred. As with many other aspects in modern day society, something can be hot and happening one week, but totally forgotten the next week. Of course, this period is not always that short; it can also take a number of months or even years, but many of the places are inspired by a broader trend. An example that can be used to illustrate this characteristic is the planting of the Trees of Birth. This ritual is clearly connected to a larger trend in which the planting of a tree plays an important role in numerous memorial and celebratory rituals.
- Chapter 3 describes the different sacred fields and focuses especially on the overlap between the different fields: the religious field, the cultural field and the fields of memory culture and leisure culture. The overlap between two or more of the fields is a must for the sacred trends that became visible in Leidsche Rijn. Especially, a connection with the field of leisure culture gives a number of the special places a playful character. Also, it is often connected to a (leisure) event that residents can actively participate in.
- Easiness is the fourth characteristic of the design of the sacred studied for this research. The rituals do not require any ritual knowledge, special clothing, or affiliation with a specific group or denomination. This means that, in principal, some rituals are restricted due to practical reasons; anyone can participate and join in regardless of the way people shape the rest of their lives. An example is the tree planting ritual in the park. Some of the babies had also been baptized, other parents chose to plant a tree for ecological reasons, and a third

group just likes to celebrate the birth in a special way. All of these people take part in the same ritual shaping it the way they prefer.

Also, people are free to join temporarily on a project basis. As some move on to the next or a different rituals or place, others join in to replace them. Joining and leaving is not significant or problematic. There is no initiation ritual or any rules or regulations attaching people to the place or group.

Even the churches reach out to unaffiliated residents in an appealing way, for example, via the singing of Christmas carols in the local shopping mall or via the open-air mass in the park. Recently I had an informal conversation about this research with one of the resident living close to the park. She told me that on a Sunday afternoon in the summer, she was surprised to hear singing outside. As she could not figure out where it was coming from she decided to get on her bike and cycle around the park to find out. As she passed by the events field in the park she noticed an open-air church service organized by one of the more evangelical churches in the neighborhood. The singing had attracted her to the service and she could take a seat and even sing along if she wanted. She felt very welcome, she said.⁴⁸²

The danger with this casual form of sacrality is the risk of failure. The singing glass tower described in Chapter 6 illustrates how a potentially sacred place and instrument loses part of its ‘magic’ when it is mainly used to play children’s songs. In case of the casual sacred, its boundaries are thin and permeable.

- A fifth characteristic connected to the previous one, is active participation. In order for people to label a place as sacred, they have to be or have been, actively involved in one of the stages of the development of the place or active participation in the ritual itself: planting a tree, burying an object, or taking part in Roman rituals. They have to feel like it is ‘their’ place or ritual. A personal connection or story will connect them to the place.

The residents of a newly built suburb such as Leidsche Rijn are searching for rituals and places they find appealing. A large group seems to construct their own unique ritual identity as the demand for rituals and meaningful places remains present in full force. Their ritual identity is a bricolage, a mix-and-match from different traditions, histories and backgrounds. On the one hand they seek places to meet others, but on the other hand many people look for places for individual meaning making. They want to be original and unique within a larger context. The newly emerging rituals anticipate the demand and the quest for meaning making in modern day Dutch society. The proliferation of ritual agencies and ritual guides

⁴⁸² Informal conversation with a resident of Leidsche Rijn at *Anafora* (November 31, 2014).

developing numerous rituals suitable for life events, confirms this trend. Some of these newly invented rituals and places remain, and others disappear. In Leidsche Rijn, the sacred can be casual, it can be temporary, and when it disappears, it is replaced by something new.

8.6 The casual sacred in perspective

The question remains as to whether it is possible to draw a line between the casual sacred as it is found in Leidsche Rijn, and developments regarding the sacred in the rest of the country. Of course this question is broad enough to devote a completely new book to, but for this conclusion I will try to sketch some connections. Firstly, it should be noted that the demographics of Leidsche Rijn are not representative for the Netherlands, as the majority of its residents are young children below the age of eleven, and their parents. The group in between is largely missing, and only 5.9 percent of the residents are over 65 years old.⁴⁸³ Hence, young families are overrepresented in the neighborhood, thereby unavoidably influencing the way in which it is, intentionally or unintentionally, designed. This demographic context could imply that the changing form of sacrality emphasized in this research is generation bound. This could mean that either the young families are an influence on, or they are a characteristic of, the casual sacred. I would say it is more plausible that they are an influence on the casual sacred as being a characteristic is too narrowing. It is this generation that might be demanding a more casual form of sacrality, one that is easily accessible, straightforward, and temporary. However, there is no reason for it to stay limited to this demographic group only.

A connection to a broader trend can be drawn when looking at the interesting relationship between public and private with regard to the casual sacred, as the contrast between the two seems to be fading away. A large number of the rituals I studied in Leidsche Rijn are personal or relate to a personal or individual situation. However, they all took place in the public sphere, my area of study. The Trees of Birth can function as an example: The tree is planted to celebrate the birth, or mourn the death of a newborn child. Both are individual experiences usually shared with family and friends. Nevertheless, all of the participants in this popular ritual chose to plant a tree in a public park in the center of the neighborhood simultaneously with twenty other families. They could also have made the choice to plant a tree in their own backyard or celebrate the birth or mourn the death in a more private way. All of the participants, however, chose for this public display of their private event. The planting of the tree in public adds an additional dimension to the ritual. These fading boundaries between public and private fit the larger

⁴⁸³ Information derived from: *Wijkwijzer 2013. De tien Utrechtse wijken in cijfers*, a publication by Gemeente Utrecht (April 2013) 17.

trend of people longing to share their lives with the rest of the world via the Internet. It is common to share selfies, pictures of food, purchases, activities, holiday pictures, locations, and numerous other aspects that would be categorized as being part of the private sphere, on social media, thereby offering others a peek into the private life of the person sharing this information. It seems as if something that is not shared with others did not really happen.

