

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MIGRATION
AND HAPPINESS:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the factors contributing to happiness and subjective well-being for university students who have migrated to another country to obtain a university degree. Inductive empirical qualitative research was conducted through 14 semi-structured interviews. These interviews yielded numerous results, showing that the main influencing factors for international students were cross-cultural desires, (educational and environmental), social networks and adaptation. These three factors contradict extensive research on happiness and subjective well-being due to not taking into account life stage. For example, relationship status, income and employment were not found to be of importance in the study. Future research avenues are considered such as researching other university cities or carrying out longitudinal studies.

Key words: happiness, subjective well-being, university, education, migration, international students.

Introduction

The concept of happiness; what it is and how to achieve it, has been a topic of differing opinions for centuries. It can and has been interpreted and understood in many contexts. The first connotations can be traced back to around 600BC. At this time, there were three main schools of thought; Confucianism, Taoism, both from Ancient China, and Buddhism from India (Zhang & Veenhoven, 2008). Despite all three believing happiness came from a different source, none feature geography, the environment or one's surroundings. Confucianism focuses on man and the feeling of compassion. Taoism believes in the power of nature; the individualist and mystical element is vital for happiness (Zhang & Veenhoven, 2008). Lastly, Buddhism, 600 years later, believes in Nirvana and the individual (Ballas, 2018; Zhang & Veenhoven, 2008). The central Buddhist belief is to look for happiness within oneself and abandon external relationships (Zhang & Veenhoven, 2008). Confucianism emphasises respecting society to achieve happiness, yet Taoism and Buddhism reject society altogether (Zhang & Veenhoven, 2008). The divergence between these three original approaches to happiness show differences have existed since the beginning of conceptualisation.

Classical Greek philosophers were also engaged with defining and conceptualising happiness. Socrates regularly challenged the thinking of fellow citizens through questions such as 'Do not all men desire happiness? ... Well then, since we all desire happiness, how can we be happy?' (Montgomery, 2013, p.16). Aristotle believed the highest good achievable by humans was the state of Eudaimonia (Ryff & Singer, 2008). Eudaimonia can be defined as 'living well and actualizing one's human potentials; living as one inherently intended to live' (Deci & Ryan, 2006, p.2). Achieving this is relative to society, and individual realisation (Ballas & Dorling, 2013).

In the 4th and 5th century, connotations around happiness shifted from being related to present day life, to representing the state of the afterlife. Achieving happiness in the afterlife was the main reason for living a good life (Ballas & Dorling, 2013), yet geography was still not taken into account or seen as an influencing factor. Perspectives returned to the present day life during the seventeenth century. Jeremy Bentham, an English Philosopher (1748-1832), said that happiness was to 'engender the greatest possible amount of happiness to the greatest number of people' (Caudevilla, 2013, p.2).

In past decades, researchers from all disciplines have studied and conducted empirical research on the concept of happiness. These include scholars of psychology, economics, medicine, statistics, sociology, political science, and management (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2011). It wasn't until the 2000s academics took into account the contextual geographic environment as a contributing factor. They combined spatial urban factors with those of well-being and found that peoples

intermediate surroundings and urban environment impacted their happiness (Brereton et al., 2008). Thus, changing urban context, such as when migrating, affects happiness.

People who migrate with an intended purpose to achieve a goal, and then return to their home country are known as sojourners (Safdar & Berno, 2016). One of the main categories of sojourners are international university students (Bochner, 2006; Jamaludin et al., 2016). The progression to university education often represents a change in people's surrounding urban environment. Whether it's a move within the student's country of origin, or to a different country, literature states migration is at its peak during the ages of 18-24. The start of university education is the main cause, with employment secondary (Thomas, 2019). The first move away from home symbolises, amongst other things, independence; the creation of new ways of viewing the world and one's society (Mulder & Clark, 2002).

Today, international education and student sojourners are on the rise globally (Safsar & Berno, 2016). De Wit et al. (2012) declare the most striking trend in international student mobility over the past 40 years is the increase in globally circulating students. They quote figures from UNESCO and OECD of 250,000 students in 1965 to 3.7 million students in 2011, thus a vast number of young adults are going through a contextual environmental change.

It's been found that this change in environment for student sojourners often has negative effects on happiness, causing emotional distress in their first few months of being in the new country (Furukawa & Shibayama, 1993; Kealey, 1989; Ward & Kennedy, 1996; Ying & Liese, 1991; Zheng & Berry, 1991). Student sojourners are forced to adapt to host countries' cultural, academic and societal norms (Kell & Vogl, 2008), which could result in feeling distressed, or unbalanced.

Research has been conducted on factors which can improve a person's happiness, or rather, subjective well-being (SWB). Since the 1960s, bottom-up factors, such as social and demographic influences were researched. Later, top down factors were considered such as personality and positive predisposition (Soukiazis & Ramos, 2015). Main factors found to influence SWB are employment, income, health, education, family and social life (Al Ajlani et al., 2018; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Dolan et al., 2008). These however, do not take into account mobility, and the role a change in contextual environment has on happiness and SWB.

Thus, the point where these three elements of happiness, migration, and international university education meet is where this thesis is located. Qualitative research will be conducted into finding out factors affecting happiness and SWB for international university sojourners.

Structure

Following this introduction, the research problem, central question and sub-questions will be outlined. Theoretical framework is then given, featuring the main literature and current academic positions of concepts, then a conceptual model and qualitative expectations are provided. The next chapter will contain the methodology and data collection process, whilst also reflecting on COVID-19

changes. Results and discussion follow, placing findings into current academic positions. Limitations and future research avenues are considered, before moving to the conclusion. The thesis ends with references and an appendix.

Research problem

The central question that will be answered is; *'What are the influencing factors on subjective well-being for migrating European international students at the University of Groningen?'*. The question is open ended thus, themes and concepts are used to help understand the causal effects on SWB for students. This will be done through thematic inductive empirical research into European international students studying at The University of Groningen, who have moved to a new country of residence to pursue a full higher educational degree. More specifically, on students from European countries other than the Netherlands, as Dutch students have undergone only a partial spatial displacement in Daily Activity Space (DAS) (Thomas et al., 2019; Roseman, 1971). Qualitative interviews will be carried out exploring what happiness and well-being means to international students, and not take factors for granted. To support this, sub-questions are used;

1. *Are factors for happiness and SWB the same for all international students?*
2. *Does life stage affect influencing factors for happiness and SWB?*

For this research, the UK is classified as still part of the EU, due to Brexit and its effects on student mobility unknown.

This research specifically focuses on influencing factors for SWB when leaving your home country for education. The subjective element of well-being allows people to evaluate themselves, to the degree which they experience wellness (Deci & Ryan, 2006; Diener 1998). Research has been done on well-being and happiness in general (Al Ajlani et al., 2018; Deci & Ryan, 2006; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Soukiazis & Ramos, 2015), on SWB and the mental state of university students (Bewick, et al., 2010; Dias Lopes et al., 2020; Stallman, et al., 2017), yet for European student sojourners, there is a research gap. Thus, the vital need arises to find and understand the influencing factors, in this situation of spatial mobility. Once known, statistical research can be carried out to find significance. Hence, this study will suffice as the preliminary findings for future research and analysis.

Theoretical framework

As seen in the introduction, happiness is a popular term, with different conceptualisations, such as; pleasant moods, emotions experienced, or overall life satisfaction (Diener & Ryan, 2009). Veenhoven (2013, p.6) classifies the term into four notions; 1. Liveability of environment, 2. Life-ability of individual, 3. External utility of life, 4. Inner appreciation of life. These cover all elements mentioned and further support the qualitative approach taken.

SWB is an umbrella term used to ‘describe the level of well-being people experience according to their subjective evaluations of their lives’ (Diener & Ryan, 2009, p.391), allowing research to focus on individual cases. Capturing what is meaningful to each individual is most important (Angner, 2010), hence the subjective nature. SWB is dependent on people's evaluation and perception towards their happiness and state of being, thus measuring SWB through an inductive approach (Diener & Ryan, 2009; Helliwell, 2019). Diener (1998) states SWB is preferred over happiness due to having many conceptualisations and meanings. In this paper, however, both terms of happiness and SWB are used.

Mobility is vital to human existence and could be classed as a formative element of existence (Flamm & Kaufmann, 2006). Wagner and Mulder (2015) give a geographical approach on mobility, stating why and where people move is due to three factors; the trigger of life course events, preceding life course events and anticipated future life events. We can go further with life course migration, to a theoretical distinction, by classifying it as a complete spatial displacement in DAS; typically for employment or educational reasons (Thomas et al., 2019). International student sojourners fall into this category, due to life course events (Wagner & Mulder, 2015) of university involving complete spatial displacement.

The importance of mobility in modern society is so strong it has become an ideology (Flamm & Kaufmann, 2006). They state, ‘sociological analysis today can no longer function without an in-depth analysis of the role of mobility in social integration’ (p.168). A completely sociological look at mobility can be found in the book review by Xi Wu (2017) on ‘Transnational Students and Mobility: Lived experiences of migration’ by Hannah Soong. Wu (2017) uses Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital as the explaining factor for transnational student mobility in Western Society. In regard to Social Theory, Bourdieu’s original chapter on ‘The Forms of Capital’ (1986) allows us to place the desire to increase one's educational qualification as symbolic capital. We can go further and say it’s a specific form of cultural capital as one is, through institutionalisation, pursuing greater educational qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). This is purely a sociological view on spatial mobility, linking to educational pursuit.

Student sojourners can be further categorised into short and long-term. Short-term students go abroad to university for a period of a few weeks to one year, commonly known as exchange students. Long-term students move abroad for more than one year to pursue their whole academic degree abroad (Jamaludin et al., 2016). For this research, only long-term student sojourners will be studied.

Studies have found three main reasons students seek long-term international university education; desire for a cross-cultural environment (Brewer, 1983; Jamaludin et al., 2016; Massey & Burrow, 2012; Sánchez et al., 2006), distinct academic opportunity and a unique social experience (Jamaludin et al., 2016; Sánchez et al., 2006), all improving one’s cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

As mentioned earlier, many longitudinal studies (Furukawa & Shibayama, 1993; Kealey, 1989; Ward & Kennedy, 1996; Ying & Liese, 1991; Zheng & Berry, 1991) show sojourners experience high levels of emotional distress or psychological symptoms in their first months of being in the new culture. The cross-cultural learning environment long-term student sojourners seek out, results in a culture shock and then a period of adaptation. These studies backup Oberg’s (1960) ‘culture shock’. He sets out four emotional phases that sojourners go through once they migrate to a new country. Cited by Ward et al. (2005, p.81):

1. Honeymoon
2. Crisis
3. Recovery
4. Adjustment

In the adjustment phase, when the sojourner has become accustomed to the new country, and operates within the culture without feeling anxious, (Oberg, 1960), they are able to reflect and enjoy competences in the new environment (Ward et al., 2005). Thus, this is the stage where happiness and SWB is evaluated.

Conceptual model

The following conceptual model shows the life course trajectory for undertaking higher education, nationally and internationally. The specific area researched is located within the circle.

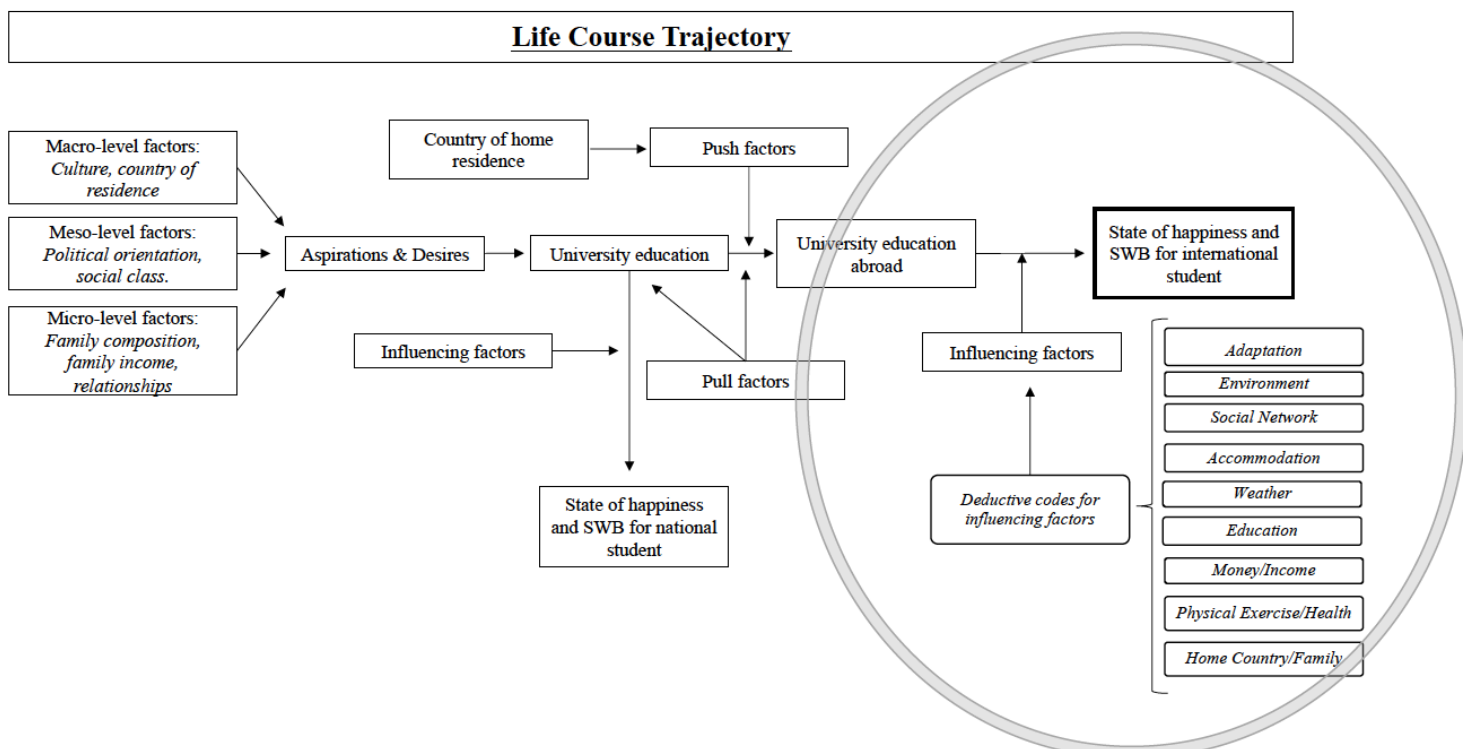


Image 1: Conceptual Model

‘University education abroad’ represents the act of migrating from a European country (excluding the Netherlands) of residence to the University of Groningen, for higher education. The deductive codes (*code tree 2*) represent what will be found in this study, for example, education (Cuñado & de Gracia, 2011).

Expectations

A qualitative approach has been applied as most suitable due to specific factors being unknown. Therefore, expectations are as follows:

- *Happiness & SWB is a multi-faceted concept and means something different to each interviewee.*
- *Education is an influencing factor for happiness & SWB for students* (Cuñado & de Gracia, 2011).
- *Adaptation is an influencing factor for happiness & SWB for students* (Ward et al., 2005).

These expectations will help to further understand the constructed nature of SWB on migration influencing international students.

Methodology

Due to the exact nature of this research topic, primary qualitative data collection was carried out. Qualitative research has shown important themes resulting from positive SWB. Influencing factors, specific to European internationals, are unknown and at present, can only be conceptualised. Therefore, the aim is to find meaning, experience and notions (Dunn, 2016), regarding the interviewee as a participant in meaning making, rather than just a source of gathered information (Di Cicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Quantitative research such as surveys or questionnaires would presuppose meaning, factors and their importance.

As mentioned earlier, the research gap is in understanding affecting factors on happiness for international sojourners. Thus, qualitative research allows the phenomenon to be studied and implicitly understood. Once breadth has been achieved, data gathered can be used for further research into the specific importance of stated themes. For example, themes formulated could be directly used in quantitative based surveys to a wider sample population for future research, to achieve depth through statistical research.

Due to the global pandemic of COVID-19, processes underwent changes. Physical face-to-face interviews were not possible, so instead were conducted via the online video platform ‘Whereby’ in the last week of March and first week of April 2020. A benefit of this was interviewees feeling more relaxed speaking in their home environment (Clifford et al., 2016). Interviewees were asked to sign a consent form (*appendix a*). These were scanned and uploaded to a secure private drive file and

deleted once research was completed. Interviews were transcribed via the voice recognition software otter.ai and uploaded to Atlas.ti for coding.

Data collection

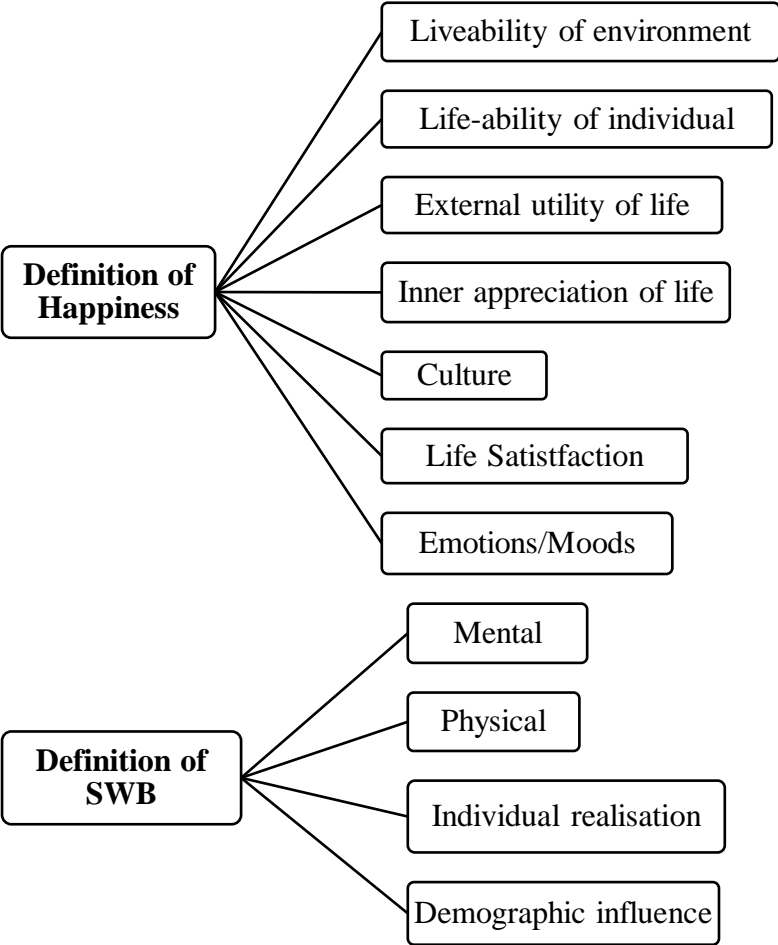
A literature review was conducted to identify the current situation of this topic in previous research. Afterwards, an interview guide was drawn up (*appendix b*) and tested, allowing qualitative interviews to be conducted.

Fourteen in-depth interviews were carried out with European international students at The University of Groningen, who have lived in Groningen for more than 1 year. This time frame made sure interviewees were long-term students (Jamaludin et al., 2016), gone through the ‘culture shock’ and now in a period of settlement (Oberg, 1960).

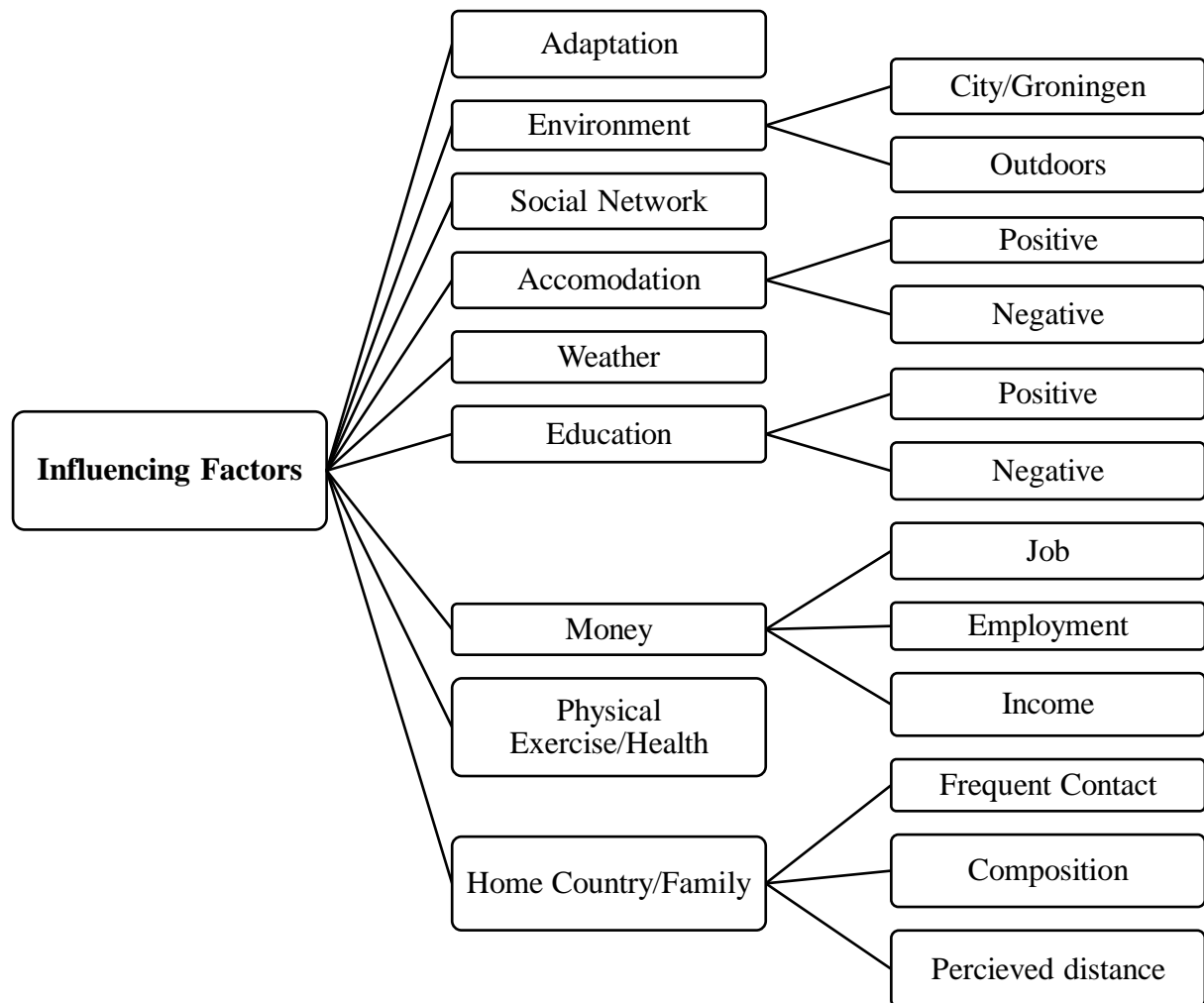
The interviews were semi-structured allowing interviewees to talk about their personal experiences and motivations, avoiding leading topics (Clifford et al., 2016; Dunn, 2016). Questions were asked in the same way during all interviews. Conversational and informal tones were stressed throughout, allowing a process of meaning making to take place, rather than solely gathering information (Di Cicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). All interviews were conducted in English as it is the lingua franca of the study phenomena’s life, and the language of lived experiences in Groningen (Redman-MacLaren et al., 2019).

Analysis

The process of data analysis took a deductive approach (Clifford et al, 2016). As seen below, codes were created from popular themes and factors found through the literature review. Code tree 1 shows definitions for happiness and SWB. Code tree 2 shows factors thought to influence the state of SWB. This coding system helped sort, organise and retrieve data and unravel general perceptions and build theory (Cope, 2016; Dunn, 2016). These code trees were uploaded to Atlas.ti along with all 14 transcripts (*appendix c*).



Code tree 1: Definitions



Code tree 2: Influencing factors

Once transcripts were analysed and coded, brief inductive coding was done, to make sure all key themes and factors were identified. For the entire coding process, the computer software program Atlas.ti was used, facilitating both deductive and inductive coding. Additionally, a word frequency was made using the feature 'Word Cruncher' in Atlas.ti (table 1), discussed in the results section below.

Ethics

During this research, ethical considerations were taken into account. Throughout all data collection, confidentiality was assured to all interviewees. Complete anonymity was not carried out as interviewees were known, yet all names were omitted. No information is given that could identify interviewees. Interviewees were made aware of their ability to leave, stop, or not answer any questions at any time throughout the interview.

As Valentine (2005) said, cited by Clifford et al. (2016), it is important to reflect on your own positionality and think about who you are and how this shapes the interview. As a fellow European

student at the University of Groningen, a more open and trusting interview process was able to take place due to the main researcher coming from an inside position of positionality. To collect trustworthy data, it was necessary to ask questions in the right way, with consistency, so participants did not interpret questions differently (Clifford et al., 2016). This was adhered to throughout.

Results & Discussion

This chapter will present the results and discussion, grouped under subheadings, tackling the main themes in each category, using qualitative summary methods (Lu & Gilmour, 2004). Due to interview length, only sample quotes are given, subsequently highlighted yellow in appendix c. The basic information of each interviewee is given below, in a randomised order.

Name	Age	Gender	Country of Home Residence
Interviewee 1	21	Male	Norway
Interviewee 2	21	Female	Belgium
Interviewee 3	22	Female	Romania
Interviewee 4	21	Male	Italy
Interviewee 5	21	Female	Germany
Interviewee 6	24	Female	UK
Interviewee 7	25	Male	Spain
Interviewee 8	22	Female	Germany
Interviewee 9	21	Female	Latvia
Interviewee 10	21	Female	Poland
Interviewee 11	24	Male	Luxemburg
Interviewee 12	22	Female	Italy
Interviewee 13	25	Male	Germany
Interviewee 14	24	Female	Cyprus

Table 1: Interviewee information

The map below shows the spatial element of this research. Red countries display interviewees' home country of residence, grey display European countries, and the Netherlands is yellow. This map shows not all countries have been researched, yet there is proportional representation.



Image 2: Location of interviewee's country of home residence

Table 2 below, produced via the 'word cruncher' function from Atlas.ti, shows the number of times a specific word came up in all transcripts. All words such as 'I' 'and' 'the' were deleted, only words relevant to the central theme have been kept. Included words featured more than 46 times in all 14 transcripts. 'Feel' is the most popular word, followed by 'People', 'Happy' and 'Groningen'.

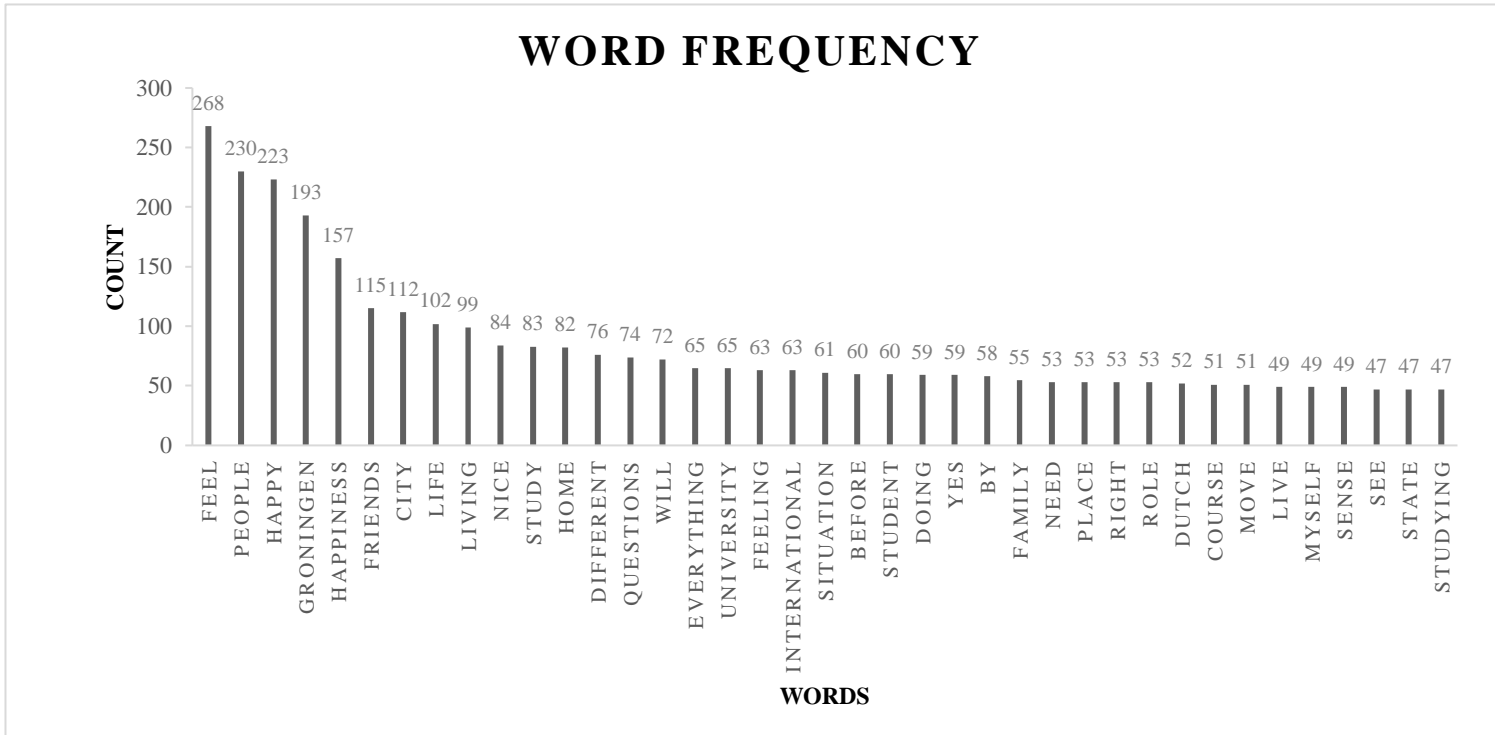


Table 2: Word frequency

Definitions

When *defining happiness*, results fitted into Veenhoven’s (2013) 4 notions, relating back to personal situation and beliefs. Emotions such as serenity, calmness, an unbeatable high and feeling good in your own skin were used. They spoke about surrounding themselves with people and environments they love, relating to Confucianism. Where emphasis was more on the state within, and being happy where you are, related to Buddhism and Taoism. This variation backs up the contested history of the field, seen in the introduction.

“...when you’re feeling really good in your own skin...”

(Interviewee 9, 2020)

“not desiring to be anywhere else at that moment...”

(Interviewee 12, 2020)

When *defining SWB*, more unity was seen. Nearly all interviewees said well-being was made up of two parts; mental and physical. These definitions backed up Diener & Ryan’s (2009) classification of being subjective to the interviewee and allowing them to relate the aspects of their own personal situation and satisfactions. This SWB division is common in a considerable amount of research (Diener et al., 2012).

“both physical well-being in the sense of just feeling healthy, good, strong and also, mental well-being..”

