



16/07/2014

# Social and digital exclusion

## The case of gypsy-travelers in the Netherlands





# Introduction

- › Advancing framework of digital inequalities
- › More comprehensive understanding of digital exclusion
  - *Role of geography*
- › Focus on social and digital exclusion of vulnerable groups
  - Gypsy-travelers in the Netherlands  
(*woonwagenebewoners*)



# Digital inequalities debate

- › From a dichotomous perspective
  - ‘the digital divide’
  - ‘haves or have nots’
- › To a nuanced and complex perspective
  - ‘digital inequalities’
  - beyond adoption, towards usage

(DiMaggio et al., 2001; Van Dijk and Hacker, 2003; Hargittai, 2004; Gilbert, 2010; Mariën and Vleugels, 2011)



# The role of geography

- › Lack of attention for spatial context
- › Explanatory potential of geography
  - Social networks and family ties
  - Neighborhood and village communities
  - Access to services and amenities
- › Space and place as a black box in digital inequalities research?

(Crang et al., 2007; Hardill and Olphert, 2012; Naughton, 2013)



# Comprehensive approaches

- › Two approaches allowing geographical perspectives
- › Gilbert (2010)
  - More complex approach, including social and spatial contextualities, with US and urban focus
  - Too complex?
- › Helsper (2012)
  - Corresponding fields model for social and digital exclusion
  - Work of Bourdieu (1990)



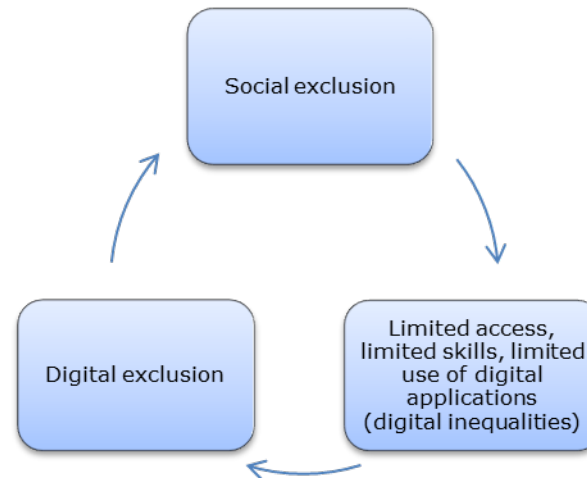
## Corresponding fields model (i) (Helsper, 2012)

- › Field-specific resources
- › Social Field
  - Social networks, citizenship, participation
- › Cultural Field
  - Identity markers derived from norms, values and traditions
- › Economic Field
  - Employment, money, poverty, access to financial services
- › Personal Field
  - Micro level; skills, attitudes, aspirations, preferences



## Corresponding fields model (ii) (Helsper, 2012)

- › Theorized relation between social and digital exclusion
- › Somewhat deterministic
- › Circular? Vicious?







## Two-fold aim

- › Critical review and empirical test of Helsper's corresponding fields model
- › Include the role of spatial context into the analysis
- › Empirical component
  - Fieldwork with gypsy-travelers in the Netherlands





# Methodology

- › Literature review and document analysis
  - Including sociospatial context of gypsy-travelers through history
- › Fieldwork with **closed communities...**
- › 7 in-depth interviews with *woonwaghebewoners*
- › Go-along observations
  - Social worker
  - Policy maker
  - Fieldwork diary -> 27 entries with 14 families on 5 sites



## Research questions

General debate: How does offline exclusion (inclusion) affect digital exclusion (inclusion)?

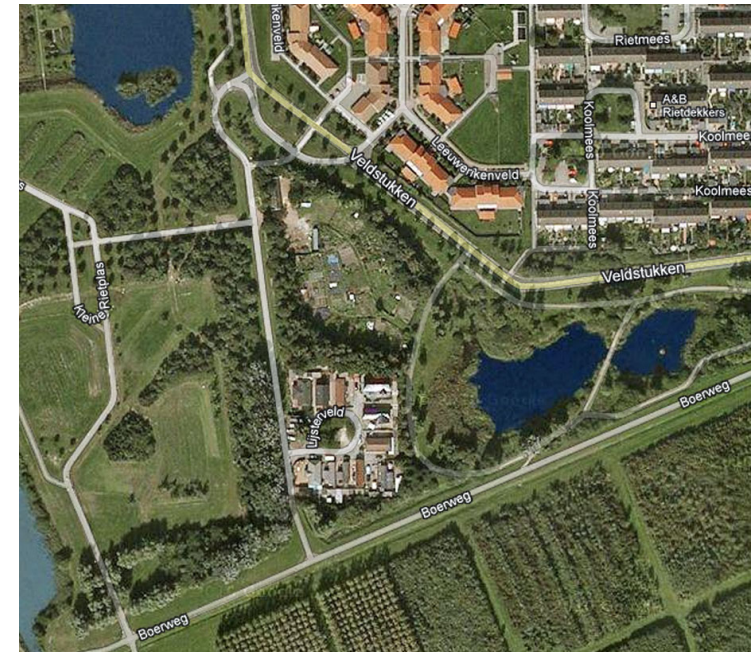
*How does the sociospatial situation of Dutch gypsy-travellers affect their degree of digital inclusion?*

