The Counter Culture on the Move
A Field Study of Youth Tourists in Amsterdam

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to give some impressions and interpretations concerning the ‘trek’ of masses of young tourists to Amsterdam during each summer the last few years. My data come primarily from the summer of 1971, when several studies of youth tourists were conducted. Aside from the local importance these phenomena may have, I think their interest lies in the light they can throw on the development and possibilities of what one likes to call The Counter Culture and on the many variations a confrontation with The Old Culture can take.

There are many, many people who visit Amsterdam as tourists each summer. Those tourists who are between 15 and 30, travelling without their parents, are called ‘youth tourists’. Many of them don’t live a normal, established, ‘bourgeois’ life. The anti-bourgeois life style of this population is accentuated during their vacations and/or when they are away from their home country for a longer period of time. They dress differently, wear their hair longer, use inexpensive means of transportation, living and recreation, and, in general, behave differently from the ways followed by the majority of the settled population or even the ‘normal’ tourists. This draws the attention of many people, and of the media. It irritates some people. And it presents many problems for the local authorities: where do they put them, which rules do they reinforce and in which will they behave tolerantly, what facilities do they create.


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On the one hand this is connected with a general ‘Youth Problem’, on the other it is a seasonal affair. Will it stay like this, will it grow, will it diminish? Many of these ‘tourists’ are ‘nomads’ really, and many decide to stay, to settle in Amsterdam... 

This stream of youths grew especially strong in the late sixties, from ’67 onward. The image that dominated the issue in the public mind at that time was the ‘Dam’, a big square in the centre of the city, where, facing the Royal Palace, the National Monument for the commemoration of the victims of World War II became increasingly the meeting and gathering place for what were called ‘the hippies’ or less friendly the ‘longhaired lazy scum’.

Increasingly people began to sleep here, especially in the warm summer of 1970. There were complaints (pollution and stealing) and riots (Mariners and local gangsters beating up the dirty hippies). By the end of August sleeping outside was forbidden in the area, which gave rise to violent riots. In 1971 the Dam was filled everyday as it was in ’70, but it was used only as a meeting and gathering place. The sleep-function, and part of meeting and gathering function as well, were taken over by ‘the Park’ (Vondelpark). This park is the biggest park near the centre, where thousands slept in the open air and many more gathered in the daytime. So the Park became the dominate image, attracting many a curious eye and generating many feverish imaginations of lust and crime. ‘Looking at the hippies’ became a favorite Sunday afternoon pastime and reporters from all over the world came to inform their customers of this curious happening.

The youth-tourist-scene wasn’t limited to these two magical areas. Many slept en masse in the so-called Sleep-ins, in Youth Hostels and Youth Hotels, in occupied buildings, in boats or in the places of new or old friends and acquaintances. They visited recreational centres for young people, or especially for young tourists, like the Paradiso, the Milky Way, Studio 7, the Meditation centre the Kosmos, or a teahouse in the catholic Mozes and Aaron church. They walked through the streets of the inner-city, looking around, making music, begging, shopping sometimes ‘loosely’, weird, sometimes filthy, always carrying the mysterious image of ‘drugs’.

As I said, the phenomena generated by this ‘trek’ to ‘the magical centre’, (as Amsterdam has often been called since the times of Provo) are problematic for the local authorities. The public, as I will explain later, is divided, but mostly very interested: ‘the Park’ was a favorite topic of conversation. What do they do? Why? Is it good or bad; or mixed? Should they be driven out or welcomed? Should the authorities install facilities, for sleeping, recreation, aid; how much, with what effect, etc.? Whatever the local problems and
decisions, the most telling fact for an outsider is that these phenomena have been possible in this manner, on such a scale, in this place, and are met with such 'tolerance' (relatively) from authorities and public.

Sources of data and some quantitative impressions

In order to be able to suggest some interpretations of these phenomena I will present some data on the people concerned, followed by a short sketch of developments during the summer of 1971. These data come from various sources. There were three research projects operative during that summer in connection with 'Youth Tourism'. The first was an interview-survey, financed by the municipality, the questionnaire being developed by a committee of 'experts' and 'bureaucrats', and the field work being done by a Market Research Bureau (Veldkamp Marktonderzoek NV) using part-time student-interviewers, N = 1351.

The second, also paid by the municipality, was a participant observation study with five fieldworkers for the whole season and three fieldworkers only incidentally. I was involved in this study as a 'supervisor' and as editor/writer of the report. Third was a 'consumer-oriented' research during one week by a team of 'amateurs' gathered around the 'underground' bi-weekly ALOHA. I also used several reports by project-workers, data from journalistic reports and first- and second-hand knowledge concerning the preparation for the summer of 1972. Although most data and some interpretations were taken from the work of others, the responsibility for the paper is mine alone.