(Interviewee 4, 2020)

Despite interviewees coming from different countries, there were no patterns or trends seen in definitions relating to cultural backgrounds. This could be because all countries are roughly at the same industrialised societal level (Diener & Diener, 1996), and classified as a Western Society. Many studies (Lu et al., 2001a; Lu et al., 2001b) look at the divide between Eastern and Western Societies, categorising Europe into a Western Society, symbolising it as a unity when it comes to happiness and SWB. When looking at different definitions, one can infer that nationality does not play a role if all countries of origin are from a similar societal standpoint, such as Europe.

Deductive codes

Adaptation (Ward et al., 2005) was an expectation and therefore researched during the interviews. It was recorded that most interviewees needed 6-12 months to settle in completely (phase 4; (Oberg's, 1960)) to student life in Groningen. Certain factors made this period of adjustment easier, including pleasant living conditions, good flatmates, enjoyment of study programs, and good social networks. In a few cases, when one of these aforementioned factors was negative, the period of adjustment lengthened closer to 1 year.

"...really easy, because my flatmate was really nice...I was able to catch people through her and she introduced me to the city, we hung out a lot..."

(Interviewee 5, 2020)

Ballas and Tranmer (2012) state the longer a person lives at an address, the higher their well-being. Combined with phase 4 from Oberg (1960), adaptation has a connection to higher levels of reported well-being (Ward et al., 2005). Longitudinal studies have found when a migrant or person moving to a country for educational purposes, adapts to the new culture quickly, their happiness and well-being are higher, or more stable (Cummins, 2013). Adaptation can also result in happy living (Veenhoven, 2013), displayed by all interviewees, namely how they had adapted quickly and settled into life in Groningen.

Environment, both natural and urban, brought positive results. All interviewees spoke about the benefits of being outdoors and how easy life was in Groningen. How the city size was perfect to build a life away from their family home, as this was, for many, their first time living outside the parental household. The canals and city architecture were frequently mentioned, bringing positive emotions. However, interviewee 14 had previously lived in a more rural setting and struggled with the lack of peaceful nature.

"The environment here is completely different than back home.... you can go to the park but it's packed. There's no sense of nature."

(Interviewee 14, 2020)

Studies found that geography and environment affect well-being (Brereton et al., 2008). Interviewees mentioned the sun and good weather brought about positive emotions, and the opposite

when it was bad weather, confirming Brereton et al. (2008) findings. Two interviewees mentioned Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) impacting their well-being.

“makes me happy when the climate is right”

(Interviewee 13, 2020)

All interviewees mentioned how their *friends and social networks* were vital, due to living in an unfamiliar environment with family and friends far away.

“...rely on our friends so much as pillars”

(Interviewee 3, 2020)

“My friends are my rock..”

(Interviewee 9, 2020)

Here, Dolan et al. (2008) findings on the power of social networks and friendships was confirmed. High levels of sociality relate to positive SWB (Bailey & Miller, 1998; Diener & Ryan, 2009), as reflected in all interviewees. As found in Martín et al. (2010) university student’s social perception of leisure and behaviour patterns are related to hedonistic values, leading to certain activities or methods of having fun. Here, leisure activities consisted of going out with friends. Additionally, friends and social connections who are geographically closer have a stronger influence on happiness (Miao et al., 2013), thus reinstating the importance of social networks for international students whose previous social network and family are further away. This is also confirmed by how the word ‘friends’ was very common, seen through the word frequency table.

The ease of *cycling* in Groningen benefitted SWB. Interviewees who played a *sport or exercised* stated it made a large contribution to their happiness. Biddle & Ekkekakis (2005) confirm the importance of physical activity on the well-being of society.

“I can't live without physical exercise, I go crazy.”

(Interviewee 3, 2020)

Generally, interviewees had frequent contact with *family*, despite being located in another country. Bailey & Miller (1998) found frequent social family contact, when at university, increased overall life satisfaction. Here, an interesting element of technology came up. A few interviewees mentioned how moving out of the parental home, and with the ease of technological communication, their relationship with family had gotten better.

“I think it actually brought us closer together.... my relations with my family got better since I moved out. I call them more, I talk to them more often...”

(Interviewee 10, 2020)

Accommodation had a strong effect on the interviewee’s SWB. When it was a good situation, in which they felt comfortable, the effect was very positive. They identified with the flatmates, who became part of their social network and also was a place for them to call ‘home’ away from their parental household. When the interviewee was living in an accommodation which they did not enjoy, or housing was causing them an issue, it had strong negative effects. This is seen in Foye’s (2016) article examining the direct link between value, space and size of accommodation towards SWB.

Furthermore, Veenhoven (2013) lists housing under liveability of environment, relating back to quality and satisfaction with life.

“I had to start looking for another accommodation. And that was complicated [and] extremely stressful, because I wasn't able to find anything. I became paranoid about it.”

(Interviewee 12, 2020)

Education was found to be a key element affecting happiness and SWB. All interviewees were studying for their university degree. Their reason for migration was to pursue a higher educational degree, in a cross-cultural environment, and thus, their chosen *study program had given them a purpose*. Cuñado & de Gracia (2011) affirm education directly relates to increases in happiness. Educational satisfaction allowed interviewees to feel connected, rooted and settled in Groningen. Through giving them a purpose, which they enjoyed (Seligman, 2011), their studies provided a drive and end goal, as well as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1960), all resulting in positive SWB.

“I'm utterly obsessed with it. I'm in love with it. It changed me as a person.”

(Interviewee 3, 2020)

“I found direction in my studies and that made me really happy.”

(Interviewee 8, 2020)

Additionally, due to all interviewees sojourning for the purpose of obtaining a degree, academic performance was seen to be an important and significant component of cross-cultural adaptation (Ward et al., 2005). A cross-cultural learning environment is one of the driving factors for student sojourners (Jamaludin et al., 2016; Sánchez et al., 2006), and confirmed by the results here. Long term sojourners want to pursue a cross-cultural environment. For international university sojourners, cross-cultural reasons are more important than academic or social reasons for studying abroad (Brewer, 1983; Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Sánchez et al., 2006).

Exams and workload, however, contributed to negative feelings. During these periods, higher levels of stress were felt and feelings towards the university changed. Studies have found mental health issues are on the rise in university students (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010; Macaskill, 2012; Storrie et al., 2010) and stress, workload pressure and exams all contribute to this. This element is not just for international students, and is experienced in all university students, independent of sojourning or not.

“I think the uni really pushes you to just get to this end goal. And I did that too much.”

(Interviewee 6, 2020)

“I think the workload is insane.... before exam times I'm usually not so happy with the studies.”

(Interviewee 13, 2020)

Deductive codes of relationship status, job, income and employment did not yield significant results. **Relationships** are mentioned in previous studies as playing a strong role in happiness and SWB (Al-Ajlani et al., 2018; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Dolan et al., 2008). This research however, did not find it to be of great importance for students, with only two interviewees discussing it. One spoke about how their girlfriend helped throughout COVID-19 lockdown. A second interviewee mentioned

how they had a relationship for a couple of months, yet was not discussed further. Moreover, a third person spoke about telling family and friends of his changed sexual preferences.

“I felt in a safe space and in a happy place, so I decided to come out of the closet and that had a huge effect on my well-being.”

(Interviewee 1, 2020)

The Netherlands is an open and liberal country, that sees ‘homosexuality [as] nothing out of the ordinary’ (Duyvendak et al., 2010, p.235). This interviewee had felt more accepted in the Netherlands than their home country, deciding to open up, thus affecting his overall state.

Also contradicting extensive literature stating *income* is a factor of well-being (Al Ajlani et al., 2018; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Dolan et al., 2008), only five interviewees mentioned money and *employment* briefly. Despite jobs bringing independence from parents, it was rarely mentioned.

“I have been financially independent since I was 19. It affects my well-being because being financially independent makes me breathe, so that I don't stress my parents for money.”

(Interviewee 14, 2020)

There is extensive research backing up the importance of *employment* for happiness and SWB, hence, being a deductive code. All interviewees were in full time education, so currently not focused on career aspirations. The few who did have part-time jobs were seen to have benefited greatly from the financial independence from family financial support. These findings go against the majority of happiness and SWB research (Diener & Ryan, 2009; Dolan et al., 2008) who state income and employment status are key factors for happiness

Furthermore, the transition to university, national or international, represents a huge increase in *independence* (Budzynski et al., 2020). This independence was seen as a positive element contributing to all interviewees well-being, across all elements.

Overall, factors of income, employment, education, and health are common contributors to well-being (Al-Ajlani et al., 2018; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Dolan et al., 2008) yet did not feature strongly in the results here, thus, could be deemed not as important for sojourners. This contradictory trend could be accounted for by the life stage of interviewees, who are not at a life stage where family size, settling down, marriage, or current employment and income are important. Thus, one could ascertain influencing factors are related to life stages.

Inductive codes

Inductive codes found are briefly mentioned here. Firstly, emotions and attributes of *stability*, *balance*, *purpose*, *growth* and having a *routine* were common across all interviews.

“I like to have a nice balance between my personal life and my work life.”

(Interviewee 10, 2020)

“... having a purpose is really important to me ..”

(Interviewee 5, 2020)

"..overall I gained growth.... that also brought happiness."

(Interviewee 7, 2020)

Interviewees realised the *importance of balance in their life*, acknowledging not all days could be perfect, let alone happy ones. They understood negative days do not need to have a negative effect on their overall well-being and had learnt to accept this.

"Sometimes it's okay not to be in a good state.... you can't appreciate the highs if you don't have the lows...you need perspective...."

(Interviewee 8, 2020)

Self-awareness and evaluation are essential for functional well-being (Vittersø, 2013). These emotions and attributes can be found under Veenhoven's (2013) 2nd, 3rd and 4th notion, thus further solidifying their importance for happiness and SWB.

Some inductive codes were only brought up occasionally. One interviewee expressed how they missed *art museums* as they felt museums contribute to their overall well-being. Another interviewee mentioned *drugs and marijuana*. Here, marijuana helped keep negative well-being and unhappiness away. The liberal Dutch society (Duyvendak et al., 2010), compared to that of their home country, also played a role here, providing safe access. Another interviewee said they always felt *safe* and never in danger, plus a lack of *racism* experience, all contributing to positive emotions. Factors of safety and racism are not limited to sojourners; Dolan et al. (2008) state feeling unsafe can be detrimental to one's well-being.

Location specific

All interviewees mentioned they enjoyed the *student vibe in the city*; contributing to being happy. The characteristic of the city being relatable and well-known for students was mentioned a lot, both positively and negatively. All interviewees felt part of the international community yet did not feel part of Dutch society. Being actively involved in your local community improves well-being (Diener & Ryan, 2009), and through feeling excluded from Dutch society, the well-being of sojourners was negatively affected. Also, language barriers can isolate sojourners, having negative consequences on their well-being (Safdar & Berno, 2016).

"I feel a part of something, but it's not society, like the true meaning of it."

(Interviewee 3, 2020)

COVID-19

The global pandemic of *Coronavirus* had negatively affected SWB for all interviewees. Half the sample returned to their home country, resulting in them feeling sad, reflecting on how life in Groningen made them happy. Those remaining were feeling the distance between their families or home country stronger than normal.

“I’m really happy in Groningen and a lot less happy here, being forced to leave Groningen is of course not positive..”

(Interviewee 11, 2020)

Interestingly, one interviewee made a distinction between happiness and SWB. For them, they felt their happiness had been negatively affected, yet their well-being had improved.

“my happiness, I would say it's like a bit on edge at the moment. But my well-being, I'm good, well fed, we have the backyard, the mountains.”

(Interviewee 2, 2020)

For the interviewees who stated that having a purpose, routine or stability was a strong influencing factor for their well-being, the lockdown and reduced mobility had a greater negative effect on their well-being. Half the interviewees saw the current situation as a chance to slow down, whereas the other half felt something had been taken away and were suffering as a result.

“I was happy to go into this quarantine because I felt like the world around me, was going a bit too fast and it didn't leave me a lot of space to be calm because happiness also comes from being calm.”

(Interviewee 12, 2020)

Education and a cross-cultural learning environment were strong factors positively influencing SWB. With new online teaching measures, well-being could be greatly affected. Additionally, adaptation periods might be prolonged, thus further affecting sojourner SWB.

Summary

Overall, three apparent factors stand out. Firstly, the desire and satisfaction for cross-cultural learning and educational environments. Secondly, social networks and friendships are vital. Thirdly, adaptation and quick settlement period supports SWB.

Common factors of happiness and SWB from previous studies do not correlate with what has been found here, suggesting life stage and circumstances need to be taken into account. Confirming this, Diener and Ryan (2009) discuss well-being changing throughout life stages, as happiness decreases with age. Richard and Diener (2009) also found personality and characteristics change over the life course, thus changing SWB over the life course. Al-Ajlani et al., (2018) found family life, such as kids and size, matters most to people who have children, and social life is more important to elderly generations. For university students, the number of children (Soukiazis & Ramos, 2015) they have is normally not of great importance due to them being a demographic not usually with offspring. Additionally, the political and economic environment, relating to welfare state topics such as insurance and pensions (Soukiazis & Ramos, 2015) are also not of importance to students. Well-being is strongly affected by the surrounding contexts of people's lives (Ryff & Singer, 2008), showing that at different life stages, people give different things higher importance. Furthermore, if we take Wagner & Mulders (2015) three geographical reasons why people move, each one relates to life course events, further confirming the fundamental role life stages play.

Furthermore, student sojourning is an individual act and when coupled with cultural and social capital, also individual, results will be personal each time (Bhugra, 2020). Additionally, our embodied sources affect our embodied state, and thus how we value, see and adapt. Country of origin was not found to impact definitions of happiness and SWB, due to all interviewees coming from Europe, an area of similar societal statuses.

University education in Europe over the past years has been promoted as an intrinsically positive and desired element, even becoming a policy goal in itself (de Wit et al., 2012), thus, migration policies have been instrumental in facilitating university migration. Policies and organisations help migrants adapt to new environments through facilitating networks, support, and communities. Results did not yield any mention of policies or the role of organisations influencing SWB or helping the students settle and adapt to the new environment. Thus, for this sample of international students in Groningen it can be thought organisations are not a contributing factor.

Limitations

Limitations and areas for future research are vital to findings in a scientific community, especially when carrying out empirical research (Brutus et al., 2013). Therefore, this study features limitations.

Firstly, as an international student, there is a degree of subjectivity. However, this enables a deeper reflection on my position in regard to people, processes and study phenomena, due to completely understanding the ‘self’ and the interconnection (Mansvelt & Berg, 2016). Secondly, all interviewees were studying and living in Groningen; therefore results are location specific to the city. To gather a wider contextual understanding, further research could carry out interviews in other university cities, increasing external validity. To make an absolute claim and valid analysis about the effects of migration on happiness and SWB of international students, a longitudinal study with a larger sample size would be required.

As mentioned, COVID-19 did not cause any issues with methodology nor data collection yet provided an extra research area.

Conclusion

This study, located in the triangulation where concepts of happiness, migration, and university education come together, aimed to find influencing factors on happiness and SWB for migrating university students. Thus, the research question was *‘What are the influencing factors on subjective well-being for migrating European international students at the University of Groningen?’*.

From this question, sub-questions and expectations, three main driving factors were found to influence happiness and SWB for international students. Firstly, the strength of desire for a cross-cultural educational environment plays a leading role. Secondly, social networks are very prominent,

due to increased distance from family, home culture and previous social networks. The last factor of great importance is adaptation, supporting international student SWB. A short and positive adaptation process, combined with a cross-culture desire, results in greater happiness and SWB experienced. Thus, confirming all outlined expectations.

Extensive happiness and SWB literature implies homogeneity across its subjects. It is seen here how the life stage of education and the first move away from the parental household affects this homogeneity and therefore, influencing factors on SWB should be analysed in relation to life stages.

This study, taken with the already widely researched fields of happiness and well-being has helped contribute to the further understanding of migrating international university students.

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Appendix

a. Consent form

University of Groningen
BSc Human Geography & Urban and Regional Planning

Consent form

Bachelor research project: 'Happiness and Spatial Mobility'

For the research question of: *"What are the influencing factors on subjective well-being for spatially mobile European international students at The University of Groningen: A qualitative Study."*

I have read the information about the research project. I was able to ask questions and my questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I had enough time to decide to participate in the research.

My participation is completely voluntary.

I can withdraw from the research at any time, without having to give a reason. I give my permission for using the interview data for the following purposes (e.g. scientific article, presentations and educational purposes).

I agree to participate in this interview.

Name and signature of research participant. _____

Date. _____

I also give permission for the interview to be tape recorded on a handheld device: Yes/No

Signature: _____

Please include your email address if you would like to be sent the final research project

Email Address: _____

I declare that I have informed the research participant about the research.

I will notify the participant about matters that could influence his/her participation in the research.

Name and signature of researcher. _____

Date. _____

b. Interview guide

Introduction:

Hello, my name is Isla, I am a Bachelor student of Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning, at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences here at the University of Groningen. This interview is conducted in the context of my bachelor research project in which I want to explore subjective well-being and happiness for European International students studying at the University of Groningen. The questions I am going to ask you will relate to this topic. I would like to emphasise that I am particularly interested in your individual points of views, understanding and thoughts, there are no right or wrong answers. If at any time during this interview you feel uncomfortable, want to leave, not answer a question or stop the recording please don't hesitate to ask. As stated clearly in the consent form, all the information will be kept entirely confidential and names will be omitted for the research.

If you don't have any more questions, then let's start the interview?

Questions:

So, I'm going to start off with a few introductory questions for the purpose of the recording.

1. Could you please tell me your name, gender and age?
2. What country are you from?
 - Where were you born/spent most of your life growing up
 - And have you lived there your whole life?
 - When did you move to Groningen?

So, now onto some more topical questions:

I'm really interested in happiness and spatial mobility and how they interact....so,

3. What does the word 'happy' mean to you?
 - Unpack this; how they say it, through culture
 - Define it
4. What does the word well-being mean to you?
 - How does this relate to happiness for you?
5. Do you feel the two are connected?
 - Yes/no why?
6. Would you use these two terms to describe how you feel here, living and studying in Groningen?
Before COVID-19

7. Why?
 - Why do you say that? What influences your answering
 - Discuss and question factors mentioned (education, relationship status, living conditions)

8. How do you find the distance between you and your family?

9. Do you think you've adapted well to life here in Groningen? How long did it take you to settle in?

10. When you are feeling negative emotions of well-being or happiness, do you actively seek out change?
 - What things to do you/why those certain things.

11. How do you find being an international student here?

12. Before we finish, I was just wondering, how has the recent change, globally, due to Coronavirus, affected you? In relation to everything we have just discussed.

Thank you for your time, is there anything else we haven't mentioned that you'd like to discuss?

c. Transcripts

Transcripts are colour coded into themes, as seen in the table below. All quotes used in text are highlighted yellow.

Theme	Deductive/Inductive
Adaptation	Deductive
Definitions – Happiness & SWB	Deductive
Environment – City & Outdoors	Deductive
Accommodation – Positive & Negative	Deductive
Money/Job/Income	Deductive
Physical Exercise/Health (gym, bike)	Deductive
Relationship Status	Deductive
Social network (friends, social life, etc)	Deductive
Study Program/University/Education	Deductive
Family (incl. technology)	Deductive

Weather	Deductive
Balance/Stability/Routine/Purpose	Inductive
Food	Inductive
Negative days are fine/balance	Inductive
Art Museums/ Safety/Marijuana/Racism	Inductive
COVID-19	Inductive
Location specific – Groningen	Inductive
Independence	Inductive
International Student	Inductive

Transcript: Interviewee 1
Friday 27th March 2020, 3pm GMT

Interviewer: So yeah, thank you for doing this interview with me. I'm a bachelor student of the Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning bachelor at the University and this interview is conducted in the context of my bachelor research project in which I'm exploring happiness and well-being on spatial mobility for European international students at University of Groningen. So, the question they want to ask will relate back to this theme, but I really want to emphasise that I'm particularly interested in your own opinions and thoughts and points of view so there's no right or wrong answers. And if anytime throughout the interview you want to leave not answer a question or want me to stop the recording, please feel free to say so. And yeah, as stated in the consent form as well. All information will be kept entirely confidential and your name will be admitted for all research purposes. So, if you don't have any more questions then let's start.

Interviewee 1: Great.

Interviewer: Okay. So a few basic introduction questions. Could you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 1: My name is XXX, 21 years old and I'm male.

Interviewer: And what country are you from?

Interviewee 1: I'm from Norway.

Interviewer: And you spent most of your life in Norway before moving to Groningen?

Interviewee 1: Yeah, I spent, I was born in Norway and I moved right before my 19th Birthday. And after that yeah so I've lived in Groningen now for 3 years

Interviewer: so you move to Groningen in 2017

Interviewee 1: yeah 2017.

Interviewer: So yeah, now on to some more topical questions, and I'm really interested in happiness and spatial mobility and how they interact. So what does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 1: Can you repeat the question

Interviewer: Yeah sure sorry, what does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 1: Happy, I think it's a feeling you have when you're surrounded with or you're in a situation that makes you happy. I don't know. Yeah, so yeah, I think happy is a feeling, but it's also be like, memory or something you associate with like the word I don't even not only associated with a feeling but also with like memories and stuff.

Interviewer: And what can what can contribute to that feeling or Memory

Interviewee 1: I think a certain amount of people, yeah a lot of people there are people who in my life Yeah, most situations that I or time spent with them I think okay, I'm happy right now. Also by like things you can do in your life like if you achieve a goal or something that you worked for, or just doing something that you like, or something even new that you didn't know you liked or something in general

Interviewer: um, and what does the word well-being mean to you?

Interviewee 1: urm well-being is like I think I find like the overall happiness like happiness more like moments and well-being is more of an overall like over a longer period of time, like long term happiness maybe not necessarily only happiness but urm your well-being, I think can also be like, negative. If you kept Yeah, you know what I mean? Like, you can have a negative well-being. But I think, you know, like, in general, I think it was a positive word if you think about well-being, but I think it's, I feel like also I associate it a bit with, like health industry, kind of, like with your, your own health and maybe not the industry side, but like your own health. And maybe, yeah, yeah. Your own health and how you feel.

Interviewer: Yeah. And do you feel the two are connected or independent from each other happy and happiness and well-being?

Interviewee 1: If I feel like they're connected or independence from each other?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 1: Yeah, I think they're dependent on each other or I think well-being is dependent on happiness I don't think happiness is dependent on well-being

Interviewer: Why do you think that?

Interviewee 1: Because as I said I connect well-being more like longer term something so I think if you have like more happy moments and more happiness then your well-being improves but I think that even if you have a bad well-being in the moment you can still have like happy moments without it affecting your well-being and the same like for sadness for example I think you can have even though if you have a good well-being and you have a lot of happiness you know sound like a sad low with without, like directly influencing your well-being.

Interviewer: Okay. So taking everything that like how we've just described happy and happiness and well-being taking that like definitely those definitions stuff in mind, would you use them to describe how you feel about living and studying in Groningen?

Interviewee 1: Yeah I would. I think I think my well-being is, as I don't know, it has changed since I came to Groningen a lot like I think my well-being but also what I like I think I had a good well-being before I can to Groningen and also since I've been in Groningen, but I think it's different than it was before. I also think my like, perception of happiness has changed, like maybe something that made me happy before, doesn't necessarily make me happy now, but also things that didn't make me happy before really make me happy now in Groningen, and I think that in general, I connect like what I had now, especially now when I'm like at home, or other times when I go like back to Norway. And I like to think about happiness and happy moments and happy times. So most of them like connect me to Groningen and the people there.

Interviewer: Um, yeah, you said Um,

Interviewee 1: so like if I, yeah,

Interviewer: no, no carry on.

Interviewee 1: If I would like now if I would like to describe my happy place I think it would definitely be in Groningen than Norway.

Interviewer: um, and you Yeah, you said there are things in Groningen that make you happy?

Interviewee 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: What are those things?

Interviewee 1: I think that people especially because like I always had friends and stuff in Norway and a few good friends but I think when I came to Groningen, I found more people that I surround myself with that were like more my type of people that you like, you found four people that you actually liked even the people that you don't hang out with as much I like better than the people that didn't hang out with us much in Norway, for example. I think it also has to do with like, because they're like more people there and like, different types of people. But yeah, like I've gotten different types of friends in Groningen probably also because I've also become like, kind of a different person than I was before but so yeah, I think people is the main people is definitely like the main connection to happiness, I think for me, and that's why also Groningen because that's like where those people are at the moment.

Interviewer: And if people is the main factor for you, what are the other ones that might be less important than people but still important?

Interviewee 1: I think what I do with my whole life. Like the tasks I conduct during the day. Yeah, my study definitely like the work I do outside my study, for example, and GYAS that are really active like with Association and stuff. So I think like your daily, my daily, the things that Yeah, the events of my daily life kinda. And those are of course also depending on types of people but it's especially what I do with my time and where I put my energy and stuff.

Interviewer: So, you know, having like a good routine or daily tasks and stuff that plays a role for you and your well-being?

Interviewee 1: Not like not a routine, especially because you don't really have a routine, but more, Okay, so in my first year I did I did a little bit stuff for GYAS, I was pretty active. And then I felt like my study while like I really like my study or my study and what I study, however, I don't like it when that's it takes up 100% of my time and all the tasks and all the things I do during a day or like the main things that I do during a week I like all associated with my study, because that is like, takes over and I really like my study but I don't love it that much kind of. So like having like another outlet and having like other tasks to do and other things to do with that is completely different from a study that really makes me happy as well. So that's why I have like, I have a bit of study delay, because I didn't like didn't pass all my courses. But I think I could have if I would have like put all my time and energy or put more time energy like in my study, but I chose not to. Because it didn't make me happy to only do my study. So I'm like fine with having a study delay, if that means that I can do more of the other things that I also like to do, which makes me happier, which then again, is positive for my well-being.

Interviewer: So what are some examples of other things? Apart from just your studies you mentioned GYAS?

Interviewee 1: Yeah. Well, if, basically, GYAS and my study those were basically the two things that I do. One of the things that I really liked about GYAS is that I do like graphic design committee. And I like design logos and posters and stuff like that, like a really creative on that side of it. And since that was like something that I was actually considering studying, but I did not and now I'm like, happy that I can still develop that part of myself and do that. Even though I'm not studying it and still doing it kind of not only for fun, but also with like a purpose.

Interviewer: So you said you enjoy your study. Right? Oh, hello. Yeah. And

Interviewee 1: yeah, yeah you need to say it again.

Interviewer: yeah. Your studies What? What role does that play in your well-being apart from apart from what we've just discussed about it not taking up your whole time but how do you feel about the bachelor programme that you study?

Interviewee 1: I have like ups and downs. I have like, moments when I'm like, Why the fuck do I study this? You know, like, this is not what I want to do at all. But I think it's like a special topics and stuff. Like different courses and everything. And then I have moments where we suddenly study a topic and I'm like, oh my god, I love this. So much. Much and this is like really what I'm interested in this what we what I want to do. I think because like, for example with statistics for example, like I'm not good at statistics at all and I don't understand it that well and that's kind of ruined like a little part of it for me and then also with like all the courses that are like, like, for example the IR course we are in the I didn't like kind of twice but I would say like one and a half times before because and the topics we had them were like not interesting for me and that's why I think I was not motivated to do it and then and that also affected like my happiness I would say because if I'm not interested, I lose motivation and then I'm not happy about it. But like this year, I have like a completely different topics that I'm really passionate about that I really find really interesting, which makes me happier when I do the course. And which, yeah, gives you a sense of actually, it gives me a sense with like achievement, which again makes me happy. Yeah, but then they were like, yeah, I think I think interest is like a really, really important part of graphing as well. Like, if I have to work on something that I'm not interested in, then I'm not happy with it most of the time, but if I work on something that I have a lot of interest in, then I, I've become really happy with it. That's, I think, also why like GYAS and the things I do there are so important. Because those are things that I'm really interested in. So that's why I'm really happy about doing them.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, and you, you said you moved to Groningen in 2017.

Interviewee 1: Yes.

Interviewer: How long did it take you to settle in and adapt to the city and everything?

Interviewee 1: I think it took about six months until I was like, really settling in kinda maybe a bit less. And like after a year I was like, really and I like created a whole life there for myself basically, because in the beginning it was like kind of struggling with like, what type of people that I want to hang out with? Because like I had like, housemates, I'm in like in housing with like 10 people and I had a few housemates, I had like few friends at university and a house and I had just joined GYAS, the association which I didn't know what it was. I didn't know what I was going to do there or anything and then I kind of just got dragged into its kind of, and then I found out like, Okay, my housemates I don't really care about them. They're not really my type of people so I like ditched them and was like Okay GYAS okay, I really like these people. I'm going to hang out with these people. I found a few people at the university as well with that with like, okay, I like these people as well. So again with like people I think I was getting like people that made me like feel like I was settled in there like after six months I had like a good I think like balance of like, the people that I enjoy, have like, what would you call it, the major part like the major amount of people that I was hanging out with after six months were like, I was like, content with like, I would like to hang out with those people. Like, for the first six months, it was still like kind of searching for. Okay. Do I want to

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee 1: continue with these people? I'm like, Okay, see you never, you know. After a year I like just and I also moved to another two other housing and other people and then it was like, even better, because yeah,

Interviewer: yeah. So you think you adapted overall, positively, like you adapted well to life there? Or you would say

Interviewee 1: Yeah. I think so, I really think so because well, another thing is I came out of the closet, like after six months or something when I was in Groningen, and I think actually that was like kind of a turning point as well. Because like before, I have like a lot of good friends and everything, but it was like always, like, kind of it's like, hesitance like something a little bit like keeping back just like a little bit because like, you know, I didn't I didn't really know, maybe who I was or what I wanted, you know. And then like after six months, I just felt like say in a safe space and in a happy place as well with people so then I decided to come out of the closet and that was also a huge effect on my well-being. Like after that. I was like why the fuck did I do this like five years ago, you know? Of course, I know why I didn't because I wasn't ready. But I think that also had like an effect, that that was also really due to also me developing as a person but also to the people around me.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee 1: Yeah. And I think also due to that I was a lot more independent when I after a while, when I was in Groningen, like, before you're, before you're 18 you're like less the independence and stuff, you're more dependent on people and everything and that maybe also of course, if you want to become independent, that could also have native effect to your happiness, but if you're independent and you and you managed to like on your own in your own way find a place where you're happy then yeah, yeah, that's a good thing.

Interviewer: Yeah, I think um yeah, independence is

Interviewee 1: Yeah

Interviewer: You mentioned living conditions and accommodation, that played a role in your well-being as well?

Interviewee 1: Sorry can you say that again please

Interviewer: What role does accommodation play for your state of being?