What has not changed with this new form of sacrality described here, are the reasons for people to seek the sacred: marking life events, commemoration, meeting others, and meaning making. Births, weddings, funerals, remembering the dead or other events from past times, meeting others in order to feel like you belong to a group, and finding a place to free your mind from everyday life and cares. And, whereas some of these events and places may have been premeditated in the past, nowadays it is more common to give them an individual twist, nothing really fancy, but rather something unique. Funerals and cremations can function as an example. Many Dutch funeral homes have been redecorated in the past years. During the service, a ritual supervisor can develop a unique ritual such as writing the name of the deceased in the wind. Coffee and cake in a dull grey room in the funeral home after the service is not done. It has been replaced by wine and tapas in a redecorated homely and lounge like area. It is not so much a funeral with set rituals, but an event that represents the life of the deceased. This example emphasizes how the casual simply refers to the shape the sacred takes and not to its meaning, nor the reason for people to seek or long for the sacred.

The question that rises here is whether or not every existing ritual or sacred place can fit into this casual jacket. It can be answered with use of an example. In the early summer of 2014, the Dutch Evangelical Broadcasting channel (EO) came up with the idea to organize a spectacular musical TV event on the 4th of May: the day on which the Dutch commemorate the dead from the Second World War. This show, inspired by the yearly performance of *The Passion* that had also been broadcast on the same TV channel,⁴⁸⁴ was supposed to include songs by famous Dutch artists and a procession with torches ending at the Anne Frank House.⁴⁸⁵ The responses to the plan, that was accidentally and prematurely leaked to a website, were very negative. People responding to the plans on various social media websites were hoping that it was a joke, and they called it repulsive.⁴⁸⁶ This day of commemoration could not be casualized and made into an event. Hence, it can be said

⁴⁸⁴ Since 2011, the Dutch Evangelical (EO) and Roman Catholic (RKK) Broadcasting Channels organize a musical-biblical event in the center of a Dutch town. During this event, that attracts thousands of viewers on location and around 3 million on TV, the passion story is sung by famous Dutch artists and with famous Dutch songs. It can be best described as the Mattheus Passion in a casual form.

⁴⁸⁵ H. BEERKAMP: 'Een fakkeltocht voor Anne met meezingers', in *NRC Handelsblad* (June 26, 2014).

⁴⁸⁶ J. KOOYMAN: 'Dodenherdinking als groot mediaspektakel', in *NRC Handelsblad* (June 27, 2014).

that when the casual sacred touches upon existing ritual repertoires, it leads to discussion. Sometimes, like with funerals and weddings, this discussion results in changes but in other cases it leads to rejection; sometimes people even feel attacked. Therefore the casual sacred should not be seen as a mold that can reshape every ritual and every sacred place or event. In chapter three I refer to the work of the British theologian Gordon Lynch who in his book, *On the Sacred*, claims that the sacred is something people would “kill or die for (...) what they believe can legitimize violence against other human beings, and what moves them with deep moral feelings of belonging or disgust.”⁴⁸⁷ I slightly nuanced this statement by saying that the sacred especially shows when it is under pressure, contested, or threatened. Meaning that it also shows when it is up for change and transformation.

8.7 The End

In the introduction and in Chapter 6, I describe the urban gardening art project *De Halte Tervijde*. In the summer of 2013, I participated in this project by growing my own vegetables in a wooden box, built for me by Wouter de Heus, one of the active participants in this research. I cycled to *De Halte* at least two times a week that summer. I watered and harvested my radishes and my *bok choy*, and I ate wonderful salads from the curly endive I grew in my urban garden. In addition, the part that was especially interesting for this research was the interaction and collaboration between the participants that I observed. They planned the project together, they obtained the land, and they shaped it. And once it had lifted off, they watered each other's gardens, everyone kept an eye on the tomatoes of Mrs. X and the tobacco plants of Mr. Y, and they corresponded about it on the Facebook page or in real life, in the garden. At the barbeque I attended that was organized to eat the harvest from the gardens, people shared food and wine at a long table in the center.

In the winter *De Halte* was quiet and I wondered if and in what form it would return. I gave up my garden this summer, but looking at the Facebook page, I realize that it did come back to life. However, the form in which it did seems a little different. A number of the very enthusiastic participants from last year did not revive their wooden box; some others have once again spent wonderful hours at their gardens this summer. The edible bus stop, part of the arty plan behind the project, was finished, and part of the garden ‘professionalized’ due to the active gardening strategies of some of the new participants.

It is special to some, practical to others. Anyone can join in. It is leisure, it is culture, it changes shape and form, and participants can come and go whenever they please: some move on after the first summer, others stay. It is something par-

⁴⁸⁷ G. LYNCH: *On the sacred* (Durham 2012) 23-24.

ticipants worked hard for, something they constructed themselves, and it is valuable to them as it frees their minds from everyday life and cares. I searched for the emergence of sacred places in Leidsche Rijn and this is what I found.

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