It is difficult to get a good idea of the total number of persons who have been there. Only the numbers of nights spent can be guessed, so that people staying, for example, 30 days were counted 30 times. From the two most typical sleeping places we have for the 'Sleep-ins': May 8,527; June 14,314; July 25,324; August 42,747; September 1,638; Total 100,550 in 1971 (1970: 82,998); by nationality (counted twice each week): Germany 29%, USA 16%, France 9%, Netherlands 8%, Italy 8%, Britain 7%, Canada 2.5%, Belgium 2.1%, Sweden 1.6%, Denmark 0.9%.

For the Park we depend on guesses made almost every morning by the police: June 3,762; July 30,660; August 15,360; and the first half of September 1,670; the top-count being 2000 for one night, the means for the period mentioned: 125, 989, 495 and 119, and the total of sleepers counted: 49,780, total mean 541. From the survey I will cite only a few 'facts', since the validity of
this study is rather questionable. The modal age of the respondents was 19-20, accounting for 30% in the Park, the Sleep-ins and the campings. In the Youth Hostels the age was higher (modal age 21-22) and still higher in the Youth Hotels (modal age 23-25). Around one-third is of the female sex, less in the Park (27%) and more in the Youth Hotels (42%). According to nationality the division is as follows: USA 27%, Germany 17.7%, Britain 10%, Netherlands 9%, France 7.9%, Italy 7.6%, Scandinavian countries 5.9%, others 14.8%. Germans and Italians are more frequently found in Sleep-ins (28% and 12%), French in the Park (15%) and Americans in the Youth Hotels (54%). The socio-economic status of the respondents is higher than the general population, the highest categories are found twice as much. Most tourists who respond attend schools (around 30%) or universities (around 30%); around 10% had industrial and another 10% clerical jobs. Irregular workers and non-workers were unevenly distributed in the different sleeping places getting a maximum of 20 and 10% respectively in Vondelpark. The length of staying in Amsterdam was clearly longer than that of ‘normal’ tourists, although it is not possible, from the data at hand, to judge how much. A third (Park 51%, Sleep-ins 42%) had spent less than seven and a half guilders the day before. About half of the respondents lived with their parents; around 80% called their relationship with parents ‘good’ or ‘reasonable’.

The weather during the summer of ’71 was in general quite nice; warmer and less wet than usual. When sleeping outside around Dam square was forbidden in August 1970 there were already some people who had experimented with sleeping in Vondelpark. Vondelpark was already in the process of developing into a centre for local hippies and foreign workers: Turks, Moroccans. During weekends significant numbers of local hippies would come to the park to sit on the grass, smoke hash and play music, while the foreigners played their own music and sat on the grass. All this gave the park a ‘sweet’ image for ‘alternative’ people. In the spring of ’71 an experienced youth worker, Piet Riemens, suggested that the city install some facilities in the park, namely a small recreation centre and an aid centre. In haste and in an improvised manner these were set up. However, the facilities created by the city were inadequate to accommodate the number of youth tourists who descended upon Amsterdam. No one had expected such numbers, and nobody was prepared to handle the problems that arose from drug-use, tough dealing practices and stealing. The police had been against ‘the experiment’. They withdrew from the park for a few weeks and came back after many complaints and bureaucratic struggles with a specially formed ‘Vondelpark detachment’. This police unit came much too late, was too inexperienced and
unsure of the role they were supposed to play; and they had to cope with all kinds of difficulties to be able to suppress 'the criminal element'. Due to an initiative of the prosecutor there was a 'bust' of the recreation centre in the park in the last week of August, which formed a kind of peak in the development of bad relations between police and project-staff. This staff had been formed and extended in haste and was a rather mixed group of mostly inexperienced people. They were constantly called on to cope with large numbers of unusual and unanticipated problems.

One was called 'the tent problem'. From the end of June onward a few small tents appeared. At first their owners were summoned to take them down but when there came more and more this was judged impossible, so that towards the end of July there were many, many tents and some quite big ones. Everybody talked about it but nobody knew how to handle the affair. The police seemed to be afraid that reactions from 'the hippies' against the police might generate a riot. In August the Mayor came back from his holidays and quickly ordered a 'cleaning' action which was executed quietly and without any trouble.

The petty criminality of part of the park population extended into the surrounding areas, residential and shopping areas of relatively high standing, with generated a lot of bad feelings, to put it mildly. In the rest of the city the problems were less pressing and new, but especially in and around the recreational centres Paradiso and Milky Way the masses of young and naive customers attracted all kinds of hustlers. In all cases the major problem was the discrepancy between capacity on the one hand and the quantity of customers on the other.