Interviewee 1: Well, for me, it had a lot to say because I lived with like, 10 people and there was 10 really, really, really different people. We had, like stoners that smoke like, every single day and Chinese no wait Taiwanese, master students that just slept and studied and that was it, basically. And you had me somewhere in the middle. I don't know where even Yeah, you were like, you had to like there was like less me time, kind of like you can like retreat to like safe space kinda. It was like Less and then when I moved, I just moved to a studio where I was like all by myself. And for me that was really good since I was like, I was with people like the major amount of time. Like, as soon as I like basically left went outside of my room, I was like with people, you know, I was with people eating in the evening or with people during the morning and in the middle of the day, like with other stuff, and then in between, I was training with people as well, so that I was like, really nice to like, get a new accommodation where I could just be myself or just be with myself and no one else and just like retreat and just relax after like a day. It's like being with people all the time.

Interviewer: Um, and overall, how do you feel about being an international student in Groningen?

Interviewee 1: Well, I'm kind of in between, you know, I like I like to say that like the best of both worlds, because like I like to just pick in between because I have a lot of like, commitment at the university. The majority of my friends are like also international students and I think I like that both a bit more than like the non-international students at the University because they're often like that she's only hanging with Duchies, you know, like, no one else. Bah, bah, bah, bah, not all of them of course, but like this, like, stereotypical overall feeling. Well, I feel like the international sounds like a bit more open and a bit more, you know, like that. But on the other hand, like as important as GYAS is to be like, the things I do there, I don't think I would have had that if I was like a fully International Student like or especially if I didn't speak the language.

Interviewer: So you speak Dutch?

Interviewee 1: Yeah, I speak Dutch. Yeah, I speak Dutch fluently. And I think that's a really important factor. Because if you like it depends on the setting of course which setting you want to fit in or not like maybe some international Student would like GYAs as all but like I found the need for it and I really enjoy it, but a part of fitting in there is speaking the language.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 1: So I think that's that. Yeah. Yeah. That. Yeah. I was just thinking if I was no, I don't know what I was gonna say it but.

Interviewer: Um, so obviously your family's back in Norway.

Interviewee 1: Yes.

Interviewer: How do you find the distance?

Interviewee 1: Well, I went to boarding school for three years before I moved to Groningen, and that boarding school was like two hours and like 15/20 minutes away. So I was like kind of used to not living at home. Because then I went boarding school and that I was like home during the weekends and stuff. So like I kind of took like a big step when I was 15 with boarding school so that when I was like 18, almost 19 and I liked the next step to go to Groningen, yet the step wasn't like, as big as, as it would have been for someone else that didn't go to boarding school. So that's like, at least how I felt like I already knew how it was to like, go to a new place and to need to meet new people and kind of start your social life over again. And already knew how it was to not see your parents or your family like during the week, and maybe only in the weekends and now they changed to like only the holidays like the change wasn't that big. Because like I was already used to just keeping your family connections like over the phone, for example.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee 1: That was actually like a funny thing. Like when I just had to come out of closet like I talked to someone a friend of mine about it she was like and I was like I don't know I just want to do it I just want to tell my parents you know and she was like yeah I was like but I don't know if I should like wait till Christmas to like know wait till summer because when February or something like wait or wait like I see them get a person like I don't know if this is like news you have to be in person or like just do it over the phone she was like No, I think I think you need to do this in person and then was like oh fuck yeah maybe I do and then like two days after was like fuck it I don't need to do this in person you know I can just do this over the phone and I did over the phone. Because for me like for our family like to be talking over the phone is like almost the same as talking like in person. Of course. It's very nice to see each other in the flesh and everything and hug your mom and stuff like that, but since like I've lived outside of home for like six years now. Like you get used to just adapting to not living together so talking like having serious conversations over phone and stuff like that, and not only when you're in person.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee 1: And enjoying memories with each other from a distance like not only like sitting next to your mom on a couch or showing her photos on your phone because like this what I did today, but like being able to enjoy that, like stuff, my mom is able to enjoy it as much, even when I just send them to her on WhatsApp instead of like show it directly to her.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, I understand what you mean. I think that's

Interviewee 1: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, so obviously, we've spoken a lot about the situation obviously before Corona virus.

Interviewee 1: Yeah

Interviewer: And a lot has changed. So how like obviously due to lockdown going back to Norway, all of this, how is the chain impacted your state of being and your well-being.

Interviewee 1: Yeah, I think Well, I was really sad at first because I we kind of felt like, I really felt like a refugee if I'm allowed to say that. Because it was like, suddenly like, you have to leave the country like, or I didn't have to leave the country but like the university was closed and everything so I needed to study and the only place I could like really do that outside of like, the UB or my room was like, at home in Norway. So that it was like, Okay, let's go to Norway. And then my mom was like, I really want your kids home. I want you here with me, you know, in your situation, so that I was like, my choice like kind of like, just went out the window and was just like, leave the country and come home. So that I was like really sad because I like really abruptly had to like leave my daily life, my daily routine that daily, like the people that I like, associated with like my happiness and that has affected my well-being and I just like had to leave them abruptly without like even saying goodbye basically and then when I came here in the beginning I was like urgh the first three days, was like I don't want to be in Norway I want to go home I want to be in Groningen because I saw like all my friends just like still hanging out with each other and still just living kind of like normal life even though they'll have like a few adjustments of course but like in general was like pretty normal. But then when I when like the things changed in the Netherlands as well like the restrictions came there and then I think I was like more fine with it because then I realised like the difference for them and for me wasn't that much. And also now like the adaption that I did with like my family and my parents that I was like able to connect with them in the same way over like the phone over a distance. I didn't have that as much with like, my friends in Groningen and the people there because like I wasn't used to that. Like every time was like at home on holiday. I was like, I want to go back. I'm really excited to go back to Groningen again. Of course I'm really excited to do that now as well. But now, I'm like starting to adapt to like the feeling of connecting with them also, like, by Skyping and FaceTime and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewee 1: So now like, getting the, the people that I connect with my happiness and that affects my well-being like I thought like I kind of lost that when I went to go away to Norway, but now like kinda regaining that again, even though I'm here.

Interviewer: Um, and lastly, not just specifically in the coronavirus situation, but like as a whole, when you are maybe feeling like a negative state of well-being.

Interviewee 1: Yeah,

Interviewer: do you do you, like, actively seek out to do stuff or to influence your state or yeah to change

Interviewee 1: Yeah urm like I do, if I like feel like I'm feeling down or something, you know that I do different things, sometimes I go outside, you know, go to like fresh air. Like that's I think that's like probably a thing that I really connect with Norway and I find like this positive to my well-being like the nature here like walking in the forest and in the mountains or something like that. I think that's the thing that I really kind of miss in Groningen. Like, having like, I mean, of course, like I really live really close to Noorderplanstoen and I like go there to see the trees and get like fresh air, but it's not. It's not to say, you know, it's not the same as like walking up a mountain and having like an amazing view, you know, just like after walking for like 20 minutes, you know? So, like, I do that a lot like when I want to, like improve my well-being or my happiness like in the moment if I have been studying the inside all day and I'm like, like feeling like okay, now I'm not happy anymore with this. So then I go like Outside, go for a walk. Maybe I go take my bike and I just cycle somewhere. And then I think that if I do that in Norway, it has like a bigger effect than that it does when I do that in Groningen, like Yeah, but also a thing that I really noticed actually it's like my bike. And that's of course really connected to Groningen and not to Norway, but I noticed that like after I got my because have a fixie or like a single speed bike, like it's like cycled faster on and I noticed that after I got that bike, I was more I was way happier to like to go to university and stuff like that. Because in the beginning, it was like going so slow and I was like, I don't like to go slow and people were passing me and everything and now like now if I'm like, tired in the morning and like urgh I have to go to university and this sucks you know, I just jump on my bike and I just started cycling like really fast. And then they kind of focus on that. And it really like, Yeah, but I'm like, I don't find that bad anymore because I think it's really fun. You know, just like to cycle on the fast lane earlier stuff, and especially pass people

like, I don't let anyone pass me that's like if someone tries to pass me that away, then I get angry. And then I'm like, Okay, I'm gonna pass you again.

Interviewer: I'm just writing that down.

Interviewee 1: Yeah. Yeah, no worries

Interviewer: So I think that was kind of all of my questions. But is there anything that you that we discussed that you want to go back to or any things that we haven't touched upon that you want to mention?

Interviewee 1: No, I think it's all good.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Um, yeah, well, thank you so much. I'm going to stop the recording.

Interviewee 1: Yeah.

Transcript: Interviewee 2

Monday 30th March 2020, 12pm BST

Interviewer: Okay, good morning or good afternoon, actually. My name is Isla. Thank you for doing this interview with me. I'm a bachelor student of Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Groningen. And this interview is conducted in the context of my bachelor research project in which I'm exploring subjective well-being and happiness and European international students studying in Groningen. So yeah, the questions I'm going to ask you will relate to this topic. But I really want to emphasise that I'm really interested in your own opinions, your own thoughts, so there's no like right or wrong answers. And if anytime throughout the interview, you feel uncomfortable, you want to not answer a question you want me to turn off the audio recordings, please don't hesitate to say so. And yeah, as stated in the consent form, all the information will be kept entirely confidential and your name will be omitted for all research purposes. So if there's not any more questions, we can start.

Interviewee 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, so I'm going to start off with a few introductory questions for the purpose of the recording. Could you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 2: ah yeah, hi, I'm XXX, I'm a female and I'm 21.

Interviewer: Thank you and where are you? What country are you from?

Interviewee 2: I'm half Belgium, half French.

Interviewer: So where do you spend most of your life growing up?

Interviewee 2: Oh, well, urm it was kind of I moved around every three years. So do you want me to list the countries?

Interviewer: No, it's okay. And so when did you move to Groningen?

Interviewee 2: August 2017.

Interviewer: Okay, so now on to some more topical questions. And yeah, as I mentioned earlier, I'm interested in happiness and spatial mobility. So what does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 2: Urm, oh well to me, just kind of occupying myself in ways that make me reflect well upon myself. So just anything that leads to my well-being rather than, like, negative thoughts I guess.

Interviewer: Um, so what do you occupy yourself with?

Interviewee 2: Um, I do love sports. I played football quite a bit. Keeps me quite happy also just being around people. Like obviously what are a good influence but yeah being around people

Interviewer: and what things make you reflect well upon yourself?

Interviewee 2: I guess making good use of my time not procrastinating. Just like I don't like to just lay around that makes me reflect badly upon myself I just like to keep myself busy in a way that is going to make me a better person.

Interviewer: So what does the word well-being mean to you?

Interviewee 2: Um, I associated more with health actually, generally, just living a healthy lifestyle, being healthy.

Interviewer: And, and what, what factors contribute to a healthy lifestyle in your opinion?

Interviewee 2: I think one of the major things for me is spending a lot of time outdoors. I think just the outdoors is very just a healthy way of living your life. Well, there's obvious like nutrition and being active but I think being outside is something that's kind of overlooked a lot.

Interviewer: And do you feel happy and happiness and well-being interconnected or are they independent?

Interviewee 2: Um, I think a lot of people can be happy without the well-being part, yeah. Yeah, but not the other way around. Like, I feel like well, if, well-being is often linked with happiness, but happiness doesn't always mean like well-being.

Interviewer: yeah, I understand what you're saying. Yeah.

Interviewee 2: Ok, good.

Interviewer: So now taking those definitions and what you've just described the word, would you use them to describe how you feel about living and studying in Groningen?

Interviewee 2: Ah, yeah, definitely. I think it just, it takes some time because, like, adjusting to it all. But I think that's a lot, most people just when you move I think, for me at least the biggest thing with this move was that I was doing it all on my own. So it took me a while to reach that point where I was like, Oh, I'm happy and I have some like stability to my life.

Interviewer: And, so is stability, something that pays a well for you in your well-being?

Interviewee 2: Um, yeah, I think more well-being than happiness just because I feel like you have some sort of baseline of stability then you're able to kind of keep yourself sane and like on track if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah. And what for you what factors make you feel stable, or influence your stability?

Interviewee 2: Um, I think, like a bit of a balance of everything. So just knowing that I'm up to date with my, like University work, it makes me feel productive. Um, so I think that's a good thing that I base my stability around. And then I think football is a great thing for me just like sports. Because I spend a lot of time doing that. So I think and it keeps me like, in a routine that I enjoy without like, being too restrictive either. So I like that as well. So, yeah, I feel like I base my stability around those two things.

Interviewer: Um, and what do you study?

Interviewee 2: Chemical engineering.

Interviewer: And do you enjoy it?

Interviewee 2: Yeah, I really like it. I think like, I really enjoy the material. I think just the stress of studying gets to you sometimes. So I enjoy it, but I wish I had more time to enjoy it more.

Interviewer: Yeah. How did, you always know you wanted to move to Groningen to study chemical engineering?

Interviewee 2: No, I came to visit the summer before I graduated. And just for a day because I was in Brussels, so my mom and I drove up. And we're like, oh, it's very nice city and I spoke to a few students. And when I got my acceptances, it just was like, complicated to go to other places because the UK was not accepting me as EU and I was like, I'm so not bothered. And then my mom was like to just want to like sign this confirmation that you're going to study. I was like, Yeah, sure. And it was kind It was really, like, not planned out. Like I know, I didn't know where I wanted to be. But I kind of figured out what I wanted to study. So I just yeah,

Interviewer: And would you say, how are you feeling now towards your studies and the university?

Interviewee 2: Um, yeah, I like it. I'm very happy with my choice. But I think big, like, one of the biggest things that makes a difference is the people you meet. So I feel like I met a good group of people. But that's kind of just I think, for most people, that's just what happened if you meet the right people, you're gonna just end up liking it more. But yeah, I think I'm happy. I'm very happy with my choice, but it was just, it was always gonna be a temporary thing. So now that I'm finishing, I know that like I'm moving on, but I'm happy with the choices I made.

Interviewer: Yeah. And so you mentioned people, does that play a role in your well-being?

Interviewee 2: Oh, yeah, definitely. I feel like I always need that human connection. I'm not at all introverted. So, although I've learned to be very independent and like my alone time, I always need like, I feel like I need to be around people, whether it's just one person or like a few just, you know, yeah to talk to people.

Interviewer: And how, obviously, you are an international student. How do you find the distance with your family?

Interviewee 2: Um, I think it's okay, actually. Well, because growing up, I was only really close to my parents and my sister. The rest of my family isn't like it doesn't bother me, but I don't see them more than twice a year at all. And, yeah, I talked to my mom most days just, like 20 minutes here and there. So I think that's fine, but I see them like, probably twice between, like Christmas and Summer, so I feel like that's fine. But yeah, I don't find it too hard.

Interviewer: Um, previously, you mentioned the outdoors and it being quite an important factor for you. What?

Interviewee 2: Yeah,

Interviewer: What bits are most important to the outdoors? Or how does that play a role for you?

Interviewee 2: I don't know. There's just something about being outside like fresh air that just like makes me a lot happier. Obviously not when it's like storming or raining or whatnot. But yeah, I really enjoy. I find it harder in the winter, as well. I feel like that's one of the things that makes me like, a bit sad in the winter. I guess you could say just, I feel like I can always go outdoors. I feel like I'm confined to being in indoor spaces. Yeah. I generally really like to spend my time outside even if it's just like on my pavement to study instead of my room.

Interviewer: So you'd say the weather and seasons, are also quite an important factor for you?

Interviewee 2: Yeah, definitely.

Interviewer: And you also mentioned nutrition, what does that? What role does that play?

Interviewee 2: Oh, it's just, I find myself in phases where I just have like a meal a day and I just snack a lot. So it's just like, chips nothing great, and it just makes you feel like, No. It's not like a huge thing, but just making sure I'm eating my vegetables and just, I feel like that's just because I overlook it. It's like it. I feel like it's an easy thing to do, although harder when you're on your own. But, yeah, just making sure I have like one good meal a day is important.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um and now, if I'm correct thinking, saying, you're coming to the end of your studies?

Interviewee 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: How do you feel looking back at your time in Groningen as a whole?

Interviewee 2: Ah, I feel good. I feel like I learned a lot just being away and alone. I feel like I never really was like, forced into being by myself and figuring things out. So I feel like that's one of the biggest things I'm taking away from that. It's just like, a lot of independence, which I'm happy with. But yeah, I think, well, I guess it's just a very university experience, but just like, happy with it, like, I feel like I did do some in my studies. I could have done better but then I really like the social life I got so I wouldn't change that. Yeah.

Interviewer: Um, so what role does independence play for you in your state of being?

Interviewee 2: Um, I feel like it just gives me more time to reflect as well just because I've learned to be independent. So I've learned to be able to spend a lot more time with myself. all through high school, I was always surrounded by people, like my people would just walk into my house all the time. So I was never really like alone, ever. So I feel like just giving myself my independence is just me being alone, like, whether it's just going back to time for myself or whatnot. It just gives me like, slows time down and gives me time to reflect on things. So I feel like I make better decisions and I can just like appreciate moments more by just reflecting.

Interviewer: um, and how do you feel towards the city itself?

Interviewee 2: Oh, um, I think its really nice city. I think it's very well catered to students as well. But I feel like a lot of it is centralised around that, so I really like it but at the same time, it's like also a bubble. So I think it's perfect for students. But, um, yeah, really just like a very university town. Yeah I like it.

Interviewer: And how do you feel being an international student?

Interviewee 2: I don't mind it at all. I know a lot of people have trouble when it comes to like, the segregation between the Dutch students and international students. But I also think it's a choice about the efforts you make. I, well, I'm on a football team, and only International, but it didn't stop me from being part of the team if I tried. And because I showed that I cared and tried. They also put in the effort, so I feel like Yeah, no, I feel like it's fine. As long as like you acknowledge it and you try to. Yeah, to fit in it works.

Interviewer: Um, and you. Do you speak Dutch?

Interviewee 2: No, I understand it now. Because of living there for three years so

Interviewer: yeah, um, and what type of a student accommodation do you live in?

Interviewee 2: Now I live in apartment with two other girls. Yeah, just an apartment but I live in a student housing my first year.

Interviewer: Um, and what did you think of the student housing?

Interviewee 2: I think it was good for first year but only for first year. Like it's a good way to meet people and network, but it's a very hectic life as well.

Interviewer: Yeah. So when you move to Groningen, how long did it take you to adapt and settle into the way of life and the city?

Interviewee 2: Probably like a good six months, I would say be fully familiar with my surroundings and just like the people around me as well because I feel like you have to learn to make like building those friendships takes quite a bit.

Interviewer: And when you after the six months and you felt more settled, did you notice a change in your state of being your like your well-being?

Interviewee 2: Yeah, just because you get, well you have more than that stability just because you're more accustomed to your surroundings. And actually, you get to know your people as well. So there's a constant of at least your close group of friends as well. So I feel like that helps with your well-being just because it gives you more of a sense of like, oh, like it's okay. Like, I have people who are okay, like I'm happy with where I am.

Interviewer: And generally speaking, when you aren't feeling positive emotions of well-being or not very happy, do you actively seek out to change the situation?

Interviewee 2: Ah, yeah, I mean, I tried to but honestly, I feel like everyone needs those days where you just need to accept that you need to be a bit upset for a while and just let that emotion overcome you so that you can work on that. But, um, yeah, it's usually just like a day or two. And then yeah

Interviewer: And what do you do if it' if you want to change how you're feeling? What do you do?

Interviewee 2: Um, I generally try to see more people I feel like that helps just hearing how they're doing and just like exchanging stories just kind of changes your mood as well. We're doing something like myself shopping, like to retreat, or, like make a nice meal, like a like, a lot of effort and like, cook for a good two hours or something. Yeah, I don't know. But it's just like very small things like that. Kind of just lift up your spirits. Yeah.

Interviewer: And obviously I should have clarified earlier. I'm sorry but we are talking about before Coronavirus. So everything we've just discussed has yeah before the recent situation, but obviously it would be stupid not to address it because everything has changed in the past couple of weeks. So yeah, in terms of everything we've just discussed now how is the reason situation affected your well-being?

Interviewee 2: Ah I feel like, good not good. I'm in a weird state of mind where cuz I ended up being home by chance. Like I was visiting my family for a weekend and it was like, Oh, just stay here. I go through this thing of, Oh, am I happy to be home or do I wish I was back at uni? But I feel like a lot of it plays a lot of it is playing in my mind because I'm, I feel like it was my last few months at uni as well. And you never really expected to go like this. So I feel like that just plays in my head a lot, but I know, I feel like it's good we're just busy with exams and stuff because it keeps you busy. Um, but so my happiness, I would say it's like a bit on edge at the moment. But um, my well-being I feel like I'm good, well fed and like we have the backyard and we're in the mountains. So like I have things to do. It's not like I'm isolated in the small apartments. Yeah. So I think its ok yeah.

Interviewer: So, I think that was the majority of my questions. And is there anything that you want to go back to that we've covered or something we haven't discussed that you want to bring up? In terms of yeah, your well-being and things.

Interviewee 2: No, I think that's good

Interviewer: Okay, um, well, thank you so much. I'm going to stop the recording now.

Interviewee 2: Yeah, no worries.

Transcript: Interviewee 3
Thursday 26th March 2020, 12pm GMT

Interviewer: Okay, so yeah, thank you for having this interview with me. My name is Isla. And it's conducted in the purpose of my bachelor research project, which is exploring subjective well-being and happiness for European international students at the University of Groningen. And so I'm going to ask you questions relating to this theme and, and I really want to stress that I'm interested in your own personal opinions and thoughts. And there's no right or wrong answers. However, if anytime you want to stop the interview, you want to stop the recording. You don't want to answer questions, please. Feel free to say so. So if you do have any more questions, then let's start.

Interviewee 3: Yes, let's go for it.

Interviewer: Okay. So I'm going to start off with a few introductory questions. Could you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 3: So my name is XXX. I'm 22 of age. And I'm female.

Interviewer: Thank you and, um, where are you from?

Interviewee 3: I'm from I'm half Canadian and half Romanian, but I grew up in Romania. So, Romanian. Yeah.

Interviewer: And where did you spend the majority of your childhood?

Interviewee 3: as, the same amount in Northern Ireland and Romania. Literally the same amount. I can't say more or less than one or the other place.

Interviewer: And when did you move to Groningen?

Interviewee 3: I moved to Groningen two years and a half ago

Interviewer: So 2018?

Interviewee 3: Yes. 2018 Uh, no, 2017, September 2017.

Interviewer: Yeah. And so now on to some more topical questions and I'm really interested in like yeah happiness and spatial mobility. So what does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 3: Should I give just one word or should I just like

Interviewer: no just discuss just discuss what it means to you.

Interviewee 3: Happiness is like this like unbeatable high it's just like a high it's an unbeatable high yeah.

Interviewer: Um, and how would you How would you say you get the high or how does that high come about?

Interviewee 3: I think forgetting about all your worries are coming about and having an environment that makes you forget about all your worries and negativity in life, so that can be people or just like a place in general.

Interviewer: What does the word well-being mean to you?

Interviewee 3: I would say mental stability, like being content or stable yeah and healthy, and happy.

Interviewer: Healthy in terms of?

Interviewee 3: like physically healthy, and mentally of course but more like physically.

Interviewer: And do you feel the two terms are connected? Or are they completely independent from each other?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, they can be connected. Yeah. To an extent. Yeah.

Interviewer: And why do you feel this?

Interviewee 3: Because whenever I address someone like oh, like, I just care for their well-being like, I also care about happiness and like their state of mind basically under state as human. So you they're connected for sure.

Interviewer: Okay, and would you use these two terms that we've just discussed to describe how you feel about living and studying in Groningen?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And why would you related those terms back? Like, why would you say yes.

Interviewee 3: I mean, I'm defiantly happy being in Groningen so I mean, that's one of them. Yeah, I'm just in a happy place like I've never really had home until now. So yeah, I think yeah, that's why. I just never had a home until now like a stable place.

Interviewer: And what do you think makes you feel happy in Groningen?

Interviewee 3: people! Everyone's like social I get to see people all the time.

Interviewer: So your friends are important to you.

Interviewee 3: super important. Yeah, shout out to XXX..

Interviewer: Obviously I want to clarify that we're talking about a period before coronavirus happened. Yeah, before lockdown and things. But that any other, how do you? You obviously move to Groningen for your studies. What do you study?

Interviewee 3: I study European languages and cultures, Second year.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about that course?

Interviewee 3: I'm utterly obsessed with it. I'm in love with it. It changed me as a person. So in terms of happiness, that course is also part of it for sure.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you think your educational satisfaction relates back to your state of being

Interviewee 3: Yeah.

Interviewer: And did you move to Groningen, specifically for this for European languages and cultures? Or how does your study fit in with your decision to move?

Interviewee 3: Um, my decision to move was really random. I was going to apply to London Actually, I was really close to going to Brunel and I had to I had to just have a great resume. So I just came here for like social work. And then I randomly stumbled across the city and I was like, Wow, it looks so pretty. So I didn't I didn't go for the course. I just knew I wanted to be here because of the vibe, the ambience, the city. Yeah.

Interviewer: So the does the city relate to how you your happiness and well-being?

Interviewee 3: Oh, yeah, for sure.

Interviewer: How?

Interviewee 3: um, I guess part of it is because I don't have to pay transport, to pay for transport. For sure. So there's not a lot of money involved. It's just an easy city to go around, you know, you know your places. It's like it's really well structured in that sense, you know?

Interviewer: So the factors mentioned, just to go back to them. Transport what So do you have the bike? Do you walk everywhere or?

Interviewee 3: So I live in the city centre, so there's not really a lot of reason for me to like cycle that often. But um, I do cycle if I need to go to paradigm or like outside Groningen, anywhere like that I cycle, but I walk mainly I'd say 70 to 80%. I walk more.

Interviewer: How nice that you'd have in the city centre.

Interviewee 3: It's a privilege but it's also kind of a shit show because of the noise sometimes, but now there is no noise obviously because of corona. Yeah, I mean,

Interviewer: And you also mentioned money. How does that relate to, to everything?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, so essentially, if you compare it to where I was gonna go to London, London would have been a lot more expensive. I had, I would have had to pay for transport, and a bunch of other things out here. I don't have to pay for it, which is obviously good, because I'm saving up so that makes me happy. I think everyone's happy when they save up. So yeah, for sure. That's one of the reasons why it's better for me.

Interviewer: Um, do you have a part time job?

Interviewee 3: No, I don't. I mean, I sell stuff on Depop. I don't know if that counts.

Interviewer: That still is, I guess, money coming in, in that sense. So yeah,

Interviewee 3: I think I pay taxes too. I mean, there's still tax added. So I guess its kind of considered a job sort of.

Interviewer: And you also said the ease of the city and the place and that what that affects your happiness.

Interviewee 3: Yeah, because I'm not stressed. I'm like, I'm very like, I'd call it I take things slow you know, like, I don't have to catch bus. I don't have to be careful. Be careful where I walk. If there's going be cars coming crashing into me, you know, like, it's just a very easy city to live in. So you can live at your own pace.

Interviewer: So you feel safe in the city.

Interviewee 3: Sorry, come again, come again I got interrupted.

Interviewer: So you feel safe in the city?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, I feel safe. I think that's subjective though.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you think that then even if it's a subjective feeling, do you does that then relate back to your levels of happiness? Or do you think that independent?

Interviewee 3: Um, no, it's definitely to do with my happiness for sure. Cuz I feel safe. I feel happy obviously I won't be anxious. So yeah.

Interviewer: Um, and you said you live in the city centre, what's your living situation like?

Interviewee 3: So I currently live in a sort of Studio by myself. I only share the washing machine and I have a nice balcony. So I'm happy about that.

Interviewer: yeah, outside space is beneficial I think.

Interviewee 3: So especially now it's like I can just go to the balcony. Just observe the sun and whatnot. So that Great.

Interviewer: and your friends... You said your social network is also around people.

Interviewee 3: Yeah

Interviewer: That is, do you have like regular your regular contact?

Interviewee 3: Um, yeah, no, but yeah, I usually I would see my friends almost every day, give or take not necessarily go to their houses when I would bump into them at the UB and stuff like that and hang out with them so,

Interviewer: yeah,

Interviewee 3: yeah, um, and what about your family? Do you have regular contact with them?

Interviewee 3: Um Yeah, I mean I just call them I don't FaceTime them or anything we just call each other every other day. Maybe now it's every day but every other day usually. Yeah.

Interviewer: And they're all in Romania?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, they're all based in Romania.

Interviewer: And how do you find obviously speaking before coronavirus, how do you feel the distance being an international student in Groningen versus your yeah being in a different country from your home country?

Interviewee 3: Um, I grew up as an only child it's not a big difference like I feel like I've always known how to live on my own my parents have been working you know, so it's like, I only see them usually in the evening or something. So there's no big difference and the prices to go back home aren't that expensive it's just I choose personally to stay here more often than go back home because I don't know I still want to be on their fucking mind all the time on their hands. I just rather be here. Yeah.

Interviewer: Um, would you say maybe that Yeah, you've like, Well, well, how do you think when you move to how do you think you adapted to the city did it take you long to settle in Did it take you a longer time?

Interviewee 3: No, because like, initially, I was living in a student house thing, in paddlepool. So we had a lot of people to occupy my mind 24/7 like I just like seeing people all the time. So it helped, again, being around people. I think if I was alone or lived in a different circumstance, maybe it would have been harder for me, but nope, it was pretty easy adopting.

Interviewer: Um, so you said friends, again, helped you? Like adapt and settling. Were there any other factors that helped? Or was it mainly your living situation and Yeah, the social aspect?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, and like, like I said, it's just like, because it's such a small city, like you don't have you know, where events are going on, you know, where, I don't know I've never had FOMO for instance, you know, I feel like if I was if I was in a big city, Like 10 concerts were happening in the same time I'd have big ass FOMO but here, it's like, I know what's going on. It's easy to go around. So I think again, the size of the city mattered a lot.

Interviewer: Um, and I'm looking back at your time Hello, hello. Yeah. Okay, sorry. looking so you've been in Groningen since 2017. So yeah, two and a half years looking back now as a whole on your time, would you and also keeping in mind the definitions of happiness and well-being would you look back in your time in Groningen with those definitions in mind or not?

Interviewee 3: so we're saying now compared to them to the first time I came here,

Interviewer: no, I'm looking back as a whole your whole experience living in Groningen.

Interviewee 3: Um, I would definitely stay there was a lot of instability. Like there's a lot of fluctuations. Especially in first year I'd say. By the end it got really hard because of drama. I think that doesn't really have to happen, like necessary because the city doesn't have any do but yeah, I definitely have people hurt me a lot. So I guess like, it did go up and down like now okay, but like maybe a week ago, I was really amped up. So yeah, I would say it's not a stable state of well-being/happiness. So, yeah.

Interviewer: So do you think stability or not stability, but I'm kind of urm Yeah, yes, stability in friends and social network influences your well-being a lot.

Interviewee 3: Yeah, absolutely for sure.

Interviewer: And just to discuss that, obviously with coronavirus How has that affected your well-being and your happiness now?

Interviewee 3: So we're talking about the situation with corona.

