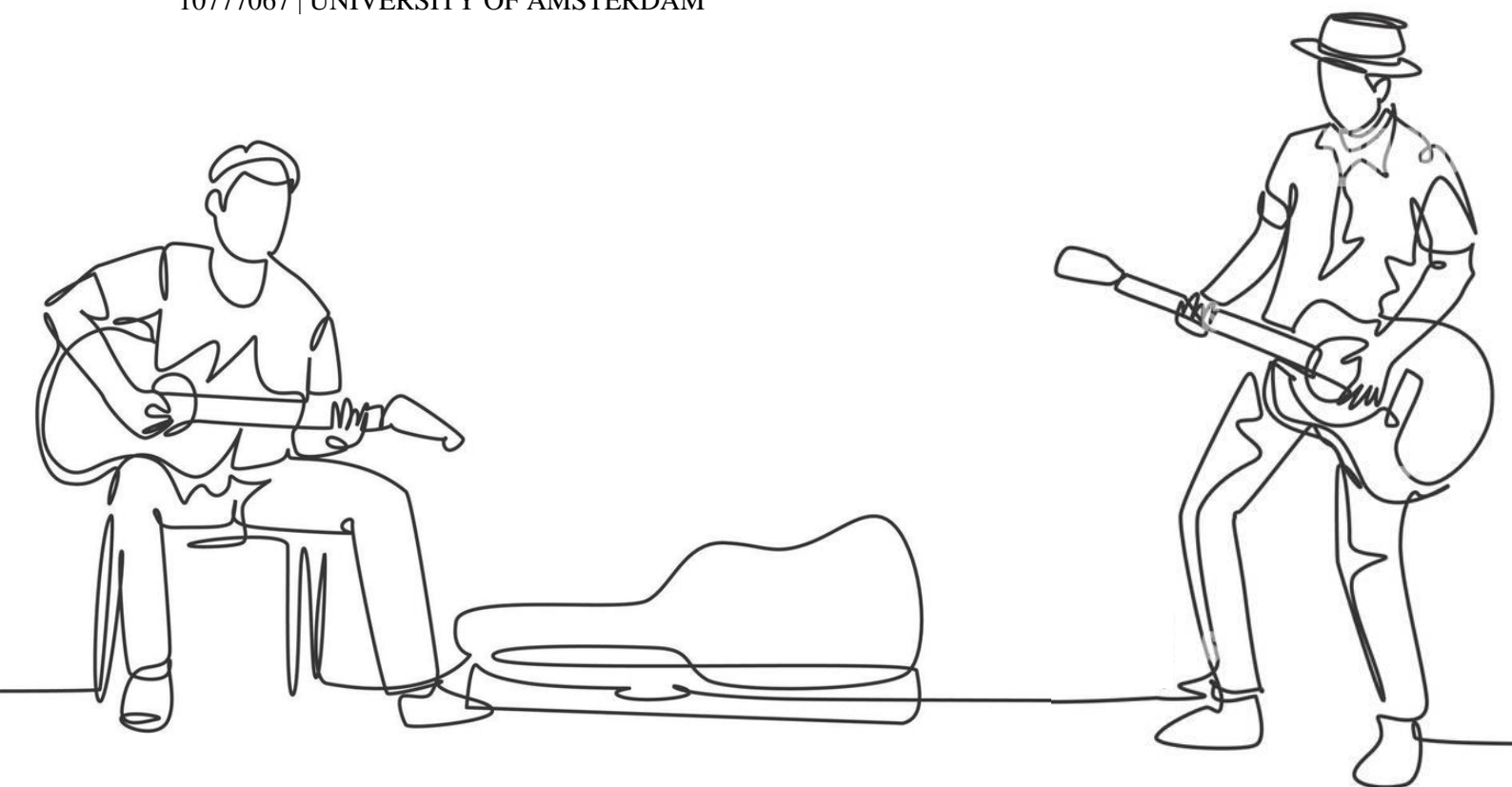


# The urban stage: on buskers' contribution to social space

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A LEFEBVRIAN APPROACH TO BUSKING'S  
IMPLICATIONS ON SOCIAL SPACE

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## Preface

This research project entitled ‘The urban stage: on buskers’ contribution to social space’ was written by Tijmen Holleman. This thesis project is part of the Urban Geography-track of the Human Geography master’s programme at the University of Amsterdam and was carried out in the period between February 2022 and June 2022 under the supervision of dr. I. Tzaninis. I would like to thank him for his supervision and guidance during the project. His advice and recommendations pushed me in the right direction and his words of reassurance kept me motivated throughout the process of setting up the project, collecting data, analysing and writing up the final piece.

In addition I would like to thank my family and friends who have shown their support throughout the process. Through giving me pep talks and helping me to meet deadlines, they made sure all the work was done in time. Moreover, peer reviewing with friends occasionally resulted in fruitful discussions which overall improved the quality of this thesis.

Finally I want to thank all the interviewees who took the time to help me by allowing me to interview them. All interviews were interesting and useful in their own specific ways and helped me to gain sufficient data to do good research. Moreover, some respondents in particular opened doors for me to finding new (potential) interviewees, which provided a sense of relief since I initially struggled finding sufficient people (willing) to talk to me.

## Introduction

On a relatively sunny evening in February 2022, I decided to go for a walk through my neighbourhood. Living right on the edge of Amsterdam's Canal District allows me to go straight into the vibrant central district, although I can also relatively easily escape the rush of the touristic centre and walk towards the more quiet eastern or southern parts of the city. With COVID-19 and its concomitant regulations still being in place at the time, the central city was relatively calm and quiet. However, when crossing Rembrandtplein, something struck me: while there was barely anyone out on the streets, a man was playing the cello on the streets. A small group of people was watching, applauding and some of them put some money in a small container that stood on the pavement in front of him. This specific instance made many questions arise: why does this man do this? Why are these people watching? Is he allowed to do this or does he need some sort of license? Who are these people who are watching? In addition to triggering these questions, I also started to think about other moments in which I saw people performing some sort of art on the streets.

Living statues, musicians, singers and painters: while exploring different cities across Europe, one could encounter various artists perform their craft out in the open. Most often, they perform their arts in or near busy places, such as squares or shopping areas; but also transport nodes, such as metro stations, are not left untouched by these performers. In some cases, these street artists almost become unmissable within specific parts of the city. Think, for instance, about the Montmartre area in Paris, of which specifically Place du Tertre has become labelled as the *schilderswijk* (painters' neighbourhood) because of the overwhelming amount of opportunities to observe painters creating magnificent art on their empty canvases. Although this may be a very well-known example of a public space where street artists perform, this may not be the most representative case for other cities. In many other places, such as Barcelona's Rambla area or London's Piccadilly Circus, street artists may also very well be present in the physical cityscape, albeit in a less obvious manner than the Montmartre area. While walking through Amsterdam's Canal District, for example, you may also encounter street artists in different spaces. Dam Square is the most popular location within the city's boundaries for street artists to perform (Versprille, 2013). In other words, Amsterdam may not directly be thought of as a place for street performance the way the Montmartre area does. Yet, the city, just like many others, has various public spaces where street artists perform. Therefore, Amsterdam serves as a critical case in this research project.

Street artists may become embedded in the physical landscape of specific urban areas. One such example in the Amsterdam case is Dam Square. While walking around my own neighbourhood, I often pass through Dam Square, always noticing different types of street performers. While living statues can be spotted on a daily basis, the square also occasionally exhibits street musicians, dancers, magicians and many other artists. Exactly because these street performers are so embedded within the cityscape, this paper addresses the relation between these street performers and their urban stages (*e.g.* the places

where they perform). By doing so, I aim to contribute to the broader literature on the dynamics between urban public space and informal labour.

As such, I argue that street performance in the Dutch context could be considered a form of informal labour. First of all, street performers do not have fixed working hours and workplaces. They have the freedom to perform at the times that are most convenient for them, while also being able to perform at a place of their own preference. However, there are some exceptions, as busking is not allowed before 9 a.m. or after 11 p.m. and busking is banned from specific places, mainly the busy tourist streets to avoid clogging (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022). This means busking is still allowed in many other locations: such as Dam Square, Rembrandtplein, Leidseplein, Nieuwmarkt and Waterlooplein. Briefly put, despite these minor regulations, street artists have a lot of flexibility in choosing their work hours and places.

The second reason this form of labour can be considered as a form of informality, relates to the absence of labour relations and social protection. Although street performers need to obey to some minor regulations, such as not using amplifiers or organs; moving at least 100 meters each half hour and not performing in groups of over six people, they do not have any formalized relation to the state or an employer (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022). If one wishes to be able to perform an organ or to perform in a single place for more than a half hour, it is possible to demand a permit from the municipality. In general, however, just anyone can perform a form of street art. It is not required to be formally enregistered within the *Kamer van Koophandel* (the Dutch Chamber of Commerce) and street performers can collect their earnings in cash, without having to pay income taxes to the local or national government. This is in stark difference with the Parisian *musiciens du metro* (musicians performing in the Parisian metro stations), who have to audition for the municipal metro service (RATP) in order to be granted permission to perform.

Thus, this limitedly regulated form of labour is present in public spaces across urbanities, although the extent of regulation may differ from one place to another. In the Amsterdam context, however, street performance has not been left uncriticized in the public debate. Over the past decade, there have been several events that made it harder for street performers to work in public spaces. For instance, back in 2013, the Amsterdam municipality no longer provided permits to living statues who performed their craft on Dam Square (Versprille, 2013). In the following year, residents and entrepreneurs of the Amsterdam Canal District filed over 90 complaints against street musicians due to noise disturbance (Karman, 2014). Since then, there have been stricter regulations regarding street musicians that dictate where they may play, for how long, at which times of the day and under which conditions (such as without the use of amplifiers). During the COVID-19 pandemic street artists suffered from another blow: they were banned to perform in the city under the pretence that it would ‘clog’ pedestrian flows in the city (NOS, 2020). This may be a sign of new urban developments, in which the local government has a tendency to regulate the use of public space more than before. In the light of these events, I am interested in researching how street artists affect the production of the social spaces

in which they are active. The research question, therefore, is formulated as follows: *How do buskers in Amsterdam contribute to the production of social space?* Moreover, because social space is a concept consisting of three separate elements, namely conceived space, lived space and perceived space (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]), this research project initially treats these dimensions separately using the question: *How do buskers contribute to the production of conceived/lived/perceived space?* As social space is the result of these three separate elements, it may be more useful to initially treat them as separate parts before combining the dimensions into the holistic concept of social space.

What follows is an overview of the two core concepts of informal labour and social space (including the three subconcepts of conceived, lived and perceived space) which is guiding for this research project. I show how these two concepts and three subconcepts are defined throughout this paper in addition to earlier research on the relation between the two concepts. What is to be noted, is that social space serves as an analytical tool that helps to better understand how urban public space can be understood in relation to buskers. This will reveal an apparent research gap, to which this project intends to make a contribution. Consecutively, the mixed-method approach is elaborately explained and is largely inspired by earlier research projects as shown in the theoretical framework. Moreover, ethical considerations are taken into account. What follows is a systematic approach in revealing this research project's fieldwork, following Lefebvre's three dimensions of social space. The conclusion returns to the research questions and connects the three dimensions to one another. Finally, the discussion places the findings and conclusion in the academic debate surrounding social space and provides some recommendations for further research.

## Theoretical framework

This section showcases the conceptual and theoretical foundations for this research project. It starts by developing an overview of the concept of informal labour, which is then connected to Lefebvre's (1991 [1974]) notion of social space and its spatial triad. As this project uses social space as an analytical tool rather than to critique or discuss the concept itself, it finishes by demonstrating how other researchers previously adopted social space as a tool, which shapes the operationalization of the concept.