On life styles

One of the central tasks one can set for sociology is to study the way of life of people, to study the way they 'make', 'construct', or 'choose' their way of living. The results of these processes of social construction can be studied from many different angles and on different levels. On a collective level we can use the term 'culture', we can speak about 'structure' when we consider organizations, and I will use the term 'life style' when my focus is on individuals. In every case, one can distinguish between more formal, explicit, public and official aspects, on the one hand, and informal, implicit, private but more factual ones, on the other; or between ideology, institutional order, and personal image, as against factual guidelines, pragmatic rules and life as lived. When
we look at the subject of this paper 'from the inside' with our focus on the behavior of the young tourists themselves the concept of life style in an factual sense seems the most relevant. The 'social organization' that emerged internally (among the tourists themselves) was rather sketchy and improvised and remained relatively unstructured; externally (relating tourists to population and authorities) the organization was of a 'global' sort, being based on ad hoc formed policies and improvisation. The culture of the tourists remained mostly implicit, while 'culture-clash' seems a rather relevant concept when we consider some public reactions.

The lives, the portions of lives, that were lived by the young tourists in the summer in Amsterdam had in many cases a style that was largely 'deviant' as compared with the 'normal' life styles practiced in Amsterdam by the settled population and by the usual tourists. They were more similar, of course, to the life styles of some youth groups, bohemians and other outsiders. But the large quantity of the 'practitioners' and the high visibility of the 'hippies' in the streets and in the park added to the special 'offensiveness' for many members of the settled population. When we shift from the public to the scientific eye, these lives can be considered as of one class only on a very abstract level. Even then their sameness can only be stated comparatively. On this level their 'groupness' was no more than a kind of under-institutionalized mechanical solidarity. The young in question lived 'free', independent, highly individualized lives. Social bonds and attachments were rather loose and temporary; we-feelings vague and general: 'mankind', 'young people', 'park people', people from my country or town. There were no specified roles to play or tasks to perform in any kind of established structure. Young people were on their own and what they did was mainly for themselves. But in spite of this looseness and vagueness there was considerable similarity, rather uniform or even stereotyped behavior and outlook: hanging around, smoking hashish, listening to rock music, wearing long hair, jeans-type clothes, etc. There was a combination of stylistic similarity and a low level of interdependence of an 'organic' type. Other people of the same 'pseudo-species', Erikson's term, were important as co-users of a shared setting, as silent mutual confirmers of a way of life, as co-builders of an atmosphere supportive of all. On this level the life styles concerned can be conceptualized in a largely negative way: the common denominator is a 'freedom from', a 'negation' of institutional control of behavior, experience, demeanor and life-organization. The positive elements (not in a moral sense) are quite sketchy on this level. The young came especially to Amsterdam because it offered, or seemed to offer, a certain freedom from external restraint and repression, a certain tolerance for deviant
forms and some possibilities to live 'alternatively'. But when we look at the way this 'behavioral space' is used, we see a large variety of objectives, projects, and meaning. In other words, when we look at the matter positively, as 'freedom to', we have to go beyond the generality and the sameness of the youth culture which is rather superficial, to encounter a multitude of motives and behaviors which different people display in various ways. This means that we have to fight the very human tendency to generalize, to see the negative freedom and to infer or impute one or another positive freedom and treat it as an adequate description. This tendency can be seen at work in all kinds of labellings and interpretations, like the popular one in Holland 'long-haired lazy scum', like the tendencies to see 'hippies' as peaceful saints, or lazy and spoiled children, or criminals and maniacs, etc.

One of the tasks of a more detached sociological observation can be to discern the variety and debunk the generalization born in a too close and one-sided involvement. But to say something one simply has to generalize. As a kind of compromise five theoretically formulated, morally neutral perspectives were chosen. These are useful, we hope, to cope with the variety without falling into too many traps of partialness. It is striking that most of the more involved observers used one or two of these perspectives implicitly but rarely more. These perspectives are 1. a socio-cultural one, 2. a recreational one, 3. a psycho-social one, 4. a problem-oriented one, and 5. a deviance-oriented perspective.

In a socio-cultural perspective we consider certain behaviors, goals and values of individuals in the contexts of larger developments of 'culture' in connection with developments in the structure of human interdependencies. There have been numerous important changes in the cultural orientations of many, especially young people, in modern, highly industrialized societies during the last 15 or so years. With a, in a sense unjustified, suggestion of oneness and newness one can speak of The Emergence of a Counter Culture. The 'whole' consists in reality of a multitude of tendencies, vague feelings, changing and shifting every moment on the one hand and some explicitly formulated ideologies on the other. Most of these attitudes and behaviors have been observed in previous periods, but never on this scale. The general trend of this 'movement' is one of detachment vis à vis established routines and structures and looking for 'alternatives' either actively or passively, individually or collectively, in a more 'cultural' or a more 'political' vein. There are many factors that must be taken into consideration if one wants to 'explain' these developments; some mainly 'structural' and others more historical in character. However, I lack time and space to spell them out in this paper. The impor-
tant point for us here is the non-accidental character of all this: it belongs here, you can't wipe it out.

