



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

# Urban multilingualism: individual experiences of linguistic soundscapes in Amsterdam

Nesrin El Ayadi

Dept of Geography, Planning and Int.

Development Studies

N.EIAyadi@uva.nl



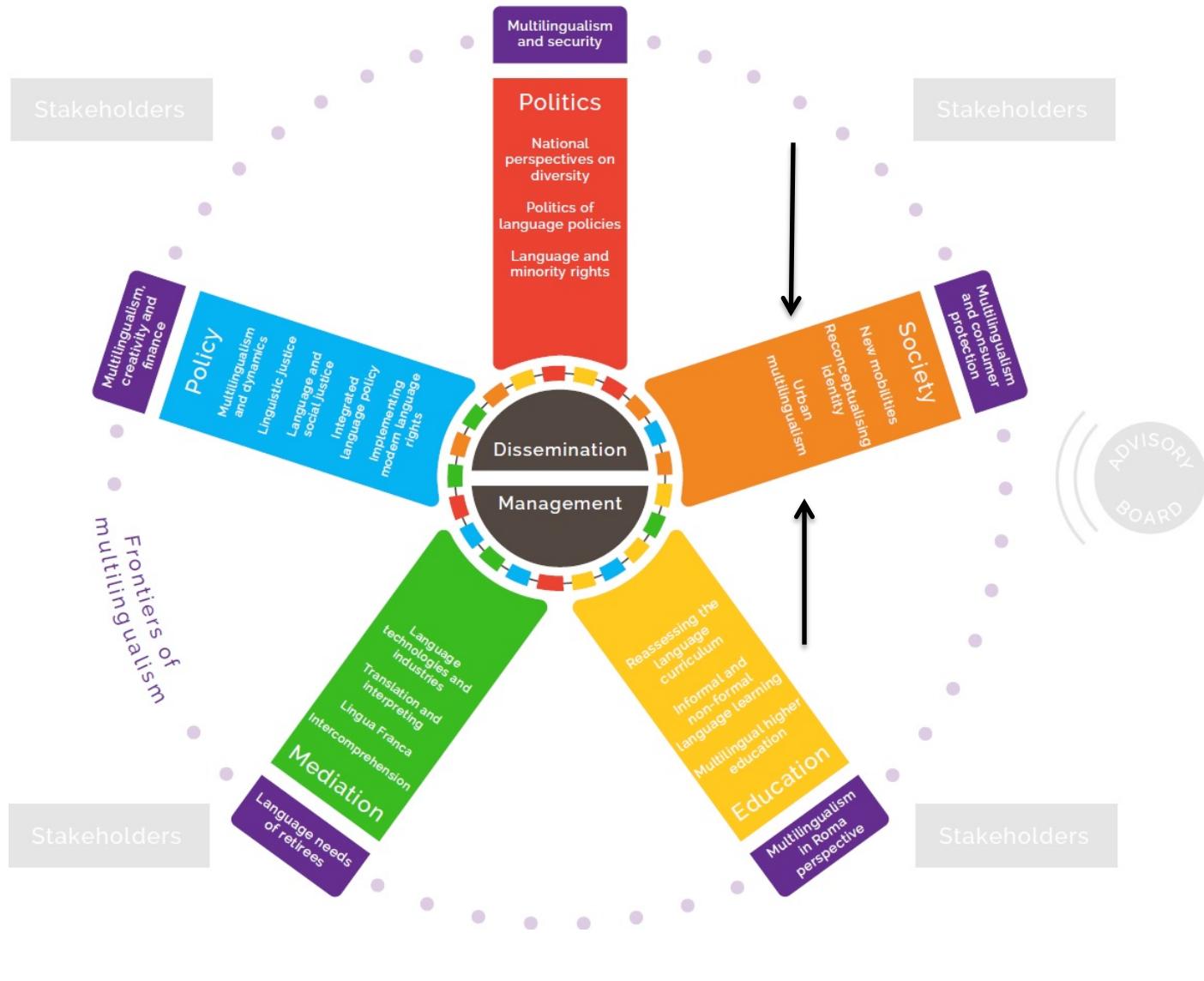
The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme under grant agreement No. 613344 (Project MIME).

*Interdisciplinarity and the future of  
multilingualism research*

*28 August 2018*



# Task2.3



# Research question

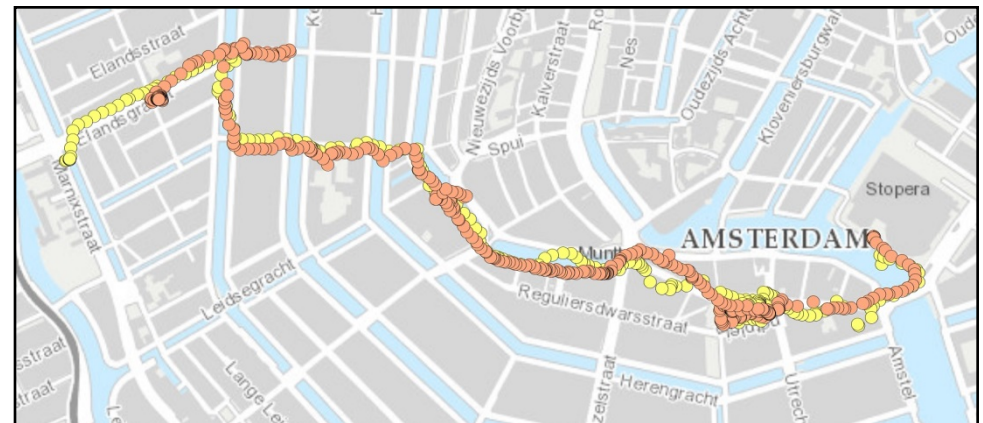
*How does the linguistic soundscape of Amsterdam's inner-city affect one's sense of place and feelings of belonging?*

- LS as opposed to landscape (instead of signs/landmarks etc.)
- LS as specific urban sound (instead of nature, music, cars etc.)
- Strongly embedded in phenomenology and qualitative methodologies



# Methods: linguistic sound walks

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N=27





# Linguistic sound walks

- From May 2016 - January 2017
- 13 linguistic sound walks with 27 participants
- 17 participants, the main language of the linguistic sound walk was Dutch (of which 10 had a multilingual upbringing)
- 10 participants opted for English as the main language of the walk (of which only 2 had English as their heritage language).