### Informal labour

In an effort to describe of which activities the economy of Accra (Ghana) consists, Hart (1973) is the first to adopt the term *informal income opportunities*. The concept is coined to provide a typology of Accra's labour force. This typology distinguishes different types of labour, in which the main distinction lies in the degree of (in)formality. Informal labour, Hart argues, operates "outside the organised labour force" (ibid., p. 68). Yet, informal activities can very well be part of the formal economy and therefore must not be overlooked when studying economic activities. He explains this by the fact that both small- and large-scale informal activities can contribute to the formal economy. For instance, some goods can be produced in the informal sphere, such as making jewellery at home from products that are found or traded with other materials on the streets. This is considered informal, as this activity of self-made jewellery is highly unregulated and operates outside of the legally arranged formal sector. A jewellery maker who works in the formal sector, may buy their (raw) materials in a marketplace, where an official financial transaction occurs. This financial transaction is a documented cash flow, which means taxes are being paid, but also the fact that the transaction is documented means it may be included in the analysis of economic data. Although Hart mainly focuses on the distinction between the formal and the informal, he additionally identifies a distinction within the informal economy itself: the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate activities. By making this distinction, Hart shows that informal activity does not necessarily operate outside legal boundaries, but that it could very well be the case that certain types of labour are just not regularized. In essence, this distinction relates to the extent to which activities are considered criminal or illegal. In this research project, busking (*e.g.* the act of performing some sort of art in public space in which the audience can give money to the performer) falls within the category of informal but legitimate activities, as street performance itself is not penalized under given conditions. However, in the case of Amsterdam, there are by-laws in place which set out basic rules for this type of activity, making it punishable when transgressing municipal regulations.

Although informal activity, whether legitimate or illegitimate, can be found in every corner of the globe at any given time, much research focuses on informal labour in the Global South (Hart, 1973; Swanson, 2007; Donovan, 2008; Millar, 2014; Sarmiento et al., 2016; Zeidermann, 2016; Longondjo Etambakonga & Roloff, 2019). Rogan et al. (2018) provide a rather simple explanation: they claim that informal employment is the norm in both developing and middle-income countries, whereas informality



in industrialized economies operates outside of the regular economy. In other words, informality is deeply rooted in the Global South's national economies and it provides a relatively normal means of sustaining in one's livelihood. Rogan et al. provide a useful definition of informal labour, which is not to be confused with precarity, for the purpose of this paper (ibid., p. 312): "international efforts toward a concept and statistical definition of informal employment have focused primarily on employment arrangements which, de jure or de facto, exclude workers from employment-related social protection". However, Zeidermann (2016) extensively illustrates some other traits of informal labour. He shows how informal labour can take on many forms, but most of them share the trait of flexibility. In other words, he shows how the informal labour force often can work at different times of the day in different places. Millar (2014) even stresses that in the context of Brazilian *catadores*, who collect waste from Rio de Janeiro's dump sites, this specific trait makes informal labour very attractive. After all, this flexibility allows the labourer to work whenever money is needed, while at the same time empowering the labourer to be with family and friends whenever necessary. Therefore, street performance in the Amsterdam context is considered as informal; there is no employment-related social protection, financial interactions are, in general, not registered as well as that it provides a degree of flexibility regarding working hours and working place.

This thesis project focuses on street performance as informal labour. Just like Millar's (2014) *catadores*, these street artists have a flexibility in where and when they work. What is certain, however, is that they work in public space. Carlin (2014) explains how activities, such as street performers, have a transformational impact on the public space in which they work. They may either facilitate meaningful encounter or create a desire to avoid certain spaces due to nuisance. Nevertheless, what Carlin's article lacks, is providing evidence to *what* factors determine the extent of meaningfulness of such encounters. Contrarily, Margier (2021), studying homelessness in Portland, Oregon, shows that local authorities, albeit subtly, 'invisibilize' the homeless through compassionate policies in which the homeless are evicted from certain public places. Moreover, Margier shows that also other groups exposed to homelessness may experience invisibilization. This process reveals that people subconsciously 'delete' specific events or people from public space. In some way, it results in some sort of immunity, in which people are aware of the fact that the homeless are out there, but they do not consciously encounter them. So although Carlin's (2014) focus on the transformational spatial impact of (meaningful) encounters has some degree of validity to it, we must not overlook the extent to which people 'invisibilize' others and, therefore, do not consciously experience encountering these people.

Simpson (2011) argues that informal labour activities are part of experiences in everyday life that may produce conviviality and sociality. Yet, Swanson (2007) shows how other forms of informal labour may be highly undesirable and even be forced out of public space. In Ecuadorian cities street vending and begging are common informal activities that are used as strategies for survival by the urban poor. However, municipal institutions ward off these activities as they supposedly 'taint' the image of the city centres. Although this has proven to be effective in the case of Quito's and Guayaquil's street

vendors and beggars (ibid.), Sarmiento et al. (2016) reveal that the performance of such activities may also be a bottom-up effort to contest the state and to reclaim the city as a place where everyone should be welcome.

### Social space

Despite the fact that all aforementioned papers in the previous section acknowledge that spatially-embedded informal labour activities are significant in shaping interactions between various stakeholders (Swanson, 2007; Simpson, 2011; Sarmiento et al., 2016; Doubleday, 2018), such as informal labourers themselves, those being exposed to informal activities and those in powerful positions, none of them explicitly describe how these informal activities and encounters that are the result of these activities affect the experience of space. These papers either focus on social interactions between the people that pass through these spaces (Simpson, 2011; Doubleday, 2018) or the implications of informal street labour for power relations (Swanson, 2007; Sarmiento et al., 2016). In other words, the focus of such papers is mostly on interactions and social relations themselves rather than these encounters' transformational effects on space. What is missing, then, is a comprehensive understanding of how informal labour (through the lens of street performance-induced encounters and interactions) contributes to the spaces in which informal labour takes place. Therefore, this thesis project introduces Lefebvre's (1991 [1974]) understanding of social space as an analytical tool to grasp how street performers, such as musicians and living statues, (re)create social space.

According to Lefebvre (1991 [1974]), social space consists of three dimensions: lived space, conceived space and perceived space. This is, as he calls it, the spatial triad: the three dimensions which accumulatively determine what space is. This tripartition can also be understood in terms of different ways of studying space. Albeit a bit dated, McCann's (1999) interpretation and application of social space in the context of racism-induced protesting in the United States does a perfect job

at making Lefebvre's philosophical ideas a bit more tangible. McCann shows how real-life events, such as protests, can contribute to the experience of social space. He suggests that all three elements of social space (conceived space, lived space and perceived space) all are co-constitutive and mutually reproduce, reinforce and/or contest one another. As figure 1 shows, they are all linked.

First of all, *representations of space* (or conceived space) deal with how space is thought of and configured in a rather abstract way. These abstract configurations consist of an accumulation of ideas,

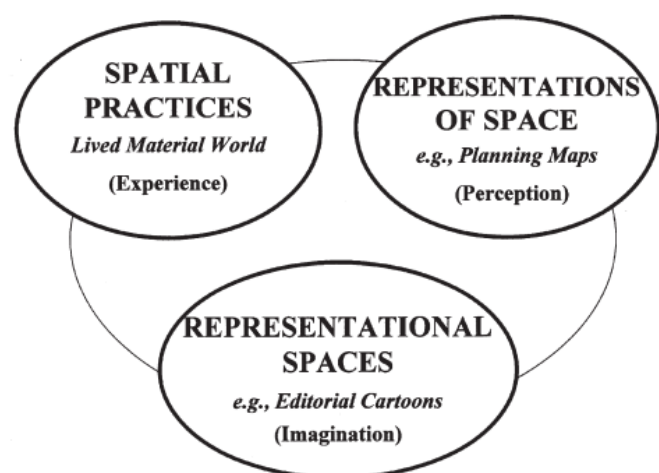


Figure 1: Lefebvre's spatial triad according to McCann (1999)

regulations and maps of what space is and how it ought to function. This is mostly in the domain of those who actively seek to plan, code, design and theorize space, such as academics, policy-makers and urban planners. In other words, these representations of space are the foundations of any space, as it precedes everything that happens in reality. For instance, before a new place (such as a new neighbourhood) is constructed, experts, policy-makers and urban planners investigate how this place should come about, what it should look like, what facilities should be there, et cetera. However, this is not to say that representations of space are irrelevant when considering places that already exist. These same experts constantly use data, such as surveys, maps and place-related discourses and debates to reconfigure already existing places. This includes asking questions such as: ‘should this road be redesigned?’, ‘What can we do to combat overcrowding in this park?’ and ‘How can we make this neighbourhood more attractive for small-scale business owners?’ In short, then, conceived space deals with abstract ways of thinking about what places are, how they function and how place-based problems can be solved.

Secondly, *representational space* (lived space) is described by Lefebvre (1991 [1974], p. 39) as “[it is] space experienced through the complex symbols and images of its ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’”. As McCann (1999) explains, lived space is about the ways in which discourses are constructed revolving around particular places. This dimension considers the ways in which places can accrue meaning through lived experiences. Hence, lived space is about the ways in which ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’ think of different places, what they mean to them and how these meanings and discourses come about. McCann illustrates how media artifacts, such as cartoons and editorials, “have had a significant impact on the spatial practices of Lexington’s residents because they shine a harsh light on the role of planners and the everyday lives of middle-class Whites in the production of exclusionary, abstract, public spaces in the city” (ibid., p. 173). In other words, it is the stories of individuals which are the result of personal experiences, which can be represented and transmitted through any communicative means, such as story-telling, pictures and songs. Although McCann stresses the significant impact of mediatic artifacts due to its strength to reach mass audiences, lived space is the result of individual spatial experiences, which, of course, can be spread through individual contact (such as telling a family member about the robbery that happened next-door) or to mass audiences through the media (such as news stories narrating about specific events that occurred in a specific place). Consequently, the story and meaning an individual gives to a place due to an experience, can spread to other audiences who can either reproduce, reinforce or counter this narrative. Thus, lived space is about the meanings and symbols that individuals or groups attribute to a place as a result of individual experiences or stories as told by others. Lived space, therefore, can largely vary across population groups depending on their experiences and the extent and nature of exposure to place-based narratives.

The final dimension pertaining to social space is that of *spatial practices* (perceived space). McCann (1999, p. 173) explains how this dimension in particular is mediated by conceived and lived space: “working within the bounds of the conceived abstract spaces of planners and architects while

simultaneously being shaped and shaping individuals' perceptions and uses of space". In other words, the results of how space is conceived and how it is defined through discourses and narratives, affect the way in which people actively use space. Lefebvre (1991 [1974], p. 38) also uses the words "daily routine" to describe what spatial practice entails. Perceived space, then, accordingly is defined as "the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project" (ibid.). This of course represents a very typical way of talking about urban dwellers. Yet, this metaphor highlights that spatial practices is not so much about what space means (lived space) or what space is or ought to be (conceived space). Rather, perceived space shifts focus towards how space is actually being used on a daily basis and how it affects daily routines.

### The significance of temporality and rhythms

Another theory that fits well into the study of social space, is Lefebvre's (2004 [1992]) rhythmanalysis. In short, rhythmanalysis intends to connect the spatial to the temporal by arguing that everything that happens in space, also happens in time. Although we can study change both over space and time, it might be useful, Lefebvre shows, to include the spatio-temporal aspect into studies of any given subject. These spatio-temporal rhythms can both be part of the natural world (such as the fact that the sun comes up every day, albeit at different times depending on where in the world you are) as the human world (such as the fact that one travels from home to the office five days a week). The latter two examples show that phenomena that have a spatiality, also have a temporal aspect to them and the other way around. Thinking in terms of rhythms demands the researcher to consider "temporalities and their relations within wholes" (Lefebvre, 2004 [1992], p. 23). This quote reveals the complexity of the matter: including a temporal aspect is interesting only if specific moments (such as McCann's (1999) study of protests) are placed within their broader temporal relevance. A singular event is placed in time, but also is the result of past events and will result in future events. Only if the researcher is capable of seeing the bigger picture (and place minor instances into a broader temporal perspective), one can discover patterns and rhythms over space and time.