Many characteristics of the young tourists' style as we observed it, fit into a counter-cultural model: an unwillingness to endure restraint, to follow established ways, to play institutional roles and realize oneself in institutional identities; a preference for the unformed, the bright, the accidental, the unspeakable, illustrate this. But, as I said, there are many substreams in the Counter Culture. What we observed fits largely in a kind of quiet pessimism mingled with quiet joy and sometimes bitter existentialism. For many, the big dreams — change society, build a better world, make a revolution — are gone. One defines the objectives on a smaller scale: 'better yourself first', 'develop your mind', 'enjoy yourself', 'stay alive', 'stay out', 'take life as it comes and see the good in it'. To keep alive, physically and/or morally, to guard your autonomy or stay independent as long as possible, to enjoy yourself or to develop your personality, these are the prominent objectives discernable. This makes the life style concept highly relevant as I have said; life is defined as a more or less individual process, at least this is the 'idea'. Other people are relevant, but in a general way, not personally so to speak. Both the institutional and the oppositional options seem unattractive: the first is morally and esthetically repugnant and unclean, and the second involves too many hardships and acute feelings of meaninglessness and powerlessness. So these people do not fit themselves into any kind of collectively organized scheme of roles. They may join a group, they may communicate, interact, etc. but always with an eye on their personal freedom.

The Counter Culture has won so much power in a charismatic sense that many elements which one can define as 'counter-cultural' have spread among groups of people who don't have a 'total' commitment to it. There is a kind of counter-culture fashion, both in a literal and in a more figurative sense, which attracts many people who are in a position which makes this possible and attractive. Especially strong among these 'followers' are people in their early and middle teens who are starting on a more independent route in their lives and who can easily and cheaply find their symbols of independence in the outside characteristics of the counter culture. A lot of young, very young and very inexperienced people from nearby countries were seen in Amsterdam playing a hippie game. So one can see gradations in depth and involvement, connected with a kind of seniority in the counter culture.

In a recreational perspective we can use the general differentiation between more instrumental and more expressive activities, between work and leisure, between the serious and the playful which can be discerned in many spheres of
life. In a sphere of recreation people are less goal- and more value-oriented, they feel less restrained and more free, they ‘decontract’ and ‘are themselves’. In our kinds of societies it is usual for many people to quit their serious pursuits and the place they live for a few weeks and to relax, do things they like, eat, drink and be merry as they please in the company of like-minded and like-styled people. A good many of the things we observed among the young tourists fit this model perfectly: most of the young people were free from school or work obligations for a restricted time which they used to relax in another place with peers. It is true that the style of relaxation differs in many aspects from established ways, but in a structural sense there is much similarity. The differences are largely a matter of ‘means’, of time span (greater), and of organization (less). And, as I implied above, the choice of recreational means is borrowed from the Counter Culture: the Hippie Game is used as a recreation game.

In a psycho-social perspective one can interpret behavior, or more generally a life style, as fitting in a process of individual development. Everybody lives a life which can be seen as his or her own, developing a continually reproduced life style. It is in part determined and influenced by ‘circumstances’, but it is also a creation, a creation within a limited repertoire. These developments have a certain logic, a certain understandability afterwards but never an absolute predictability in advance. One of the means to gain a more general understanding in this matter is a conceptualization of developmental phases, in which certain problems are more central than others. The young tourists we observed were in many cases involved in the problem one loosely defines as problems of identity. They were looking for and experimenting with ‘new’ identities or combinations of identity-elements. In many societies the emergence of a certain ‘space’ for this seeking and experimenting can be seen, a certain freedom from restraint and responsibility, what Erikson (1968, p. 156) has called a ‘psycho-social moratorium’. The possibilities offered by such a ‘moratorium’ have spread enormously: shifts in identity can be deeper now and more people can have them. These developments transcend the traditional concept of adolescence, which made Keniston (1968, p. 264) introduce a new term ‘Youth Phase’.

This seeking and experimenting is not done individually in any strict sense; it is largely done in conformity with positive and in confrontation with negative reference groups. Its ideal setting is a loose, supportive peer group in a ‘free’ atmosphere, as in Vondelpark. Its central process is experiencing and learning from that. But people in our culture are very badly prepared for an evaluation of behaviors in such a light. More generally, we have not been
trained to combine perceptions of events with conceptions of processes, or, to put it differently to combine the perception ‘temporal’ with the judgement ‘serious’ or ‘worthwhile’ (Elias, 1970). But seen in a more detached light, many shocking things in the bourgeois-eye are not definite although they are serious. This is especially the case with many kinds of drug-induced experiences, ‘good’ as well as ‘bad’, but also with not-working, promiscuity, not-washing, etc.