Interviewer: Yeah, like now Uni being cancelled and kind of lockdown

Interviewee 3: um I would definitely say that it was hard because I'm a really big extrovert. So in the beginning, I'm very lost and confused, but um, I go to therapy, so that helps a lot like I do online therapy. And I've managed to have coping mechanisms and techniques to deal with it. But it also I guess, it's an opportunity to get to know myself you know, not because I feel like we're lacking We rely on your friends so much as pillars and now we're like, kind of doing our own thing and managing on our own. So now I'm fine. No, I'm fine. I'm content with it actually.

Interviewer: Um, so that that's good to hear. But do you think um, the situation of Corona virus has impacted the things that make you happy in a non-Corona virus situation? So, previously we spoke about, like the city stability and your social network. Do your friends you do you think they still play apart now? Or has it become quite a different situation?

Interviewee 3: I think No, it's actually fine. Like, you know, because then we keep in touch. You know, I keep in touch with my closest friends. If anything, it's kind of shows me who's there like for real, they're online. Um, so it doesn't really impact that much or still work out. I still have my own thing. It's just I've adapted Yeah, so it's fine. Yeah, it didn't impact that much my happiness since

Interviewer: you said you work out do you do sport?

Interviewee 3: Um, so prior to Corona time I used to go to the gym. But now I run around five kilometres every other day and then if not, I just do workouts at home....

Interviewer: So, I'm sorry I think I think I lost you at the end. But you think physical exercise also impacts your happiness?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, I can't live without physical exercise. Like I go crazy. I have to. I have to do something for my mind. So I do workout pretty often now. I work out more than I used to have Before Corona because I do it every day just because I don't have weights, so I have to do something to make up for it but yeah, it impacts my happiness.

Interviewer: and are there any other factors you think that impact your happiness and apart from yeah working out and the ones you've mentioned that friends, the city,

Interviewee 3: urmm definitely good music um there's so many genres out there some things some genres will actually trigger me that's even possible emo rap and all that. I rarely listen to it anymore but yeah, music and movies for sure impact my happiness.

Interviewer: Um, and then also taking it back to Groningen and the city and studying. How do you feel being an international student?

Interviewee 3: urmmm I thought I would feel more isolated or alienated. But obviously, we are not the only one. It's like we're a bunch of us. So I feel part of something that not a part of the society like the Dutch society, but yeah, I feel part of this. I feel a part of something, but it's not society, I guess, like the true meaning of it.

Interviewer: Yeah. Kind of the international community and bubble in Groningen I think is quite strong.

Interviewee 3: Yeah, like we're really strong together. You know, we bond, and we click easily fascinated about each other backgrounds. For sure.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, I think that was kind of all of my questions. And do Is there anything else we haven't mentioned that you want to talk about or anything you want to touch upon?

Interviewee 3: No, no, that's great. I think I think like now you know so much about me... like trying to understand people's minds.... hahah

Interviewer: Yeah, but I hope you didn't feel uncomfortable with anything though.

Interviewee 3: No absolutely not, it was so nice actually, it's a good topic by the way I really hope you get all your results in you get to write it down the impact of happiness in a city that's important actually.

Interviewer: Thank you. Yeah, I am really interested in and I'm really interested in that as well. And like, how for us moving to a different country actually does play such a big role. And yeah, each person is different and has different situations but that yeah to analyse. analyse that, but yeah, I'm gonna if there's anything else you want to say I'm gonna stop the recordings.

Interviewee 3: Yeah. Okay.

Transcript: Interviewee 4
Thursday 26th March 2020, 2pm GMT

Interviewer: Yeah, thank you for doing this interview with me. It's conducted in the contents of my bachelor research project for the Bachelor of human geography and Urban and Regional Planning. I'm exploring subjective well-being and happiness in relation to being an European international student at the University of Groningen. So the questions I'm going to ask you will revolve around this theme. But I want to emphasise that I'm really interested in your own personal opinions, and your own thoughts and feelings and there's no right or wrong answers. And also, if at any time during the interview, you feel uncomfortable, you don't want to answer a question or you want me to turn off the recording, please don't hesitate to say so. And as stated in the consent form, which you've just signed, all the information will be

kept entirely confidential. And I'll admit your name for the final result. purposes. So if you don't have any more questions, then let's start. Okay. So to start off with, I'm just going to ask a few introductory questions. Can you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 4: So I'm XXX, I'm 21. And I'm male.

Interviewer: And where are you from?

Interviewee 4: I'm from Italy.

Interviewer: And you spent most of your life in Italy.

Interviewee 4: Yeah, yeah, I lived there since I was born, and until I moved to Groningen.

Interviewer: And when did you move to Groningen?

Interviewee 4: It was September 2017. Yeah, yeah. For the first year of my Bachelor Human geography and planning.

Interviewer: So now on to some more topical questions. What does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 4: It means...mm.. happy, Well, definitely, definitely, I would say without any, any problems. And in, in a state of the state of peace, I would say,

Interviewer: um, and what do you think adds to or contributes to obtaining that state of peace?

Interviewee 4: Well, you mean in general?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 4: well, of course, external factors. Like I would say the people you have around. Your, your situation in the sense of where you're living, just like your living conditions. And, and, and yeah, but then also could be some very minor, minor factors like sometimes just the weather can make you happy or stuff like this

Interviewer: and you said that those are like external factors, do they relate to you? Do you will do you relate to them?

Interviewee 4: Yeah, I would definitely say so. I mean, when I don't know for example, thinking about friends, like if we meet them, we gather together then it is definitely a happy moment and yeah some factors that I mean some factors that I cannot control but many other factors that I personally can control. Also I am happy for example if I'm productive for example studying then I'm happy because I mean it's very personal and it varies from person to person but for me if I'm productive and have a good studying day and I accomplished something then I'm I am happy or if something goes well also for like we like by luck that I'm happy. So yeah some things I can relate to. Some other things do not depend on me but yeah,

Interviewer: Um and so what does the word well-being then mean to you?

Interviewee 4: Um, I would say well-being relates to the idea of, umm but first of all, I mean both physical well-being in the sense of just feeling like healthy feeling good feeling strong and also most important, mental well-being. So, again that can be related to the concept of being happy. But so I would say me being in peace being yeah general feeling good about yourself and sometimes the physical part and the mental part. I mean, often, I mean, almost always, I would say they are interrelated and interdependent.

Interviewer: Yeah, and then would you describe happiness and happy and well-being then as being connected or two independent things?

Interviewee 4: Yeah, I would say they are connected. If I'm if I'm feeling good, like in the sense of well-being, then I think I'm I am way more likely to be happy in general. They are related. Yes.

Interviewer: Is it more well-being influences happiness, or would you say happiness influences? Well-being or both influences each other? Or would you say that there's not a state of influencing that it's just two individual factors?

Interviewee 4: No, I would say they influence each other. I mean, there is an influence. Um, yeah, they influence each other a theme in both ways. But yeah, I would probably say that, for me personally. Like, the idea of well-being also, in the sense, like, in more physical sense can influence the, the being happy. So yeah, if I'm not feeling good with myself, if I also, I don't know, with my body with my mind, then it's, I would say it's harder to be happy.

Interviewer: and then keeping in mind the kind of definitions you've discussed, or we've discussed just now, how do you feel about your life living in Groningen? Obviously, before coronavirus but yeah. How do you feel about living and studying in Groningen?

Interviewee 4: Well, there's been, I mean, in general overall, I would definitely think about it as a happy period. Due to the fact that I met many people, I gained an independence from my parents and from home in general. Which was, which meant a lot to me. I, in general I like studying what was what I like, I mean, I like what I'm studying. So yeah, Overall, I would say it's been a very, very happy, happy period of my life. Um, of course there were ups and downs. So, sometimes I was just, I mean, I was just feeling that something could be better, or something was missing, especially at the beginning when it's a bit harder. It's a bit hard to adapt to the new situation. But yeah, and I think it was also getting better and better in the sense of, yeah, adjusting to the new situation. Then by the end, by now that like, almost three years, three years that I've been living here it's easier I know myself I know so it's easier to, to I'm already settled, let's say so it's easier.

Interviewer: So, if we, you like listed a lot of factors, so, um, I just want to like go through them all if that's okay, so you mentioned people and you've gotten to know friends and things are you someone who's very socially active?

Interviewee 4: No, not in particular in the sense that I don't I don't I mean, I don't, I don't feel necessarily comes too comfortable in, in like, constantly meeting new people constantly gathering but they really like to have I really enjoy the presence of a few friends a few seeing individual friends with who I really like to spend time and so yes spending time with them definitely contributes to my, to my happiness and my well-being.

Interviewer: And you also spoke about the fact that the move to Groningen brought about independence from your family. Would you say that, that gain of Yeah, feelings of independence? Yeah. influenced your state of being?

Interviewee 4: Yeah, I would say so. If I if I have to be honest by the end of high school. I'm an only child. So let's say that living with my parents was starting to feel a bit a bit tight a bit a bit strict How can I say? And so yeah, I was and sometimes they were also back at the end of high school. They were still treating me a bit as far as maybe as a child or something like that. But with the with the big step of moving here I definitely feel like my relationship with them has changed a lot better improve, actually. So, so now we are more like I feel more an adult they see me more as an adult. I feel more responsible having to deal with all the I don't know the house stuff, or I mean having to live by, by myself.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 4: So, so yeah, that that meant a lot to me.

Interviewer: And so you mentioned your family supported your move to the Netherlands?

Interviewee 4: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And did you always know you wanted to move to Groningen to study human geography or how did that come about?

Interviewee 4: Actually came after like, I think like most of the people in a moment in which I didn't really know what to do after my high school, but then going as said, trying to do and I was looking for something out of Italy, abroad to speak English to meet new people to international people. So yeah, I was going through the various options didn't really know what also what to study but then I found the program in Groningen and I thought it would be interesting to give it a try. And so I did and so far I'm really enjoying it. I really like I really am really happy with my choice.

Interviewer: Um, so yeah, so you're, you're quite satisfied with the yeah with the bachelor and the university and stuff?

Interviewee 4: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Overall Yeah. There have been ups and downs but overall yes. Yeah.

Interviewer: And you also mentioned adjusting and settling in and when you moved in 2017 did you how long did it take you to adjust? Do you think you settled in well to the city?

Interviewee 4: well, took some time. Good question. I mean, I, it took me it was a long process and sometimes it's going on. But yeah no, overall everything went pretty smooth. I was also I feel lucky in the sense that I was living in student accommodation with many other students. So let's say that that was, I mean, I was definitely not by myself, but it was just many, many students in in the same boat in the same conditions as I was. So that made it a lot easier also to get to know people and to start friendships.

Interviewer: And so do you think having like a wide social network or not social network but a wide kind of access to lots of people help you adjust and settle in.

Interviewee 4: Yeah, yeah. Just I think that if I would have moved in, in, in just in a room by myself, it probably would have been harder. Just starting and not knowing anyone. I mean, living with other people was definitely an occasion to, to meet, meet people and again, create friendships and also help each other in in like most for most of us him leaving alone for the first for the first time. So yeah, it was a there was support there was a there was a we were in this together so going through the first year. Going through the I mean, for many of us for the first trip like the first university experience together I think made it a lot better and easier.

Interviewer: And what's your current living situation?

Interviewee 4: I live by myself. I only share the I mean I have a room with the kitchen I only share the restroom but I don't really know the other people like sharing it with so I would say I mean I'm here by myself.

Interviewer: And do you like your current living situation, or did you prefer living in a big house with lots of other people?

Interviewee 4: No, I think that both have pros and cons. I like I mean, I like I like having this place now. Because that means the knees being I mean, it's quiet. I can I can just, I don't have to share the kitchen. So I can I can organise it as I like. So yeah, but again, if this if the if I would have had this place in the first year first as a first place, then I probably wouldn't I wouldn't have met many friends. And I would say it would have been a bit sad, but I really liked how things went. So having the student accommodation first, even though that adds a lot of negative aspects, in terms of the housing itself, and after that, moving by moving by myself in this place

Interviewer: and just to go just to go back sorry when we were talking about family and do you find being from your family being back in Italy and you being Italian that then do you feel that there's like a big distance between your family and you will or how do you feel in relation to moving and now living in Groningen and your parents living in a different country?

Interviewee 4: I mean, there is a big distance I yes, I, I feel that. However, I would say that with I mean, with the technologies we have nowadays, I still talk to them pretty often. And then also, I think, I mean, for

example, I had a I went for an exchange experience in Seattle in the United States. And there was there I was feeling I was feeling far in the sense that, you know, there was an adult if something happens, like, I mean, there was actually feeling like, Whoa, there is an ocean in between. But here, I mean, yes, I feel far. But at the same time, I got the chance to go back, especially in the first years quiet, quite often. I mean, I would say once every, every couple of months at least. So, so yeah, that that was not too, too bad.

Interviewer: And what other anything what other things What things do you do when to make yourself feel happy? Do you have you know, like something you do every time you know if you need to feel better or yeah?

Interviewee 4: yeah, I mean for example, I really like sports for example, I like cycling. So that's, that's I do that as to I mean when I do that, I definitely feel good plus again it the contribution also comes from the people because if I would be going by myself, then you would be one thing but like going with the, with some friends from my studies, so that that changes everything I would say in better. And then yeah, also again, see my friends that that's one thing that that is a synonym of happiness and well-being with them, I really am happy to when I spend time with them. And then yeah, also, I would say that by now also going back to the adjusting thing, you're also building certain routines contributed to my well-being my happiness, for example. And how can I say, I don't know, the habit of studying I really enjoy studying in the library where I could see all my friends again and but also in general like, I liked the environment there. And so even though I was studying if I think about it going there was a happy moment. I mean, I really have happy memories. They're like me at the end studying with all my friends. So from different studies and, and studying together, then taking breaks together. So also, I mean this this kind of routines of habits I remember them as happy. I mean now I'm talking in the past before the corona situation but yeah

Interviewer: yeah, so having routines positively influence?

Interviewee 4: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Um, and yeah, obviously we're in a weird situation with Coronavirus but how has it the current situation with university being cancelled and isolation and things and how has that affected you in in relation to everything we've just discussed?

Interviewee 4: Well, a lot has changed in the sense I mean, social contacts are way, way less. I mean, as it should be. But I'm still trying to stick to, to the desperately, desperately sticking to the things that make me happy every day for example, cycling so until I until I will be able to do it, I will keep doing it. And then yes, they stay staying. I mean, staying in maybe in my room as changed along terms of the routines we were talking about. So, and I have to be honest, it's, I mean, I've been struggling a bit. The first days the first weeks with no being able to focus at all be I mean be to be productive, but on the other side I have to say that this whole change also brought nice things if I mean like of course just as the quarantine if you want to find something nice and do this later but so for example also my friends at home in Italy they are all on lockdown in quarantine they cannot leave their houses. So they are they are video calling each other so I'm also video calling them and I'm also part of the of the of their nights out in the sense or they're video calls why they actually go out for real then, of course since me that would be difficult so I'm actually feeling a lot closer to, to them to my friends in Italy and I like it And yeah, yeah trying but still trying to develop new habits in the sense of like you know be trying to focus and stuff

Interviewer: Yeah, new routines and stuff in the current situation but how lovely that that a positive thing has come out of this and that you now have feel more connected to your friends back in Italy because you know that's really positive and really nice yeah

Interviewee 4: we need we need some positive aspects yeah

Interviewer: I definitely agree with you and coming towards the end but how do you feel about being an international student in Groningen as a whole?

Interviewee 4: Well, it I mean, it brought. I mean, I feel like I mean, I feel like there are not many contacts for, for me with, with the Dutch people I never had the chance to actually like be really friends with any of them me in particular. So actually like, kidding like I was I have not I made more Dutch friends

while I was on exchange abroad than actually here in in the Netherlands. So um so yeah, no I mean I feel like I'm in, in in an international environment let's say because all my social contacts I mean at least 99% of them are our international students, there is a stronger strong relationship, I have to say with other Italian students, I don't know if that happens in general or in particular to Italians who probably tend to stick to stick together. But so yeah, that that there is a strong relationship with them. So actually I find myself always like, I mean, often speaking Italian and so yeah, I mean it feels like I'm leaving here, but sometimes it also really feels like I can say a colony in the sense of like, I play in Italian place away from Italy, but still like with all the Italian elements, and then again, like, I think that with all the technologies we have now it's really, things are a lot easier. I mean, my, my mother also my mom was have studied for a couple of years in, in Wales. And I mean, back then she, she, I mean, she's like, she had no ways of communicating apart from phones that were not always working. So, so yeah, I mean, I, I can imagine that having, I mean, for us the experiences made a lot, a lot easier. And many of the many of the possible problems are now like, are now taking out. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. And technology is, um, we're very lucky to have it.

Interviewee 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: And if I'm correct in saying you came here in 2017, so you're coming towards the end of your study?

Interviewee 4: Oh, yeah. Yeah, indeed, hopefully!

Interviewer: And so looking back now on your time as, as a whole in the Netherlands, and at the University of Groningen, do you look back on it in a positive way?

Interviewee 4: Yes, yes, definitely. I still don't know what I'm gonna do, I don't really know what I'm gonna do after that, but I definitely have the feeling that experience like enriched me in all possible ways in the sense that I mean, I feel like if I if I would have stayed home, then I would have been like, like, like my, some of my friends and I can see that like, the person that never left their hometown and so, I mean, their horizons are not really broad. Let's put it this way. While staying here. I really feel like there is so much more out there are so many opportunities, just different ways of thinking different ways over different perspectives different career possibilities than what you're used to. So yeah I definitely feel like the experience enrichment plus it was a very positive experience during my stay again like I made friends going over the things we already said but like yeah made friends I became independent in the sense that I'm able more or less to live on my own So yeah, I definitely happy I'm definitely happy with the, with the experience then of course, like everything that have been little downsides, but overall Yeah.

Interviewer: Um and when you were using the term enriching, just now in do you see enriching as a positive contributor towards happiness or a negative contributor or how do you describe an associate with the term enriching

Interviewee 4: I would say positive I would say positive, like contributing in a positive way to my happiness. Because I mean just seeing new things. Again, seeing your new perspectives, I mean really broadens your horizon and I mean, I'm, it makes me feel happy, in the sense of like, I'm really happy to be learning something new I'm really happy to be to be to be I mean again meeting new people but on the other side might actually be that it changes the meaning it changes what happiness means for you so if I if I would have stayed home happiness being happy with that meant some something different than what is meaning now for me so yeah I mean I can't really think of practical examples but being if I would have been home being happy might have been like having I don't know like I mean probably having very material stuff like being happy in the, happiness confined within your hometown so yeah, I have a nice, nice, nice car or something like that. While coming here, being happy means something different, like changed my like, coming here changed my concept of happiness. I don't know if that's clear kind of, but I'm

Interviewer: sorry, I'm just writing it down. Um, yeah, so I think you've answered all of my questions. And I'm very grateful. Is there anything that we haven't covered that you feel you'd like to discuss or anything you want to go back to?

Interviewee 4: No, not really. I'm yeah, I think I think I said everything. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you so much. I will stop the recordings now.

Interviewee 4: Was my pleasure.

Transcript: Interviewee 5

Thursday 26th March 2020, 11am GMT

Interviewer: Hi, good morning. I'm a bachelor student of the human geography, and Urban and Regional Planning bachelor at the university here and this interview is conducted in the context of my bachelor research project, in which I want to explore subjective well-being and happiness for European international students. And yeah, the questions I'm going to ask will relate to this theme, but I really want to stress that I'm particularly interested in your own individual points of views and your own understandings or feelings. So there's no right or wrong answers. And if at any time during the interview you feel uncomfortable, you want to stop, not answer question or stop the recording please just let me know. And yeah as stated in the consent form, all information will be kept entirely confidential and your name will be omitted for all research purposes, so if you don't have any more questions, then let's stop. Yeah. Okay. So for the purpose of the recording, I'm just going to start off with some introductory questions. So could you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 5: I'm XXX. I'm female, and I'm 21 years old.

Interviewer: and what country are you from?

Interviewee 5: I'm from Germany.

Interviewer: And you lived there your whole life or?

Interviewee 5: Yeah, I've been abroad for a year in the States, and then a year in Ecuador after high school, and now I'm here in the Netherlands.

Interviewer: So now on to some more topical questions, I'm really interested in happiness and spatial mobility. So to start off with, what does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 5: Um, I think it's just, ah, the feeling that you have when you feel good about yourself and where you are and your life and that what you're doing has a purpose because I think having a purpose is really like an important factor for being happy.

Interviewer: and what does the word well-being mean to you?

Interviewee 5: Um, I think well-being is more like a medical state so that you psychological and physical, feel good and that you don't have any like illness or that you are not like distress and that you're not like. I think it's more like yeah, like it's not like to be happy is not really like it's also important but happiness for example it's like a factor of well-being I guess then well-being is more like an umbrella term.

Interviewer: So you feel the two are connected in a way

Interviewee 5: ah, happiness and well-being?

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 5: Yeah, I think so. I think so for us that happiness is like a part of well-being.

Interviewer: So, urm using the way we've just, you've just described the two words would you then would you relate them back to your life in Groningen living and studying there?

Interviewee 5: Yes, definitely. I think I'm happy and well

Interviewer: um and what do you think influences you being in that state of being?

Interviewee 5: I think the people that I surround myself with and what I'm doing that I like my studies and I like to city and just like, like my routine in life and how I like do my things, meet new people, and then I'm able to do the things that I'm interested in and that I enjoy doing.

Interviewer: So, you mentioned your study. What do you study?

Interviewee 5: Psychology

Interviewer: and do you enjoy it? You do?

Interviewee 5: Yeah, it's nice, stressful but nice.

Interviewer: And have you always wanted to study psychology?

Interviewee 5: I thought about it a long time and then I didn't really know what to do. Um, psychology seemed to be interesting. And then I just chose it and hoped it would work out and as far as I did,

Interviewer: And did you move to Groningen to specifically study psychology at the University of Groningen? Or how does your study relate to your move from Germany to the Netherlands?

Interviewee 5: I never wanted to study in Germany. My sister lived here six years ago as well doing a bachelor and I always liked the Netherlands. I thought it was really beautiful and so wanted to study in the Netherlands. I say also just like heard good things about it and then and I decided to study psychology and then it just worked out everything.

Interviewer: Um, so family also had kind of like played a role of importance in your decision?

Interviewee 5: Um, well, yeah, like my sister has a lot of influence on my decisions as she's kind of like a role model of me. So I really like admire the things she does. I like the way she did it and try to like, do her own thing. So I know. Yeah.

Interviewer: And you also mentioned the city. Um, what aspects of the city were you referring to?

Interviewee 5: Um, like the canal, the park. The like the houses like when you go downtown that it's also like really small, which is like, you're able to go from place to place with it easily and everything is really connected. And it's kind of a community you meet like, similar people at events that you're interested in and it's easy to kind of connect to people.

Interviewer: Yeah. Does that relate to, you also mentioned the people influencing you, your social kind of surroundings?

Interviewee 5: Yes, definitely. I mean, you go to the events that you're interested in and you normally meet people there that have shared interest with you and as Groningen in a small community it's also smaller than bigger cities. You're like meet like the same people at different events and they connect and then they get the feeling of belongingness and like to be part and easy. I don't know. When you have shared interests, it's easy also to talk to people and get along and yeah.

Interviewer: And obviously, just I want to clarify that we are talking about before coronavirus times and yeah, isolation or lockdown. And what interests do you have, you said when you meet people who have similar interests you enjoy that but what interests do you have?

Interviewee 5: Um well I like sports interests I play soccer so I have like people who are also interested in like doing sports and then I'm really interested in feminist network I'm, I tried to support women's rights, General human rights and I'm really into that topic and try to like connect people through that, especially

like the Women's March that happened and I kind of find people who also like, you know, like to do something together, organise something for it really nice and yeah

Interviewer: When you moved here in 2019, how long did it take you to settle in? Do you think you've adopted? Well,

Interviewee 5: um, I think it took me like was it September like a month, maybe? It's really easy, because my flatmate was really nice. So I was able to catch some people through her and she kind of introduced me also like, to the city, we hung out a lot. And then for my studies, I met a few people and then just like randomly, I know the whole community grew and I know I think it's still like changing and adapting, but I definitely had like a good and really comfortable, comfortable start.

Interviewer: And you mentioned your flatmate, what's your living situation like?

Interviewee 5: I live in a flat and I have two roommates, both German. Really nice. And one is a first year medicine student already has a better and economy something and the other is in her third year and studying liberal arts and science. And we also share like some common interests. And yeah, we really work well together in our flat as we are really different, but also like similar that we get along, and therefore we kind of adjust to all the obstacles that we face.

Interviewer: And you mentioned that they're both German.

Interviewee 5: Yeah.

Interviewer: Does that influence your feelings towards your flatmates and your living situation?

Interviewee 5: Um, um, I don't know really, I think like, us we have similar experiences like through high school, it's really like similar on all Germany. And as we have to share, or we like to say like a similar culture in the world from different parts from Germany is probably also on values and how we grew up was also really similarly, we grew up really well. had like no huge problems, I believe. And, um, which probably is easier when us when you would live with someone from a completely different culture, who maybe has like, different experiences or different values that you have to adjust but might also be like, more interesting or like, here like hold minds. Like money grows through, like living with people from different countries, but in general, I think it's just, it doesn't really matter as we're all humans and should be fine.

Interviewer: So does that relate back to, to you being an international student and not living in Germany where you're from having German flatmates? Does that influence your emotions over not living in the country that you are from?

Interviewee 5: Um, first of all, I was thinking if I want to live with Germans because like, I don't want to live in Germany, so I've more looking forward to like meeting more people from different cultures, but at the end, I think it doesn't really matter. Um, and I have a lot of like international friends as well. So it's not primarily German people. But I do notice that when I hang out with a lot of Germans, especially from my bachelor programme that I do relate to them as like really German and like the German people that I know, and how they act and, but I don't have the same feeling with my flatmates. I think like the mindset of still, like really open and yeah, it's really nice.

Interviewer: So, you, you earlier you mentioned routine being important to you. Is that something on your routine? And like having a purpose?

Interviewee 5: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is that something that you are kind of aware of? Explicitly, do you actively seek out to you know, make sure that you do have a routine every day and a purpose and things?

Interviewee 5: Yeah, um, I think when I noticed when I was in Ecuador that having a purpose is really important to me because I just like the way what you do that you know the way you do things and what you do kind of like that you know why you're doing them and like here I have my studies like I want to like pass like I want to do my best, I want to study I'm interested in the topic and that like kind of keeps me going

like you know when you find it annoying and like a lot to do is like if I really want to do it or but I'm like thinking about this that why you do it and what you do, like keeps me going and having a routine is also nice because for me it's really hard to like not have anything planned because then I can't get my like myself up to do something because I don't know what to do and then I feel like I'm wasting my time and then I don't do anything and then not having like a returning routine kind of like keeps me going.

Interviewer: Yeah, um and We've spoken a bit about being an international student and open mindsets, but how in general How do you feel about being an international student in Groningen?

Interviewee 5: I feel really good as especially, Groningen is like full of international students and students in general. So I feel really, um, yeah, I feel really welcome and good, even though I think Germans also like a little specific, because they're like a lot of Germans here. So I would rather like consider like the Dutch people, internationals and then they're like, Germans.

Interviewer: Also just to touch on it as it's, you know, affecting everyone the recent situation with Corona virus, and everything that we've discussed previously, about Happiness and well-being How is the recent situation affected you?

Interviewee 5: Umm I think at the beginning it was hard to like get a routine and to get up and like know, okay, what I'm going to do like have a purpose and getting up. But I also managed to do that and just adapting to like new the new situation by trying to get new projects like do different things that you didn't have time for and like start a new hobby and I don't know just like Calm yourself not always having to be stressed. And also, I don't know enjoying like the good weather, which definitely helps I think the weather would suck the mood would also definitely decrease but in general, I'm still having like, the same mindset is so important.

Interviewer: Um, so you mentioned weather without looking at before coronavirus. Would you say weather still impacts your happiness?

Interviewee 5: Yeah, definitely. I mean, if the sun is out and you wake up and I look outside the window and the weather's good. Definitely is a more my decision to get up in the morning definitely increases to enjoy the good weather. And if like the good weather isn't as good then you kind of rather want to stay in your bed and not go outside.

Interviewer: Yeah, and yeah, I think um I think that's all of my questions. And is there anything else you would like to mention or touch upon that we haven't in terms of you moving to Groningen and your happiness and Well-being?

Interviewee 5: um, no I think like it was definitely a great decision to move and it's always nice to take a challenge and try to experience and get different insights of different aspects and just to be open minded and try to do your best.

Interviewer: And looking back on your time as a whole in Groningen would you use happy happiness and well-being in a positive way to describe how you feel about it all.

Interviewee 5: Yeah, it was definitely a positive way. I mean, positive attributes, being well and being positive So it's always a good thing

Interviewer: Yeah. Um and then quickly going back to when you describe well-being you said it was more of more of like a medical state so psychological and physical, do you think ah how do I do you think Groningen supports both those aspects for you?

Interviewee 5: Um Well, this Yeah, like the city itself. I think it's tries to have like really positive aspects like the city and it's really like cute and I mean, they look quite special like the homeless people there try to be like no more on the outside, which is not a good aspect but like the whole view of the city is really pretty and really like, you know, nice. You just really focused on that. But of course, they also like things that don't go that well. But in general, I think every city can do something good for you. If you just like, I know adjust to it and then maybe see okay, like, if some things aren't going that well then how can I change that as you can't sometimes change your situation.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Um, thank you so much. If there's any, there's nothing else you want to mention.

Interviewee 5: No, I'm good.

Interviewer: Ok I will stop the recording now. Thank you.

Transcript: Interviewee 6
Monday 30th March 2020, 2pm BST

Interviewer: Okay, good afternoon. Thank you for agreeing to this interview with me. And it's for my bachelor thesis, and I'm currently studying Human Geography and Urban planning, and yeah, at the university. So, I'm going to ask you some questions revolving around the topic of spatial mobility and happiness and subjective well-being. But I really want to emphasise that I'm really interested in your own personal opinion and your thoughts and feelings. So, there's no right or wrong answers. And at any time throughout the interview, you want me to stop the audio recording, you don't answer a question, or you want to leave or Stop, please don't hesitate to ask or say so. And yeah, as stated in the consent form, all information will be kept entirely confidential and your name will be omitted for all research purposes. So, if you have any more questions, let's start.

Interviewee 6: Yeah let's start.

Interviewer: Perfect. So, I'm gonna start off with a few introductory questions. Could you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 6: I'm XXX, Female, I'm 24 years old.

Interviewer: And what country are you from?

Interviewee 6: The UK, England.

Interviewer: And you spent most the majority of your life there before moving to the Netherlands?

Interviewee 6: Yeah, majority of my life in London.

Interviewer: And what year did you move to Groningen?

Interviewee 6: Oh, 2017 Yeah, two and a half years ago.

Interviewer: Um, so now on to some more topical questions. As I mentioned earlier, I'm really interested in happiness and spatial mobility. So, what does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 6: Hmm? Um, like content with things

Interviewer: and what type of things?

Interviewee 6: Urm, like hobbies, living situation, social What's it called? Like social groups?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 6: Like you're surrounded by and like what you're doing so like if you're like studying or if you're working like, what you're working towards kind of

Interviewer: So, like a goal you'd say when you have a goal influences it?