Although this research project itself does not intend to use rhythmanalysis as a tool to understand the relation between social space and buskers, rhythms itself are of relevance when trying to understand a phenomenon that takes place in space and time. Lyon (2019) contends that even though Lefebvre clearly distinguishes between the cyclical rhythms of nature (such as tides, day and night, et cetera), it is the linear rhythms that are central to the human body and its experiences of everyday life. Whereas cyclical rhythms are very much predictable and possess an indefinite repetitiveness, the linear rhythms of everyday life are defined by repetition and difference. In general, the human body passes through space and time with repetitiveness: it goes to the same work place five days a week, visits the same grocery store and goes to the same gym twice a week. However, this repetitiveness is neither predictable nor indefinite: people change their everyday routines regularly because of factors that transcend the

individual. For instance, the individual from the previous example may call in sick from work, have to visit another grocery store as it is under construction and may go to the gym once a week because of many social events in a given period. Briefly put, the linear rhythm of humans is, at least to some extent, repetitive, but varies largely between people. What follows from this assumption is that the respondents in this research project also have everyday lives that are mostly structured by rhythms. Gaining insight in their spatio-temporal patterns of daily routine, would provide insight into where, when and how often they might encounter street performers.

### Applications of social space

As the concept of social space is very vast and philosophical, this final section shows some concrete examples of how social space may be studied in geography. Altogether, this lays the foundation for the conceptual model that is shown at the end of this paragraph (figure 2).

One of the strengths of social space as an analytical tool lies in its capability to be applied to a myriad of geographic phenomena, such as urban planning (Mee Kam et al., 2010), real-estate (Jiménez Pacheco, 2018), participatory planning (Carp, 2008), spatial attachment (Petersen & Minnery, 2013) and protesting (McCann, 1999). McCann (1999), for instance, adopts a Lefebvrian approach in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the relation between public space and protests that arose after exorbitant police violence towards a young African American man. He uses lived space to understand how editorials and cartoons in the attack's aftermath were used to reveal racial inequalities in the use of urban public space. By doing so, McCann stresses the power of spatial depictions to be spread to counter (or support) hegemonic spatial narratives. Additionally, the paper shows how historical planning processes have resulted in "the production of exclusionary, abstract, public spaces in the city" (ibid., p. 173), which affect the spatial practices of different racial groups within Lexington, U.S.

Carp (2008), however, uses the same approach to study a whole different phenomenon: that of participatory urban planning. She argues that "planning requires accurate representation of a planning situation to formulate appropriate intervention that protects and promotes a common good" (ibid., p. 129). The paper reveals that if urban planning from the domain of conceived space desires to be beneficial for the common good, an appropriate connection to lived and perceived space should be made. After all, she concludes, professional knowledge should be informed by local knowledge and affective relations to space by daily users. Hence, in order to achieve proper participatory and inclusive planning for the common good, Carp vows for the introduction of Lefebvrian concepts in urban planning practice.

Studying the demolition of two piers in Victoria City, Hong Kong, Mee Kam et al. (2010) show how spatial practices changed over time as a new Chinese business class arose in the city, challenging the British colonizers' power. Mee Kam et al. here show how socio-political (re)configurations affect spatial practices and the affective relations people hold to these places. Although initially being excluded from the city's Queen's Pier, as it initially was just used by the British aristocracy and their guests, the

Pier became more accessible after Chinese residents accrued more wealth and power after World War II. The Queen's Pier and its surrounding harbour area came to symbolize "their [Chinese residents] right to the economic and political heart of Victoria City, giving them a legitimate presence and identity" (ibid., p. 427). This, however, resulted in conflicting ideas of conceived space: British colonizers planned to redesign this place for other purposes, whereas Chinese elites "were determined to defend it". (ibid., p. 427). This paper, then, perfectly shows how different rhythms (British colonizers in opposition to Chinese residents) result in conflicting claims on (social) space.

While Mee Kam et al. (2010) show how different populations have different rhythms which result in conflicting interests and interpretations regarding social space, Petersen & Minnery's (2013) study of "the meaning of home for older people living in purpose-built, age-segregated complexes" (ibid., p. 822) reveals that varying spatial practices within such social groups (in this case: people between the age of 70 and 100 living in the same housing complex) result in a varying degree of feeling 'at home'. As they put it (ibid., p. 838): "the very essence of diversity, namely the range of spatial practices that make up older people's everyday life, makes the production of one space, the residential complex, to suit everyone inherently difficult". What this shows, is that it is hard to uniformly think of conceived space in equal terms for one specific population group. Even within these social groupings, different rhythms exist which affect how the residents use the complex and how they give meaning to the complex: "older people's incorporation of meaning into their living space, in respect of their life, their relationship with others and their relationships with places is both a historical and contemporary practice of everyday life" (ibid., p. 839). This implies how spatial practices can affect how space is given meaning, or, how perceived space relates to lived space. After all, it shows that all practices of everyday life is incorporated in the meaning of their living spaces.

Finally, Jiménez Pacheco (2018) studies real-estate violence in the context of central Barcelona. Adopting Lefebvre's methods and concepts "allow us to establish a critical theoretical link between the emergence of the real-estate financial circuit, the social space devastation and political power relationships inside and outside technocracy" (ibid., p. 98). He places the real-estate crisis in European cities in a 'right to the city'-context by demonstrating the conflicting interests that several stakeholders have within this system. By doing so, he integrates social space to understand where and how these conflicts arise. This analysis shows how power relations are deeply-rooted within dispersing perspectives on social space and, in general, the exclusionary nature of the housing market in central Barcelona can be explained by the way place is conceived in a capitalist era.

Although these research projects explore a wide range of different (urban) geographic phenomena, they share some commonalities. Firstly, all articles manage to dissect the three dimensions of social space and show how they can reproduce, reinforce or contest one another. Whereas Peterson & Minnery (2013) show how spatial practices are determining for one's attachment to the home, Mee Kam et al. (2010) show how spatial practices may be in conflict with how place is represented. Furthermore, all these articles show how rhythms play a key role in how social space is produced, from

the individual to the collective level. Finally, these papers give some methodological tools in studying social space. Carp (2008) and Jiménez Pacheco (2018) in particular provide conceptual models which deepen the understanding of social space. Carp (2008), for instance, stresses the sensory experience to be central to perceived space, the abstract level through plans, concepts and ideas to be central to conceived space and feelings and emotions, such as ‘loving’ and ‘fearing’ to be central in understanding how space is lived. Jiménez Pacheco adds to this by showing that conceived space is defined by rationality, whereas lived space is defined by affection.

Drawing from the literature, this paper assumes that the presence and visibility of street performers in the cityscape foster specific encounters and interactions among residents, entrepreneurs or employees and passers-by, as well as fostering encounters between beforementioned stakeholders and street performers themselves. These encounters and interactions occur in specific places at specific times (as a result of rhythms that bring people together in space and time) and may take on many forms: some may choose to ignore street performers, whereas others may engage with the performance for a certain amount of time; some may give them a little money, whereas others may not do this. These events themselves have implications for lived space (as these interactions may (re)shape the way in which people relate to the place in which these interactions occurred) and perceived space (where these interactions can be considered as a ‘spatial practice’). The conceptual model below illustrates what is happening. Different users come together in public space where street artists perform. Interactions and encounters that happen in this environment are spatial practices that create the perceived space, which, consequently, affects the experience of the people involved. Additionally, these public spaces and whatever happens within them, are constantly affected by planning, by-laws and theorizing by experts and professionals. The work of these professionals, in its turn, is affected by how people live and perceive space.

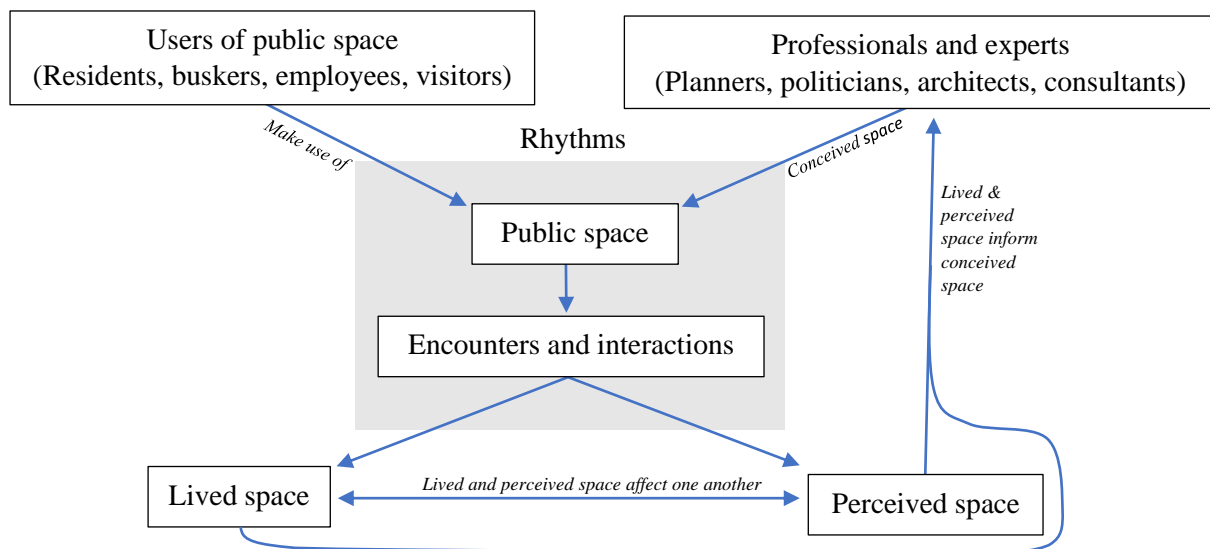


Figure 2: conceptual model

## Methods

This research project has used two research methods in an effort to understand how busking contributes to the production of social space. Although semi-structured interviewing and participant observation are the main means of doing this research project, I also reviewed policy documents to gain knowledge about the way space is conceived. Adopting different methods in an effort to triangulate ensures the inclusion of various perspectives, which increases the trustworthiness of this research project. Participant observation was used to personally experience *what*, *where* and *when* street performances occurred. Moreover, participant observation would allow me to have sensory experiences of the phenomenon at stake which, according to Carp (2008), is key in understanding Lefebvre's perceived space. On the other hand, semi-structured interviewing can contribute to gather the insight of various stakeholders with diverging interests and experiences. Interviewing provides the opportunity to ask how others experience busking, how they feel about the phenomenon and what that means for the places in which busking occurs. Hence, the open nature of (semi-structured) interviewing grants the opportunity to address all different dimensions of social space, depending on the questions being asked. Finally, in addition to these two main research methods, a small policy review was carried out in an effort to understand how space is conceived through the eyes of the Amsterdam government. This data was used to support the interviews with the municipality's policy-makers.

### Data collection

In an effort to find interviewees, I initially defined four groups I aimed to interview. Firstly, I wanted to interview people who live near places where street performers can be found. In order to achieve this, I determined four places of interest, as these are places where I had personally observed street performers: Dam Square, Leidseplein, Museumplein and Rembrandtplein. Secondly, in a similar fashion, it would also be useful to include people who work near these squares because this most likely would mean they would also regularly come across these places. These two groups (residents and employees) are considered as the people 'on the ground'. These are the people who could be exposed to busking and, therefore, it might affect how they live and perceive space. The third groups consists of municipal professionals. Interviewing people who are involved in thinking about space would provide insights in the way these spaces are conceived and in what ways busking is part of conceived space. Finally, the inclusion of buskers themselves may add additional insights on how they experience space and the encounters that occur within them.