Our subjects were often involved in a phase of their life in which a Protean life style, as Lifton (1968) has called it, is dominant. What follows in other stages of the life-cycle is not yet known and unpredictable. One can go down or up, regress or progress or get stuck. It is a risky phase, open-ended ...

In a problem-oriented perspective one takes another look at many of the phenomena we approached earlier in terms of freedom, looseness and behavioral space. For many people, however, there are aspects of unfreedom and struggle for freedom which make their lives less happy and willed than we implied earlier. We can say in more ordinary language that many people had personal and/or social problems to cope with. Some of these were manifest before they came to Amsterdam and others developed during their stay. In both cases, the ‘freetown’-character Amsterdam developed for young people had something to do with it. Deserters from the U.S. and Portuguese armies, runaway minors from homes and correctional institutions, and refugees from oppressive regimes came here and had trouble staying alive in a reasonable way. Others (and often the same) had problems of a more personal sort, connected with their own development and risks and experiments therein, often stimulated by drug-use. All these problem cases manifesting themselves in such an ‘understructured’ setting were difficult to handle in themselves, and especially in such quantities. The existing aid institutions and groups were in an understandable state of irritation because their ‘normal’ work is difficult enough and their means very restricted. The help that was given was usually free, anonymous and intended to ‘free’ people so that they can help themselves, but in some cases new dependencies developed.

In a deviance perspective one considers behavior in the context of an established normative structure. Seen in this light many, many things done by the young fall into deviant categories. All kinds of rules concerning clothing, hygiene, the concealment of intimacies, drugs, noise-making were more or less violated as were property norms and more generally ‘involvement’ norms (Goffman, 1963). In every society a certain measure of deviance and a certain measure of control can be considered ‘normal’ and in most cases there is a kind of equilibrium between the two. But here deviance was stronger than
control and this inbalance increased during the summer. We have already mentioned a de-institutionalization of normative rules, an under-organized situation. This was the case ‘internally’ (among the young tourists themselves) and ‘externally’ (between tourists on the one and population and authorities on the other hand). The destruction of some values, norms and common understandings involved a weakening of others; for example ‘productivity’ and ‘property’. Because some forms of deviance were accepted it was hard to drive out others; for example hash-smoking and stealing. Because one didn’t trust the police concerning drugs and other matters it was hard to seek help in cases of intimidation and terrorism. This impotence was also hard to overcome because of the heterogeneity, the fluctuation and the looseness of the ‘society’ in question. The possibilities this situation offered for those who can be described as more criminal than non-conforming (Merton, 1957, p. 360) were used by many different groups. There were certain minority groups in Dutch society, from (ex-)colonies or otherwise, but also tourists or ‘new-nomads’ who used this ‘space’ to gain a little or a lot of money or other profits. It appeared hard to use the dichotomy criminal-non-conformer in a strict sense: many people legitimated their ‘marginally criminal’ behavior by complaints about the wickedness of established society. All this deviance generated considerable labelling activities. The young tourists, as ‘dirty hippies’, ‘lazy scum’, etc., were, of course, easy victims for many. But it was our impression that this kind of general labelling was less practised compared to the last few years. There seems to be a certain process of accommodation and differentiation at work. There was also less aggressiveness in a physical sense and there were no violent riots as the year before. But the stigmatizing and labelling was directed more and more towards certain groups within the mass now, especially national or ethnic groups. Many people, especially staff-members of the various projects, created new scapegoats to save the ‘normal hippie’ or the ‘peaceful young tourists’ or so it seems. These groups were easily recognizable by appearance and/or language like ‘foreign workers’, ‘poor Italians and Frenchmen’, ‘Surinamers’ and ‘Indonesians’. One can be quite sure that some individuals ‘deserved’ some condemnation but these general judgments were often too hasty.

On ‘social organization’

Although, as said, more collective phenomena like bondings or we-feelings were less prominent among the young tourists I would like to discuss here
some aspects of the ‘social organization’ that did evolve. The sketchy social formations that could be observed can be characterized as solutions for some elementary problems, namely sleeping, eating, recreation, sociability, money and drugs. Sleeping was done in commercially exploited hotels, in city-financed ‘sleep-ins’, in the open air in Vondelpark or in the houses of friends, acquaintances or what can be called ‘the alternative middle classes’. A lot of people tried to keep sleeping costs at a minimum to be able to buy more drugs and stay longer in Amsterdam. Especially in the less safe settings as in Vondelpark there was some formation of ‘sleeping groups’ which served functions of sociability and mutual help also. They were often, but not always, based on national or regional origin; especially in the beginning. Groups that existed longer were more heterogeneous in origin but more homogeneous in life style. Eating was done in a very improvised manner, here and there, wherever one found oneself. What was offered in the various ‘centres’ was largely ‘macrobiotic’ and ‘biologic-dynamic’ in character: health-foods and teas. But many young tourists also used more conventional facilities and square products: French fried and sandwiches.

