

Exploring safety in Nightlife districts.

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*“We live in a world that is dominated by fear.
We are increasingly afraid to walk in our city
streets (...)”*

Politics of fear; fear of politics conference – Brighton 2010.

> *Introduction:*

“Despite the academic interest in (...) safety amongst geographers, planners and other social scientists there have been few attempts to unpack the term or even acknowledge the complexity and confusion surrounding their use (Little et al 2005, p155).

Yet safety is an important aspect in urban renewal and development programs, also in nightlife districts.

People increasingly afraid to walk our city streets is exactly what is not needed then.

Creating safety? → surveillance and control

> *Introduction:*

Respondents:

- (I) What exactly is safety for you?*
- (R1) Ehm. Safety, (laughs), what a difficult question actually (female, Groningen).*
- (R2) Well, I'm not sure exactly what my definition of safety would be. (...). I do think that it is something intuitive. And to bring this into representation, I find that very difficult (female, Utrecht).*

> *Literature*

Safety can be understood different in various discourses.

Feminist and emotional geographies: acknowledgement safety as situational and transitory. Increasing interest how it is mobilized and understood in practice (England and Simon, 2010)

Aim:

- *Explore how visitors of nightlife areas understand safety during the practice of going out and how this is mobilized.*
- *How is surveillance understood in relation to safety.*

> *Interviews:*

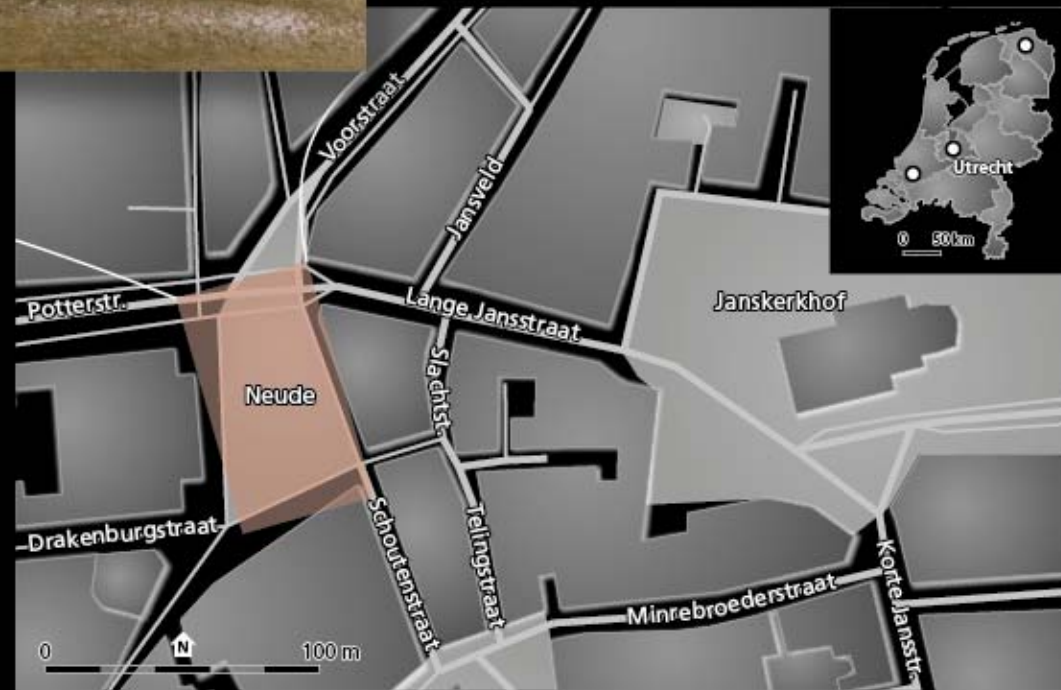
Why:

- > Feeling and emotion are not easily measured through other methods.
- > Looking for a 'bottom-up' understanding on (un)safety – or, the visitors perspective.

What:

- > 18 'socially heterogeneous (gender/age/ethnicity) interviews
- > Three Dutch cities (Utrecht (8), Rotterdam (5) & Groningen(5)).
- > Respondents collected in nightlife districts.
- > Coded and analysed (see Strauss and Corbin 1990) using MAXQDa.







> *(un)safety?:*

Safety as different 'modes' of experience.

- > *Self-evidence*
- > *Vulnerability.*
- > *Full unsafety*

A constant movement between these various modes of experience and the ways in which transitions between are understood by our respondents.

> *Self-evidence:*

(R3) “Feeling safe is like when I don’t have to be aware of what happens around me. It is like I can have a drink, go out or cycle home without noticing that I am actually doing that” (female, Groningen).

Self-evidence; ‘No need to pay attention’:

Self evidence very central to our respondents during a night out.