Purposive sampling was applied in order to find a diverse group of interviewees that would include people from all four categories. Two methods were used: I messaged acquaintances of whom I knew they lived or worked near one of these four places. Although useful, this method only yielded four respondents. Additionally, I used the internet to find other potential interviewees. The Facebook group *Straat/locatietheater en buitenoptredens.nl* (street theatre and outdoor performances) has members from



all over the Netherlands who are interested in street performance and through Google I found contact details of various cafés, shops, museums, municipal employees and other enterprises in the areas under research. Through emailing and posting on aforementioned Facebook group, I managed to find nine additional respondents. Moreover, snowball sampling resulted in five more interviews. In total, 16 interviews were carried out with 18 respondents (as two interviews were organized with two interviewees at the same time). All interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes (except for the interview with R9-R10 which lasted approximately one hour) and were carried out in Dutch (except for the interview with R6, which was in English). Furthermore, all respondents granted permission to audiorecord the interview with my phone. The respondent table below shows the necessary information about the respondents:

| #   | Category     | Place(s) discussed               | Distance to place*  |
|-----|--------------|----------------------------------|---|
| R1  | Resident     | Dam, Museumplein                 | 2 min. walk from Dam, 5 min. bike to Museumplein                            |
| R2  | Busker       | Various                          | -   |
| R3  | Employee     | Dam                              | Adjacent to Dam Square  |
| R4  | Employee     | Dam                              | Adjacent to Dam Square  |
| R5  | Resident     | Dam                              | 10 min. walk from Dam   |
| R6  | Busker       | Dam                              | On Dam Square   |
| R7  | Resident**   | Dam, Museumplein                 | 2 min. walk from Dam, 5 min. bike to Museumplein                            |
| R8  | Busker       | Dam, Leidseplein                 | On Dam Square and Leidseplein   |
| R9  | Municipal*** | Various                          | -   |
| R10 | Municipal*** | Various                          | -   |
| R11 | Resident     | Dam, Leidseplein, Rembrandtplein | 10 min. walk from Dam & Leidseplein, 5 min. Walk from Rembrandtplein        |
| R12 | Resident***  | Dam                              | 2 min. walk from Dam  |
| R13 | Resident***  | Dam                              | 10 min. bike from Dam   |
| R14 | Busker       | Dam, Leidseplein                 | On Dam Square and Leidseplein   |
| R15 | Resident     | Leidseplein                      | 2 min. walk from Leidseplein  |
| R16 | Employee     | Museumplein                      | Adjacent to Museumplein   |
| R17 | Resident     | Museumplein, Leidseplein         | 2 min. walk from Museumplein (formerly), adjacent to Leidseplein (formerly) |
| R18 | Employee     | Museumplein                      | Adjacent to Museumplein   |

\* = This column shows at what distance these people live or work from the places discussed.  
 \*\* = Although I initially reached out to R7 as an area broker, she could tell me more about her perspective as a resident.  
 \*\*\* = These interviews were held with two respondents at the same time: R9-R10 and R12-R13.

In addition to semi-structured interviewing, participant observation was used in order to gain knowledge about what performs at which times and places. This allowed me to personally experience which kind of street performances occur in Amsterdam and, hence, to which performers the interviewees occasionally could be exposed. Being a resident of Amsterdam's centre resulted in both planned and unplanned observations. As it can be relatively hard to predict where and when street performances occur, I decided to spread my odds and plan observations that lasted between one and two hours at different times and places. All planned observations took place in the months of March and April 2022 and were carried out on Dam Square or Museumplein, as both interviews and personal experience reveals that these two are the most popular spots for busking to occur. The schedule below demonstrates the schedule of participant observation:

| Date & time of observation                               | Location    |
|--|-------------|
| March 16, 10.45 a.m. – 11.45 a.m.                        | Dam Square  |
| March 22, 4.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.                          | Dam Square  |
| March 23, 6.30 p.m. – 7.45 p.m.                          | Museumplein |
| March 26, 3 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.                             | Dam Square  |
| April 2, 10.00 a.m. – 11.30 a.m.                         | Museumplein |
| April 9, 12.45 p.m. – 2.00 p.m. & 2.30 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.* | Dam Square  |
| April 15, 2.45 p.m. – 4.15 p.m.                          | Museumplein |
| April 24, 12.45 p.m. – 1.30 p.m.                         | Dam Square  |

*\* = this day I spent from 11.30 a.m. – 3.45 p.m. accompanying a street performer*

In addition to these eight planned observations, I made spontaneous observations in the city whenever I crossed paths with a busker. While walking through the city, waiting for friends or going out to a restaurant or bar, I kept my eyes open and took notes whenever I observed a street performance. These spontaneous observations also took place at Leidseplein and Rembrandtplein and even resulted in some interesting observations in places one would not expect it, such as Reguliersdwarsstraat (where it is not allowed to play percussion) and Bos en Lommerplein (on a rainy day when almost nobody was around).

During the planned observations, I focused on gathering different sorts of data. First of all, I took notes on my phone of what type of busker I observed and in which place and time. Secondly, I tried to observe the interactions that took place. Here, I focused on people who were showing some form of engagement with the performance, this could be by standing still and watching, but also in more overt ways, such as by giving money or snapping pictures and recording videos. Although focusing on these interactions result in an understanding of what types of interactions occur, it omits the encounters that do not occur. In other words, by observing the interactions, a blind spot arises for those who ignore the street performers. Thirdly, I took into account other events and factors of the physical environment. For

example, I took notes of the weather, but also whether there were demonstrations going on or other occurrences that may affect buskers.

### Data analysis

After having collected and transcribed all this data, *Atlas.ti* was used to carry out the thematic analysis. Thematic analyses are fit to reveal how phenomena relate to one another. As Lefebvre's social space consists of three dimensions (conceived, lived and perceived space), doing a thematic analysis would reveal how different themes connect to these dimensions, while at the same time showing how these three dimensions relate to one another. To ensure the analysis would be carried out properly, I analysed the data in four rounds.

The first round of data analysis was mostly of explorative nature. While rereading all transcripts and observations, some initial themes arose. For instance, I used the preliminary codes of 'interaction', 'street artist' and 'Dam: descriptive' to highlight which excerpts were talking about interaction in general, which street artists an interviewee remembered or general descriptions of Dam Square. However, this did not suffice, as these codes were still very generic and many different quotes and excerpts fitted into the same category. Therefore, the second round of analysis was used to further specify the codes. Here, for instance, I distinguished between different types of interactions (e.g. 'giving money', 'chatting', 'avoiding', et cetera), street artists (e.g. 'Dam: living statue' or 'Museumplein: musician') and descriptives (e.g. 'Dam: amenities' or 'Leidseplein: location'). These specified codes revealed two things. First of all, many more different codes arose, meaning that the interviewees had strongly diverging ideas and experiences regarding public space and buskers. Secondly, it revealed how respondents positioned themselves in relation to street performances. It became evident that some respondents geared more towards a negative experience, whereas others held more neutral or positive attitudes. The third round of coding was used to 'fine tune' the coding of the second round. As described above, many codes derived from the second round. The third round disclosed that many codes could be merged, whereas others were redundant. For instance, separate codes were used for 'interaction: standing still' and 'interaction: watching'. For the latter, some interviewees explicitly expressed that, on occasion, they would actively watch and enjoy a performance and despite the fact that those excerpts from the code 'interaction: standing still' did not explicitly mention they were actively watching, we can assume that if one is saying they are standing still, they are doing so to engage with the performance in one way or the other given the context of the question asked. Hence, these codes were merged. After the third round of finetuning, the fourth and final round of the analysis process related to creating 'code groups'. *Atlas.ti* allows its users to create 'code groups' which consist of various codes that relate to that code group. To facilitate the writing of the results-section of this research project, I created three code groups: conceived space, lived space and perceived space. In this round, I reconsidered every single code and its quotes to decide to which code group(s) it belonged. Some codes, such as those regarding policy, only related to one code group (conceived space). However, the code 'Dam: descriptive:

transport node' was categorized both under lived and perceived space, as the codes not only describe physical circumstances which pertain to perceived space, but also how this spatial quality affected the way interviewees valued this space through lived space.

### Operationalization

In preparation of the semi-structured interviews and participant observations, the concept of social space demanded operationalization. While reading through Lefebvre (1991 [1974]), it became clear that his take on social space is rather philosophical and abstract. Therefore, the theoretical framework provides an overview of various authors (McCann, 1999; Carp, 2008; Mee Kam et al., 2010; Petersen & Minnery, 2013; Jiménez Pacheco, 2018) who each operationalized the abstract concept in their own ways to serve their own research endeavours.

Lefebvre (1991 [1974], p. 40) defines perceived space as “the practical basis of the perception of the outside world”. In Lefebvre’s understanding, it is the use of the body, specifically its sensory organs, that create perceived space. It is about what people see, feel, taste, smell and hear. These sensory, embodied experiences create the perceived space and help people to understand and interpret the spaces they are in (Carp, 2008). The physical world and our sensory organs help us to distinguish one place from another. Briefly put; perceived space deals with the ways in which people interpret space. Both participant observation and interviewing can help unravel such spatial perceptions. Participant observation allows me, as a researcher, to go to places and interpret them myself. As I can only make observations from my own sensory experience, interviews help to supplement my individual perceptions. Through interviewing, I managed to unravel the perceived space of others, which cumulatively creates a comprehensive understanding of how different stakeholders perceive the places under research. These perceptions can either relate to tangible objects, such as physical objects in that space, or to abstract ideas, such as emotions that are evoked at a specific place. While the first relates to perceived space, the second relates to the lived space. Lived space relates to how people experience spaces and events that occur within these spaces (McCann, 1999). Using participant observation revealed my own experience within different spaces, but it is mostly the experience of my interviewees that are of relevance. Therefore, while carrying out the interviews, I distinguished between these two types of space: the perceived and the lived. While the first is more likely to be factual, as it is about what is actually present in the physical world, the latter is much more subjective. After all, the physical objects and events that occur in the world, are interpreted and experienced differently, causing diverging ideas and emotions that are attached to that place. In sum, both during my observations and interviews I distinguished between the physical and the metaphysical, the objective and the subjective and the facts and the feelings. Additionally, and a little easier to distinguish, I used policy documents and the interview with municipal employees to understand how buskers relate to conceived space. Talking about conceived space can consist of both factual and subjective language use, as it relates to the more abstract configurations of space as it is right now, or how it should be. The table below schematically represents

the operationalization of social space. Moreover, Appendix C provides an overview of which questions I asked in order to invoke all three dimensions of social space.

*Table 3: operationalization of the dimensions of social space.*

|                    | <b>Conceived space</b><br>(how is space thought of?)   | <b>Lived space</b> (how is space experienced?)   | <b>Perceived space</b> (what is really there and how is space used?)                                 |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| Type of experience | Abstract ideas → how is this place ought to function?  | Emotional/affective experience → how do you feel about that?   | Sensory experience → what do you see, hear, smell, taste or feel?                                    |
| Language use       | Subjective and factual language use, e.g. <i>these are the rules right now, but we may need to tighten them.</i> | Subjective language use, e.g. <i>it seemed as if they were having fun, because the children had smiles on their faces.</i> | Factual language use, e.g. <i>there were five people watching the living statue for two minutes.</i> |
| Contestability     | Contestable; more diverging conceptions.   | Contestable; more diverging experiences.   | Hard to contest; more uniformity.  |

### Ethical considerations

In communication prior to the interviews, respondents were informed about the procedure and an overview of the content. Hence, all interviewees were aware of the topics that would be discussed during the interview and they knew that the interviews would be audiorecorded. However, to make sure respondents felt fine with being audiorecorded, I repeated this question before starting the interviews. All respondents gave consent twice. Additionally, in a similar fashion, I gave notice that the interviews would be processed in a way that would ensure anonymity. All names, addresses and contact details that would allow one to be able to deduce the identity of the respondents, therefore, have been deleted from the transcripts. In the results section, the respondents are referenced according to their respondent number as shown in the respondent table (table 1).