Recreational activities were only partially separable from other kinds. The activities were hardly actively centered on Amsterdam: the city was mostly used as a tolerant context with a good atmosphere, but not as something interesting in itself. The same can be said of the use of the recreational centres: they were used rather passively and consumptively. This seems congruent with drug-use: one manipulates oneself for kicks and one selects stimuli in the environment, sights, smells, tastes, sounds, to build-up a pleasant, high feeling. This is important and generates a lot of talk. Competence in these activities can be acquired, but it means a certain passive consumption of what is offered. It means using the environment, individually or in small groups, not participating in its creation. These useful environments were offered in a certain variety, sometimes more loving and sometimes more ‘hard’, cynical and profit-oriented.

The quantity of visitors especially towards the end of the season, created many problems of criminal deviance and control: aggressive dealing in drugs of bad quality, pick-pocketing, etc. As implied, it is hard to drive these people out, without scaring the innocent hash-smoker or the runaway child. In some cases a selective policy has been followed with a program and a price destined to keep the tough people away. If this worked as intended the young from ‘underprivileged’ categories had one place less where they could be themselves.

‘Sociability’ was, of course, a large part of recreation, but it can also be treated under a separate heading. The ‘reasons’ for a contact could be many:
the sharing of an ethnic or local background, of behavioral preferences or ideological orientation, etc. Many conversations centered around the details of what one could do where and consisted of the exchange of information relevant for tourist life. The exchange of goods of all kinds, bought, stolen or second-hand also generated a lot of talking. Drugs and music served as kinds of general socializers, being the starting-point or accompaniment of most contacts. As a general characteristic of sociability an accent on non-commitment, on mutual autonomy, is the most noteworthy. Family-names were almost never used or known, many people used pseudonyms or nick-names. People didn’t ask or tell much about themselves or the other personality; one preferred a certain vagueness and disliked any intrusiveness. On both sides of this general style of sociability characterized by non-committing friendliness, one could discern more positive and more negative forms: mutual help and manipulation. Manipulation could take forms as ‘eating out’, begging (‘fifty cents please’), stealing, raping, ‘operating’ and prostitution. It may be noted that on the whole there was in fact less sexual interest and activity than one perhaps expected and certainly less than some myth-makers would have it.

The financial means of many young tourists were scanty indeed although others were relatively wealthy. So some were very active and inventive to get the few guilders a day they needed to stay alive and high, while others were a source, willing or not, of money for the first. Many ways were used to keep the stream going: ‘alternative’ work or incidental services, the making and selling of handicraft ornaments and hash-pipes, music making, the collection of empty bottles, fencing, drug-dealing, begging and stealing. Maybe because of the high needs, the scarcity of possibilities and the high number of competitors many relationships with a financial component were highly manipulative, seducing or threatening, and this seemed to be accepted as inevitable. So the many with acute survival-problems practiced new and old methods of ‘hunting and gathering’, while some evolved to a kind of ‘neo-artisanat’.

It cannot come as a surprise that ‘drugs’ is the most problematic of the foci of social organization that will be dealt with in this paper: a tough and touchy subject for policy as well as for research. The drugs taken by the young tourist can, as far as the illegal ones are concerned, best be treated as of four kinds: 1. hashish and marihuana, 2. trips (LSD, etc.), 3. speeds (amphetamines, etc.) and 4. opiates. Many people who only speak generally of drugs, or even the subtle ones who differentiate between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’, ignore the large differences in use and effect of these four kinds. The sequence of these four also represents the order of their ‘following’ and the acceptance one generally had for their use.
The ‘smoking’ or ‘blowing’ of hash and weed were general phenomena, accepted by almost anyone and often done quite openly. This acceptance is not shared to the same extent by all Dutch authorities and by the police-officers which led to some ‘misunderstandings’. The use of these drugs was for most a regular accompaniment to their recreational activities and a large minority ‘blowed’ from morning to night to stay very, very stoned.

Hash- and weed-smoking is a typically ‘social’ action: it is a central activity in many groups and is often the reason for forming new ones. The preparations are followed eagerly, critically and with anticipatory pleasure. People comment on techniques, quality, experiences of others. When the drug takes its effect one laughingly shares the experience after which there follows on most occasions a lowering of activity and interaction. Many people were lying down in their sleeping place or in a recreational centre, clearly ‘out’, or at least showing very little signs of ‘straight’ life. Trips were used more often than before, but in not so general, open and easy a manner as with hash. It is a more individual or small-group affair. The effects are more spectacular, more dependent on a supportive atmosphere and harder to interpret as harmless and passing as compared to hash. So it doesn’t come as a surprise that some people, especially the less experienced, had a bad trip, or ‘flipped’. This was more frequent when, during the summer, trips of an unusual strength were offered, generating unbased rumors of ‘rat-poisoned trips’ generally believed without analysis. The help that ‘flippers’ need should be given by an experienced person, without panic, in a calming down and reassuring way. Help of this quality was often not available. The world of the tripper seems hard to empathize with for a ‘straight’ person, including the ones in position of authority. The use of speeds and opiates is harder to observe because it is less accepted. ‘Spouters’ formed a very unstable, shifting group, needing and mistrusting one another. They are hard to help and because there aren’t too many, and maybe because they generate so much anxiety in the ‘straight’ person, there isn’t a really good organization to do this.