Interviewee 6: Yeah, yeah. It doesn't have to goal but like, just some like meaning having meaning that you like that you care about.

Interviewer: And what does the word well-being mean to you then?

Interviewee 6: Urm, well-being to me is like you're like physical health and yeah, your mental health.

Interviewer: So, what would you say constitutes as physical health?

Interviewee 6: Like the state of your body, like being able to like do exercise and move around easily?

Interviewer: And what would you say constitutes as mental well-being?

Interviewee 6: Like being aware and understanding your emotions.

Interviewer: So, happiness and well-being. Do you think the two terms are dependent or independent, connected or not connected to each other?

Interviewee 6: I don't think happiness is connected to physical health, necessarily but yeah, definitely to mental health

Interviewer: and how does happiness connect to mental health?

Interviewee 6: Urm well, I think, I think probably to be like truly happy you would have had good mental health. But just because you have good mental health doesn't mean that you're happy.

Interviewer: So then taking how you've described, and we've discussed the two terms would you use them to describe how you feel about living and studying in Groningen?

Interviewee 6: As in like, what do you mean?

Interviewer: Like would you use the terms happy and well-being to describe how you feel living in Groningen?

Interviewee 6: Yeah, I would say so.

Interviewer: and why, what influences that answer?

Interviewee 6: I think a lot of things are like available, like say sports, but also the university gives you like meaning and there's a good social aspect here.

Interviewer: And you mentioned study, what do you study?

Interviewee 6: Astronomy

Interviewer: And do you enjoy it?

Interviewee 6: Yeah. I don't I don't know if I necessarily enjoy it but like, it's like challenge enough to keep me busy. And I think that that keeps my mental health good.

Interviewer: So, having yeah, being busy and having things to do also plays a

Interviewee 6: yeah challenge

Interviewer: Yeah plays a role for you.

Interviewee 6: Yeah, definitely.

Interviewer: And did you always know you wanted to move to Groningen specifically or to study astronomy?

Interviewee 6: No not at all.

Interviewer: And how do you feel now about your move?

Interviewee 6: Um, yeah, I think it was a good choice for reasons that I didn't consider, like the level of education. And yeah, I was probably there was probably a really good choice in general.

Interviewer: And how do you find it with your family back home in the UK?

Interviewee 6: Yeah, it's fine.

Interviewer: And do you think that plays a role the distance in your state of being like your well-being or not?

Interviewee 6: Yeah, I think distance helps my well-being

Interviewer: How so?

Interviewee 6: Um, I think being in a house with my parents isn't very good for my mental well-being. Like in the long run,

Interviewer: And now being in your current living situation has a positive effect?

Interviewee 6: Yeah, definitely.

Interviewer: And what type of living situation do you live in now?

Interviewee 6: I, in a house with four others, international students.

Interviewer: And do you think the situation of your current environment or living environment plays a role in your well-being?

Interviewee 6: Yeah, because I'm surrounded by like good positive people.

Interviewer: And you said that about the city there was lots available. Um, what did you mean by that?

Interviewee 6: Like, like, if someone's feeling down, you would often tell them like get out, meet new people, do new things. And like here, that's always possible. Whereas in other places, I think it's a bit harder or a bit more scary or but here's like very easily accessible to yeah put yourself out of your comfort zone, do something new, get a hobby.

Interviewer: Do you think um you mentioned scary and like safety and easily accessible and stuff do you think those emotions play a role in well-being?

Interviewee 6: I think if it's like, like the easier that it's made to do things for your well-being and the better your well-being will be.

Interviewer: Yeah. And you mentioned hobbies. Do you do you have any hobbies?

Interviewee 6: Mmmh yeah. I just like doing new things kinda, I like sports or if there's like yeah like new and interesting like events or something but like I don't know it's I like I like when things are constantly changing and because there's like new things going on, that you don't feel like you're doing the same thing every week.

Interviewer: And you think in Groningen you don't feel like that? you feel that there's always something like each week is different?

Interviewee 6: Yeah, like I don't have a set routine.

Interviewer: Do you think routine plays a role then in your well-being?

Interviewee 6: For me, yeah.

Interviewer: How so?

Interviewee 6: I don't like it. It makes me feel like really bored and un challenged, like claustrophobic.

Interviewer: And if you are, obviously I want to clarify that we are talking about before Coronavirus happened.

Interviewee 6: Yeah

Interviewer: We will address it like in a short while. But when you are in a state of negative well-being or not feeling very happy. Do you actively seek out to change your state of being? Yeah.

Interviewee 6: Yeah.

Interviewer: By doing what type of things?

Interviewee 6: Yeah, depends what's making me unhappy like if I'm stressed or like if I'm like not feeling good enough about something then I would like go into sport or something. I do I do that. Yeah, I do. Sports. I do something new but if I'm feeling like lonely or something then I will reach out to a friend.

Interviewer: So, your social network and your social life influences your well-being?

Interviewee 6: Yeah

Interviewer: In what type of ways?

Interviewee 6: Like people to talk to you and they make you feel less lonely

Interviewer: and when you moved in 2017 to the city, how do you think you adapted well to it? How long did it take you to settle in?

Interviewee 6: yeah, I think I adapted really quickly. I had like really good housemates from the get-go. And they like involved with me and they were already here well one of them was already here. So, he involved me, and the other new guy like into his life and we already had like a we were already like, straightaway invited to things and everyone was like super friendly. And then I also went to like ESN and KEI week and both of them introduced me to really good friends and yeah, I really enjoyed those weeks and my life kind of continued like that for the first year or so

Interviewer: and how do you feel being an international student in Groningen?

Interviewee 6: You feel quiet, like not intertwined with Dutch life.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about that?

Interviewee 6: Yeah, don't really notice it. But I just sometimes it becomes like really evident, like if some of my friends that are Dutch and they have like a life outside of university, it's like very separate to our friendship because it's like a different, kind of only the language but it's like a big factor. But it's also like, because I don't like because I'm not intertwined into like the Dutch student life. I'm also don't really

know much about like, the city outside of the university. Like I feel like the city to me is just the uni. But then there's I think there's like, so many things about the city that I don't know about just because I have never been shown like it.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about the university in general?

Interviewee 6: What about the university?

Interviewer: Like, just what are your kind of feelings towards the university in general? Do you, said you enjoy your studies because it's challenging, but the university as a whole, how do you feel towards that?

Interviewee 6: Oh yeah, I think it's a bubble completely. I think they kind of put you in a bubble. Like I think it's quite on multicultural and on multi anything. But that might just be my study. But I just feel like it's not really representative of the city and it's more, I don't know. I think they don't try and make us look outside of the university bubble enough.

Interviewer: You, before you also mentioned the city, how do you feel about the city?

Interviewee 6: Yeah, I don't know. I only know the student side.

Interviewer: But just thinking about the city as Groningen, a place to live.

Interviewee 6: Yeah like I think the city as like a physical thing is really nice. Like how it's set out and I think it's really a nice place.

Interviewer: And I want to address it because yeah, lots changed in the past few weeks with Coronavirus. How, everything we've just discussed yeah, in relation to it, how has Coronavirus affected, your well-being and the factors that you've just mentioned?

Interviewee 6: Ah, it hasn't done yet. I think it probably will, but not yet.

Interviewer: And yeah, coming to the end of your studies now. Looking back, how do you look back on your time as a whole? In Groningen studying

Interviewee 6: I was kind of like a whirlwind. Like everything happens so quickly and I kind of wish I would have taken things like slower like, just look around more. And so, it's just like I think the uni really pushes you to just get to this end goal. And I think I did that too much.

Interviewer: And has that affected your well-being when you think about the city in your life there?

Interviewee 6: Yeah. I mean, maybe but at the same time, if wasn't like pressured and pushed so much to maybe I would have had more time to, like, get sad about things. So, I don't know, could have gone either way, like I could have used the time to like do more. Or I could have just like use the time to like get bored and claustrophobic and like I don't know how it would have affected it.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah could have gone either way is like the unknown.

Interviewee 6: Yeah

Interviewer: yeah, I think that was the majority of my questions. Is there anything we've discussed that you want to go back to or anything you want to mention we haven't mentioned or yet any anything else you want to talk about in terms of your well-being and factors affecting it.

Interviewee 6: Urm no I don't think so.

Interviewer: Okay, well, then that's the end of the interview. Thank you so much. I'm gonna quickly stop the recording.

Transcript: Interviewee 7
Thursday 26th March 2020, 10am GMT

Interviewer: Okay, so my name is Isla and I'm a student of a Bachelor of Human Geography & Urban and Regional planning and at the University of Groningen. This interview is conducted in the context of my bachelor research project in which I'm exploring subjective well-being and happiness for European international students studying at the University of Groningen. The questions I'm going to ask will relate to this topic, but I'd really like to emphasise that I'm particularly interested in your own individual points of view and understandings and feelings so there's no right or wrong answers. And if at any time during the interview you want to stop, leave, not answer a question or do you feel uncomfortable, please don't hesitate to ask or to say. And yeah, as stated in the consent form, all the information will be kept entirely confidential and your name will be omitted from all research purposes. If you don't have any more questions, then we can start.

Interviewee 7: Yeah, sure.

Interviewer: So I'm going to start off with a few introductory questions. Just for the purpose of the recording. Could you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 7: I'm XXX. I'm 25 years old, and I'm male.

Interviewer: And what country are you from?

Interviewee 7: I'm from Spain.

Interviewer: And have you lived there your whole life? Apart from now.

Interviewee 7: Yeah. Yeah. Besides like living in Spain. I moved here when I, to Groningen, when I was 23. So it was the first time abroad. Yeah.

Interviewer: So that was in 2017.

Interviewee 7: Yeah, yeah. 2017

Interviewer: Okay. So now on to some more topical questions. And I'm really interested in happiness and spatial mobility and how they interact. So what does, what does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 7: In terms of like, living environments, I guess

Interviewer: No, just to start off with just in general, how would you define happy?

Interviewee 7: I think I will describe it as Calm.

Interviewer: Calm?

Interviewee 7: being calm, basically. Yeah.

Interviewer: And what does the word well-being mean to you?

Interviewee 7: Oh, wow. I would say being calm but it's strange. Yeah.

Interviewer: So almost the same?

Interviewee 7: Well, you have all of your like essential things covered I guess. That's what I would describe like well-being.

Interviewer: And do you do you feel that happy and happiness and well-being a connected or completely independent

Interviewee 7: No, are connected. Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer: And, and so how would you kind of define then, both concepts together? Would you use the same descriptions?

Interviewee 7: You mean the individual things or like if I would like to describe it together?

Interviewer: Yeah. If you'd like to describe it together.

Interviewee 7: Hmm. Well, I would say that in order to be happy the only thing is like happiness Sometimes you can be happy and you can you can be sad or whatever it is we are like emotional people, like emotional beings so emotions like change over time, but I would say that if you want to be more happy than other like a state of like emotion you need to be your, well-being has to be good. So you like your sensual things have to be covered, food good living place, to stay basically. So I think they are connected Absolutely. I don't know if that works.

Interviewer: Yeah, it does. Um, so you said to have like a positive state of well-being you have to have things covered. And you listed food accommodation, and yeah, living situation.

Interviewee 7: Yes.

Interviewer: Are there any more or do you think do you think those

Interviewee 7: yes of course. Urm like Money is one of them. But I would say that money also includes kind of food because if you don't have money, you cannot get food. So, a lot of times it's kind of a circle. So all of them are together, somehow and then all of them affect the well-being and also happiness.

Interviewer: Yes, you couldn't really distinguish like individual factors on their own, it's all kind of when they all come together. And so would you say then that you think of, of happiness and well-being as like a an all rounded kind of thing, you know, everything coming together.

Interviewee 7: Wow. I mean, there are people that don't have like that, like, their well-beings are not that good in terms of like money or like food, all these things and then they are still happy. But I would say that nonetheless, this, if you if you have, like a proper well-being, per se, you're more likely to be happy. Or like in the long run happy. So also it's really hard to measure like, because sometimes you can be happier than other times so this Yeah, you're gonna be like I am 100% happy or 80% happy. So yeah

Interviewer: um yeah, so then taking what we've just discussed now, would you use the terms and the definitions to describe how you feel living and studying in Groningen?

Interviewee 7: Yeah, I would use the ones I mentioned. Yeah.

Interviewer: Obviously before everything's happened now with Corona virus but yet kind of looking at the situation before locked down and cancellation of university. Why? What do you think influences your decision to say Yes, you would? Why do you say that you would use those words to describe it?

Interviewee 7: Oh, well, I've been living here three years. And I lived in three different places. So this one is my third place, basically. And then each place was better than the other in different ways. So for instance, like money wise. Also, the facilities like the first year were like, terrible, and the price was really bad. The conditions were extremely Yeah. And I see that I'm happier, like, so I'm, in the second year. I'm happier than the first year and then I'm happier than the second year, like for sure. And it has not only affected my happiness, but also for instance, I think, now I can focus more, I got to like better marks. And hmm yeh I think it's it has really huge influence in my well-being. Or had, yeah,

Interviewer: yeah. The Yeah, accommodation. And urm so each one How do you said you've just mentioned your grades getting better. What do you study?

Interviewee 7: I'm doing English literature and well sorry the program it's called English language and culture. That's basically literature and linguistics.

Interviewer: And do you enjoy it?

Interviewee 7: Yeah, yeah, I do. I do. I want to change but I want to do something else after, but I like it.

Interviewer: Um, did you move specifically to Groningen to study that particular course?

Interviewee 7: Yes. Well, I mean, I wanted to go abroad no matter what and then I wanted to do this program and then there were like different options, but Groningen, it was one of them and then the one that I choose.

Interviewer: Um, so, apart from accommodation and now, academic studies, are there any other factors that influence your state of being you've just mentioned?

Interviewee 7: Well, yes I guess friends it's a really important thing like the social aspect of the city. I know that a lot of people have problems with finding friends, or they feel really lonely. I didn't have that problem. And what else here? Well as studying also, for me, I need to do something in order to like feel great, you know, I cannot be a couch potato. I will like, you know, if I don't do anything in one day, I feel anxious and I feel I haven't been productive that day. So I think I'm going to university also really helps, which is a shame, we've got Corona Virus because now I cannot really go, and I have to stay home. And for me home is a place to, to enjoy and to relax, not to study. And also I live in a tiny studio. So where I basically have a table and, there's where I like cook, chill and also study which is really strange. And then what else well, I also have a girlfriend so that also works really well it helps my well-being.

Interviewer: and is your girlfriend also in Groningen?

Interviewee 7: Yeah, yeah, she is.

Interviewer: and so would you say kind of having a purpose each day, whether it's as small as you know, I know cooking a nice meal or you know, going to a lecture that also influences your state of being?

Interviewee 7: Yeah, certainly if you follow it, and you actually do it. Yes.

Interviewer: And, and you mentioned earlier also, when we were talking about your accommodation that each year it's got better and better and each year and it's also got cheaper and cheaper. And that's also influence then you in a way, the monetary side of it?

Interviewee 7: Yeah, so, absolutely. Because I think the first year, the accommodation was really shitty. And I mean, I would be willing to pay for a really shitty place. If I had to pay like only a bit of money and I could save some money, but it was completely opposite. As I said, like the situation has become better and then also cheaper, which is like really strange. During the first year, I felt that they were scamming me basically. And then one of the worst things was that I mean, I had to work in Spain, I had to stay home. So I couldn't find for the first year, I couldn't come to Groningen and find a place. So I relied on the University, the University I think they had a leaflet or something I don't remember exactly. But they recommended to live with SSH, SSH. And I was like, okay, the University says this, I will Yes, do it. And then I ended up living in an SSH building. There was I think I paid 557 Euros, which is a lot as you know, because Groningen is not that expensive. It was a I think it was a normal hotel. But literally nobody would pay to stay there because it was super old and then he was shitting, basically. So that's what why they made student accommodation. I was thinking so much, and everything was really, really bad. The conditions were extremely poor. I was sharing kitchen with 24 I think,

Interviewer: Wow, that's a lot of people

Interviewee 7: or something like that. 20 something 20 something maybe XXX remembers because I met Fabio there, we were living together.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 7: And then besides that, two months after moving, they send us an email mentioning that they are going to do some renovations. We're not it's not renovation, sorry, some construction. Basically, they want to build a third floor. I was living in the second floor and they wanted to build a third floor. I think they were like working for six months or something like that. And imagine how noisy it is to make a floor on top of you. I was living there. I remember one day that they were like constructing and then everything was shaking. I felt like my alarm was going to literally break and then Hadn't the feeling that I couldn't see come, I was paying for a place that it was extremely expensive. And then he had to leave my place because I couldn't be there because it was too noisy. And also, I didn't need an alarm clock because the workers were from Eastern Europe. I mean, I'm not blaming them because they are the workers. They are not the people who say like, we are going to this. They came here to do their work to get money and they go back home. The thing was that since they wanted to go back home didn't work at they work all day long. So at 8:30 in the morning, you could hear like the first hammer, and then I would wake up, and yeah, and I think they were put work until 5 or 5:30 or 6 or something like that. And then the only day that they had like free was Sunday. So from 8:30 till 5 or 6, I don't remember exactly. I try my best to not stay home. Then if you put the fact that I was paying 550 euros for 57 something like that. Well, imagine.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's so much money for not spending a lot of time there. And yeh I can imagine it must have been horrible for Yeah.

Interviewee 7: Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer: Yeah. But because it was an SSH house recommended through the university and you said you felt scammed. Did that then influence your feelings and emotions towards the university in terms of your academic study?

Interviewee 7: Wow, I actually don't know. I don't know if I can say that. I mean, I was pissed at the University that's for sure. Because I don't think SSH deserves to be recognised by the university. Because not only all these conditions but I mean, I'm talking about my specific million that it's Martini house. I think it's called. Yeah. Because I haven't been living all the SSH places, but um, we were supposed to also have a person working there. So if we had any trouble or anything, nobody was there like never but affected my grades? Well, I guess I couldn't study that well there. And I was like, literally pissed so maybe, but I cannot. Yeah, I mean, I cannot measure it.

Interviewer: Yeah. But now you don't have any of those kind of feeling through the university. Now in your third year?

Interviewee 7: Well yeah I have strong feelings with the university but like not with the living conditions right now.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, and do You said you moved to Groningen in 2017. And how long did it take you to settle in and adapt to the city and the student way of living?

Interviewee 7: I'm actually quite fast. The only good thing of the first place that I was living in was that we were a lot of students. So I made a lot of friends there. I mean, I'm still really good friends with Fabio and I met him there.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 7: I adapted really quickly yeah, I found my place here, I would say, and that's it. Yeah, I didn't have problems with that.

Interviewer: And what do you think what, just quickly, what factors do you think influenced your quick adaptation and settling in things?

Interviewee 7: But we were we were bonding all the people in the in my accommodation the first year because the conditions were so bad that the only thing we had was each other. So I think that's one. Can you repeat the question? Because now I forgot.

Interviewer: Yeah, sure. And so what factors do you think influenced your adaptation and helping you settle in? Are they ones that we've also previously mentioned? Or?

Interviewee 7: Well, yeah. Well, I would also say that there are many things that you can do here, like yeah and, for instance, I was I went to ESN Week, I made friends there. And I also believe that the first years since they don't know anyone, they need to just basically be confident kind of, so I think as a first year is really easy if you live with a lot of first years, of course. So besides that, I mean, you can join like clubs, like play sports, which is great. Also, you can meet people there. I was also in a choir, I play with some people like music. I was playing some concerts. I also had, like, my study association was making so many dances. I used to go to those. So yeah, it was like really easy, actually. They're like, also meetup. I think that's called. The web page where, for instance, I joined sometimes, like board games nights.

Interviewer: What's the website called?

Interviewee 7: I think it's called meetup meet up.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee 7: So there are like events that anyone can organise. And then people yes, meet. And I was like, normally when I was going there, and there were only Dutch people, mostly So because normally I'm only going with internationals to the meetups, these ones, they were like all Dutch and then they would speak English because they are really good at it. So no problem. So yeah, I think I got like adapted to the city fairly easy because there are a lot of opportunities.

Interviewer: and now your time is coming to an end in the city if I'm correct because you're graduating ..

Interviewee 7: yes you're correct

Interviewer: and how do you feel looking back at your time? Do you.. going back to the definitions that we use at the beginning of happiness and well-being? Would you, yeah, as a whole when you're describing your bachelor experience, use those words?

Interviewee 7: Mm, it depends because I wouldn't say that about the first year I wouldn't describe it as happy.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee 7: I would say like the overall thing that I have like, gained, has been growth. But urm that I mean, I think that growth also brought happiness. But the experience overall has been happy. And but the first year No.

Interviewer: And lastly, I was just wondering, you know, we briefly touched upon it, but I want to go back to it, due to coronavirus and the new situation. How has your happiness and well-being being affected you said that you you're just yeah like kind of a lockdown in your apartment of 12 square m.

Interviewee 7: 23 square meters, a studio so I don't share anything. So, which is great in my opinion because I think the first year I was sharing with a lot of people and I was like okay, no, I don't want to do that ever again in my life. So I decided to get a studio. I think the worst part of it all I mean, I'm someone who really enjoys alone time I needed to actually. So that's also why I actually really liked the studio. But the problem here right now he said that my 23 square metres because I have also, I told you that I have everything. I don't have to leave my studio for anything is that I have to do everything here. The space is quite small, and I can really focus as I said, as I mentioned before, I like to come home to relax, not to work and It's been tricky now to work on my assignments or my essays from here. Yeah, because for me, it's I have like the mindset of home, relax, and now home is everything. And that's the trickiest part. I mean for isolation is not a bad because I go almost every day or not, not every day, but every two days I go to my girlfriend's place and stay there. And that's okay. But the problem I think is focusing on working. That has been really tricky. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. And I know lots of other students and I as well feel the same you know, kind of you have one space where you do everything and it's really hard to distinguish it whereas normally we can go to the UB

Interviewee 7: Exactly, yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Um, well, I think that was one of my questions. Was there anything else that we have haven't mentioned that you'd like to discuss in terms of Well, yeah, in relation to you moving to Groningen. And yeah, factors affecting your happiness and subjective well-being.

Interviewee 7: I mean, I think it has affected my well, well-being and happiness because I really wanted to leave my home. So I knew that I wanted to study University, and I wanted to go so when I came here was something it's like the dream came true. You know, I mean, I'm a bit exaggerating, but nonetheless, I was really happy of coming. I wanted to experience another culture, although I didn't really experience it that much, because he's super international. And it's really hard to get in the Dutch culture because you basically you need to speak that normally. But yeah, I think, I really wanted to move so and accomplish that, so I got that from Groningen.

Interviewer: and how do you feel about not being able to integrate into the Dutch culture?

Interviewee 7: I'm actually okay by it because I prefer like internationally to um like any nationality I would say, if that's a word. But I remember that they were like well including and they're like huge groups of Spanish people and then some of them they don't didn't talk with anyone else, so they only hang with each other and I didn't want that. I wanted to meet people from all over the world also Dutch but yeah, I don't know. Also their kind of lifestyle. I mean, I'm relying on stereotypes but that I don't like actually. But, um, I don't know, I haven't really been able to become friends that much. Will I mean, not as easy as with all the internationals. But I would say that probably because we don't have family here, we can't go over the weekends to home. And they do. Yeah, they also have like a language, which is quite something.

Interviewer: And, and that also is why earlier you mentioned you know, your friends and their social life being important to you.

Interviewee 7: Yeah, yeah. I mean, although I previously said that I really like my alone time, and then I actually need it. I mean, I really like to also spend time with people. And she I never had like a problem with. I mean, I met XXX. I mean, I'm really good friends with him. I met him in first year accommodation. So, yeah, I mean spending time with him since then. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. Well, yeah, I think those were my questions. Um, thank you so much for Yeah, talking to me and answering my questions. Okay. Yeah, I'll stop the recording now.

Transcript: Interviewee 8
Thursday 2nd April 2020, 9am BST

Interviewer: Yeah, good morning. Thank you so much for agreeing to do this interview with me. My name is Isla and I'm a bachelor student of Human Geography and Urban Planning at the university. And yeah, this interview is conducted in the context of my bachelor research project in which I'm exploring subjective well-being and happiness and spatially mobile students and at the university so that Yeah, the questions I'm going to ask will revolve around that topic, but I really want to stress that I'm interested in your own personal like opinions and thoughts and points of view so there's no right or wrong answers. And if anytime throughout the interview you feel uncomfortable, you want to stop not answer a question or you want me to turn off the recording, please don't hesitate to say and yeah, as stated in the consent form, or information will be kept entirely confidential. And your name will be emitted for all research purposes. And if you don't have any more questions, then we can start.

Interviewee 8: Uhm, just out of curiosity, how are you going to like in case you would use citations and quotes, how would you like, label them in the text? Would you just be like, okay, German girl from x, y, or one researcher or participant, or do you already know about that? Asking because I also have to deal with that.

Interviewer: Yeah. So either two ways either I'm going to I haven't, I haven't decided yet. I need to do some more research into it. But either, I'm going to just label you participant 1 participant 2 participant 3, I see in the order I interviewed you. So I would then constantly refer to a participant that to you. Or the second option is give you all pseudo names. Yeah, I think that might just be too confusing then because then I'll have 28 names. So I think, I think I going to do, yeah. Participant 1 participant 2, participant 3.

Interviewee 8: Yeah. Cool.

Interviewer: Um, yeah. So I'm going to start off with just a few basic introductory questions. Could you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 8: Yes. So my name is XXX, I am 22 years old and I'm female

Interviewer: And where are you from?

Interviewee 8: I'm from Northern Germany, like from a small city close to Hamburg and has 12,000 inhabitants that is, yeah close to Hamburg.

Interviewer: And you spent most of your life there before moving to Groningen?

Interviewee 8: Yes, exactly. I grew up there and I went to high school, after high school I did my gap year also in the city. And then it all got way to small. So I yeah, I moved to the Netherlands.

Interviewer: And what year did you move to the Netherlands?

Interviewee 8: It was, oh my god, 2017 I assume.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee 8: Yeah, yeah, I finished school 2016 and then to start my undergraduate studies here, I came in August 2017.

Interviewer: And so yeah, now on to some more topical questions. Um, as I mentioned earlier, I'm interested in yeah, like happiness and spatial mobility. What does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 8: That is a difficult question, I think happiness is first and foremost to me like a feeling. It's, it's coupled with excitement, gratitude, and peace in a sense and freedom maybe. I would say I am most happy when I'm surrounded by nice people or I'm doing something that fulfils me and excites me in a sense. Yeah.

Interviewer: And what type of things fulfil you?

Interviewee 8: I would say, I mean, right now I'm very happy with the studies I chose because I feel like they definitely feel my interests and that sense makes me very very motivated to pursue, yeah, the things I studied which is basically social psychology and this whole like prejudice reduction intergroup contact thing, so I would say it fulfils me on our... Like you know like, pyramid of needs. I'm not sure it is like several needs. And I would say okay, it fulfils me first and foremost that I have friends and family on the bottom. And then I have my university which fulfils me on a more knowledge level or interest level also with the perspective of sustaining my life hopefully later because I'm basically paving the path for my future. And, but then also, just just many small things fulfil me, like, if it's sunny outside, like now or if I don't know, I wake up in the morning and I hear the birds. And so I would say there's different levels to it. And it's all based, at least for me on, on social relationships and my friends. And then yeah, I would say academia like my, my future profession or something like this.

Interviewer: And what does the word well-being mean to you?

Interviewee 8: I would say there's at least two aspects to it; Physical and Mental. Both are equally important because I think physical well-being as in a healthy body, being able to move being able to, yeah, explore the world basically, for that you need to have a healthy body. Or I mean, it's easier if you have a healthy body. But also mentally I think it is important that yeah, I think well-being also has a mental component. So being resilient and being able to, I don't know, cope with rejections and being curious, confident, I think those are all maybe attributes that contribute to mental well-being. And if the two of them make the physical and the mental and are coupled, I guess then you can achieve like a general and overall well-being. So, yeah

Interviewer: Yes. And do you feel that happy and happiness and well-being are connected or completely independence?

Interviewee 8: That is a very good question. I would say maybe that, I think you can be happier if you're doing well. But you still can, in a sense, do well if you're not too happy. Like maybe that's a bit what I meant with this distinction between like, mental and physical well-being. And I would attribute happiness, maybe a bit more to the mental side. But that still means that you can be physically well, like that your body functions well. And if you're not sick, and I can move and all those kinds of things, so yeah, I would say, happiness belongs to the mental well-being but well-being itself is bigger than that.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Um, and now taking how we've discussed, and you've defined happy and happiness and well-being would you use those two, to describe how you feel living and studying in Groningen, obviously this is all before Coronavirus. We will address the current situation like a short while but yeah before Coronavirus.

Interviewee 8: Urm yeah, I would definitely use those terms I think I mean, it's difficult to sum up two and a half years with like those two words, but I would say overall they apply. I mean, there's been periods where I was doing that mental not too well, but physically I was well off. And then, I don't know, I like just got to know so many amazing people here. I made so many nice friends. **I found my yeah, direction my studies and that just made me really, really happy.** So I think they both definitely apply and not the whole time like constantly but on average, I guess very much

Interviewer: and that like kind of thing you've just described now of not being not constantly applying but overall, that kind of, I don't know what you want to call it up and down or whatever.

Interviewee 8: fluctuation yeah

Interviewer: Yeah, does that play a role for you? Do you think in your well-being like in the in the broader sense?

Interviewee 8: Yeah, I think, again, it was maybe the cheesy but like, **you can appreciate the highs if you don't have the lows.** So I mean, I think you always need to have some perspective and also some gratitude that basically makes you reflect upon whether you're doing well or not. And that's also something I like to experience now in the in the past days, and times of Corona actually quite a lot like that I'm it really puts things again, into perspective, because there's so many limitations and restrictions and without those limitations, I wouldn't be able to appreciate so many small things that I would take for granted. So, yeah, I think it is really, really important to have both sides to. Yeah. To be constantly like aware of what actually it means and how you mean it was also there. Yeah, the more negative feelings. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, and you mentioned a few things that I just want to like go back to individually. You mentioned friends and family and that being like the base of your pyramid, what type of roles do does that play, friends and family in your well-being?

Interviewee 8: Urm, I'm starting with my family, I would say very, very grateful that I have a super solid basis. I made my parents I know would support me unconditionally because they trust me, and because they trust me, I also act respectfully, and I don't want to disappoint them. So it's like a very mutual agreement of like, we have a really, really strong bond. But this is not to present like I don't know, I don't go home often or whatever. But I know if something would be up, I could always call them in the worst case they would even come and just to have the security is definitely something that makes me feel really secure. And that again, adds to my well-being. **And with my friends, I would say, I mean, I have quite a broad circle. And**

also many friends from different groups. I particularly don't have my own very strong solid group, but I have many good friends who are in many groups and then I also get to know a lot of other people. And I really, really enjoy that because I definitely need a very, like intimate close friendships, which take almost on like the same function as a family does. As in being a stable basis and being security and also trust. But then it's also just really nice to have more friends who are like a bit more like far away but more loose, because it is super nice to do spontaneous small things that just contribute to like immediate happiness like the most superficial one, which is also really important, I would say but, um, so yeah, they both definitely. Yeah, contribute to my well-being I would say.

