The Black Prince; a study in authenticity, order, complexity

Sjaak Kroon
Tilburg University, Netherlands

In November 2010 the small rural village of Middelaar (population 1,000) in the North of the Province of Limburg witnessed the election of a Carnival Prince of Moluccan origin. After 55 indigenous Carnival Princes this was the first "Black Prince" in the rich history of the local Carnival Association. His election was immediately taken up by regional media and already in the first article in a regional newspaper, based on an interview with the Prince issues were brought up such as ethnicity, language, religion, belonging to the local community, the right wing political party PVV and the like. These and other issues came back in different ways and at different levels during the whole Carnival period, i.e. until Ash Wednesday 2011.

In my talk, which basically reflects work in progress, I will try to show how the discourse that emerged around the Black Prince can be understood as including different meanings of authenticity. The result of this is a multifaceted concept of authenticity that can ultimately be understood as a product of globalization and superdiversity reflecting a confrontation of order and complexity in the very specific context of the carnivalesque in a very small place in Limburg. Being the president of the Carnival Association under study I base my study on data stemming from participant observation, field notes, interviews, written and Internet documents, newspapers, regional TV, and audio/video recordings.

Keywords: authenticity, margins, carnival.