The supply of drugs is of course organized illegally by ‘dealers’ who don’t open up their trade easily for sociological or any other kind of investigation. The information one can get is understandable from two perspectives, a commercial and a criminal one. From the first one can use all kinds of regularities formulated by economists concerning price-fluctuations, capital-formation, the importance of regular supply and sales, the difference in the treatment of regular and irregular customers, competition and cartel-formation. The second aspect explains all kinds of secrecy and anonymity and many instances of ‘secondary deviation’ (Lemert, 1967). Because dealing is an illegal and pro-
secuted activity to begin with, it attracts many who are willing and able to act against the law in other respects also and others may feel forced by competition to follow them. And because the deal itself is illegal, the customers don't have ways to procure the protection against deceit and intimidation they may think they could use in the case of buying a second-hand car for example. The quality of the hash offered for sale to passing tourists is often very bad indeed, as the nick-name 'bullistan' indicates. Thus the illegal character of drug dealing has the effect of encouraging dishonest and/or criminal behavior by the dealer toward the customer. The tendency towards cheating, doctoring etc. of the merchandise is especially strong when there are many inexperienced and passing customers, and when there is a limited supply, as was the case in the second half of July 1971. When hash is scarce in such a period there is a real danger of 'filling the gap with hard drugs'. So one could argue for a policy of informal protection of the honest hash-dealer to drive out tough criminals and hard stuff. But although this advice has often been given, it is still not followed. Legalistic argumentation still wins from grass-roots realism and humanitarian tolerance. The effect is the ad hoc prosecution of accidentally found dealers of relatively innocent drugs, sometimes grotesque 'gestures' of prosecution in the form of 'busts' and no effective policy in regard to speeds and opiates.

**On policy and public reactions**

When we look at the phenomena connected with Youth Tourism from a greater distance, from a larger perspective, there are many questions of 'how' and 'why' that could be put and tentatively answered. One could ask why it happened in Amsterdam, why in this period and what will happen in the future. One could ask for a description and explanation of the policy of relative tolerance that came into being in Amsterdam in this area. One could ask for an exposé on the reactions to all this by the public at large or groups within it. It is hardly possible to treat these problems and others like them satisfactorily in the context of a short paper, but I will attempt to suggest a few lines of the framework in which these answers could be formulated. I will use illustrative material from the summer of '71, the discussions following that season and the preparation up to the time of writing (May 1972) of policy formulation and in practical preparation, especially in regard to the Park-problem.

On the most general level one can observe in Dutch society a long term
tendency to treat problems by avoidance, by ‘accommodation’ and by ‘con­tainment’. Although Holland emerged as a national state from a ‘liberation struggle’, it has a long tradition of pluralism, of many groups living together in the same area and of the recognition that no group can dominate without the others’ consent (Goudsblom, 1967). One could also speak of a tradition of fights over ‘principles’, combined with a practical, business-oriented tolerance which made Holland a land of refuge for fools and radicals, especially, if they brought money in. After the war there has been a succes­sion of coalition-based governments with shifting alliances among the (many) parties. The Amsterdam city-council and government reflect this but more to the left than on the national level, owing to the city’s socialist and liberal leanings. Below or behind the party and government scene is a large bureaucratic ‘forest’, dominated by civil service, welfare state and rules-are-rules tendencies. In Amsterdam the municipal bureaucracy seems to be especially divided, partly rule- and partly service-oriented and afraid to lose influence compared to other branches. The police department is municipally organized, officially subjected to the mayor, as far as ‘order problems’, and to the prosecutor, as far as ‘law enforcement’ aspects are concerned. In the sphere of ‘service’ and ‘welfare’ a tradition has developed in which a problem area at first is covered by what is called ‘private initia­tive’ (philanthropy), afterwards to be subsidized or ‘taken over’ by govern­ment agencies. This also happened in our case when a Foundation for Summer Youth Accommodation was incorporated in municipal agencies and dominated by ‘bureaucrats’.