Interviewer: Um, you mentioned stability and like, yeah, being stable. What role does that play for you?

Interviewee 8: Um, you mean as in, like the speculation of happiness or more in general, like stability as a value in life?

Interviewer: Um, I guess a bit of both.

Interviewee 8: Okay, I think, um, well, what I really like for me, well, stability also comes with a bit of structure. So I realise that I need some structure in my life. As I need to know that I have those bases I can follow up on I know need to know, basically what my strengths are, because I which gives me structure and I get basically builds this frame in which I can put myself and if I know this frame, then I can also like respond to my environment. But this frame isn't fixed. It's just like a few things that get with every challenge. Basically, they get more defined and more clear.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 8: But I need to know, like, I think, I mean, also you know, all the time we had all of a sudden and sometimes uncomfortable that I agree with that, but I think so, it is important to have some sort of stability to build a sense of self. But this is also a process. So yeah. And then that is also something going back to the Like fluctuation of happiness, I think it's really important to get to know things that, for example, make you feel good, that you can apply if you feel bad. And that gives you some sort of stability to get back to, you know, to a more happy, happy level or something. So yeah, stability is really, really important but also with you know, notion that stability itself is unstable. If that makes sense, like I can always grow it can always be new defined, it can always be enriched and be more concise. But the idea of that I think, is really important.

Interviewer: Yeah, and you mentioned previously also the weather and like you gave this morning as an example. What role does the weather play for you in your well-being?

Interviewee 8: I can get so excited when it's sunny outside, or also windy I really like going because then there's so much movement in the air and it's so like, you should go outside and then you get like a fresh breeze that that's like yeah going like wiping your brain your brain I've think that is amazing and also I mean in my hometown we always went sailing and then you need the wind then and but definitely I love I love the sun and I get really motivated I love like more a morning person so like the first like moments of the day when the sunrise and winter and summer I'm gonna get but this is just something that I think it's really important and then I would definitely say like if I'm already in a mentally not too amazing place and then it is raining outside. I'm easily down spiralling.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 8: But then on the other side can also be super cosy to just be stuck in the house and knowing that, you know, oh, I'm just going to put on some candles and I'm going to read the book, or I don't know watch some movies I think that is also just sometimes really nice and relaxing like everything. Because if it's sunny, I always have the drive to do something. But you can't do all of that all the time. Everything. No, it's something nice if the weather also, you know?

Interviewer: Yeah. And, and you also mentioned nature, like the birds for example. That's also important for you?

Interviewee 8: Yeah, I think nature is really important. Like I also like the place I grew up, which I think contributes a lot to also how I perceive nature and my relationship to nature. Like it's, it's, it's a big river and there's like, a lot of like nature around it. And I always used to go there if I just had to get my head free and go for a run or something or a cycle. And it was also something I still do here. So if I feel like the city is just getting too busy, I'm really happy that I have my race bike and I can escape it. Just be a bit on my own. Yeah. And also now it's just really funny with the lake in front of my window. It's just so nice. It's so calming and so yeah, yeah, I love it.

Interviewer: I love, I have a Yeah, you've been my house, but my window as well opens out onto the pond. And I just love it every morning when I open my curtains and I can see the pond and whatever is happening out there

Interviewee 8: Yeah and when I can hear the frogs, or I see the heron. It is so nice.

Interviewer: Yes! Um, so, you mentioned your study. And just to clarify what do you study exactly?

Interviewee 8: Well, I do liberal arts and sciences as XXX, XXX,, and everyone else. But my direction is more social psychology. So social sciences and then within social sciences, social psychology, and I'm particularly interested in intergroup contact like, what happens if, for example, refugees and host community meet, but not for like a brain level but more and social constructs such as? What is identity? How do you build your identity? How do you feel towards out groups? What is an authoritarian personality? Like those kinds of things? And yeah, so that is more of my street, like social psychology and then intergroup contact.

Interviewer: um, and your family are back in Germany,

Interviewee 8: Yeah

Interviewer: and how do you feel about the distance? How does that what was the separation between countries play?

Interviewee 8: It's an interesting question because also during those Corona times, I'm very grateful that I'm like, car train distance to home, and I would not need to take a plane because that also make my decision of staying here way more easily than for example for you because at one point is just not a decision anymore because you can't like you know that that's just and I like the idea that if shit goes down I could be or my family could be with me within half a day and this is nice but I'm also happy that the distance is there and it goes up so like the border in between because then the mental distance feels more than it actually is. And I think that was also quite important for me to get like a clear cut from before to also just yeah develop more and yeah, but I really that's also something like linking it back to the real stability thing you were talking earlier about. It gives me stability to know they can be there because the distance isn't too far. But it's not showing enough so that and we go every weekend, which I would not do at all anyways but yeah,

Interviewer: yeah. So do you think independence plays a role for you in well-being?

Interviewee 8: Yeah, definitely. Oh, yeah, I think I didn't say that earlier. But that's a very, very yeah, true observation. I think independence is important. And also like both in life choices, but also in maybe thinking of something like being able to have like an own opinion and being able to. Yeah, basically create your own sense of self and your own values you construct like basically to perceive your environment or something. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. And if I'm correct in saying you're coming to the end of your time in Groningen and your studies?

Interviewee 8: Yes

Interviewer: How do you feel about that and yeah, how do you how do you look back on your time in Groningen as a whole?

Interviewee 8: So if everything goes planned I will graduate in summer. And yeah, looking back on everything, I guess it was. I mean, it all started with us living in Frascatti and being crammed into this like Student house. I think that was an amazing experience because I got to meet so many nice people and like so intimately that I think the people, back in the day system is with us with my close friends, like XXX, XXX, XXX, they're all still so of my kind of circle. And I'm really happy for that experience. But it's also good that this whole student time, student life, student, like that the dorm life was basically just for a year because it also is a very, I feel like artificial living situation. It's not normal to live with, like so many people in so little space and it's exciting all the time. And I was really happy when we got to move out and I found My next like my last place, which was the opposite, because I basically lived on my own. I mean, I was with five roommates, technically, but not so we did anything together. So it felt like I was living on my own, which was quite difficult in the beginning. But then I also got to appreciate it, got to learn to be alone. And I think this is like looking back on the whole time here in the city, maybe with my biggest achievement because I know I can be alone without doing that. And I feel like this is something that no one can take for me because I can always build up on it like I do now because I'm living with two of my close friends. And which is just so nice because it's just so much more warmer and I feel appreciated and it's like nice to have company and do breakfast together and I love it. It's not that I would, I don't know, be like, totally go crazy if I had to live on my own. And that gives me a lot of, I think, like I can feel I can rely on myself that way. And I think this is the biggest thing that the city taught me and next to it. I mean, I'm happy for all the people I met and for my studies and yeah, it was definitely a turning point overall.

Interviewer: Yeah. And how do you feel about the city? The city specifically, such as Groningen?

Interviewee 8: I really, I think it's really beautiful. Like I really like the small street with the with the house with the big windows, I think the big windows is the best thing. And also the small canals and the bikes. I think it's just like a good maybe vacation like or, or so. And also the fact that it's super easily, like within 10 minutes, you're at the lake and you're out of it. And I guess that's something I've been doing is like, my best friend is studying in Berlin and she has to go for two hours to leave the city because it's just so so stretched, and I think that would not be something for me. But something I miss a bit here I find a bit unnatural. It's just that it's manly students and sometimes I feel like every year is the same. Like it's you know, always the first years that get drunk in Kokomo and then go to Sunny Beach, then all things I've done as well and appreciate it like I don't want to like say that that's bad or anything but it's just so repetitive like every year is the same and so much. Like there's so little actual general continuity here of evidence also, just because I myself am a student, and that's just the only perspective I get. But I sometimes feel detached from like the real life like how often do you see children on the street? How often do you see elderly people, and these are the areas I'm living or going, and I always feel like that's like it's easy to lose the bigger picture if you're not the whole time reminded by that you're not like the only demographic group.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 8: So that's I think, in comparison to back home. Like I said, I'm from a very small city that like a lot of quite old people live there. 12,000 inhabitants, but then in 2015, we got a refugee camp in there, and then 2000 refugees were put to 12,000 inhabitants, which is quite a lot. But that just made the whole city so much more also, like in terms of socioeconomic status, but also ethnically, so much more diverse. And you have people from all kinds of Yeah, and I was basically in the underrepresented group because everyone who was my age left as I did. But I think it's always important to, to not forget that. Yeah, we're not the only ones. And that's what I have with the city here that its very, very much student centred, which is great as well, but also, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. And when you When you moved from your city to Groningen in 2017, do you think you adapted well to the new environment? Or did it take you a long time to settle in?

Interviewee 8: Urm I think also, again, due to the fact that we had to live in Frascatti for first year, I think that was a really smooth transition. Because I would say in my first year of uni, I didn't really integrate into the city too much, but only into the international community. Yeah, because everyone was in the same position. Everyone came from a different country didn't know anyone and started studying. So for sure you make friends and for sure you and that was just really, really exciting. And I would say, I properly integrated in the city in yeah, my second year when I moved out of the student housing and I actually lived in those neighbourhoods and I live in like a block with many families as well. So I started babysitting the family downstairs in my house, which is cool to learn Dutch and stuff. And that is when for the first time really had the feeling that I was in the Netherlands and not just in someplace where people only would

speaking English. So I think it was a gradual integration in that sense. Yeah, it started with like international and then more Dutch. And now I would say, I would say I'm quite well integrating, and I feel good here like, I can speak Dutch. And I used to work here. So I'm not sure which criteria to use for integration. Like that's a general like big question, but if you would pick those two then I think I am. Yeah, I feel really happy here.

Interviewer: Yeah, and how did having a job, what role did that play in your well-being?

Interviewee 8: Um, so I worked for UCG as a as a career event assistant, which was really like I was really happy that I got asked to do the job because when, like the career officer went on sick leave, so they needed someone to replace here and because I'd done an internship with her, like I was the only person who could. And just being asked whether I could basically fill in for her was something I was like. Wow. Cool. So in that sense, I think it gave me a lot of confidence. Because apparently I did good work and they wanted to hire me. But in the end, I didn't really enjoy the job too much. So it was not that I yeah, I found it super, super amazing and interesting. But again, like the fact that I was earning my own money, and that I was, yeah, basically working and not just living on my parents' money. Yeah, I think that's what I liked most about it. Not necessarily work I did, but the fact that I got asked by them and then the independence that it gave me.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, and how do you feel just quickly about being an international student, I know you've just spoken about it, but as a whole yeah, being an international student in the city, how do you find that?

Interviewee 8: Um, I must say I feel less international than German, like it's for the first time that my German identity is quite salient. And it's also like things like the Liberation Day and the king day where Dutch people put on their flags. Like I say that that's the first time I was like, Well, fuck, like, no one could do that in Germany, like you can't. Chant the German national anthem no like, especially after the wars and everything, I guess just impossible. But that made it for me more like the whole. Yeah, I didn't consider myself to be too much in the international community in German, even though I am. I don't have German, like many German friends but I was always like, when I said under me like, oh, you're studying psychology? And that's kind of true. And I was like, Yeah, I guess I'm German then you know. So yeah. So that's a bit a thing. But I think what's really great about the city is that everyone is able to speak English. So even though you are an international you don't feel foreign, in a sense because you can engage with the community like even the old cheese lady on the markets speaks better English than probably, I don't know my aunt in Germany or something? Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 8: So in that sense, I think it's a very, very open city. Yeah.

Interviewer: And when you're feeling maybe negative emotions of well-being or not that happy, do you actively seek out to change your state of being?

Interviewee 8: Um, I think also that I've changed. In first year, I was always distracting myself, which was quite easy in Frascati as there was always people around and you can always just, I don't know, sit for hours in the kitchen basically doing nothing, but also that made me really disconnected from everything. So I think, also part of my, like living alone-ish experience was that I got to learn to just let those feelings be there. And without that, evaluating them, and then I just realised it's, you know, **sometimes it's okay not to be in a good state** and just have it like that without evaluating that. And then one or two days, I usually always got, you know, I got back out my bed and then I actively did things like I met people, or I went for a run or went for a cycle or, I don't know, I baked a cake. Like anything that gave me some feeling of like ownership, like, and then it also usually it goes back when better I mean, depending on the circumstances. I think as soon as I started to take ownership of my mental state, and I wanted to change it already that made it better.

Interviewer: Yeah. Exercise plays an important role for you then?

Interviewee 8: Yeah, I think like, it's not that I'm a, like a marathon runner or anything, but just moving. I think it's nice for me and seeing changing so I really like to cycle around the lake or to the farms

surrounding the city, which I would like for me it's more like the seeing stuff in the physical activity. Yeah, but that's a super nice side effect. So maybe that's how I put it.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, and lastly, I just want to address obviously Coronavirus with everything that we've just discussed, and obviously a lot has changed in the past few weeks. How has this affected, yeah Coronavirus, affected your well-being and state of being?

Interviewee 8: Urm I think in the beginning, when it was quite clear that university was not going to happen and that we would basically be caught in our homes, then I was still living in my old place. And I was like, Yeah, I mean, it's kind of annoying, but it's also you know, okay. And I just had to work a lot on my thesis. And so I was in the first place really happy that I could just do my work and get like a lot of stuff done. But then I realised over the days that like, social contact is so important. And yeah, then, like, this amazing opportunity came up. And I had no like, I could move. And I think from then on, I just experienced a lot of gratitude. Like, it's, it's like one of those things. I mean, rationally, I always knew that I was so so lucky. And I should be so grateful. But it was more on the rational level than on an emotional, but I think since I moved and I don't know, like my roommate comes by and is like, hey, just got some melon, do you want some (?) and now I think I can just appreciate so much. I'm so grateful. Most of that time. Family is healthy that my family is not, like, begging me to come home and crying on the phone, but they're themselves super relaxed. So again, speaking of stability they provide even in those in those times and that I found ways of dealing with a situation with my friends, I definitely limited my social contacts, but it's still, I mean, now I just go for example for a walk with XXX the other than cooking with her also. And it's just I think a lot of Yeah, many things made me just really, really grateful and yeah. Can't complain.

Interviewer: That's good to hear. So I think that was all of my questions. But was there anything that we've touched upon that you want to go back to or anything you want to mention that we haven't discussed in terms of yeah, well-being and living in Groningen?.

Interviewee 8: I just think that the questions like maybe it could be interesting for you in the next interviews to ask again the questions of like, What is happiness and well-being also at the end, or like, at least not take the answer from the beginning as the only answer because I just realised, like, the longer I talk about, the more I also make sense of it, right?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, that would be quite interesting. Yeah. Um,

Interviewee 8: or that just like I think that with everything I said, it's, you can still relate many things to the initial questions because what I said back then, I don't even remember it anymore. But I feel like things added up to it. Yeah, and then other than that super interesting interview. Very nice question.

Interviewer: Well, if there's one thing I want to say I'm just going to stop the recordings and quickly, save them.

Transcript: Interviewee 9
Monday 30th March 2020, 12pm BST

Interviewer: Okay, yeah. Good morning. Thank you for agreeing to interview with me. My name is Isla and I'm a bachelor student of Human Geography at the university. And yeah This interview is conducted in the contents of my bachelor research project in which I'm exploring subjective well-being and happiness and spatial mobility of European students in Groningen. So, yeah, the questions I'm going to ask will revolve around this theme, but I really want to stress that I'm interested in your own particular opinion, your thoughts, so there's no right or wrong answers. And if anytime throughout the interview you feel uncomfortable, don't want to answer a question want me to turn off the recording and or you want to leave, please don't hesitate to say so. Um, and yeah, as stated in the consent form, all information will be kept entirely confidential and your name will be emitted for research purposes. So, if you don't have any more questions, then we can start.

Interviewee 9: Let's begin!

Interviewer: So I'm going to start off with a few basic introductory questions. For the purposes of recording, could you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 9: My name is XXX, I am female, and I am now 21.

Interviewer: What country are you from?

Interviewee 9: I'm originally from Latvia. I lived in the Netherlands for 10 years now.

Interviewer: And when did you move to Groningen?

Interviewee 9: Two, no three years, three years ago, So 2017, yeah.

Interviewer: So, now on to some more topical questions. I'm really interested in happiness and spatial mobility and how the two interact. So firstly, what does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 9: Urm, Happy is when you're urm, well first of all, when you're feeling really good in your own skin, but you also are surrounded by people that you love that you can always go to and you just feel at ease, I guess when you're happy.

Interviewer: And what do you think makes you feel at ease and good in your own skin?

Interviewee 9: Um, definitely, for me it's a lot to do with who I hang with of who I'm surrounded with. If it's positive people that are happy and I guess keeping track yourself, so I mean, like, like keeping up with your work and you know Exercising as well. That plays a role. For sure. Yeah new experiences for sure. Because I'm quite curious so, yeah.

Interviewer: And what does the word well-being mean to you?

Interviewee 9: Um well-being is living well, I guess. Yeah healthily and happily together

Interviewer: and would you would you say you feel the two happy and happiness and well-being are interconnected or independent or?

Interviewee 9: Definitely interconnected yeah I think well-being is a step towards happiness maybe.

Interviewer: So taking how if you just say described happy and happiness and well-being, would you use those two terms to describe how you feel about living in Groningen?

Interviewee 9: Yeah, yes, definitely more happy than well-being but yeah

Interviewer: Also, I want to clarify that this is obviously before Coronavirus. In a few more questions we will like specifically address the current situation.

Interviewee 9: Oh, yes sure.

Interviewer: But yeah, you said you would use the word happy more so than well-being and why? Why that? Why would you use happy?

Interviewee 9: I would say just because for me personally I would be more than happy because of the lifestyle I have in Groningen in the sense I have my friends, studies. But I'm not like, my lifestyle isn't too healthy or anything like that in Groningen. Just because I mean I'm not with my family and it's quite hard I guess for a student to also take care of themselves at the beginning, especially by living by yourself. Health wise, like I can get a bit carried away with partying

Interviewer: So would you say health plays an important role for you in your state of being?

Interviewee 9: More like life lifestyle health, I guess you know not, not like if you're sick or not but more like if you're doing physical exercising, if you're eating well. And you're sleeping, and stuff like that. I hope that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah, it does. And you also mentioned family. Family plays an important role for you in your state of being.

Interviewee 9: Yeah, for sure. I mean, like, you know, when you live in a student city, it's like you know, you still have your family and your lifestyle like that and then when it goes, when you're by yourself a bit off the rails and in the beginning, especially the support systems still at home, you know, so I think definitely

Interviewer: yeah so you also mentioned friends

Interviewee 9: Yeah,

Interviewer: and yeah, does that play an important role for you?

Interviewee 9: for me personally a very very very big role. Was the question in happiness or well-being?

Interviewer: In Both.

Interviewee 9: Yeah, I know for me, my friends are really my rock. If I didn't have the social networks that I had here, it would be a very different story I think on my happiness and well-being.

Interviewer: um, also, you mentioned like, work and studies and stuff. What do you study?

Interviewee 9: I study Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Interviewer: And do you enjoy it?

Interviewee 9: uh yeah, I think it's a really great study. And that was also what I really loved about coming to Groningen. The people there are really like me and it was really, really nice. And it is still really, really nice.

Interviewer: And when you move here in 2017, Did you feel you adapted? Or like how long did it take you to adapt and settle into the city?

Interviewee 9: Um, I think it took me about half a year. Like, I mean, I felt comfortable from day one. We had this whole student house that we lived in together, all friends, you know, university was very close by and it wasn't too difficult. But it was more like I remember like being like, okay, I feel comfortable. Now. You know, I know who my friends are. Like, I know this city, it is my city, you know?

Interviewer: And do you think then half year into your move, you noticed a change in how you're feeling towards the city in terms of your happiness and well-being?

Interviewee 9: Sorry, what?

Interviewer: So you said half a year and you finally felt that the city was more you know yours and you felt comfortable. Did you also notice a change in your happiness and well-being at that time?

Interviewee 9: Yeah, for sure. I literally remember sitting there be like wow like now. Now I'm really I'm really happy here but I guess it also has to move away from home when you find yourself a little bit more and you know more what makes you happy and you know.

Interviewer: Yeah. You mentioned your student house and your first year. Do living conditions influence your happiness?

Interviewee 9: I think definitely, I mean, I also saw, so in my first year I lived with like all my first years in my study, and it was great because whoever was your friend, you could literally hang out with them every single day and it was so easy. You are having a down day, you know, you can literally walk over to your best friend's room, knock on the door. You know, or even in your kitchen, you have all your closest friends. But I had, I also know people who in Groningen, who especially in their first year had a pretty shitty place to live. That wasn't very social. And they their experience was very, very different. You know, if you're in the studio, I think, especially for a bachelor student in your first year, I think it really affects you because it's just harder to meet people.

Interviewer: Yeah. And so meeting people, and yeah, that new experiences and your friends all relates to each other.

Interviewee 9: Yeah.

Interviewer: And how do you feel being an international student in Groningen?

Interviewee 9: I think there is a very big network of international students, which is really nice, because there's literally like a little bubble but at the same time, this year, I have moved into Dutch house because I also speak Dutch and I realise that it's also it's really a bubble like The Dutch and the International don't mix. But I mean, it's also a good thing, right? Because everyone kind of finds their place.

Interviewer: And do you think being able to speak Dutch has influenced your time in Groningen?

Interviewee 9: For sure for sure. Like for me, even looking for a job. I know from international friends it's a lot harder, there's not as many options. For me working has been a huge advantage and that also, you know, that's also part of your schedule, and its part of like, being happy, earning money. But that comes out really bad. Earning money to be happy. But I'm also just now for me, I can kind of expand my networks with the Dutch and everything and I think if you don't speak Dutch, it's not a huge disadvantage, because in the Netherlands everyone speaks English, but it is still an advantage in many ways.

Interviewer: So you think, having a job and having money and like a disposable income kind of has that influence your state of being?

Interviewee 9: Yeah, definitely like. I mean, it just makes your life easier in the first year, I could enjoy a lot more things simply also travel more just because I could find a job. And I know a lot of my friends couldn't. Also with the loans, I know that international students usually can't get a loan unless they work. Like I don't know how many hours. So that's a huge advantage for me as well. But I mean, it's so nice that you can get a loan, even if you do have to work so much.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, and you if I'm correct in saying, this is your last year?

Interviewee 9: Yes,

Interviewer: and how do you feel about finishing your study and leaving Groningen?

Interviewee 9: Really sad actually, in a way it's like my home. I'm actually considered staying here. That's because also though the coronavirus and everything I want to spend some more time here I feel like it was stolen away.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. And obviously a lot has changed in the past like few weeks with Coronavirus. So how's that affected your state of being and everything we've just discussed?

Interviewee 9: Okay, from one point of view, it's actually nice because you're a lot more calm. And since I'm a third year, it's like, you know, you have time to focus in your thesis, and figure shit out but at the same time, it's like our last half year and it makes me really, really sad that we can't enjoy it. Which sounds so spoilt to say as well but yeah

Interviewer: No, I completely understand where you're coming from.

Interviewee 9: Yeah.

Interviewer: And when you are feeling down and not in a positive state of well-being, do you do you do things to change your state of being?

Interviewee 9: Um, Yeah, for me, it's definitely I, I either go and I meet up with someone because that always clears my mind or I, I exercise. So that really helps me as well.

Interviewer: What part of exercise helps you the most? like being outdoors or do you go to a gym or is it just like getting your mind off the situation?

Interviewee 9: I think it's just if you're being physically challenged you can't think about anything else. So you're just not overthinking things and you do your workout, and then afterwards you're just too tired to be sad.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, and yeah, I think you mentioned that you are originally from Latvia and then moved to the Netherlands. So your family in the Netherlands?

Interviewee 9: Just my mom

Interviewer: and how do you find being in Groningen and your mum being in the same country but not in the same city?

Interviewee 9: As in right now or in general,

Interviewer: as in, sorry as in general

Interviewee 9: okay, for I mean, for me, it's actually really nice because even though I am from Latvia, all my family's there. It's nice that I had like my rock and somewhere where I can go, to my mom, just by train away, but at the same time, I've also really enjoy being in the city and enjoying my freedom, for sure.

Interviewer: Does freedom and independence relate to your well being

Interviewee 9: Um, yes, and no. Because, you know, in a way, like, as I said before, like I, when I, when I'm alone, I am a lot less organised in the sense that I'm, you know, eating well and actually going to the gym and then I'm actually waking up early in the morning getting my shit done. You know, I'm not going to bed very late as well. But at the same time, it also makes me very happy that I can make these decisions by myself. So I think Yeah, independence is not very good for my well-being in general, I guess. But no, no, I think independence is good for both. Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Um, yeah, I think that was one of my questions. Is that anything that we've discussed that you want to go back to or something that we haven't mentioned that you want to mention in terms of happiness? And well-being.

Interviewee 9: No, that was very interesting, actually.

Interviewer: Yeah, well thank you so much for your time. I'm going to stop the recording.

Transcript: Interviewee 10
Saturday 28th March 2020, 10am GMT

Interviewer: Yeah, good morning. Thank you for agreeing to do this interview with me. It is in the context of my bachelor research project for Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning, which is my studies. I'm exploring subjective well-being and happiness for European international students studying

in Groningen. So the questions I'm going to ask you will relate around this theme. However, I really want to emphasise that I'm really interested in your own personal point of view experiences, feelings, thoughts, so there's no right or wrong answers. And anytime throughout the interview, if you don't want to answer a question, want me to stop the recording or leave or anything please don't hesitate to ask or say so. Yeah, as stated clearly in the consent form, as well, all the information will be kept entirely confidential and your name will be omitted for all research purposes. So yeah, if you don't have any questions, let's start. Okay, so I'm going to start off with a few introductory questions. Can you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 10: So my name is XXX, I am 21 years old, and I'm a female.

Interviewer: And what country are you from?

Interviewee 10: I'm from Poland.

Interviewer: And you've spent your whole life in Poland. Before, before moving to Groningen?

Interviewee 10: Yes, before moving to the Netherlands.

Interviewer: And what year did you move to the Netherlands?

Interviewee 10: Three years ago, I think the same as XX, it was 2016 or 2017

Interviewer: 2017 I think.

Interviewee 10: I think so. Right? Yeah. 2017

Interviewer: Okay, so now on to some more topical questions. I'm really interested in yeah, happiness and spatial mobility as I just said. So what does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 10: That's a difficult one. I don't know. I think being content with your life and feeling like you're in place or enjoying what you're doing. I don't know.

Interviewer: Um, and what when you said enjoying what you're doing, what type of things would you be doing?

Interviewee 10: I don't know. I think that happiness in general, like relates all parts of your life. So when you're happy with I don't know, your private life, your school life, or whatever. A person finds important, I think.

Interviewer: Um, and what do you what do you find important?

Interviewee 10: I don't know, I think it's like, depends, I do find my studies important. So I'm happy when I do well. I'm also happy when I can spend time with my friends and my family and when I have time to do other things, then studying when I'm not stressed. I'm happy when I travel as well, I think.

Interviewer: And so what does the word well-being mean to you?

Interviewee 10: I think it's quite similar to happiness in the sense that I think well-being comes from wanting to balance between your life like in your life so that you're happy in your life. I don't know. It's quite similar in a way.

Interviewer: Yeah. And what do you think adds to or not adds to but what do you think contributes to the balance what needs to be in balance?

Interviewee 10: I think it depends from person to person. But for me personally, I like to have a nice balance between my personal life and my work life. So that, you know, I do not spend my whole life studying, but that I also don't spend my whole time being drunk and partying you know.

Interviewer: Do you feel the happiness and happy and well-being are connected or interdependent?

Interviewee 10: I think so, Yeah,

Interviewer: Yeah. And why would you say that?

Interviewee 10: I think if your well-being is on point then you're happy. And if you're happy, then it's easier to keep your like well-being in life balance on point as well.

Interviewer: Yeah. So they kind of help each other and support each other.

Interviewee 10: Yeah. Yeah, I think so. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. So then taking everything that we've just described now and how you've described the terms and stuff, would you take happy and happiness and well-being, too, would you use them to describe how you feel about living and studying in Groningen?

Interviewee 10: I think most of the time, yeah. I mean, not counting like exam periods or stuff like that. I guess everybody has some difficult situations as well sometimes, but I think in general, yeah.

Interviewer: And obviously, I want to clarify that we're talking about before coronavirus happened. But further on, we'll address the current situation a bit more. But yeah, we're discussing, like, in general, but um, so you said you would use them to describe how you feel about Groningen, but what in particular makes you feel these connotations and terms in relation to Groningen?

Interviewee 10: I think mostly the people,

Interviewer: the people

Interviewee 10: I think I have nice friends in Groningen, and I like spending time with them. And I think because I live there more often than in Poland since I'm only back in Poland for Christmas and holidays, so I have more friends and better friends in Groningen at the moment that I have in Poland. So I think that contributes a lot to my happiness.

Interviewer: And you mentioned earlier studies and exam period how, what role does this play for you

Interviewee 10: What role?

Interviewer: yeah in happiness and well-being?

Interviewee 10: Well sometimes they really stress me out I mean, AI is a quite a difficult study to do. So sometimes they really contribute negatively to my well-being and happiness. But in general, I think my second year, my first year, I still was adjusting to the stress and everything and I think my second-year kind of like the balance of how to manage my study so that it doesn't affect myself too negatively, you know? So I think yeah, I do get stressed, but I think it's, it's an okay level of stress for exams.

Interviewer: So you enjoy studying AI overall?

Interviewee 10: Overall yeah I think so

Interviewer: How would you describe your feelings towards the university and your academic studies in general

Interviewee 10: Well sometimes I get frustrated by the university because I feel like their organisational matters are not necessarily on point, even before coronavirus, yeah in a way that I feel like some teachers are not necessarily understanding for the students and but I think I like the education system better than I would like it in Poland because they do require us to think more than to just memorise and, you know, kind of copy paste from your brain like study by heart. So that's what I like. And we also have practical courses

now, in the second year, which I quite like, because they teach you stuff that you actually need in your future life and work. And not the dry theory that some studies do.

Interviewer: Mm hmm.

Interviewee 10: So, yeah, I don't know how to conclude that..

Interviewer: no that's good. And you mentioned like Poland and studies and stuff. And how did you did your family's obviously back in Poland?

Interviewee 10: Yes

Interviewer: And how do you feel being in the Netherlands and your family being in Poland?

Interviewee 10: I think closer to be honest,

Interviewer: sorry, you cut out.

Interviewee 10: Did you hear?

Interviewer: No

Interviewee 10: I think it actually brought us closer together. So to say me living in the Netherlands because I feel like if you don't spend 24/7 with someone, you appreciate each other a bit more. So I actually think my relations with my family got better since I moved out. I called them more I talk to them more often, because if you're in the house, you kind of start annoying each other after a while. So I think it was a good change.