Furthermore, both in the email and at the beginning and end of the interview, I informed my respondents about the opportunity to look into the transcripts. This would have provided them the option to rectify or change some of their comments after the interview if deemed desirable. However, none of the interviewees expressed the desire to look into the transcripts and, therefore, none of the transcripts were edited after they were processed.

## Results

This section highlights the results that derived from the fieldwork (e.g. semi-structured interviewing and observing) in an effort to answer the main question at stake. While analysing the data using *Atlas.ti*, all codes were placed into code groups that either related to perceived, lived or conceived space to grasp how the interviewees' utterings relate to Lefebvre's (1991 [1974]) spatial triad. This section, then, is structured as follows: it starts off by showcasing how interviewees perceive different public spaces in Amsterdam, with a focus on Dam Square, Museumplein and Leidseplein, as these were the three most frequently discussed squares in which busking seems to occur. After having illustrated how these places are perceived, I then delve into the dimension of lived space, where personal experiences and meanings related to street performances are dissected in order to grasp the affective relations the interviewees have with Amsterdam's public space and its street performers. Although the research question places everyday use of the places under scrutiny in Amsterdam central, the dimension of conceived space is also briefly touched upon. After all, the relationship between perceived, lived and conceived space is reciprocal and, therefore, the more abstract notion of conceived space has implications on how actual spaces are perceived and lived. As these three dimensions are the cornerstones of Lefebvre's *social space*, the final section sums up the most important results in order to understand *how* street performers contribute to social space. In order to make this section easy to read, large quotes and excerpts are put in boxes.

### Perceived space

Perceived space, or 'spatial practices', as coined by Lefebvre (1991 [1974], p. 38) relates to the link "between daily reality [...] and urban reality". In other words, as explained in the theoretical framework, perceived space deals with the depictions of spaces in the individual's minds, which derives from personal experiences, as well as the stories of others that are spread through media (e.g. pictures, movies, music, travel blogs, etc.) or word of mouth communication (McCann, 1999; Carp, 2008). Perceived space is about those sensory experiences that affect how spaces are being used (McCann, 1999).

In an effort to understand *how* street performers are related to the perceived spaces they use as their urban stage, I first prompted some of my interviewees (R1, R3, R4, R5, R7, R11, R12, R13, R15, R16, R17, R18 (residents and employees)) to describe the places that were central to their respective interview. The task given to the respondents was to explain how they would describe that place to someone who had never been to that specific place. By formulating the question as open-ended as possible, interviewees were prompted to describe the given place exactly as they perceive it.

The answers to this question can be categorized into roughly four categories: physical landscape, functionality, geography and miscellaneous. Box 1, on the right, shows how R3 explicitly addresses all three main categories. Firstly, and by far the most common theme that arose, almost all respondents that were asked this question discussed at least one thing related to the physical environment of that place to describe that place. Among others, this relates to the aesthetics of that place, such as the cobblestones (R4), using descriptive words such as ‘beautiful’ (R11) or describing it as an “open and spacious place in a relatively dense city” (R13).

However, it was only about Dam Square where the aesthetics of the physical environment were mentioned. Amenities seem to be far more important: for the Dam several mentioned the palace (R1, R3, R12, R13) and shopping amenities such as the Bijenkorf (R1, R12); for Museumplein the multiple museums were mentioned (R7, R17, R18) and for Leidseplein the focus is on recreational facilities (R15).

Secondly, almost all respondents described the functions of the places at stake. In this case, they discuss how the space is used in reality, not how it ought to be used. R13 illustrates how the Dam “has become a place to demonstrate”. He continues by arguing that “it is definitely these past couple of years obviously much more common”. R3 supports this view of an incessant growth of demonstrations: “Dam Square used to be very open and accessible for everything and everyone. Over the years we have continuously had to deal with demonstrations [...] there are over 900 recorded demonstrations on Dam Square each year”. R4 goes bit deeper in detail in explaining this, as box 2 below shows. In addition to the recently growing amount of demonstrations on Dam Square, some also point to the annual memorial

*Box 1: R3 describing how he perceives Dam Square*

“Yes, as far I experience it, it is a place where lots of people come together [functionality]. A very centrally located point [geography] in Amsterdam. But [it is] a place that is not being used for what it was initially built for. It is a monumental dam, is what I’d say. There are lots of memorials, demonstrations [functionality]. It is the backyard of the royal palace [physical landscape], that as well, as it was intended for originally and the Dam as it originally was designed to retain the water. [...] That is because it is located so centrally [geography] and because the centre has attuned to tourism in the past decades, the shops [physical landscape/functionality] have changed and that is why you see so many tourists walking across Dam Square and a lot less tourism in the Pijp or West or Oost. That is not so strange, because this [Dam Square] is a place where everything comes together from Central Station [geography]. [...]”

*Box 2: R4 describing the diversity of demonstrations on Dam Square*

“The ‘centre of the centre’, because that is what it [Dam Square] is. It is a bit like the birth place. A lot happens: demonstrations about all sorts of topics: against the COVID regulations, Ukraine every weekend. There is always something to do, like the Israeli and Palestinians who tell their stories. Have you seen them? [...] Yes, if one is there, than the other one is there, too. I always call it the ‘national square’ of the Netherlands. If there is something going on, you see it back on Dam Square. [...] But also the Black Lives Matter... I had to work then, so I could not go, even though I am very much in favour. [...]”

on May 4<sup>th</sup> (R1, R3, R12, R13). Museumplein as well is described as a noteworthy place for such demonstrations (R7, R16, R18), although R7 stresses that Museumplein, due to its design, is much more multifunctional. This is supported by the fact that all interviewees who talked about Museumplein mentioned (King's Day) festivals and Ajax-inaugurations (when they became national football champions) in addition to demonstrations. Moreover, R7 explains that Museumplein was designed to accommodate a variety of audiences, for instance by including a skate-park, a green area and a marketplace in the design for the square.

For all three squares, some mentioned some topics related to geography as well. This was not necessarily mentioned by many respondents, but it was central to the description of some respondents (R3, R4, R11, R13 and R15). All three places are described as a central location from which it is relatively easy to travel to other places within the city due to the presence of public transport. R7 even makes the claim that a central location could facilitate demonstrations when talking about Museumplein: “[it has] a big field of grass. Or there are demonstrations being held because it is located in the middle of the city”. This is interesting, as it connects two separate attributes of space, showing how spaces are not only multifaceted, but all facets are interdependent.

In addition to these three themes, some mentioned elements of these places in their descriptions that do not fit well into these overarching themes. For example, regarding Dam Square both R1 and R5 included the presence of pigeons and pigeon-feeders in their description and R3 and R4 went into detail describing the historic development of Dam Square. Moreover, Museumplein was once described as a safe space due to the presence of the museums' security guards (R16).

In sum, when being asked to describe these places, the physical landscape, function and geography of these places seem to be most prevalent in people's imaginaries. Only one respondent (R11) included street artists in his description of Dam Square. This is striking, as all respondents received both a short digital introduction before the interview as well as a summary of the research project at the beginning of the interview which explicitly mentioned the subject of this research project. In other words, when asking people who regularly visit Dam Square, Museumplein and/or Leidseplein to describe these places, street performers are, in general, not on top of their mind. Yet, during the interview I asked them to think about the street artists they see in the city. This actually revealed that although buskers may not really be inherently connected to the places respondents were asked to describe, most of them in fact have quite a clear idea on what happens in relation to busking. The table below shows which type of street artists were mentioned for which places:

| Table 4: street artists per place (mentioned by X people) |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Dam Square (8)</b>                                     | <b>Museumplein (6)</b>                                     | <b>Leidseplein (2)</b>                       |
| Musicians:<br>Accordionist (2)<br>Bagpiper (1)            | Musicians:<br>Accordionist*** (0)<br>Classical music** (2) | Musicians:<br>Flautist (1)<br>Undefined* (1) |



|  |   |                                       |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| Pianist (2)<br>Guitarist** (1)<br>Organist (4)<br>Sax-player** (1)<br>Trumpet-player** (1)<br>Undefined* (3)   | Guitarist*** (0)<br>Opera singer*** (0)<br>Saxophonist*** (0)<br>Undefined* (2)<br>Xylophonist*** (0) | Violinist (1)<br>Singer*** (0)        |
| Circus performers:<br>Acrobat (1)<br>Fire-eater (4)<br>Juggler** (2)<br>Magician*** (0)<br>Undefined* (2)  | Circus performers:<br>unmentioned<br>Magician***  | Circus performers:<br>unmentioned     |
| Dancers (3)  | Dancers (1)   | Dancers (1)                           |
| Living statues/actors:<br>Grim Reaper** (2)<br>Jack Sparrow*** (0)<br>Silver/golden man** (2)<br>Undefined* (5)  | Living statues/actors:<br>Van Gogh (1)  | Living statues/actors:<br>unmentioned |
| Street footballer (1)  | Street footballer: unmentioned  | Street footballer (2)                 |
| * = interviewee did not define what type of music, circus act or living statue it was.<br>** = observed by both respondent and during observations<br>*** = not mentioned by respondents, but observed during observations |   |                                       |

Table 4 shows that despite the fact that none of these street artists were explicitly mentioned in the initial descriptions (except by R11), explicitly invoking the interviewees to tell me about street artists, every single respondent was able to mention at least one specific busker. Box 3 (next page) reveals how, even though R4 did not mention a single artist in his description of Dam Square, he recollected, in quite some detail, what happened on Dam Square before. Dam Square by far shows the highest variety of street artists (table 4). However, this is also the place that was discussed mostly during the interviews. Moreover, Rembrandtplein is left out of this table, although it is a place of which one

*Box 3: R4 narrating his memories of buskers on Dam Square*

“[...] Well, ‘artist’ may be a big word. Those standing people [referring to living statues]. [...] Yes, those I see regularly. And in the past we used to have people who made music, but they were from Eastern Europe and did not have a license. [...] I remember... When was it? It were Spanish people, they used to stand in front of the pharmacy and they were singing with guitars and what not, very exciting. But they got sent away because they did not have a license. I believe those people were travelling the world performing. [...] Occasionally there is a fire-eater. He has a small speaker and a complete system. He has a PA [personal assistant], so he has support and he usually has a very large crowd... He knows how to attract people. He throws fire and all sorts of items. That you have occasionally. The gypsies with the *trekzakken* [Dutch expression for accordion]. That is a bit less, but still sometimes. I appreciate that sort of music. [...] Furthermore those guys playing the guitar, you don’t see them very often. So *standing stone* [referring to living statues] and the fire-eater. Those are the things I have... and sometimes an organ, that is also a street performer.”

person (R11) was able to recount the presence of several street musicians, in addition to the participant observation which revealed the presence of a cellist, but also a sax-player and a graffiti artist and a caricaturist who sell their work. The fact that almost none of the respondents mentioned street artists in their descriptions (except for R11), but every single respondent is able to provide at least one street artist when asked to do so, may be attributed to an extent of invisibilization (Margier, 2021). There seems to be a one-sided relation in which specific street artists are intertwined with specific places, while at the same time these places are not inseparably connected to the presence of (a) specific busker(s).