After a ‘restoration’ period following World War II, a change in the de­velopment of the Netherlands set in in the early sixties (as in other coun­tries) with many, especially young people, struggling for more freedom, more influence, right to speak out and to live as they please. On a national level these struggles have especially touched the mass media (TV) and have had their most powerful effect among the Roman Catholics. On the city level these struggles have culminated in the well-known PROVO happen­ings and in the Kabouter movement a few years later. Student movements and ‘stop the war’-demonstrations have also been prominent. Among the effects of these developments may be mentioned the creation of diverse subsidized facilities for young people (recreation and aid), an oversensitive police-force, a general attitude ‘for God’s sake no riots’, fierce minorities to the left (‘no’ against repression) and the right (stop the degeneration) and a large majority which isn’t too interested, but doesn’t like either alternative. Government-leaders are always centre-oriented and afraid to awake the
dogs and the birds. From these diverse tendencies, power-balances and
traditions, which could and should be better and more extensively described
and analysed than can be done here, it is understandable that the tolerance
policy could also be described as a kind of accommodation, as a kind of
non-treatment of problems, as an effect of impotence as well as of principles.
The policies followed have largely depended on improvisation because no­
body made decisions, have been largely motivated by the desire to avoid
'trouble' (riots for example) and so show a chaotic picture of 'dikes and
windmills' and produce effects nobody wants, wanted or is happy with.

These points can be illustrated by some information on the preparation of
the season of '72. Even before the end of the summer of '71 heated discus­
sions started, especially on the question of — what was called — the contin­
uation of the Vondelpark-experiment. A lot of press-comments, interviews
and articles appeared. An action-group 'Save the Park' was formed (anti),
followed by another 'Joy in the park' (pro). The reports issued during the
fall were mildly pro (the agencies concerned), anti (the police) or more or
less detached (the researchers). During a 'hearing' in December more wild
voices pro and con were raised by people living in nearby quarters. But
there was one thing that everybody agreed upon: if it was done again it
should be much better organized, prepared earlier, depending less on panic
and improvisation. What happened? The important decisions, concerning
the park-project, were delayed and delayed and finally taken by the munici­
pal council after many hours of deliberation on March 30th. The Aid-or­
ganizations announced earlier that January 1st could be considered a dead­
line for a good and March 1st for a bad policy. During these deliberations
all parties in the council spoke, and mostly by two voices, one pro and
another con, and mostly on the issue allowance for sleeping outside, only
touching lightly on other maybe more important issues. They voted at last
to allow sleeping outside in some restricted areas and supplied nearly a
million guilders for facilities and for the salaries of the 80 temporary work­
ers in the project. The 'anti'-groups have since then made an appeal to the
judge to let him declare the decisions regarding sleeping in the park unlaw­
ful and to forbid sleeping there. In first instance they lost, but they appealed
again and lost again. The organization of the project has been extended and
formalized compared to last year, but it is not possible yet to say what will
happen in the high season.

It is rather an understatement to say that the young tourists, the 'hippies'
or the people in the park generated 'mixed feelings'. They generated con-
flict, heated discussions, confusion and all kinds of 'defense mechanisms': denial, projection, identification, distortion, etc. The concept of ambivalence can be used to account for these confusions on the collective as well as on the individual level. One can think of an ambivalence towards freedom with which, for example, Merton's distinction between non-conforming and criminal behavior tries to deal intellectually and which centered in our case around the 'tolerance' issues. Tolerance can be felt to be weakness as well as strength, can be interpreted as space given or left open. This is connected with a more general ambivalence in generational relations in the Netherlands, where a clear conflict between life styles connected with generations has given way to what seems to be a more general crisis. The older people are less sure than ten years ago that they are right and there are many who think the old ways are wrong. The younger ones are hesitant, not knowing how to use the space and power they are getting and unsure about the real value of these. In both 'camps' a majority seems to escape into consumption, buying symbols of settledness, the good life, modernism or even revolt as the standards of their social circle suggests. Deep ambivalences around 'instrumental' versus 'expressive' values, competition versus cooperation, seem to form the basis of this. A way out, a livable humane alternative seems hard to build (Slater, 1970).

Comment

The writing of this paper was finished in May 1972. The information I have on developments after that does not fundamentally devaluate what I wrote at the time. The main point that can be added is that everything went rather smooth since, at least from the outside. A process of accommodation that had already set in in '71 has continued up till now. The population takes the Youth Tourism scene more or less for granted. Even if they don't like it, they don't publicly show their anger. The workings of the projects themselves have also been much smoother than before. People know the problems now and how to solve and/or avoid them. The influence of city-officials has stayed paramount. Plans to put the project-management back in the hands of private persons and bodies have failed mostly. The life styles of the tourists themselves have developed largely along the lines I presumed: playing the hippie game as a recreation game plus attraction of 'problem-people'. Heroin-use, which was notably absent in former years, has been spreading in '73. Police control is especially ineffective in this as-
pect. So Youth Tourism, as Youth Culture in general, has regained a marginal position in city life. An advertisement for liberalism and tolerance, with the problems safely swept under the carpet.

June, 1974

References