Communicating anti-racism

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Citation for published version (APA):
Acknowledgements

I would like to take a final two pages here to write a word of thanks to all the people that made this dissertation possible. First of all, I would like to thank my promotor, the great Liesbet van Zoonen. Liesbet, it has been a life-changing experience to do a PhD under your supervision and I am deeply thankful for the ways you have supported me throughout the past few years. Your guidance and vision became apparent to me only shortly after we met in a course for qualitative data analysis. During the break, we stood outside and you asked me whether I was interested to do some research on soccer with you. After I failed to show the enthusiasm that you might have expected from a full blooded male like myself, you asked ‘but you do like racism, don’t you’? Your fine judge of character was spot on (ofcourse I like racism!) and that was the start of a project that would eventually transform into this dissertation. Along the way, there were many instances where I got the full view of your great skills as an academic scholar. Often times, they would come packaged in riddles that befit a zen-master. Examples that spring to mind are: “Your paper was too long and therefore I did not read it” or “It is a nice paper, but it is lacking in bite, body and punch”. I will also forever fondly remember the time when you laboriously explained to our friend Fadi that my PhD was all about soccer and girls. I am still pondering the deeper meaning of that observation. What I already understand is that this dissertation would not have been possible without your unfailing guidance, support and friendship. As Jack Sparrow said, ‘we’ve reached a special place... Spiritually... ecumenically... grammatically.’.

Second, I would like to thank the other people who were directly involved in the research for this dissertation. First and foremost I am referring to co-authors Laurens de Roode, who did great work on the Amsterdam World Cup project and Joke Hermes who provided half the data and thinking for the qualitative study of the Westside audience. I would also like to thank Jeroen Slot and Lonneke van Oirschot at O+S of the Amsterdam Municipality, for their excellent help and cooperation on the experimental study of the effects of Westside, as well as Ivo and Rosanne for their help in the administration on that project. I would also like to thank Shakuntala Banaji for her help when I was in London (with apologies for getting you the results of the study so late!). I would also like to thank my colleagues at the MEPC PhD club and others who have discussed some of my work with me (Stijn, Niels, Pauline, Jeroen Lemmens, Fadi, Yiu-Fai, Cem, Vincent, Jeroen Jansz, Linda, Jochen & Wouter de Nooy). Thanks also to Marlies Klijn for her
unfailing faith and the work we did on the qualitative analysis course. I would also like to thank Dave Mook and David van der Leij who both provided me with data for the soccer cases discussed in the dissertation. Thanks also to Santje Kramer and Margreet Leppink for their support with regard to their campaign ‘Wat doe jij voor de stad?’ and thanks to Jayne Whitton at the London Municipality for help with the ‘We are Londoners’ campaign. I would also like to thank the people at ASCoR for giving me the opportunity to do this work and supporting me along the way: Claes, Sandra, Maike and Margriet. Also, my warm gratitude goes out to Ardy and Elske (a.k.a. the Commscience showgirls) for their unfailing assistance in the stationery department. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank the students who worked with me as part of their course requirements in the collection of parts of the data I have used. In no particular order, I would like to thank: Emma Folmer, Anne Stoel, Anne Valkering, Melanie Wolf, Christian Baden, Marlise Huijzer, Anouk van Drunen, Anna Glasmacher and Judy Ford.

Next, there are a couple of people I need to thank for my (in)sanity during the past couple of years. As is commonly understood, doing a PhD can be a solitary activity. However, that never really became an issue for me, and it is mostly thanks to the following people: Willem & Steven (who helped change the face of rock music as we know it today), Martijn & Annemarie (the flex and his ex), Christian and Hanneke (who conceived), Tobias (who was pre-conceived), Maartje Linnenkamp (who let me write my dissertation even when on holiday in Greece), Rogier & Maike & Sander & Sarah (generally likeable and cuddly people), Sem & Yvonne (who live very close to me in the neighborhood but are – last I heard - unrelated), Petra, Najiba, Marieke, Jenny and that girl that used to come to 3voor12 every week but then found an internet boyfriend and stopped showing up, Daniel Burdsey (who knows more about racism than me), Laurens de Roode (who knows more about soccer than me), Jean-Louis van Gelder (who knows more about heavy metal than me), Samrad & Behnaz (who live in a penthouse), Joyce & Johannes (who share initials), Fadi & Willemijn (the latter of whom I yet have to meet- wholly due to my own shortcomings), Todd (thanks for the proofreading), Bregje (I have an autographed copy of her latest best-seller), Lemmens (as he likes to be called) & Mieke (who is mentioned here with Lemmens but is in a league of her own) and of course my great, lovely, intelligent, beautiful & understanding roommates Esther, Suchi and Christel.