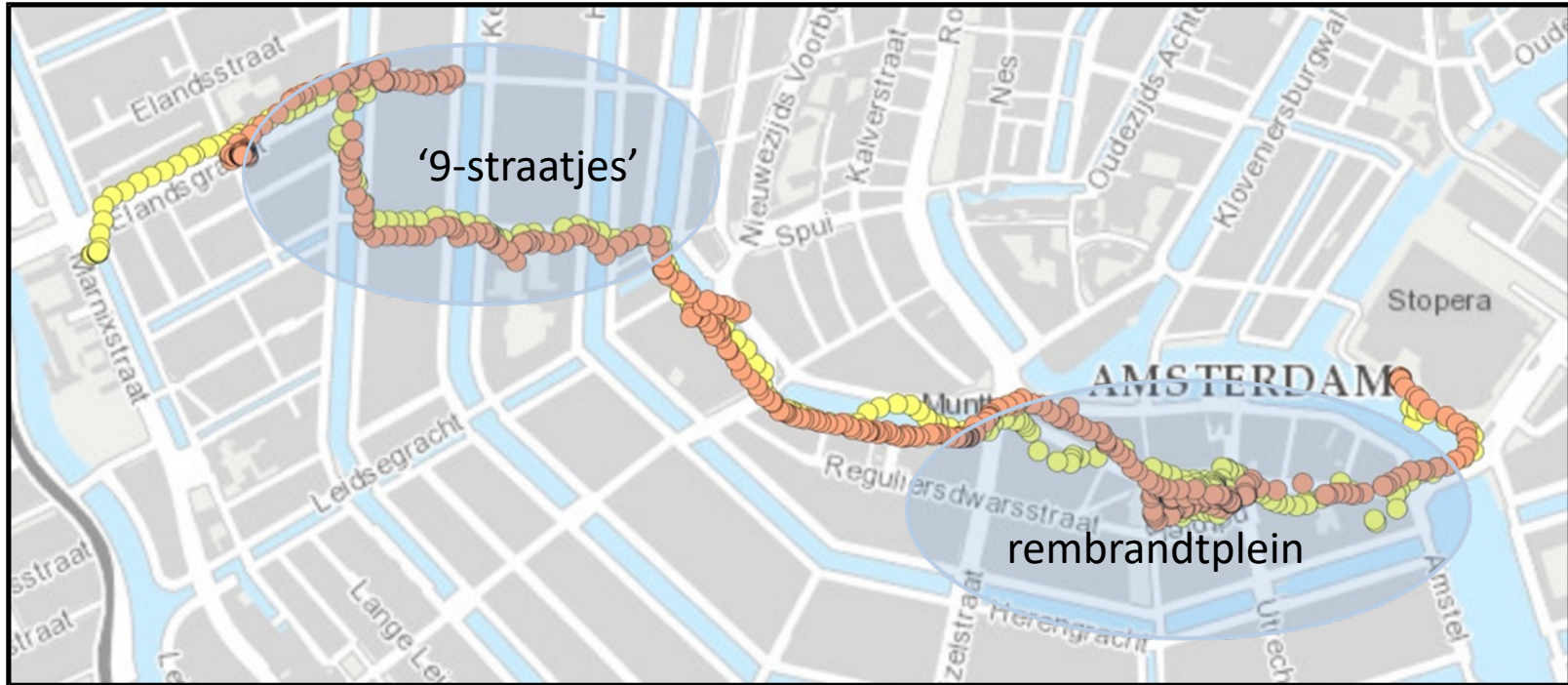


# Listening to LS

- Different ways of listening: informed by individual biographies and linguistic skills
  - Some listened to known languages (heritage language, languages learnt);
    - *'If you would go to Italy and hear Dutch...it surprises you, doesn't it? Well, that's what I have with Japanese, it sticks out.'*
  - Others to unknown languages (game and interest)



# Place perception vs direct sensory experience



# LS in microsetting

Pictures of Rembrandtplein (two upper pictures) and De 9-Straatjes (two pictures below)



# Linguistic soundscape and belonging

- Depends on languages encountered:
  - English often mentioned: celebrated and disliked
    - Dutch speakers: 'feels like I am part of a big city' vs. 'whose city is this?/I cannot speak my own language at home'.
    - English speakers: 'I don't have to speak Dutch to feel at home' vs. 'how am I ever going to feel at home without Dutch'?



# Linguistic soundscape and belonging

- Heritage language: disliked and celebrated

- Negatively:

*‘When I hear Italians, I never speak Italian. They frustrate me because they only drink and do drugs you know.... I don’t want to be associated with Italian tourists, they don’t know the city like I do.’*

- Positively:

- Nostalgia, enthusiasm, curiosity...





# Future?

- Other places:
  - ‘own’ neighbourhoods, no pre-set walk.
  - Semi-public spaces
- Other people: non-English speakers.





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Thank you.

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**Dept of Geography, Planning**  
**and Int. Development Studies**  
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