One final finding regarding spatial practices and perceived space is related to the vicinity and amount of visits to these places in everyday life. In general, respondents who work or live closer to these specific places and frequent them more often, are able to be more specific in their descriptions of the performances they have seen. For instance, R4, who has been working in a hotel adjacent to Dam Square for almost 20 years, recited the following story after being asked to tell me about the street artists he had seen: “[...] it were Spanish people, they used to stand in front of the pharmacy, and they were singing while playing the guitar. Very fun! However, they were sent away, because they did not have a permit. I believe they were travelling the globe doing (street) performances.” Similarly, R3, who has been working for a café adjacent to Dam Square for almost his whole life, was able to recount a story from several years ago: “We used to have an accordionist who regularly played on our terrace and passed the hat around afterwards. That was a man we knew of whom we allowed that.” In opposition, while interviewing R12 and R13, where R12 very recently moved from De Pijp to a street adjacent to Dam Square and R13 lives in the eastern part of Amsterdam, but passes the Dam once or twice a week for social activities, it became clear it was harder to get very concrete about what they saw: R13: “[...] or those costume? People in those costumes?” R12: “Yes, those living statues, those you can see very often. You see them a lot on the Dam”. Interviewer: “Do you know what kind of statues, what they look like?” R12: “I believe they are always [dressed] in gold or silver.” The same applies for R11. Although he did include street artists in his description of Dam Square, he remains somewhat vague and seemed to be

unable to give concrete examples of exactly what he saw on Dam Square, which he passes about four to five times a month: “Well, what I said, the living statues on Dam Square. They are always there. Artists who a demonstration... there is a lot for Ukraine, so there is some sort of band playing there.” However, immediately following this, he gets quite specific about what he has seen on Rembrandtplein, which he regularly visits to do his groceries: “[...] I am thinking of Rembrandtplein and what I see there. That must be the duos or the solos who are playing the violing, the flute or the saxophone.” Although it is hard to generalize from relatively few interviews, it seems to be the case that the amount of exposure to street performances, which can be affected by vicinity and rhythms, affects whether street performers are rather anonymous people performing a certain art or become familiar faces with their own identities.

## Lived space

### The meaning of place through its spatial attributes

Lived space, or representational space (1991 [1974], p. 39), is defined as “space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’ [...]” In other words, lived space deals with mental ideas associated with specific places, whereas perceived space is created by sensory experiences by these ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’ of space. Therefore, this section reveals how the interviewees feel about the places under scrutiny. Additionally, I include the perspective of four street artists (R2, R6, R8 and R14) to better understand how different perspectives on lived space can lead to contesting ideas on the right to the city.

Spaces can accrue meaning through a wide variety of diverging phenomena. Just as for perceived space, meaning can derive from personal experiences, but also from stories as told by others. To understand what these places mean to my interviewees, I prompted them to narrate their likes and dislikes of that specific place, which helps to gain understanding in how these places are valued and by which phenomena. Where, generally speaking, the question related to perceived space (*e.g.* how would you describe this place?) was much more neutral and invoked more descriptive-typed answers, the questions to understand how these places are actually lived (*e.g.* what do you (dis)like about this place?) are filled with personal values and ideas on what these places are or ought to be. Once again, not including street artists in this question was a conscious decision, as posing a more open-ended question would provide interviewees with more flexibility in their answers. Later on in the interview, I explicitly asked the resident- and employee-group how they felt about street performers and how they dealt with it in their everyday lives.

Asking which aspects of places are appreciated and which aspects result in a sense of aversion, brought about much more diverging answers than asking for a more value-free description. Whereas in the latter case there were at least three themes (physical environment, functionality and geography) that appeared to occur for all places under scrutiny, with of course some miscellaneous descriptives such as the presence of pigeons on Dam Square, the question of likes and dislikes shows there is a lot less

consensus in how these places are experienced on a day-to-day basis. Despite this divergence, there are some notable results.

First of all, some positive and negative aspects seem to be two sides of the same coin. R7 explained this quite explicitly while talking about the multifunctionality of Museumplein. Although this is something she values, it can also be concerning (box 4). Another such paradox that came back regularly was the crowdedness of Dam Square. Several interviewees mentioned that

*Box 4: R7 on the tensions that derive from Museumplein's multifunctionality*

“[...] it also brings about tensions. Everyone considers it [Museumplein] as his or her square, that they have the right to use it the way they want, but that is not possible. That is conflicting. [...] Now I am really talking about all the functions I mentioned before, including the events, the demonstrations, everything. But also, for instance, the skater s who skate under the Stedelijk [Stedelijk Museum] ... Especially in times of COVID there was a lot of skating, but not everyone was happy about that, but yes, there is space, it [Museumplein] is empty. So that conflicts.”

mass tourism-induced changes in amenities made several place boring to visit for Amsterdammers. At the same time R4 explained that despite the sense that this overcrowding may result in some sort of anonymity, which is not always desirable, he also argues this melting pot of a diverse crowd “makes that it [Dam Square] is claimed by nobody and that it consequently is a positive square”. Moreover, R13 also mentioned the two sides of this crowdedness-coin: while stating that he did not appreciate the fact that the square can be quite busy, it is also an open space in an otherwise narrow and dense city which allows him to breathe and look up to the skies. Briefly put, none of the three places have one particular aspect that is commonly considered either positive or negative, as various spatial aspects, such as crowdedness, spatiality and amenities, are ambivalent.

However, the analysis reveals the significance of perspective. Although the tram passing Leidseplein has resulted in a decrease in the square's beauty according to R15, it has resulted in an increase in accessibility which is useful for him as a resident. The tram is functional from this perspective. On the contrary, this tramway is a nuisance for street artists themselves, as explained by both R8 and R14, as it hinders their way of using urban space as their stage. This is clearly illustrated by R8 who discussed the redesign of Leidseplein several years (2014) ago: “The lanterns were the edge

*Box 5: R18 explaining how rhythms affect lived space*

“The question is: what are my needs? [...] Who am I? In the sense of: am I [name], I am walking under the passage of the Rijksmuseum and I see that string quartet that I have never heard before and it makes me feel rich, free and happy, because I am walking through the passage and I see street musicians. Or am I [name] the security guard who is standing at the ticketing booth who realizes that the street musician who is performing, is only playing two [different] songs. [...] Am I the pedestrian who is walking through that passage and is basically forced to walk on the biking lane because the sidewalk is packed with people watching the street musician. [...] Or am I the cyclist who is constantly concerned with those annoying pedestrians who may jump [on the biking lane] at any moment. Or am I that person who has been pickpocketed who knows: if I’m standing to watch [the performance], I am a vulnerable tourist who is not paying attention which allows me to be pickpocketed. Or am I the [police] agent who comes to take that declaration.”

of your audience. A very nice place. Tramways relocated a little. Now it is smaller. Now it is an awkwardly small funnel. What a waste. It is just completely messed up.” The notion that the meaning of a place and all the attributes of that place depends on one’s relation to that place, is supported by R18 (box 5). This story reflects exactly the issue that is at stake when it comes to lived space: different people possess a varying degree of interests when it comes to the use of public space and the meanings they adhere to these public spaces. In addition, it is not only different people who have different interests, but it is also within individuals that the meaning and usage of space can vary over time. In other words, rhythm and daily routine can affect the interpretation of space. Take the following example: if I were to ride my bike under the Rijksmuseum’s passage in order to get to work quickly because I am running late, I should pay attention to what is happening on the biking lane. In this particular case, the presence of street performers indeed may distract pedestrians who end up ‘jumping’ on the biking lane to avoid audiences who block the sidewalk. Yet, if I were to walk through the passage on a sunny Saturday as I am meeting a friend for lunch on Museumplein, I may actually enjoy the presence of these same audiences and the music played by the string quartet. Hence, lived space is relational to rhythms, but also determined by the relations between different types of users. Therefore, in order to fully grasp how street artists may affect the notion of lived space, we now turn to the interactions between street artists and their potential audiences (passers-by, whether this be residents, people heading to work or short- or long-stay visitors).

*The significance of encounters*

During interviews with both residents & employees and street artists, I addressed the topic of interaction. After all, interactions and encounters can play an important role in contributing to the meaning of space (McCann, 1999; Mee Kam et al., 2010; Petersen & Minnery, 2013). The degree of interaction between passers-by and buskers ranges from zero interaction to very explicitly positive or negative encounters. For instance, when asking R11 whether he ever had interactions with street performers, he shook his head, meaning he did not. However, he later continued expressing that occasionally he would slow down

or watch if the quality was formidable. Later, he confirmed the point made in the previous paragraph. When I asked him about the reason for usually continuing to walk, he said the following: “Because I have another goal than listening to street musicians. It is just a part of the city. I often have, when walking through the city, a specific goal in mind. Often times that is not to listen to street musicians.” R17 supports this view: “I think it depends on what it is and how spectacular it is. You see, [you can] continue walking for musicians, I think, because you can hear that while you are walking. If someone performs a magic trick or someone with a football, then I can stay to watch because I am curious to see what is going to happen.” For several other interviewees, something similar applies. Whether they slow down or even stand still to actively engage with a street performance is dependent on a number of factors: the reason they are out on the streets (as determined by spatio-temporal rhythms), the quality of the performance and the type of street act that is being performed. Continuing from those instances where respondents said they would actively engage, I was curious how this encounter continued: did they remain rather passive observers, or did they actively engage with the busker(s) through giving compliments, chatting, giving money or other forms of interaction? Once again, there is a high degree of variation from those saying that if they watch and have money, they always give something (R4, R5), to those claiming they rarely have money on them (R1) or think it is not really worth it (R12).

Among the interviewees, there were some who explicitly narrated about encounters of a more negative nature (R3, R5, R16, R17 & R18). R3, R5 and R18 in particular expressed a considerable negative attitude towards street artists. However, this was mainly due to the invasive nature of some street artists specifically. For example, R3 explained that on several occasions he had to send buskers away from his terrace: “Yes, I have regularly had to send people away because I found that what they did, did not match with my terrace and our appearance. Moreover, not everyone who is [sitting and relaxing] on the terrace asked for it. That is why I send them away at times.” Later he went on to explain that it was mainly the sound that could be of invasive nature. This was supported by multiple respondents (R16, R17, R18). In these cases, they explicitly stated that when being exposed to street performers (in particular, musicians), one is unable to escape that situation which results in annoyance. Furthermore, annoyance is often caused by the repetitive nature of such performances (R5, R16, R17 & R18). Although passers-by may appreciate the music while being on the go, standing in that same spot for several hours reveals that some musicians only have a repertoire that consists of two or three songs.

The interviewed street artists themselves expressed that most encounters they have, are generally experienced in a positive ways. R14 recounts a story in which someone who recently moved to Amsterdam thanked him: “Lots of newcomers, we played a lot for newcomers. A lot of newcomers who came to live in Amsterdam and later told me... later approached me saying: ‘I enjoyed you so much and I was just new to Amsterdam and basically had nowhere to go to, so I just went to Leidseplein and watched you and the ambiance and show always made me happy.’ So there were a lot of newcomers who appreciated that.” This story is particularly captivating regarding lived space, as it not only shows how these newcomers gave meaning to a place and the events that occurred within them, but it also

shows how street artists themselves seem to attach spatially-embedded encounters that invokes a certain emotion. However, all four street artists were also able to tell me about at least one negative encounter, which related to drunk and aggressive people (R6), being interrupted by disrespectful behaviour (R2, R8, R14) and interactions with law enforcement (R6, R8, R14).

### Busking as part of urban identity

I asked the resident- & employee-group whether they felt buskers were an enrichment to the city and whether they considered it part of Amsterdam's identity. R1, R4, R7, R11, R12, R13 and R17 agreed with the fact that it enriches the city. R4 metaphorically explained that the buskers are similar to 'flowers', it is something that puts a smile on people's faces. He deemed it particularly valuable as he felt that Amsterdam has lost its former edge, which he appreciated so much: "Things are going good for Amsterdam: she has a Gucci bag, wears Prada shoes and sits her ass in a big fat Mercedes. [However,] she used to be beautiful and hot and she had big tits, but she was not very happy. Luckily, Amsterdam has become a wealthy city, but it is boring. That is good, though: boring is good." Both R3, R5 and R15 argued that busking could be of added value, as long as it does not get annoying. And this nuisance, in general, is determined by the invasiveness of the sound and crowdedness it creates in the personal space. Even though only three respondents explicitly mentioned that this invasiveness determines whether busking can enrich the city or result in annoyance, every single respondent mentioned that they would not be happy with street artists closer to their homes. Here, then, some sort of NIMBYism arises: the respondents express a generally positive attitude towards street artists, yet, they do not desire them to be too much in their personal spaces. Although this may seem paradoxical, R18 clearly explains that such a paradox does not exist: "At the moment a street musician is playing somewhere I do not live or work, where I can leave, where it is my own choice, then I might like it. If I do not like it, then I leave." In sum, then, busking has the risk to contaminate the meaning of space for those people who are involuntarily exposed to such performances. When there is a choice, it is generally considered a positive addition to a place that can create a positive, free and happy atmosphere.