Interviewer: And that, your family plays a role on your well-being then?

Interviewee 10: You I think so, in some point, to some point of degree.

Interviewer: You also mentioned travel earlier, what role does that play for your well-being?

Interviewee 10: Um, I think in general, I do like to travel. So I find it nice if I can do it over the holidays or during the breaks or whatever. And also, when I travel, I feel like I'm more relaxed than normally. So I also like it.

Interviewer: And you also mentioned stress and how that has a negative effect on your well-being.

Interviewee 10: Yes.

Interviewer: When you do have a negative, or you're feeling negative emotions towards your well-being or happiness, do you actually actively seek out to change it?

Interviewee 10: I think it depends what kind of stress it is because you can't always change it. You know? So like, if I'm stressed for the exams, then I will try to study more for the exams in a way so that I'm less stressed that I don't know something.

Interviewer: Mm hmm.

Interviewee 10: But I don't know yet. No, I think I, I think I do try to like, seek for solutions to like how to make myself feel better. But for others, yeah, I think it's just guessing to you and you're like, oh my god, what do I do?

Interviewer: And in general than when you're have negative effects of well-being, what do you do to change and change your state of being?

Interviewee 10: Uh, sorry?

Interviewer: So when, when you're not feeling positive emotions of well-being, what do you do to change how you feeling?

Interviewee 10: Well, as I said, it depends on a situation, but I think, I don't know talking to friends sometimes helps me out, like to share my problems or to see that people are in a similar situation. Also sports, like if I go running, if you like, that also quite helps with the emotions.

Interviewer: Mm hmm.

Interviewee 10: And if it's something that I can actually change, like your studies, or I don't know, if I'm stressed because of someone then I try to talk to them, you know, so I think those are the ways

Interviewer: and you, you said you moved to Groningen in 2017. Do you think you adapted well, to life in Groningen?

Interviewee 10: I think so. Yeah. I mean, not necessarily to Dutch culture but to Groningen yeah

Interviewer: What do you think supported that adaptation?

Interviewee 10: Um, I think I was lucky to start my studies with UCG, even though I changed because living in a student house with other students really helps you meet people. And if you meet people and have friends you feel more comfortable in a country. Also, yeah, they organise a lot of activities like introduction camps and some projects together and that kind of stuff. And that also, like even if you have to work with someone that also brings you together. So I think actually University helped a lot in those first few weeks, maybe months. And then it's kind of, you know, went..

Interviewer: And how, you mentioned the Dutch culture. How do you find being an international student in the Netherlands?

Interviewee 10: I really like the international culture here because I feel like Groningen is very international city. So I don't feel like an outsider being there. Although I do think there is a, well the Dutch and internationals don't necessarily hang out together a lot, although I do have some Dutch friends, but it's not like we hang out so often or that I'm invited to those parties because I'm not.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 10: I do feel comfortable in the city as an international student.

Interviewer: Yeah, what other emotions do you feel in the in the city?

Interviewee 10: I don't know. Like all of them because I live there now. But I really like the Groningen life in general that a student's city and not that it's not too big that it makes you feel kind of comfortable and cosy at the same time that you can reach everything within a reasonable amount of time on the bike. So yeah, I think mostly positive, although the Dutch weather is not necessarily positive emotions.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's completely understandable that. You mentioned distance and your bike and stuff. How does that? What role does that play in your well-being?

Interviewee 10: Well, I feel like after three years, I started to like biking even though I hated it in the beginning. Although biking in the rain or in a wind is still my least favourite thing to do, and I honestly hate it. And I feel like it does affect my well-being if I have to buy for a 9am in class in the wind and then I'm not the happiest person then. But at the same time, I feel like it's nice because now for example, it's like, I'm already at home for like a week. And I really feel the lack of movement. And, like the fact that I have to bike everywhere really helps me maintain like, at least some basic amount of exercise here. So that's quite nice.

Interviewer: And yeah, obviously like now you said you're back in Poland and a lot has happened recently, a few weeks with Corona virus, in, you know, in relation to everything we've just...Hello?

Interviewee 10: Wait, you're kind of lagging

Interviewer: Sorry

Interviewee 10: Are you here?

Interviewer: Yes. Yeah. Can you hear me?

Interviewee 10: Yes. Can you hear me?

Interviewer: Yeah, perfect. Um, yeah in relation to everything we've just discussed. Obviously, a lot has happened recently in the world due to coronavirus and how has the new situation affected your well-being and happiness?

Interviewee 10: Well, I think it affected it like a little bit negatively because it's a weird situation, I think. Yeah, I kind of miss the normal university life in a way I cannot study it from home. I'm definitely not a person that can study at home. And yet also the fact that I'm completely locked in a house right now. Like, I can't even go grocery shopping.

Interviewer: Mm hmm.

Interviewee 10: It's super weird. Like, I really miss going for a run or for a walk or, you know, anything further than my balcony. And also the fact that I can't really see anybody except for my parents and my cat. It's also quite affecting me because this, I mean, of course, you can keep in touch with your friends over like, WhatsApp or Instagram or whatever, but it's different than seeing them in person. though. Yeah, I'm not liking coronavirus very much, but I think it will be better, soon hopefully, so I'm trying to keep myself busy.

Interviewer: And you said you missed the outside. What role does the outside environment have on your well-being?

Interviewee 10: While I like to go for a walk, sometimes I go for a run, or like especially when the weather is nice like it is right now I'd like to at least sit in the sun and tan a little bit or read a book or have some fresh air. So I think going outside kind of affects me positively. But unless it's too cold or too ugly, but when the weather is like it is now it's, it's nice to be there.

Interviewer: And you also mentioned keeping busy does that have a, does that play a role in your well-being?

Interviewee 10: Well, I think I like to have a balance, like sometimes I just like to do nothing. But at the same time, I kind of like that the university that there's always something to do, like either uni wise or friend-wise, or event-wise or anything wise. So now it's a bit of a contrast because, like my exams got moved to August, so for the next week and a half, I have basically nothing to do. I have one project that I need to finish for honours and one exam but it's an open book so it's going to be chill. So it's just super weird to adapt to that because I have to find myself new stuff to do. And in Groningen it kind of makes me feel happy that I always have something like I don't know, make or I have to clean my room or even like notice silly stuff or go to sports or go meet someone or go to class. And now I started doing puzzle

Interviewer: Yeah, hah

Interviewee 10: you know, haha so,

Interviewer: My last question now is you've been in the Netherlands for two and a half years. Looking back on your time as a whole how would you describe it?

Interviewee 10: I think it was a positive experience. I really liked it. I still have a year and a half to go. Hopefully in the Netherlands if the coronavirus is over. Yeah, I feel like it's a nice experience to move out into a country because I've been living in Poland for my whole life. **So I really like the international environment, which we completely lack in Poland, we have no internationals whatsoever.** So I really like the possibility of meeting people from basically everywhere, which is great. And also getting to know the Dutch culture, which I mean, even if I'm not basic, like not the biggest fan of, it's still an interesting thing to see. And also, I think, for me, coming from Poland, like Poland isn't necessarily a developed country. I mean, not this but it's far behind the Netherlands. So it's quite cool to see how the Netherlands works and also see the reactions of people like the comparison of like, what is the norm in the Netherlands and what is the norm in Poland? So I think it was like a nice time and I learned a lot.

Interviewer: And what caused you to move originally to the Netherlands?

Interviewee 10: Well, I wanted to study abroad. I also applied to the UK, mostly to Scotland, because the education there is free. But in the end, it was the degree study that they had in the Netherlands that I thought oh it sounds cool. And it sounds something that I could do. And then yeah, I just found Groningen and ended up here. So it wasn't a choice that oh, I want to study in the Netherlands. It was more like oh, I found in a nice study and the Netherlands was the place where it is was.

Interviewer: Yeah, so I think, um, that was all my questions. Um, is there anything that you want to go back to that we've discussed or anything that we haven't mentioned that you want to mention?

Interviewee 10: I don't think so. Unless you have more questions.

Interviewer: No, no. So thank you so much. And I will stop the recordings now.

Transcript: Interviewee 11

Friday 27th March 2020, 2pm GMT

Interviewer: Hi, thank you for doing this interview agreeing to this interview with me. I'm a bachelor student of human geography and urban planning at the faculty of spatial sciences. And this interview is conducted in the context of my research of my bachelor research project in which I'm exploring subjective well-being and happiness and European students at the University of Groningen. And I really want to emphasise though that I'm particularly interested in your own personal experiences or points of views and feelings so there's no right or wrong answers. And if anytime throughout the interview you want to stop, you want me to stop the recordings, you don't answer a question you want to skip something, or you want to leave please feel free to say so. And also stated in the consent form, all the information will be kept entirely confidential and your name will be omitted for all research purposes. If you don't have any more questions, we can start.

Interviewee 11: Yes, everything's clear, we can start.

Interviewer: So I'm gonna start off with a few just basic introductory questions. Firstly, could you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 11: My name is XXX, 24 years old. I am Male.

Interviewer: Thank you and what country are you from?

Interviewee 11: I'm from Luxembourg.

Interviewer: And have you spent most of your life there?

Interviewee 11: Yeah. Yeah

Interviewer: And then you moved to Groningen in what year?

Interviewee 11: First, after high school. I went to France for 2 years. So I moved into France in 2014. And then I moved to Groningen in 2016.

Interviewer: So now on to some more topical questions. I'm really interested in happiness and spatial mobility. And how the two interact. What does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 11: Oh, very philosophical question. Well, let me think. For me, I think happiness and satisfaction go hand in hand because you can only be happy if you're satisfied with what you have. If you always craved more, you can't really be happy. I think happiness is joy and satisfaction to be, to be satisfied with what you have

Interviewer: and what constitutes as what you have?

Interviewee 11: What you have is, it's not necessarily physical, but it's also you know, like, I'd like to think that it's better to have three very good friends and have 10 meh friends So you like it is better to be satisfied with three good friends rather than having three good friends with not acknowledging that and wishing to have more friends without those friends were not as good as the friends that you have. So in that sense be satisfied with the opportunities you're given, the physical things and also the not physical things. Does that make sense?

Interviewer: Yeah, completely. So now, what does well-being mean to you?

Interviewee 11: Well, it's being healthy, of course, times like these it's really important and also just mentally and physically well, and Yeah, that's Yeah. Yeah. Just generally be happy with happy.

Interviewer: And do you feel that happiness and then well-being connected or are they independent?

Interviewee 11: Yeah, I think they form I think they usually are, but they don't necessarily have to be, you know, it's people that have cancer, and then they're still happy. Whereas if I would, I would rather not have cancer, not one for me not having cancer makes me happy. But for people that have cancer, they can also be happy. I also think it matches another perspective. It's all about perspective.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. And so taking now how we've and you've discussed happiness and happy and well-being, would you use those terms to describe how you feel about living and studying in Groningen. Obviously, yeah,

Interviewee 11: Oh yeah definitely,

Interviewer: obviously I want to clarify this is before Coronavirus happened. We will discuss the current situation a bit further on but um, yeah. You said yes, you would.

Interviewee 11: Yeah. I think that my time in Groningen was probably the happiest time I've had in my life. So definitely for sure.

Interviewer: And what would you say that it was the happiest time of your life?

Interviewee 11: I mean, mostly, I mean, I didn't really enjoy my study that much, but mostly the people that I met I like people to keep in touch for the rest of my life like I made real friends. And also the interaction with those friends kind of helped me to understand better who I am as well. And it just, yeah, I feel like with those people, I can be exactly who I am. And so it's mostly about those friendships. And generally, I feel like Groningen is a really good city as a student, because there's, you have so many opportunities and there's something for every taste. And just generally the community feeling amongst all of the students is just great. Even though there might be some tensions between the Dutch and the internationals and those people in different people, but generally, I feel like there's a really good group feeling. So yeah it's like, a community of friends. And generally, it's also really pretty city, you know, building buildings, Noorderplantsoen as well.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, you mentioned quite a few factors just now. So can we like go back to them?

Interviewee 11: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you said, people and how you've met real friends and you can be yourself around them. How has that influenced your state of being?

Interviewee 11: I mean, it has made you really happy because you just feel like you're being understood and you just feel like this, this bond with those people and it's just heart-warming to be understood and to understand other people and to just, you know, live together, and I mean, not live together because I live alone, you know, like, live with them and spend a lot of time with them and you just, it just makes you feel good.

Interviewer: Um, and you also then discussed and the community of students and, and the Dutch versus international divide, how do you find being an international student in Groningen?

Interviewee 11: I personally like it because I think the international, well I was also really lucky to join media studies because I really liked generally liked the people in media studies, so that made it much easier. But I also know that now with my Master for example, there were people that that did a bachelors somewhere else and came to Groningen for their masters and I know that they sometimes felt very lonely, because a lot is done on bachelor level for integration but on a master level, if you're not used to the Dutch system, you might feel lonely very quickly. So I know that I have been blessed. But so generally, I feel good about being an international student. Because I also have, of course, have international friends and Dutch friends, they still have some Dutch friends, so I feel more or less integrated.

Interviewer: And how have you how have you integrated?

Interviewee 11: Right, I mean, generally, through the people in my study, you know, then you get to know people from your, your group and then you meet people from other groups then that creates a bigger group and then you meet their friends then somehow you just build up a big network, just automatically.

Interviewer: And so you felt you integrated into Groningen through the people.

Interviewee 11: Yeah.

Interviewer: And when you when you moved in 2016 Groningen, Like, how long did it take you to settle in?

Interviewee 11: Oh um, I think quite quickly because I was already used to not living at home anymore. And I genuinely felt like, like I could really quickly identify with the Dutch culture and the Dutch way of living, because it's somehow I mean, Luxembourg doesn't have that much culture, but I feel like somehow Luxembourgish culture the Dutch culture is in a weird way very similar, so I was able to feel at home very quickly. And then yeah, I mean, in the first week I met a ton of people. Then we had the media intro camp where a lot of nice people as well. So you know, it just happened very quickly, and I did not feel homesick or I did not regret my decision, like from the beginning on I just automatically I felt very, very integrated and I settled very quickly.

Interviewer: Ah nice to hear. And you mentioned how Luxembourg the culture and stuff and your family's all in Luxembourg? Yeah.

Interviewee 11: Yeah.

Interviewer: And how did you feel moving? I know you said you were in France for two years. But moving to another country to study. How did how did you feel about that?

Interviewee 11: In the beginning when I moved to France, or when I moved to Groningen?

Interviewer: When you moved to Groningen?

Interviewee 11: It was really strange for me in the beginning because I always wanted to study in France and then leaving France to go to the Netherlands, which was a country I read that I had never thought about

was strange because I didn't know that much about the Netherlands. I had never heard about Groningen before. So it was strange but it's, I was really looking forward to it because it was something completely new, but I heard a lot of good things about it, so I felt excited and looking forward.

Interviewer: And, yeah, I'm going back to just a few a few things you mentioned previously, you said that you were now doing your masters. Do you think your kind of perception of happiness and well-being changed from your when you started your bachelor to now doing your masters?

Interviewee 11: Like, I mean, it definitely changed between year one and now. Like between the bachelor and the masters not necessarily.

Interviewer: So do look back on your period in Groningen, as a whole, in a positive light or in a negative way, or how do you look back on the experience?

Interviewee 11: Oh, no, I definitely look back on it in a positive way. *Even though the time of the bachelor was slightly better because more friends were still in Groningen.* And when Yeah, it's really weird because I prefer the content of my master, but I didn't really like the people, but I preferred the people for the Bachelor, but I didn't really like the content but it's like mixed, but yeah, I'd say generally positive. But if I had to say which one I prefer that I might probably say the bachelor cos it was just more fun.

Interviewer: and you feel satisfied with your educational with your, the whole with everything that comes under the term education such as your studies, your university, the courses, do you feel satisfied?

Interviewee 11: *It depends, like, for the bachelor, not necessarily because I feel like they killed us with a lot of theory, and they did not teach us a lot of valuable things not to say no valuable things at all. Because I mean, theory is fine, but it needs to be anchored in reality, and it needs to be somewhat useful to reality. And the theory that we learn about with just general communications theory is that there's no right and wrong answer to those theories. And it's just a lot of blah, blah, blah, and not a lot of consistency, no that sounds wrong, but, whatever it was, like, empty.*

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 11: *Yeah, but for the master, it was. It's also different because Media studies is really, really specific. And there I feel like the culture was way more useful and it was way more like I prefer the education there, than the education in the Bachelor.*

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. Um, and you previously mentioned the city, and you said opportunities. What did you mean by that?

Interviewee 11: I mean, I mean, there's a lot of a lot of different people and different people have different problems, right? But like, there's something for every hobby if you like to dance, and there's a lot of different dance classes you can take, if you like sports, there's a lot of sports associations that you can join if you like, I don't know, cultural theatre or stuff like that. It is also, I think, even maybe two theatre groups. There's something for if you like, listening to jazz, there's something for you. If you like techno, there's something for you. If you like commercial music, there's something for you. You know, there's so many different opportunities and there's something for every taste and you haven't like, every weekend, there's something different going on. I'd like some special event. There's always different festivals and different celebrations. *And there's always something different. Even in wintertime when you would think it's a little bit more empty and boring. That's not the case because there's so many different things even during wintertime, the ice-skating rink and then just this and so there's so many so many different things to do. You can, you can basically never get bored, also now with the forum, there's a lot of new cultural opportunities. So it's, yeah, that's something*

Interviewer: so would you say having a plethora of things to choose from in terms of opportunities, hobbies, cultural things that influences well-being?

Interviewee 11: Yeah, I definitely think so. Because, I mean, of course, we're all there to study but even studying is not all of it. You also need to enjoy your leisure time and part of leisure time is of course going out and partying with also taking care of your hobbies and educating yourself in that area as well. *And that's*

why I think is this very varied platter that they offer is something really good. Yeah, and it's also part of well-being because if you do something that makes you happy, of course it influences

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, and you also said the city in terms of like aesthetics, prettiness, you mentioned parks and buildings. How does that affect you?

Interviewee 11: I mean, I think for me, I, would not like living in a city that I find ugly because you do need to walk through it with every day. And if, if, if you constantly keep seeing things that you find aesthetically pleasing, that's of course also. That also makes you happy, you know, like biking to the city centre. I have already done it thousands of times, but I still enjoy because I every time I knew I think that the buildings are really pretty canal is nice and if the sun comes out it's a whole new city and it's even prettier, so I think that again, if something is aesthetically pleasing it's also making me happy.

Interviewer: You mentioned bicycling, does chart public transport or mobility affect well-being?

Interviewee 11: Yes, that's also a very important point because it is of course nicer if you can bike everywhere there's a city is of course we if the city were too small, I wouldn't be fine. But if it were too big, that's of course, creating other problems. So the fact that voting is just as decisive it does, it's being able to travel to go everywhere by bike is of course also a very positive thing because not only are you physically active, but you can also be It's a means of transportation that is slower so you can also appreciate what you're cycling past and there's always a chance to, like, see someone on the street that you know, that's also, always heart-warming. The fact you can bike in Groningen

Interviewer: um, you mentioned the weather and the sun. Does that influence you?

Interviewee 11: Yeah, I mean, yeah, because sometimes I tend to get mild to medium winter depressions. So of course, if there's no sun, that's, that really impacts my well-being. But that being said, if there is no sun, once the sun comes out, it's even nicer. But yeah, it's definitely that's definitely one of the weather in the Netherlands in Groningen in general is definitely yeah

Interviewer: And physically being physically active, but you mentioned through cycling, but being physically active, goes back to your well-being and physical well-being. Would you say? Yeah, that's also that also plays well?

Interviewee 11: Yeah, I definitely think so. Yeah. And that's also why I mentioned you know, the different sports opportunities you have in your hobbies. I personally don't like group sports. But I know that a lot of people do, and I know a lot of people that met very nice people in their sports associations. So that's also a plus. And yeah, I think that's also impacts their well-being because they're physically active, they're playing sports, and they meet new people, nice people, so that's definitely positive.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, so to obviously address the situation of Corona virus. I mean, it's not exactly pleasant with university being cancelled and locked down but with everything in mind that we've spoken about how is the recent change affected your yeah well-being?

Interviewee 11: Yeah, I mean of course it has definitely not helped because as I said, I'm really happy in Groningen and a lot less happy here. Like of course I like seeing my family but generally I don't like coming back. So being forced to leave Groningen is of course not positive and I can't say that I feel depressed, but I do not feel happiness that often lately because yeah, I miss Groningen, I miss my friends. I miss my student life and generally the situation has had a negative impact on my well-being. For sure. Yeah I think about Groningen every day, and hope for the quarantine to end as possible every day. Fingers crossed.

Interviewer: Yeah. Same! So, um, so, not specifically in the current coronavirus situation but just also generally speaking if you are feeling negative emotions of happiness or well-being or not feeling happy and not having a good well-being, do you actively seek out to do certain things to influence that state or to change that state of being?

Interviewee 11: Yeah, definitely. Definitely. If I noticed that I'm not happy, I do things that I like doing because of endorphins and all its triggers. I'm not good with biology, but I know that doing things that you like, definitely has a positive impact.

Interviewer: And what type of things do you do then?

Interviewee 11: I am like, I do sports activities like I go to the gym, or I meet with friends, I talk to friends, I watch series that I like, I eat food that I like to eat. And I just yeah, just generally. Yeah, or I go out with my friends or see them during the day and not necessarily take a walk or get some stuff like that.

Interviewer: Um, you mentioned food, how does that affect you? What role does food play?

Interviewee 11: I mean, I like good food as everyone does. But so yeah, of course eating something that I like, is really lifting for me and also like, it depends on the day but sometimes I also like cooking and then cooking the food and then eating it if it's tasty is also very nice because you eat something that you created, of course.

Interviewer: And you also mentioned series, watching like a series that you're like, ah, how does that affect you? What role does that play?

Interviewee 11: I mean, if I feel unhappy, I usually watch funny series. And of course, the goal is to make people laugh and lift their mood. So, yeah, or I just like to watch a good movie. And then it makes me feel like there's still beauty out there. There're still talented people and yeah, things might not be as bad as you think. And you're just working and watching. It's just attended with the beautiful buildings and you're watching something aesthetically pleasing or something interesting that gets your brain working all of that is of course, good for your well-being as well.

Interviewer: Um, I think I think that was my last question. Is there anything else that you want to go back to that we spoke about or anything else that you want to bring up? that we haven't mentioned?

Interviewee 11: I don't really know what your research question and all of that is, but I think yeah, I mean, I think everything that you say, I said.

Interviewer: Okay, well, thank you so much and I will stop the recording now.

Transcript: Interviewee 12
Thursday 26th March 2020, 4pm GMT

Interviewer: Okay, um, thank you for doing this interview with me. My name is Isla. And I'm a student. Right? Yeah. Can you hear me?

Interviewee 12: Yeah, good. Can you?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. I'm a student at the Faculty of Social Sciences at University of Groningen and I'm researching and subjective well-being and happiness in relation to European international students. So, the questions I'm going to ask you in this interview will be around that theme. But I really want to emphasise that I'm interested in your personal feelings and your points of view so there's no right or wrong answers. And if at any time in the interview, you don't want to answer a question, you want to stop the recording, please feel free to say and as stated in the consent form, all your information will be kept entirely confidential and your name will be omitted for all written purposes. So if you don't have any more questions, let's start the interview.

Interviewee 12: Okay. Yeah.

Interviewer: So I'm gonna start off with a few introductory questions. Could you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 12: Okay, I am XXX, I am 22 years old. I identify as a woman and yeah.

Interviewer: And where are you from?

Interviewee 12: I'm from Italy. I'm born there. Raised, no not born there but raised there.

Interviewer: Ah, so you've lived in Italy the majority of your life.

Interviewee 12: Yeah, yeah, the majority

Interviewer: and then, and then you move to Groningen?

Interviewee 12: Yes, there's a few steps in between if you want me to explain them, is that relevant?

Interviewer: no, not particularly. Urm when did you move, to what year did you move to Groningen?

Interviewee 12: I moved in county in June in 2017.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 12: Yeah. Three years ago.

Interviewer: Yeah. Ah, okay, so now on to some more topical questions. I'm really interested in happiness and spatial mobility. And so firstly, what does the word happy mean to you just happy on its own.

Interviewee 12: the word happy for me means serene. It means being able to appreciate I mean, **not desiring to be anywhere else in that moment**, so you're just good where you are. And it could be extremely short term, or it could be long term. So if it's short term you could think about in one specific moment would I want to be here or not. And on the long run, so am I happy being in Groningen? And for example, or would I rather be somewhere else in the long run?

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, and what do you what do you think causes the state of serenity, when you when you said it's being serene?

Interviewee 12: I'm being on top of my knife, I guess, and feeling like the goal I have is within your reach. And this is very important to my day to day life. So are the things I do in a day purposeful, purpose, you know, have a purpose in relation to my goals. And also, depending on the people around me, and the circumstances, yeah, so it's not just about myself, but it's also the environment in which I'm in.

Interviewer: And so what does the word well-being mean to you?

Interviewee 12: Well-being means being happy. Which means exactly Okay, so wait let me be. So, well-being means fulfilling all these things, all the needs that I have, both emotionally, practically, having a roof above my head being healthy, being able to enjoy my every day, being able to you know, not be overwhelmed by stress and be, having time to explore my thoughts and understand what I need and what I want. Those are all factors that have a lot to do with well-being. Some being okay with the relationships I'm in.

Interviewer: I'm so do you, do you, do you feel that happiness and well-being are connected?

Interviewee 12: Hmm, not necessarily. I mean, well-being is definitely a part of happiness but happiness no sorry. Happiness is definitely wait. So you can be well without being happy. But you don't necessarily have to be well in order to be ah fuck.

Interviewer: No, I get what you say. You say you can be well, have a good state of well-being and not necessarily happy, but you can't really be happy without a good well-being.

Interviewee 12: Yeah, yeah. All right, at least. It's really hard to be happy but not being well, because usually if you're really happy, either at something like extreme in your life that makes you really happy. And even though despite like despite the things that in your life are not linked to well-being, but usually if you're happy it's also because, you think you look and think okay, everything is well as well you know so that's why they're connected. Yeah they're connected

Interviewer: um so also I want to clarify that this is obviously talking about before coronavirus. But we will, we will get on to the more specifics of the current situation further on. But if you take how you've just described and how we've unpacked happy and well-being with those kind of definitions in mind, would you describe your life in Groningen with those words?

Interviewee 12: Yeah, actually, because in Groningen I have the independence to fulfil my needs and so well and also the environment around me stimulates me to understand what my definition of happiness is. So I guess the context where I lie in Groningen really builds on is built on these notions.

Interviewer: And so you, you mentioned a few things, a few elements that I just want to go through. And you mentioned like accommodation and like living situation, and that playing a role.

Interviewee 12: Yeah, definitely. I think the first year it I mean, it's changed a lot throughout the three years I've been here because the first year I was living in Frascati and living in Frascati, it meant that I had a safety network on which to fall because I have a safe space to go to, because I knew I had it and so I knew that I was assured with it, so I wouldn't lose it, then. And that was also a space where I met most of my friends not most like a lot of friends. And then the second, then throughout the end of the first year, I had to start looking for another accommodation. And that was complicated. So that took at least two, two and a half months. And that was extremely stressful, because I wasn't able to find anything. So I slowly became a paranoid about it, but I was fine in the end, but like it really took out of my daily well-being because instead of sitting down studying, I was looking for information for 20 minutes smoking a cigarette for five, studying for two minutes, and then 20 minutes again looking for a house. So like that definitely took out of my well-being. And then second year, I found a place and I have a safe haven with my best friend. And it was good to be with those together and also we have our private space and so, but also the space to talk and come together and understand things about ourselves, and also the invite friends, so we had a lot of space. And then the third year was really, really good because we found a beautiful house and the house definitely influenced how we you know, how you lived your life, it's like your actual home, you know, so I get improved my, my perception of my accommodation went from being an accommodation to being home.

Interviewer: um, you mentioned just now like the at the end of Frascati you had a lot of stress trying to find another accommodation and then at the beginning you also mentioned stress and how having time you know, with your thoughts and not being stressed, influences your well-being. And are there any other things that have influenced you becoming stressed like, Are there any other factors?

Interviewee 12: Yeah, maybe sometimes the social aspect is a bit too much. So I guess that's one of the reasons also why I was happy to go into this quarantine because I felt like the whirled around me was like the life around me was going a bit too fast at times and it like didn't leave me a lot of space to calm because happiness also comes from being calm. So I was constantly hectic. So I need yeah, so I think that was stressful at times.

Interviewer: And what you also said your relationships and, like sexual relationships but also friendship relationships.

Interviewee 12: Yeah like all relationships

Interviewer: Yeah. And that that also plays a role.

Interviewee 12: Yeah, for sure. Because I tend to be a very social person and I tend to construct myself through the relationships I have with people. I mean, not only but a lot, I do it a lot and it's definitely helped me shape myself. So I guess my definition of happiness, there's also a construction of other people's

definitions of happiness which I resonate with. So yeah, definitely. I think it's very important for, for how I live my life in Groningen, and you know, so if yeah, I don't know like I, I tend to reflect a lot through on conversations with people. So that definitely interests how yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: How does your relationships construct your idea of happiness? Is it what your yeah, how does that work?

Interviewee 12: I don't know for example, at one point in your life you kind of like look ahead and you're like, Okay, at this point, I should have this done. I should be aiming for this. I should have these things set out for yourself. We should have these sorts of notions and then you by comparing yourself with where you'd be people closest to you, or you're able to think, okay, am I a bit behind, am I ahead? Or you know, like, am I exactly where I'm supposed to be? And it's a shitty thought because there's times in which maybe you're not doing particularly well within yourself and you think fuck all my friends are doing so well. And now I'm not so like, Oh my god, and it's, I'm so behind. Then. If you if you're able to associate this negative feeling inside and you think, Okay, this is where I'm at in comparison to this, this is fine. Like, this is all good picture, you know, so like, I know where I'm going. And I think that's how my relationships with others influences how I see it. How I see my life.

Interviewer: And you said, you lived in Frascati, do you study UCG?

Interviewee 12: Yes, I do study UCG.

Interviewer: And what do you how do you do you enjoy your study?

Interviewee 12: Yes, I do actually, a lot because it gives us a lot of freedom to navigate through different courses and different faculties. And the atmosphere within the building. The physical building is really, really good. And like it's very homey, and cosy, and it's tangible. And so that definitely played a role in you know, feeling well in the city. And then yeah, I just really like how it's structured. And I like the freedom that it gives. So I wouldn't go back and change it.

Interviewer: And did you always know you wanted to study Liberal Arts and Sciences at Groningen or how was your decision to move to Groningen made?