Finally, my gratitude goes out to all the people who participated in the various research projects of this dissertation and shared their views, experiences and sometimes living rooms with me.
Notes

1 I once heard this joke in a class in international development studies in the late 1990s. I was unable to locate a source for this joke and therefore regard it as part of our shared common sense knowledge about academics.

2 The Dutch expression used was ‘kutallochtoon’.

3 ‘Negro kisses’ are a kind chocolate coated, cream filled candy. The Dutch manufacturer recently changed its name to ‘Kisses’ after allegedly receiving complaints that the name was offensive to blacks.

4 Percentage was calculated on the basis of respondents that scored 4 or 5 on the five-point Likert scale that was used. A score of 4 represents a predominant agreement, and a score of 5 represents a total agreement with either the campaign’s worth or its effectivity.

5 Only respondents answering all relevant items were included in the model; 5 respondents were removed because their ethnicity was unknown and one because their educational level was unknown.

6 The ‘We are Londoners, we are one’ campaign was issued in the aftermath of the bombings of the London underground on July 7th 2005. The campaign ‘We Amsterdammers’ was set up in response to the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a Muslim radical.

7 In the Amsterdam focus groups, participants were asked to discuss ‘real’ Amsterdamer identities. These discussions were not expected to result in arbitration of the true Amsterdamer identity. Instead, they consistently served to trigger animated discussions over people’s own relation to their city.

8 The term immigrant here is a translation of the Dutch word ‘Allochtoon’, which is widely used in Holland to denote people with a non-white ethnic background.

9 Almere is a town near Amsterdam. Large parts of the white working class population living in Amsterdam’s city centre moved out to Almere and a number of other towns as the inner city gentrified over the last two decades.

10 We are using the terminology of Liebes and Katz here but are aware of other authors who have come to similar conclusions in their own studies using slightly different terms such as ‘inferential’ and ‘attributonal’ (Worth & Gross, 1974, cited in Michelle, 2007), ‘analytical’ and ‘interpretive’ (Neuman, 1982, cited in Michelle, 2007) or ‘official’ and ‘personal’ (Dahlgren, 1988, cited in Michelle, 2007). We recognise the commonalities in these various approaches and decided to use the terminology of Liebes and Katz because they fit most with the data and are arguably the most well known.

11 Interpersonal contact is understood here as (non)verbal exchanges between individuals that are in each others’ physical presence.

12 The central ‘optimal conditions’ are, among others, equal status between the groups, shared goals, intergroup cooperation and the support of authorities (Pettigrew, 1998). This point is elaborated below.

13 Similar campaigns have been launched in London after terrorist attacks. A comparison between the Amsterdam campaign and the London one is part of a follow up study to this paper. (Muller, in progress)

14 Participatory observations also confirmed that especially among organizers and volunteers, ethnic minorities were strongly in the minority to the point of complete absence in many of the weekly editions of the Speakerstone project.
Geert Wilders is a Dutch extreme right politician who is mainly concerned with the perceived threat of Islam to the Dutch nation. After the murder of van Gogh he received extensive police protection because it was feared that he would be assassinated. He has recently commented that the Netherlands is under threat from a ‘Tsunami of Islamization’.

Only the official discourse of the ‘Spreeksteen’ deviated from these accounts by emphasizing the role of the project in the promotion of the freedom of expression and debate. However, in interviews with volunteers working at the project, it became clear that they too subscribed to the belief that interpersonal contact and dialogue would improve understanding between different groups.

Survey data were collected by Dave Mook for a BA dissertation and re-analysed for this paper by the authors. Mook analysed this data himself in a SWOT analysis of the tournament in 2005 in which ethnicity was of minor interest (Mook, 2005). The cross-tabulation of ethnicity and reasons for participating shown here does not appear in his work. Data are used with permission of Mr. Mook.

This quote and all subsequent quotes were translated from Dutch by the first author.

The other two goals are to counter radicalisation of Muslim youth and fight terrorism. Both these goals are generally either thought to be realised through stimulations of urban citizenship, which will be addressed in the following or, alternatively, addressed with other measures such as increased security measures, which are beyond the scope of this paper.

However, the 6-year old tournament is evolving. Plans have been drawn up for next year’s tournament to include a separate women’s tournament and a children’s tournament to supplement the already existing tournament. Although arguably conservative in design, it remains to be seen how such an alternative engagement with gender will play out in practice.