Finally, when asking the interviewees whether busking was deemed part of Amsterdam's identity, the answers appear to be quite divergent. R11 noted that busking fits with Amsterdam's identity as it is an performance of artistic expression which fits in Amsterdam's liberal nature. R15 supports this view by showing that historically it has been a phenomenon in the city. Some are more hesitant, though. Especially in comparison to other (European) cities, such as Paris or London, they (R12, R13, R17) feel like it is not something that should be inextricably linked to Amsterdam. R11 adds to this by suggesting that the phenomenon itself maybe is more tied to urban space in specific parts of the world instead of Amsterdam per se.

To conclude, the results seem to point towards a differentiated extent in which buskers can affect the individual's lived space. After all, people working in places where they are exposed to street

performances (R16, R17, R18), mainly of musical nature, express the inability to escape from these places when annoyance or nuisance occurs. On the other hand, residents appear to have consensus that in general they pay little attention to street performers, as they often encounter them when they are on their way from one place to the other. Therefore, for them, busking has a more limited contribution to lived space. Hence, the extent of options that allows one to be (in)voluntarily exposed to street art (and its concomitant side-effects) affects the way such encounters are experienced and, hence, give meaning to these places.

### Conceived space

Although this research project mainly focuses on how street artists are induced with the (re)production of perceived and lived space, the results also reveal some interesting points in relation to conceived space, or representations of space (1991 [1974], p. 38). Whereas the other two dimensions of social space have a stronger focus on everyday practices, experiences and meanings, conceived space aims to describe more abstract conceptions of space. It describes how places *ought to be* and, hence, is the result of those who can affect legal proceedings and policy-related effects that are spatially embedded. People who produce conceived space are those who theorize space, such as policy-makers and experts.

The respondents include three municipal employees, two of which who work for financial affairs (R9, R10) and one of which works as an area broker (R7). Interestingly enough, R10 described he recently started working on (re)configuring policy related to busking and buskers. He explained this was the perfect moment, as after COVID-restrictions had eased in Europe and the number of visitors were on the rise again, it was time to evaluate (economic) activities that occur in Amsterdam's public space. According to R9 and R10, the COVID-period especially revealed how Amsterdammers valued public space when it was relatively empty. As a result of the global pandemic, many activities in public (and private) space were banned for a certain time, amongst which busking was one (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020; Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021). Although no official documentation can be found about the extension of the ban on busking, the official website of Amsterdam (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022) mentioned the ban was in place until March 7 2022. However, it seems no official by-law or change in this situation has been officially released ever since: the statement that it was banned until March 7 2022 just disappeared from the municipal's website. According to the by-laws (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020; Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021) the ban was introduced because street performances had the risk of bringing audiences to the street together, which could result in clogging the streets and no longer being able to guarantee 1,5 meters distance between individuals and, hence, had a chance to spread COVID-19 in public space. In other words, the decision to (temporarily) ban busking was legitimized by a health-discourse in which any governmental decision and (change in) by-law should be instigated to ensure public health. From this we can deduce that the Amsterdam government deemed the act of busking to pose a sufficient threat to public health which justifies the imposed ban.



However, R9 and R10 demonstrate how the government has not yet determined a clear direction for the place of street artists in Amsterdam's public space. R9 explained this in the following way: "It [policy] is all sectoral [meaning that policy regarding to specific topics in general applies to the whole city]. [...] What we are running into [now], is that if we observe that some things should be less, this sectoral policy is insufficient to revoke or reject licences. Because it [rejecting or revoking a license] is usually not on the grounds that that activity is dangerous, causes public order or traffic safety related problems, but that it contributes to an accumulation of activities that altogether cause overcrowding and a duration of stay that is too long". He goes on to explain that in addition to sectoral policy, the city needs to determine which functions should be prioritized in which places. Consequently, this should create a spatially-differentiated hierarchy in which some activities are deemed more desirable in specific places than others, which would facilitate and legitimize further interventions to be undertaken when nuisance or complaints come to the surface. What this requires, is a clear understanding of how public space in Amsterdam is used and which places should prioritize which functions, although R9 already shows that bike parking should always be top priority. Despite that there still may be some unclarity as to which public spaces should prioritize which functions, there already is some differentiation in by-laws regarding street performances. Since 2008 (Overheid, n.d.), by-laws were created for district *Centrum* exclusively. These by-laws formulated rules regarding in which places busking was allowed, under which circumstances (such as the use of amplifiers) and at which times. Although the first version of the in 2008 created APV (General Municipal By-laws) (Overheid, n.d.) already defined certain conditions for buskers, these conditions have been revised in 2013 as a result of complaints filed by residents of the *Centrum* district (Het Parool, 2013). At this point, the by-laws can be found on the website of the municipality (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022). Box 6 (next page) illustrates these conditions.

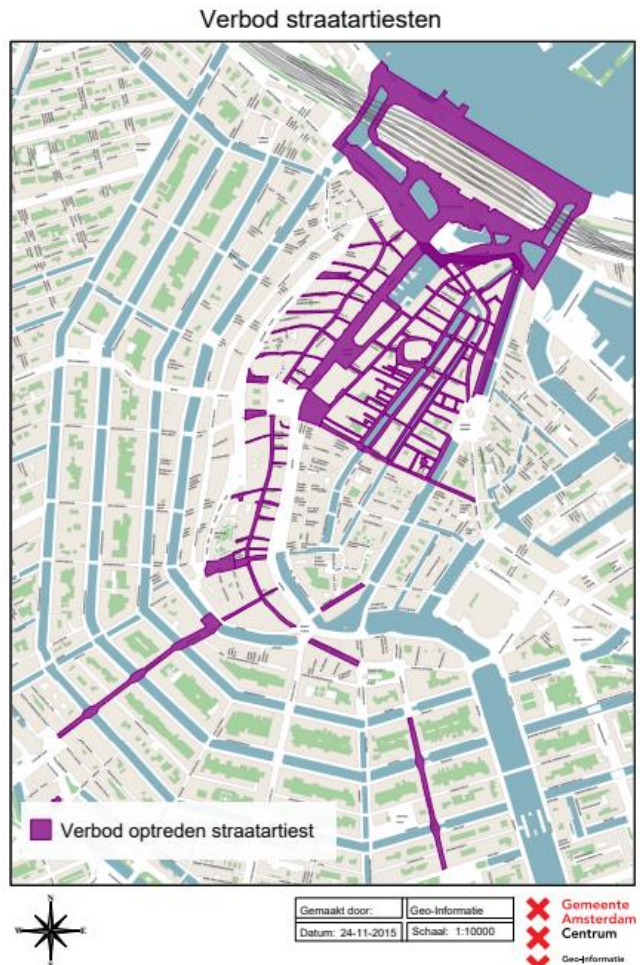
What box 6 and figure 3 perfectly show, is that even though R9 and R10 claim there should be more clarity concerning the prioritization of different functions in different places, the municipality already appears to have a clear conception of space in relation to street artists. These regulations are indeed sectoral and describe the rules for the city as a whole. Yet, there already is some spatial differentiation in which *Centrum* is treated uniquely in comparison to other districts and even within *Centrum* there is differentiation. Moreover, the temporary ban during the COVID-19 pandemic reveals that the temporal aspect should not be overlooked: as specific circumstances may result in a change in by-laws. In sum, then, the contribution of street artists to conceived space differs in space and time. Complaints about sound nuisance (Het Parool, 2013; Karman, 2014) and global events such as the corona-pandemic, may incur changes in the extent of desirability of street performers in public space. What is more, is that the extent in which buskers are considered a nuisance and sufficient complaints are filed to incur such changes in by-laws, seem to differentiate across urban space.

Box 6: the website of Gemeente Amsterdam (2022)

describing the regulations for buskers

“As a street artist or street musician, you do not need a license if you fulfil the following conditions:

- You are allowed to perform with a maximum of 6 people at a time.
- Performances using organs, amplifiers or percussion (such as the drums) are not allowed.
- You are allowed to perform within the timeframe of 09.00 and 23.00 [9 a.m. until 11 p.m.].
- You are allowed to perform at one place for half an hour. Afterwards, you are required to move at least 100 meters.
- In certain areas of district *Centrum*, you are not allowed to perform. The map shows you which areas are included. [see figure 3]



Requesting a license – exclusively in *Centrum*

Figure 3: street artists are not allowed to perform in the purple areas (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022).

Do you want to perform as a street artist in *Centrum*, but you do not fulfil the conditions above? Fill in the online request form:

- You are never allowed to use amplifiers, percussion (drums) or an organ. This is also not allowed when you have a license.
- You are only able to apply for a license in district *Centrum*. In other districts you are not able to apply for a license.”

## Social space

Previous sections separately dissected how buskers contributed to perceived, lived and conceived space, which all three are co-constitutive dimensions of Lefebvre’s (1991 [1974]) understanding of social space. Although treating them separately has attributed to understand in which ways buskers are entangled within different perspectives on space, the concept of social space should be understood in a relational manner. After all, Lefebvre shows how social space is constitutive of three dimensions which all affect each other: they can reproduce, reinforce and contest one another all at the same time. This section sums up how the three different dimensions relate to one another in this research project.

Perceived space and lived space affect one another as the physical attributes of space (perceived space) may affect how one affectively relates to that place (lived space). However, this affective relation can also define how space is understood and, therefore, this relation can work in both directions (Petersen & Minnery, 2013). The three places that were studied in this project, were mostly understood in terms of physical appearance, functionality and geography. As mentioned before, the physical presence of street performers was barely linked to descriptions of these places, although interviewees often were able to renumerate which street artists they ever had seen in those places. Moreover, specifically in the case of negative experiences, respondents could specifically recount with whom they had interacted and what occurrences triggered their annoyance. Hence, the eventual recollection of street artists who were present in real spatio-temporal instances (perceived space), triggered respondents to narrate their negative experience in relation to buskers (lived space). In these specific cases, the workplace turned into a place that, in at least some cases, became synonymous with exposure to busker-induced nuisance. Despite all this, though, it does not appear that these instances are dominant in defining how a place is experienced. After all, R3, R16 and R17 all explicitly expressed how their colleagues and them were regularly exposed to busker-induced nuisance during working time. Yet, R3 still explicitly remarked he thinks the Dam is an “entrepreneurial place”. Hence, although physical real-time events, such as busking, have an effect on how space is experienced temporally, the effect is not necessarily lingering.

The effect the other way around (so the effect of lived space on perceived space) seems to be even weaker. Lived space can affect perceived space, when ideas and meanings of a space affect spatial practices in everyday life (*e.g.* Mee Kam et al. (2010) who show how the symbolic claims regarding the piers made by the English resulted in active avoidance by the local Chinese population). However, the acknowledged presence of street artists does not affect people’s everyday routines. R1, R11 and R17 even explicitly mention they usually do not engage with performances, as that is not the reason they are using public space.

The positionality of the respondents regarding these places (resident, passer-by or employed at this place) appears to be determinant in how buskers affect the experience of place. Hence, despite the fact that street artists seem to have little direct contribution to how space is perceived even though they can be considered as physical attributes of certain places (given that they are present in physical space on a regular basis and can provide a sense of familiarity), they appear to have a more significant impact on how space is lived when experiences are described as more negative. After all, respondents with a more neutral or positive view on busking, generally described the phenomenon of busking as something that is ‘out there’. It is something that they usually do not actively engage with (with some minor exceptions) due to the fact that the places under discussion serve more of a functional purpose (getting from A to B) instead of a leisurely purpose.