> *Vulnerability:*

Feeling that something might happen:

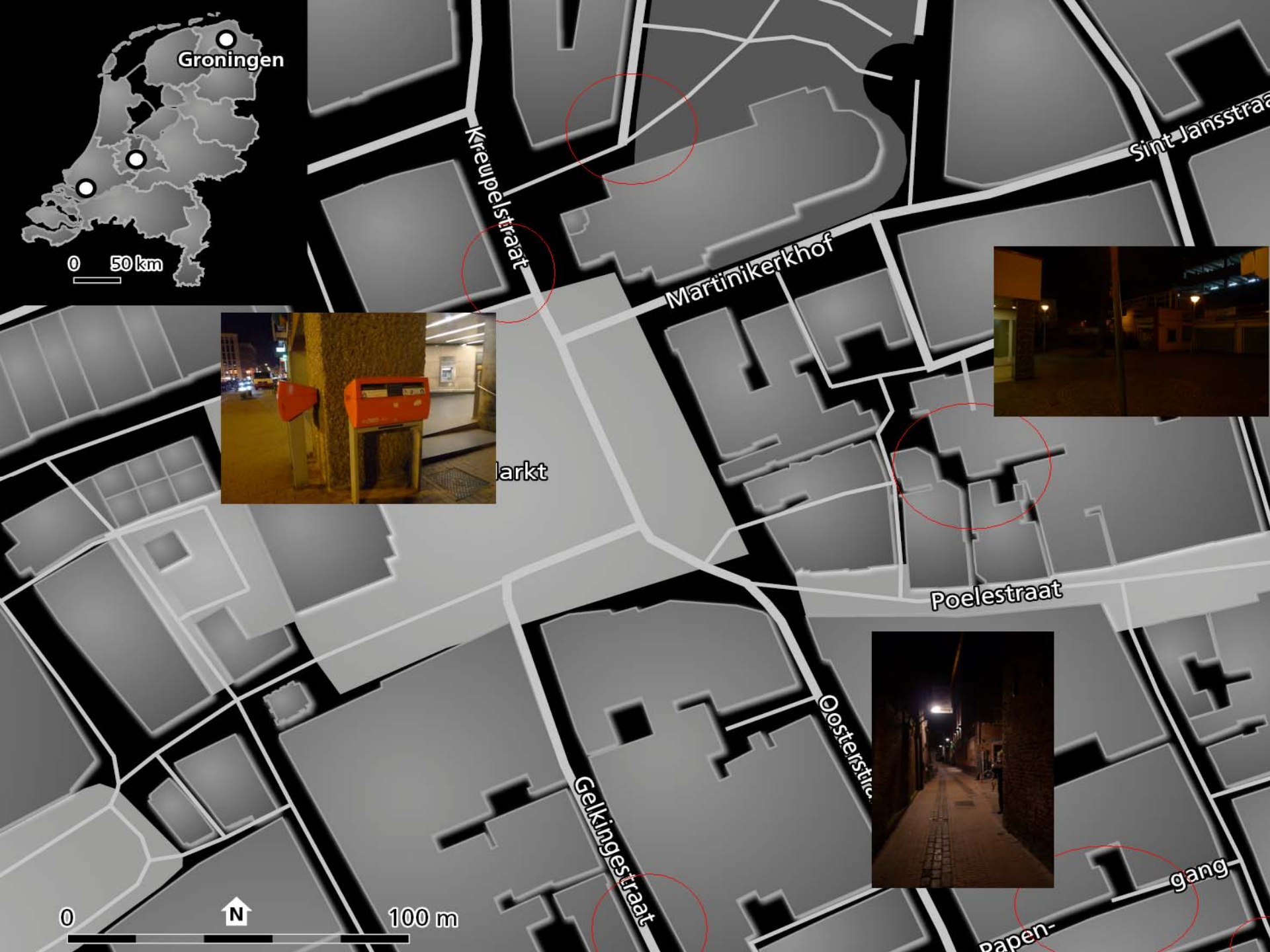
Becoming alert.

Paying attention.

Feeling restless.

Role alcohol.

(R4) "This is not a space where you are by definition unsafe. Yet, you feel a bit more on your toes, the alley breathes that atmosphere" (male, Groningen).



> *True unsafety:*

A transition from vulnerability to true unsafety was triggered by a form of undesired human action directed at the interviewee.

- (R5) *“I think it gets really unsafe for me when someone has really horrible intentions (laughs) with me. In a situation in which I’m ‘trapped’. That is when I start feeling unsafe” (female, Groningen).*
- (R6) *“Someone turned himself around in a conscious manner, at a desolated spot. That was terrifying. And after, he started chasing me by bike (female, Utrecht).*

> *Safety and 2 types of surveillance:*

	CCTV	On the ground policing
Self-evidence	<i>One of many contributing factors</i>	<i>One of many contributing factors</i>
<i>Transition between</i>	Not involved in transition	<i>Involved in transition. Recognized as trigger both in shifting back and forth</i>
Vulnerability	Little or not empowering.	<i>Strongly empowering</i>
<i>Transition between</i>	Not involved in transition	Not involved in transition
True unsafety	Little or not empowering.	<i>Empowering</i>

> Why CCTV?

(R7) *“CCTV is like an extra eye where I'm never aware of, but I think it's presence is important. I do not think it has a disturbing effect or comforting effect. I look at it as if it is a silent eye (...). And that is why I think it is good that they are there (...). To keep an eye on clubbing Groningen and that is not something the surveilling policemen can do alone” (female, Groningen).*

> *Summary*

- > (un)safety is complex and multidimensional
- > Clear clues that (un)safety is not so much of an issue while being in the nightlife-district.
- > *However*, vulnerability is expressed in particular spaces
- > *And*, true unsafety might stage everywhere
- > CCTV and on the ground policing impact differently on those different dimensions

> *Conclusions*

- > No need to make the 'safe' 'safer'. Focus on 'vulnerability' and 'true unsafety'
- > When feeling vulnerable or true unsafe, need for human-proximity – intervention there and then by emergency services.
- > CCTV as communicator and steering actor?

> *End*

Thank you for your attention.

Questions?