*And vice versa?*



16/07/2014

# Sociospatial context of Dutch gypsy-travellers





# Social Field

- › Social media and community life
  - Facebook
  - Whatsapp
  
- › Municipal site management
  - Ongoing and intensive communication
  - ‘Buzz’
  
- › Citizenship?



## Cultural Field

- › Social media as accessible stage for cultural promotion
  - Representation of identity markers
- › Gender differences
  - Women adopt earlier and show more diverse usage patterns than men
  - Men are out working -> traditional gender roles

Men more vulnerable to digital exclusion
- › **Extended family and proxy users**



## Economic Field

- › Websites for business, trade and consumption
  - Becoming more common
  - However: customers bail out if they find out products are sold from a camp site
  
- › Digital skills and literacy
  - Essential in contemporary labor market
  - Increase of visual communication?
  - Diploma society?



## Personal Field

- › Adoption: yes
- › Machine ownership: yes
- › Subscriptions and contracts: ...
  - ‘Contaminated postcodes’
- › Motivations to go digital are personal
  - Pigeon racing
- › Recreational purposes





# Reconsidering social and digital exclusion

## 1. Overcoming digital inequalities: place and culture matter

- **Proxy resources**
  - Space-specific -> On sites
  - Culture-specific -> Extended families

## 2. Towards a more nuanced debate

- Helsper's model is a good **framework**, but lacks nuances
- Take **context** into account!
- Reflect on **normativity** of 'digital inclusion'

*What kind of engagement constitutes digital inclusion?*



rijksuniversiteit  
groningen

16/07/2014



Thank you!

Questions?

[k.salemink@rug.nl](mailto:k.salemink@rug.nl)



# References

- Bourdieu, P. (1990) "Structures, habitus, practices", in: Bourdieu, P. (ed), *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, pp. 52-79
- Crang, M., Crosbie, T., Graham, S. (2007) "Technology, time-space, and the remediation of neighbourhood life", *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 39, pp. 2405-2422
- DiMaggio, P., Hargittai, E., Russell Neuman, W., Robinson, J. P. (2001) "Social Implications of the Internet", *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 27, pp. 307-336
- Gilbert, M. (2010) "Theorizing Digital and Urban Inequalities: critical geographies of 'race', gender and technological capital", *Information, Communication & Society*, vol. 13 (7), pp. 1000-1018
- Hardill, I., Olphert, C.W. (2012) "Staying connected: Exploring mobile phone use amongst older adults in the UK", *Geoforum*, vol. 43, pp. 1306-1312
- Hargittai, E. (2004) "Internet access and use in context", *New Media & Society*, vol. 6 (1), pp. 137-143
- Helsper, E. J. (2012) "A Corresponding Fields Model for the Links Between Social and Digital Exclusion", *Communication Theory*, vol. 22, pp. 403-426
- Mariën, I., Vleugels, C. (2011) "Van digitale kloof naar digitale inclusie: naar een duurzame ondersteuning van e-inclusie initiatieven in Vlaanderen", *Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap*, 39 (4):104-119
- Naughton, L. (2013) "Geographical narratives of social capital: Telling different stories about the socio-economy with context, space, place, power and agency", *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 38 (1), pp. 3-21
- Van Dijk, J., Hacker, K. (2003) "The 'Digital Divide' as a Complex and Dynamic Phenomenon", *The Information Society*, Vol. 19 (4), pp. 315-326



# Those who want(ed) to travel

The men that don't fit in

There's A race of men that don't fit in,  
A race that can't stay still;  
So they break the hearts of kith and kin,  
And they roam the world at will.  
They range the field and they rove the flood,  
And they climb the mountain's crest;  
Theirs is the curse of the gypsy blood,  
And they don't know how to rest.  
(...)

He has failed, he has failed; he has missed his chance;  
He has just done things by half.  
Life's been a jolly good joke on him,  
And now is the time to laugh.  
Ha, ha! He is one of the Legion Lost;  
He was never meant to win;  
He's a rolling stone, and it's bred in the bone;  
He's a man who won't fit in.

Robert W. Service