These findings can be connected to conceived space, as R9 and R10 both explicitly mention how data regarding buskers and the inclusion of those confronted with their presence on the streets, are

fundamental in the creation of policy and by-laws, which Carp (2008) deemed to be desirable. This is also corroborated by secondary data (Het Parool, 2013; Karman, 2014) that shows how filed complaints eventually resulted in the restriction of amplifiers and places to busk in the changes in by-laws. Hence, conceived space is actively informed by notions of perceived and lived space. As shown, the contribution of buskers to conceived space seems to be fluid, as it changes over space and time. This supports that there is a strong connection between perceived space and lived space, as negative experiences, such as exposure to excessive noise and the overcrowding that may incur due to street performances, in fact have resulted in changes in by-laws and policy over time. Moreover, approaching a phenomenon in the street through policy, requires this phenomenon to be acknowledged as something to be regulated. Policy-makers therefore appear to perceive the presence of buskers which consequently is integrated into visions and ideas about how places are ought to be.

Finally, conceived space affects perceived and lived space through crystallizing in the material reality. For instance, efforts to redesign Leidseplein by renewing the tramlines resulted in the displacement of some street performers earlier on (R8). This specific change made Leidseplein unattractive and uneasy to perform the type of performance R8 (used to) perform. Here, then, the abstract idea of planners turned out to be a harsh reality in which R8 and his friends were (undeliberately) forced to find a new stage (similar to Jiménez Pacheco's (2018) description of how powerful elites in Barcelona have significant influence on the accessibility of the local housing market through their capability to have a transformational impact on the local housing market). Furthermore, efforts to regulate busking (mainly in the city centre) has, according to several respondents (R1, R3, R4, R8), resulted in a decrease and relocation of busking-related activities. R1, who grew up in Amsterdam, told me she had the feeling that when she was younger, busking used to be a lot more common and occurred in far more places. Hence, the creation of by-laws (see box 6 and figure 3) have had actual effects on the extent and ways in which locals are exhibited to buskers.

## Conclusion

This research project focused on the exploring the relation between busking and public space through the integration of Lefebvre's (1991 [1974]) social space as an analytical tool. This section sums up the main conclusions that can be drawn from the results in an effort to answer the research question: *How do buskers contribute to the production of social space?* Semi-structured interviews, participant observation and a small policy review were carried out aiming to disentangle the rather abstract notion of social space. Therefore, conceived, lived and perceived space are initially treated separately in order to better understand how busking affects these different dimensions.

Interestingly, according to R9 and R10, the phenomenon of busking had, for a long period, been underappreciated by the Amsterdam municipality. There used to be limited policy regarding buskers. All policy there was, used to apply to the city as a whole, with only some exceptions made for district Centrum. However, this is the result of decades in which different places within the city (in all districts) were not explicitly given a function. The process of defining a place's (a square, street or park) function, R9 explained, would, in the long run, clarify which functions should be prioritized in which place. Therefore, due to a lack of current policy-instruments, it may be rather unclear where specific events or occurrences (such as busking) are deemed (un)desirable. As a result, the Amsterdam municipality is currently reviewing the issue of place-specific functional hierarchies in an effort to create more clarity on what functions an urban public space should accommodate.

Yet, the municipality has laid down and revised some regulations regarding the act of busking over time. Street performers, thus, have not gone by completely unnoticed by the local government. What becomes apparent, then, is that the extent to which buskers make a contribution to how space is conceived by experts and professionals, is spatially differentiated. After all, it is the Centrum district in which the local government has, on multiple occasions, revised by-laws in order to listen to the complaints of residents. For all other districts, including Zuid where Museumplein is located, the conditions are looser. From this one can draw the conclusion that the contribution of buskers to conceived space is determined by the estimated effect it may have on the liveability of a specific area. Although the Amsterdam case exemplifies this perfectly, since the Centrum district accommodates the both the most buskers as the most busking-related complaints (Versprille, 2013; Karman, 2014), both R9 and R10 explicitly express the need for a better integration of phenomena that occur in public space (amongst which busking) into policy-making.

Similar to conceived space, there also appears to be differentiation regarding the contribution of buskers to lived space. This differentiation was explicitly addressed by R18 and lies in the degree to which one is able to choose whether one wants to be exposed to street artists or not. In other words, when working or living in a place where one can not avoid street artists, it is more likely that street artists have a negative impact on the individual's lived space. Therefore, it is interesting that those who strongly demonstrated a considerably negative attitude towards busking, are those who are mainly

exposed to street performers during their working hours (R3, R16, R17, R18). This finding was further corroborated by the NIMBYism the resident-group expressed when being asked how they would feel about street performers busking closer to their home. Except for R11, who already lives in one of Amsterdam's busiest streets, all residents expressed they would rather not have street artists be present in front of their own doorsteps.

On the other side of the coin, those who were less often exposed to street performers, expressed a more neutral or positive attitude towards street artists. In general, quality was the most common determinant for whether an act was considered to add value to the experience of that place. However, even though multiple respondents mentioned that various buskers in Amsterdam are of high quality, most of them barely interact or engage with these performers. This can be explained by the fact that most respondents are on their way from one place to the other when they encounter street performers. Therefore, aside from slowing down their pace, they generally do not tend to actively watch such performances. Still, when asking how this compared to experiences on holidays or in other cities, it became apparent that, for most, this was of influence. After all, when spending leisure time abroad, one is not in a hurry to go places and it adds to the experience of the city. In conclusion, then, for these people street artists appear to be 'just part of urban life', a phenomenon to be 'out there' rather than 'defining urban life'.

Although street performers contribute to conceived space and lived space in diverging ways and to different extents, the contribution to perceived space is much more clear-cut and uniform. Whilst describing the places under study, all (except one) interviewees did not explicitly mention street artists as being part of that place. Rather, they focussed on the design of physical space, functional attributes of that place and its amenities and geographical features, such as accessibility. This further supports the conclusion drawn in the previous paragraph: even though interviewees are aware of the existence of several street artists (see table 4), they initially do not connect these places to street artists. In other words, these spaces are defined by their physical design, functionality and geography rather than street artists. Yet, some street artists occasionally seem to provide some sort of familiarity because they can often be found in the same place.

Social space, deriving from the mutual relationships between conceived, lived and perceived space, is not defined by street artists. However, this is not to say that respondents are not aware of their presence. They, in fact, are very aware of their existence. Yet, for policy-makers it had not been a priority for decades. There has been an apparent shift, though, according to R9, which resulted in a sense of urgency to revise policy and integrate several activities happening in public space in new policy endeavours, amongst which busking. Similarly, for those having more neutral or positive views of street performers, busking seems to have limited effects on how places are experienced. It does, in general, not result in meaningful encounters and these places appear to accrue meaning through different means, such as the fact that it is on their daily route to their work, it offers them the opportunity to go shopping or it is a place they visit to relax. Put differently, engaging with street artists is on nobody's agenda,

although they are regularly exposed to them and are familiar with some of their faces. Street performances may also result in nuisance or frustration, yet, this (almost) exclusively seems to arise from situations where one is unable to escape. Whereas respondents expressing a more neutral or positive attitude remained rather generic or vague in their descriptions, it were those with negative experiences who were able to recount in detail what type of performance they experienced and why it resulted in instances of annoyance. To wrap up, buskers have different ways of affecting the three dimensions of social space, which varies across people. This variation can be explained by rhythmic differences in daily routines which determine in what way people experience public space and the buskers contained within these places.

## Discussion

This research project adopted Lefebvre's (1991 [1974]) concept of social space in order to understand how buskers are embedded within urban public space. A mixed-methods approach was used, in which both semi-structured interviews and participant observations were carried out in order to shed light in the phenomenon through diverging means. Additionally, participant observation allowed me as a researcher to personally experience what the interviewees experience on a regular basis (e.g. encountering street performers) and in the interviews I was able to introduce topics that I encountered during my observations. Although Amsterdam may not be the most extreme case when it comes to performances *en public*, it, therefore, may serve as a critical case. As this research project was of rather explorative nature (since no research project has been carried out on the relation between public space and busking before), it may be interesting for future research endeavours to compare Amsterdam to other cities in which busking is part of everyday urban life, but to which busking is not inextricably tied. Despite the given that this research project focused on a whole different phenomenon than the authors that inspired the operationalization of social space (McCann, 1999; Carp, 2008; Mee Kam et al., 2010; Petersen & Minnery, 2013; Jiménez Pacheco, 2018), the findings are well in line with the findings of those who previously adopted social space as an analytical tool to study a spatial phenomenon. First of all, this research project supports Carp's (2008, p. 140) finding that "by organizing attention to the three dimensions of social space as they take form in concrete situations, the conceptual triad enables one to become more comprehensively and more particularly of what is going on and how". Exactly because the understanding of space can be quite divergent, the tripartite dissection of the notion of space, as done by Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) allows us to separately and concretely learn about the different building blocks of space. Moreover, this research project proved that conceived space indeed can be informed by civic ideas on lived and perceived space, as R9 explicitly expressed the desire to "be more creative and to see if there are opportunities to involve people [...]".

However, similar to McCann (1999) and Mee Kam et al. (2010), this paper also supports the idea that studying social space may reveal tensions within different claims on public space. McCann (1999), in his study on racially-motivated protests as a result of police brutality, shows how public space is differential and varying groups have conflicting interests in how public space is functioning. Additionally, Mee Kam et al. (2010) reveal the significance of the temporal aspect in the way public space is conceived, lived and perceived. They also show how political configurations may be foundational in the (re)production of space. Although their study involves a time span of several decades, this project, too, reveals that temporality and political configurations have impacted on the act of busking. Over time, by-laws and policy have changed frequently as a result of complaints and political outcries expressed by citizens suffering from busking-induced nuisances. These legal and formal changes have, at least, affected how buskers themselves live and perceive space, as it had consequences on what they could and could not do in different places across the city. Such changes do not go by



unnoticed, as several respondents expressed their impression that the amount of street artists has decreased over the past decades.

Finally, just like Petersen & Minnery (2013) this paper confirms the relevance of the effect of daily routine and rhythms on how place is lived. Whereas Petersen & Minnery use their case study to show how daily routine and everyday needs by the elderly living in a housing complex affect their sense of 'being at home', this study has shown that these daily rhythms, indeed, are significant for everyday experiences. After all, such rhythms can determine whether one is temporarily 'trapped' in one place (R18) or whether one has the option to escape. The data revealed that inescapability resulted in undesirable situations which affected one's attitude towards street artists and their spatiality.

This research project adds to the body of knowledge regarding social space in two ways. First of all, this project reveals the significance in including human beings in the study of social space. Whereas other studies (McCann, 1999; Mee Kam et al., 2010; Petersen & Minnery, 2013; Jiménez Pacheco, 2018) stress the relevance of understanding the physical configurations of space and big events (such as demonstrations or political change) to interpret social space, I argue that it is also small-scale events, such as encounters and exposure to specific people can provide a sense of familiarity or alienation. After all, Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) stresses that social space, especially spatial practice, is the product of daily reality. Although major political events (e.g. demonstrations, new political regimes, et cetera) and the physical appearance of space are definitely part of daily reality, the 'regular' everyday life must not be overlooked. However minor the contribution of buskers to social space may appear, it is the accumulation of all things that happen on a regular and irregular basis that result in the production of social space. Therefore, additional research scrutinizing the relationship between, for instance, markets and social space or the effect of traffic on social space may provide more knowledge on the everyday aspects of space.

Second of all, this research project has shown how a form of informal labour (e.g. busking) affects spatial experience for those exposed to informal labour. Despite the fact that many social scientists researching informal labour consider its spatiality (Swanson, 2007; Simpson, 2011; Carlin, 2014; Millar, 2014; Sarmiento et al., 2016), they seem to lack the analytical tools to concretely insert informal labour in space. This research project has shown that Lefebvre's (1991 [1974]) social space serves as a useful tool to grasp the spatiality of various phenomena. Conclusively, then, further research on the relationship between different types of informal labour and (social) space may reveal how informality affects the different dimensions of social space.

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