Interviewee 12: So okay, a few different stories. So I don't know when the deadline application whether the application deadlines were in the back in 2017 when I graduated from high school, I thought I wanted to do bio biology, chemistry and pharmacy. I was convinced that was my street. And then I didn't get accepted where I originally thought I go, which was Luxembourg, which sounds hella boring now. Then on the 10th of August, yeah, on the seventh of August, I realised I was fucked because I didn't I didn't want to stay in this city. And I didn't get accepted the one place I asked for. So I was on the internet with my Dad looking for something, you know, with the word science in it and so we found the role arts and sciences, and I sent my application and three days later I was accepted. So I didn't know Groningen at all before finding this programme. I had no clue. So I just left with my two backpacks and just got to Groningen and was like, Fuck, I live right next to the station. Pretty cool. And yeah, since then I'm very, very happy with it. And I did do science courses the first year and then I changed went more in the direction of Social Sciences and gender. So, you know, I didn't know anything about anything about my path until two weeks before starting it so

Interviewer: and what how do you feel about Groningen now? After living there for three years?

Interviewee 12: I'm tired of it. I am excited to move on. You know, I love the people that I've met there, and I love the relationships that I've built. And I feel extremely at home and safe there. But I feel like it's the time in my life where I need something bigger a bigger challenge, and I think next year, taking your masters somewhere is going to be very beneficial to you as well. So but I mean, I love the city, and I know it inside out I mean, maybe I don't know it inside out, but I definitely do know what to do for someone my age and my interest. So maybe I've explored all those aspects of the city and that why I feel ok to move away.

Interviewer: Yeah. And you mentioned that your father helping you look at like, degrees and stuff. Did your family support your decision to move to Groningen?

Interviewee 12: Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer: Because your family's back in Italy?

Interviewee 12: Yeah, yeah, that's where I am right now. Yeah.

Interviewer: And how have you found I'm being an international student in Groningen in general?

Interviewee 12: So, it facilitates our intercultural integration. There is a lot for us. And I mean it's a bit of a bubble compared to the rest of you know, local and stuff but it's definitely not it just doesn't it doesn't hinder the communication between the two worlds, you know, so for example, that in the market and everyone speaks in English more or less, and then you go to clubs and everyone speaks English. You go to restaurants and everyone speaks English. So you know, like it's definitely welcoming. And it's definitely an economy which is strongly built around this as well. I feel so I feel like I was welcomed there absolutely, as an international. And I feel like it's also what made me feel so at home there because I met so many people who are also in my situation, and that was really helpful.

Interviewer: Yeah, um, and Do you find it difficult though being apart from your family or being in a different country from your family?

Interviewee 12: That really varies, sometimes yes, sometimes no. So the first year I wasn't missing it at all, really, really happy that I was just living to the fullest second year I was also in a shitty relationship at that time, but it was a strong relationship. So I there so in the Netherlands, so that was a big part as well. So I didn't feel like I was missing out in Italy and then this year and then I don't know it also shifts with my mood maybe and how stressed and busy I am there. So when I'm like way too busy way too stressed, I might feel more the desire to come home. That's why sometimes I have come home like maybe I come home two, three times a year, which is not a lot considering that I come from a family which is very close knit so I could be coming home more often. But I think to the degree of these three years it was a good amount. And then this year I've been doing really well in the Netherlands as I said like I felt really at home in my house so the people around me I felt really at home and accepted. So I didn't feel it. But then towards this, like the last couple of months, I felt more of this need to come back to my roots. I don't know whether it was the weather, or the fact that I was getting a bit bored. Or the fact that you know, I still do have friends here that do interesting things. And so I don't know, maybe I just got a bit homesick in the last while. So now I will say yes, I'll do miss home, but I miss more the aspects that come with it. Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. I think. Yeah, that's, yeah, the aspects of home and family are quite important. Yeah. So we've mentioned that a bit do you think you adapted well, to life in Groningen and when you first moved there, and like, how long did it take you to settle in and things?

Interviewee 12: Immediately. It took me like a week, actually, never mind. No, yeah. It took me like a week because I got there on all my roommates gone on this intro camp thing. So I was alone at home for like the first three days in Frascati and it was just like this tiny little room and then they fall away from the kitchen. I was just walking on like the morning they came back, I was in the kitchen in my underwear making coffee. And instead of going back to my room and putting pants on, I just stayed in the kitchen in my underwear, drinking coffee and talking to them. So I'd say why I lowered the boundaries pretty quickly. And so I had a lot of space to just feel free. So I'd say very fast and I don't know even country wise it was very easily I mean Europe, like the Netherlands, isn't that culturally different compared to Italy, you know, because it's still Europe. So I don't feel like there was a massive cultural shock. And so both from my house point of view, but also from where I was, it was really immediate.

Interviewer: Um, and other any other things you do to like, bring about the emotions and feelings we discussed at the beginning around well-being and happiness.

Interviewee 12: Sorry, what?

Interviewer: are the things that you actively seek out to do to bring about that state of happiness and well-being that we discussed at the beginning?

Interviewee 12: Yeah, well, I try to be influenced to the right point around me. So the problem that I have is that I often associate my needs with other people's needs a bit too much. So maybe I allow other people's needs to influence mine too much. So maybe that is some sometimes unhelpful, so I try to I try to question myself more often and think, okay, is this something that I actually want? What do I actually want right now, what do I need to do? What can I postpone, you know? And so this really influenced the whole thing. Sorry, this stuff. These are definitely mechanisms that I use, then what else do I do? Well, I tried to see as many people as I can during the week. So I tried to meet my friends more often during the week. And I like to study in public spaces so that I, I can see that, you know, I'm part of a bigger community. *I like to make good food. I like to I love cooking. And I love it. Yeah. I mean, I love eating more than cooking.*

Interviewer: The whole process around food.

Interviewee 12: Yeah. And then yeah, that's kind of it. Yeah. Don't force myself to do things that I don't want to do.

Interviewer: What? What type of public spaces Do you like to be in?

Interviewee 12: *I love parties. So I tried to do I don't try to but I inevitably party once a week. And then but now that's way I need a break a little bit much. I like a lot going to cafes. So I love going for coffee with friends. I love going for a beer with friends. I rarely do because beers are expensive. I mean at least I think. And so what we also do is like we also love to hang out in the house. So that's something that we like to do a lot. I like to go to the market. I also really like going to supermarkets. What else do I do that, parks in summer, and lakes. And yeah, that's pretty much it. I'm not gonna lie. I don't really like going to the gym, I can see that, I can imagine why a lot of people say I like to go to the gym to hang out. I think that's bullshit.*

Interviewer: No, everyone has their own thing is that make them happy and things that they like doing and not everyone has to be the same.

Interviewee 12: *Yeah and then also I worked in Italian restaurants for about a year and that was a very happy place. It was definitely something that meant a lot because it's an Italian restaurant. And so and the kitchen was all made up of like Italian boys before we go there. And it's just like super easy and chill and speaking Italian and just like an Italian boss. So it was really easy to feel at home again. And that was really nice that it was once twice, three times a week. And so that was extremely helpful. And that's where I felt really well.*

Interviewer: How nice to have kind of like that influence from or not influence that and kind of like familiarity of Italians, and just that yeah, really nice

Interviewee 12: because I don't know, like, I don't know about English people, but like, I definitely need to have that one on one time with Italian people to like, get back to my passion and my root, you know, because it's so easy to like create a new international culture when you're full of people from different places. And so I love to just like be like, God Don't want the fuck this function doesn't even matter happened on I'm shocked, you know like and that's, that's I need that.

Interviewer: and, um you said when we discussed like looking back at your time in Groningen, you mentioned that you were like ready to leave and go on to like another challenge. But, um, do you look back positively like on your period in Groningen?

Interviewee 12: Yeah, sure. Yeah, sure. I loved it.

Interviewer: Um, and then also I do want to touch upon the situation with Corona virus because, obviously that'd be like many changes to like everyone's kind of bubble and everyone's fear of that. You know, situation, but in like relation to everything we've discussed recently like just now, how has it affected you?

Interviewee 12: Actually, I'm happy to be back. I needed this a little bit and so I'm I don't feel afraid I what I am missing is summer and going out and drinking in streets and enjoying myself and having shit down and simulating some time with nothing to do and I actually think it's fine for now for me it's been, it's

been fine. I'm not going to complain about it because I'm not scared. I mean, I could be a bit more scared, but I'm pretty relaxed about it. I don't feel like it's going to become a terrible situation. I think things are pretty fine and it's definitely not nice, of course not, it's a pandemic. But you know if you have directives, and you know what to do, then I don't see why things shouldn't go well. I mean, I feel like we all have human's best interest in mind, even if you know, you've put the economy before, but still, there's still human interest in mind ahead of everything. So I wouldn't be stressed, I wouldn't be too fearful. And also, what I really do mind a little bit is that, you know, my last period here, in Groningen just like, ended abruptly. And that maybe, is a bit negative, because, you know, we were living in this beautiful house and things are just starting to go really well with you know, XXX, XXX and XXX and everyone's everyone so starting to be really cool. And so that's a bit of a shame, but I also think it's inevitable. So why think about it otherwise.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, definitely. Um, I think that was all my questions, but um, do you have anything you want to discuss or touch upon that we haven't covered or go back to anything.

Interviewee 12: No, I'm fine. Maybe? I don't know. No, no. Yeah, maybe talk about like how people perceive the future. You know, like, how do you see this evolved? Like, do you think it will definitely affect your life? Do you think? Do you think things are going to go back to normal really quickly? Or? You know? I think that's not really research.

Interviewer: Um, no, we could we could definitely talk about I think, personally for me, um, I think we're living through a period that is going to be resting in the history textbooks for many years to come. And like you, I'm back home and I feel cheated that my last few months in Corona could have been taken away for exactly the same reasons. You know, as you I was living in a good flat Friends and I think in terms of like my well-being, I can only hope that things will get better in the next few months.

Interviewee 12: Yeah And

Interviewer: I'm doing my part in society you know, I'm isolating. I'm trying really hard to like, Yeah, do my bit.

Interviewee 12: Yeah.

Interviewer: But yeah, how do you feel?

Interviewee 12: I don't know. Yeah, I thought about I thought about volunteering and working in like a supermarket or something. But then I figured, okay, fine. I also needed this time to write my fucking thesis, which I'm not doing but I'm doing it. I'm trying to do it. But I don't know. I guess it's just something that I what pisses me off is that life is already short and that even just six months can be taken away from you is a fuck load. And especially in this moment of transition, you know, if it would have been like if this would have happened, and we would have been first years or something, I would have probably been like, oh, man, fuck it, you know, I'll be here in a couple of months, and it's going to be fine. But now it's like, in a couple of months, I'm moving out. And I'm moving back to Italy. And then I'm moving on. And so, yeah, I do completely agree with this notion that, you know, everything's just kind of like suddenly gone. And all your last memories are linked to March. Yeah, you know, whereas people should have been in the fucking park in a couple of weeks, you know, altogether.

Interviewer: But I'm going to stop the recording now. And quickly save it and then we can carry on

Transcript: Interviewee 13:
Friday 27th March 2020, 10am GMT

Interviewer: Okay, so thank you for doing this interview with me. It's for my bachelor thesis research project in which I'm exploring subjective well-being and happiness and spatial mobility for European international students studying at the University of Groningen. So, the questions I'm going to ask will relate to this theme. But I want to emphasise that I'm particularly interested in your own opinions and points of

views. And there's no right or wrong answers. But also, at any time during the interview, if you don't want to answer a question or you want to turn off the recording, or you want to leave or anything, please don't hesitate to ask. And as stated in the consent form, all the information will be kept entirely confidential and your name will be omitted for all research purposes. So yeah, if you didn't have any more questions, then let's start the interview.

Interviewee 13: Yeah let's start.

Interviewer: Okay, so I'm just going to start off with a few basic introductory questions. Can you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 13: My name is XXX. I'm 25. And I'm Male

Interviewer: And what country are you from?

Interviewee 13: Germany.

Interviewer: And have you lived there your whole life or?

Interviewee 13: Except for two years? Yes.

Interviewer: And then how many years have you lived in Groningen for?

Interviewee 13: Now, one and a half years.

Interviewer: So, you moved there ...

Interviewee 13: 2018, for the start of the academic year.

Interviewer: Um, okay, so now we're into some more topical questions and what does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 13: I think happiness kind of like a like feeling for sure where everything just is right you know, everything feels right so everything feels right I'm usually happy doesn't matter which topic now, I think Yeah.

Interviewer: And what type of things have to be right for you to feel good?

Interviewee 13: I think friends, family but if I can come back to Groningen, it's the way of life, climate makes me happy usually when the climate is right, and the whole just the whole moment, I think.

Interviewer: So, what does the word well-being mean to you as well?

Interviewee 13: I think once I'm happy if I go back to the previous question, Once I'm happy Yeah, I think also my well-being is on point. So, my happiness is not so like if I don't feel happy, I think also my well-being, when it comes to living environment is also quite low. So, this is kind of influenced. So, my well-being is influenced by the environment around me, I think surrounding me.

Interviewer: and what do you mean by environment?

Interviewee 13: Living accommodation, social contact, contacts, or contacts and then mobility. Because if I go back to my home city, Berlin, mobility is really just a mess. Like you have to use public transportation to get anywhere or the car. And this can be quite depressing. But I'm here in Groningen using the bike is also just like kind of giving you the feeling of being free and you are in control of your movement and you're not dependent on anything, like a superior service, you know?

Interviewer: Mm hmm. And do you feel that happy and happiness and then well-being dependent or interconnected or completely independent?

Interviewee 13: I think they're dependent. I mean, when you're completely unhappy I think it's not so likely that you're also like your well-being is on point right. That's what I think. Yeah,

Interviewer: Yeah. So now taking how you've like described and discussed, happy and happiness and well-being, would you use those two terms to describe your life, living and studying in Groningen?

Interviewee 13: Yes, except for dining outside. That's in Groningen, compared to my home situation not so not doesn't cover really the service from Berlin which also came because Berlin is a big city. **But otherwise I think living in Groningen should make someone happy. I mean, it's quite a nice life. I think we're living in a bubble.** Like you can't believe except pandemic now. You don't really know what's happening outside like it's quite isolated and then in you're happy in a bubble, I think you're quite happy. I mean your well-being is awesome important. Yeah, well, yes, I think Groningen is nice.

Interviewer: And also, I just want to clarify that Yeah. We are going to talk about before coronavirus. And then we'll address like the current situation a bit later on. And but what did you mean by dining outside?

Interviewee 13: Yeah, eating in restaurants. It's quite expensive, quality wise, I don't fully agree with it, like if it's good. **So that's the only lacking thing I think and also maybe the nightlife is at some point gets boring. So, like the entertainment part outside of uni, like for your free time.** This may mean has potential to be more diverse, I think.

Interviewer: Uh, and so would you say that then eating out in restaurants influences your happiness and well-being?

Interviewee 13: Yeah sometimes I think it's nice to eat outside. Nice which is affordable and quantity wise. Like you get something for your money. Nice food makes people happy, right? Something nice 100% influences your day. That can change your whole mood. Yeah, I think this is a thing for me.

Interviewer: Um and you also mentioned mobility and transport. How does that relate to your well-being in Groningen?

Interviewee 13: **I mean, one of the reasons I think the whole day is kind of nice in Groningen is that you can cycle anywhere. So, you're already quite active, do something for your mind and for your body, although it's really just a 10-minute cycle.** But then it's again, kind of the feeling of not dependent on a service, you can just if you want to hop on a bike and go somewhere, you can just do what you can just walk. Groningen is quite small. But if you live in a bigger city, you either have to take the car and then you're in a traffic jam, that's annoying. You have to pay like chaos. It's expensive and the bikes Of course, quite cheap. You like the bike to pay for one bike and then you have your bike gets stolen, of course. And then if you don't have to, you don't have to take the bus to go to the other side of the city. So, mobility is, I think I think a big factor of influencing happiness, like once you can move around before asking, like asking you bigger servers, you just feel free. And that's pretty nice, I think. Yeah. And the facilities are on point, like biking routes. **You're safe like if you don't have to wear a helmet,** the cars that kind of look at you. Which is not everywhere.

Interviewer: So, you feel safe in the city?

Interviewee 13: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: You also mentioned living accommodation. And that having an influence.

Interviewee 13: Yeah, I mean, if you live too far outside and you're then again, the effect of the back maybe gets a bit lower. **But if you have a nice house and garden and balcony, it's affordable. And then you're always in the city centre with your apartment more or less.....That also influences that happiness.**

Interviewer: And so outdoor space influences it as well you think?

Interviewee 13: What do you mean by outdoor space?

Interviewer: Well, you mentioned you mentioned balconies.

Interviewee 13: Yeah.

Interviewer: And outdoor space in your living accommodation. How does that

Interviewee 13: I mean I have a balcony and my mood changed completely compared to my previous apartment which was just like a, like a chamber? You know, under the stairs. It was so annoying but now with my balcony, I can chill outside, get some fresh air, yeah that also changed my mood, I think.

Interviewer: Your family is back in Berlin. Am I correct?

Interviewee 13: Yeah. I have a bit of family here actually in Groningen. So that's, it's not so close. But I have a good family here.

Interviewer: And how does that influence your state of being?

Interviewee 13: I think I'm not so dependent on my family. So, because I lived abroad a bit, so I'm not really connected. I love my family, of course, but I don't have the feeling of I'm missing them every day. So being distant from my family doesn't really change my mood. But of course, after like six months of chilling in Groningen, I want to go back home to see my mom and my dad, my sister, so then you cannot make a change, that you really miss your family, then it might change my mood, and affect my happiness. But otherwise, I don't think it really affects me. For friends, I'm a bit different, like my close friends from Berlin. Sometimes I'm really like okay, they get my jokes, they know how I would think, or they know what I want to say. And I can just say it. Here in Groningen, sometimes you have to get to use the friends and then kinda see how you're gonna adapt and it might change the mood.

Interviewer: So, friends in general are, would you say they're important to you?

Interviewee 13: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you, you came here in 2018. So, you're halfway through your bachelor. Right?

Interviewee 13: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And what do you, how do you feel about your studies?

Interviewee 13: The studies are nice. I like the subjects. But I just think the work load is just insane. I studied in Berlin before and also finished a degree there. And the workload is not even close to what we have here. It's just like exams, midterms, exams, resets, midterms exams, the whole time.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 13: We don't have like proper breaks. I think it's just driving students nuts. I mean, if I would be the only one, I would think it's my fault. I hear from other students that the work is just, I mean, there are limits, you know, I mean, if I, my roommates are all doing psychology, and they're teaching people to not burn out, but that all psychology students have so many exams, which is a bit contradictory right. Telling them what's wrong for psychology and then they're doing the same. Spatial Planning, I think is sometimes, maybe I'm a bit lazy, but the reading parts just the workload is too much.

Interviewer: And does that impact how you feel about the about your education in Groningen?

Interviewee 13: Um, before exam times, yes, then I'm usually not so happy with the studies anymore. But once the exams are done, and we start the new block, I'm always like, can't wait for the new courses to start and get into it again.

Interviewer: Yeah,

Interviewee 13: maybe I'm just not a fan of exams. Haha

Interviewer: Haha, and Um, and you mentioned your flatmates also do psychology what's your living situation with them like?

Interviewee 13: A quite nice actually. Like when I moved in to this house years ago, and I have another flatmate, some moved out, some moved in. I'm living with 3 girls. Everything is fine.

Interviewer: that's good. Um, and when you move to here, Groningen, in 2018, how long did it take you to adapt and settle in? Do you think you adopted? How do you think you adapted?

Interviewee 13: I knew Groningen before because my cousin studied here from Zwolle. So, he's Dutch. And so I came here like, twice or three times before, and so I knew the city a bit, but then again, I only saw his place, the city centre, the Vismarkt, Grote Markt that was it, but I think I did quite quick and well, I'm quite social, so I don't need too much time to adapt somewhere. But then again, it's always I get bored quite quick. So that's also deep. Like, was the kind of mood which went down know, at some point, like after a year like okay, I saw everything, nothing changes, but now I'm back. So, mood changed again with the good weather I think it's okay.

Interviewer: Um, and you mentioned last like entertainment and, like, so not social life in terms of friends but like diverse entertainment and socialising. Um, how do you feel about that?

Interviewee 13: Urm yeah like museums. Here there one museum, or maybe four, but they always have the same exhibition. Before which have always the same exhibition, so that's wrong. I really must gallery like exhibitions you know art exhibitions, which Berlin is very famous for that we can just like if you have a chill Sunday you just go to an exhibition and then just enjoy the two hours there otherwise theatre I don't go to much, cinema I just went once now. And like the parties are also they're all the same thing at some point it's just it's always the same people always the same stuff happening that makes it a bit boring

Interviewer: and so, do you think that kind of frequent similarity impacts your state of well-being?

Interviewee 13: Yes...

Interviewer: In what way

Interviewee 13: I mean if you do one thing like 100 times for like three months, you think you get bored and then once you're born and you can't really change anything because the supply of the services is always the same? Then you might start out, urm what I did. I started changing my behaviour on the weekends. I just skipped a lot of parties just know for the case of parties. I just skipped a lot of parties to kind of get back into the moment. Okay, that's a new party, although the same might happen again. I just skipped it for three months. Yeah. And then it's kind of faking myself you know, like my thinking. So yeah, it influenced my well-being because I get bored. And then I tried to adapt, which is I think the best way to do it.

Interviewer: Sorry, I'm just writing that down. So, you like you think new and exciting or things that are new to you in influence your well-being?

Interviewee 13: Yeah.

Interviewer: In what in a positive or negative way?

Interviewee 13: New things always positive, I think. I mean that like to kind of people, right, people which are kinda they get used to stuff and then they're happy and then people which really like to see new stuff right they can experience new stuff like seekers, and I think I've call myself in a second part. Like I really need to get like, so my senses always see something new. So, I kind of get into the mode Okay, this is nice. The something can do for the next two months, and then you get something new again. Yeah, I think I should analyse the psychology like I should ask my friends.

Interviewer: And how do you find being an international student in her Groningen?

Interviewee 13: I think its chill, people speaking like elderly speak perfect English. You don't need to learn Dutch to survive, which is a really plus but can be a disadvantage, because then you're lazy to learn. So, the language, uni I think helps a lot. I mean, I know I think there were some blame when I moved here that you needed to help accommodation because they were accepting too many students.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 13: But I don't think that's the job of the uni to fix accommodation. If you really want to move here and study here. You going to find a place like even a place to sleep. That's so easy. So, I think uni helps a lot when it comes to actually finding the right spot in the city. No like that. You can really enjoy yourself. I mean, I've never seen racism here, which is, I think a big factor. You feel safe, like during night time. The lights are kinda the city's not too dark. I mean you had spatial planning as, well right?

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee 13: Yeah, so the cities I think the city feels safe you can walk through the Noorderplantsoen and nothing is gonna happen.

Interviewer: yeah and yes, the safety and feeling yeah secure or supporters is urm influences well-being.

Interviewee 13: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. And then lastly, I want to address obviously the global pandemic of coronavirus so everything that we've like obviously just discussed now, um how has the recent change in everything affected well-being and happiness for you?

Interviewee 13: To be honest, we like stayed home last two weeks I think, like we didn't move anywhere, just a supermarket and then we came home every Three days. And I think that that's I don't know, the Dutch government kind of was a bit too loose. We did the walk into the city and I was like, why did I stay home the last seven days? while the city's just continuing to live you know, nothing really changes. Otherwise the pandemic is killing the mood, I think, it's about to start like the spring is gonna start and we have to sit around at home and can't do anything. And then we have to still perform at uni because everything is online. So, the pandemic is actually just I don't know, you just have a lot of time to think and reconsider life decisions and what you want to do with your life.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, you mentioned you mentioned the weather again, and you mentioned that previously at the beginning. Yeah. And that plays a role?

Interviewee 13: Yeah, I think weather and social contexts are like the most influential part of my happiness and well-being. I mean, I think that there was a fact that there is winter depression, right? That's I mean, I don't know I need some fresh air the blue sky and like rain can rain sometimes it's okay enough for the climate and stuff but it's just better when the climate is nice. Like

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, um and the uni pressures as well that you mentioned does that call is that causing the same type of situation for you as well as exam period and that same similar emotions arising?

Interviewee 13: What do you mean?

Interviewer: So, you mentioned the uni pressures now in isolation currently with coronavirus and then previously we discussed and when it gets to exam season exam period you don't really enjoy the university workload and stuff and they did two times we've talked about it they the same kind of emotions and effect effects?

Interviewee 13: no, with this time the pandemic environment I think what the uni's doing. Of course, they're doing the right thing they want to keep us in the routine because if the uni will also say you know what, everything is cancelled, everyone which is okay if you need even just cancelled what we're going to do now, so I think the uni's doing the best part and kind of showing us everything is just gonna go into routine just keeping routine, do us stuff and then everything's gonna be alright. We're just off for five

months. No, you don't have to be here physically. So, I think this pressure just in the first one was like, Okay, cool. Now we have to do everything at home. And I kind of read study at home Getting into like a safe space somewhere else in the UB. Yeah, but even studying missing the UB, never thought I would say that! But yeah, the pressure like in the first one it was just annoying but now I really kinda get why they still want to do it. We kind of stick to the ball and just continue.

Interviewer: Um, yeah. So, I think that was all my questions, but is there anything that you want to go back to? Or you want to mention that we haven't talked about?

Interviewee 13: Okay. Mm no.

Interviewee 13: I'm going to stop the recordings now.

Transcript: Interviewee 14
Thursday 2nd April 2020, 11am BST

Interviewer: Okay, good morning or good afternoon, actually. Yeah, thank you for agreeing to this interview with me. It's part of my bachelor research project for Human Geography and Urban Planning, and I'm exploring happiness and well-being and spatially mobile students at the University. So I'm, yeah, the questions I'm going to ask will relate to this theme, but I really want to stress that there's like, no right or wrong answers. I'm really interested in your own personal feelings, points of view, experiences. So there's no right or wrong answers. And at any time throughout the interview, you don't want to answer a question, or you feel uncomfortable. Please let me know. Yeah, don't hesitate to ask me to turn off the recording or anything. And yeah, as stated in the consent form, all information will be kept entirely confidential and your name will be completely omitted for all research purposes.

Interviewee 14: Yeah

Interviewer: Do you have any more questions?

Interviewee 14: No

Interviewer: Okay, then let's start. So we're going to start off with a few basic introductory questions? Could you please tell me your name, age and gender?

Interviewee 14: Yeah, my name is XXX, I'm 24 years old, and, um, what else do you ask?

Interviewer: your gender?

Interviewee 14: Oh, yeah, I'm female.

Interviewer: And what country are you from?

Interviewee 14: I'm originally from Cyprus.

Interviewer: And did you spend most the majority of your life there before moving to Groningen?

Interviewee 14: Yeah. I grew up and lived in Cyprus my whole life until I was 19. And then I moved to Groningen.

Interviewer: So what year did you move to Groningen?

Interviewee 14: 2015

Interviewer: Okay, so then now on to some more topical questions. Yeah, as I mentioned earlier, I'm interested in happiness and spatial mobility, and how they interact. So what does the word happy mean to you?

Interviewee 14: A sense of relief, not having a lot of pressure on you. At the same time, having no pressure really just being able to feel what you feel at the moment without having any other stressing factors on top of you. That is what happiness is for me at the moment.

Interviewer: and what are some stressing factors for you?

Interviewee 14: Um, financial implications, weather sometimes, my mood, and just well at the moment those stressors are just uni stuff that because I don't really have much in my life

Interviewer: um, and what does well being mean to you?

Interviewee 14: Well-being is for me, it's like a mental health. Just being able to be myself around other people and having a good like, a good mental health. You know what I mean? Just being present at the moment not being too much in my head. Well-being is like being able to be happy wherever you are, regardless of, you know, the environment or the people.

Interviewer: I'm sorry, just writing this down... so do you think happy and happiness and then well-being, do you think that interconnected or are they independent?

Interviewee 14: I think they can be both. You can be happy. Well, no, if you put it like that actually, your well-being like, for me to be happy, my well-being needs to be like, in a good place as well. Like, I don't think I can be happy without like being mentally sane, if that makes sense. So yeah, I do think they're interconnected, especially happiness will make you happy and then being happy would lead to like a better well-being.

Interviewer: Yeah. And so then taking how we've, or you've, just defined and discuss the two terms. Would you use them to describe how you feel about living and studying in Groningen?

Interviewee 14: Okay, how would I use them?

Interviewer: Or would you use them?

Interviewee 14: Um, definitely. I mean, I was happy. I am happy here. My well-being obviously wasn't always peaked, or I don't know how to use well-being in a sentence. But it wasn't, I wasn't always happy obviously, like, it fluctuates. I've been here nearly five years now. So it's a long time to be just happy.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee 14: Obviously, I had rougher times, but now I am happy. So yeah, I guess we say that to describe my time here.

Interviewer: Um, and yeah, what factors do you think have influenced how you feel about your time there?

Interviewee 14: Urm well when I first came here, it was just the mystery of being in new country like I didn't know where I was, it was my first time outside my own country. My first time living alone. I was 19 at the time. So that would make me very anxious and like conscious of where I was. I couldn't really live the moment because I was like, Oh, did I make the right decision to be here? Was it too rational, and stuff like that. But as time moves on, and you get to meet people you like, identify with and then you move into like a nice apartment and you find the study that actually fits your interests, then that would lead to more happiness in the end. And that was my case, as well. Because when I came, I was not that happy.

Interviewer: Um, you mentioned like, quite a few factors. I'm just going to go back to each of them if that's okay. So, you mentioned mystery of like a new country. And how do you find and how did you find the distance from Cyprus to the Netherlands?

Interviewee 14: And for me, the first thing was how different the weather was. Because, you know, weather is not such a big factor, but for me was because Cypress is like the sunniest, sunniest island of like Europe, it has sun 350 days, like a year. And it's then I came here, and it was like, you see the sun maybe once a week, maybe once a month.

Interviewer: Yeah!

Interviewee 14: yeah, it's true though. Like it affected my well-being more than I thought it would because I when I was coming here, I knew the weather would be different I knew it would be cold. You know, so I was like, I do actually enjoy being in a cold place, but then I didn't realise it will be cold and dark, you know? So that affected me like, psychologically a little bit. Urm, sorry, I forgot the question.

Interviewer: No, you answered it. So, you also mentioned accommodation. What role does accommodation play in your well-being?

Interviewee 14: Well, for me, it's important to live in a place where I feel comfortable. And like now my room is like my favourite house so far I've been through because when I first came here as well I was in a student house with 250 students. So it was hard to like, you know, feel at home, because I felt more like a guest than I was feeling like I'm at home. And this was my first home away from home. And it wasn't what I expected it to be. Yeah, it was, yeah, a bit hard to adjust to that kind of life, even though like I live my, I have a big family. So we're six. So that was also useful for me to like, bond with my like, roommates at the time, because I was used to living in a space with a lot of people but not that many, like not 200 people. So it was hard to adjust to such place that, you know, other 200 people call home as well. Yeah. Yeah. It wasn't very cosy and or home like, which now it is because it's a house.

Interviewer: Yeah. And so how, how do you find your family, well how does your family play a role in your well-being in specific in specific regards to you, living in Groningen and studying here?

Interviewee 14: We're just checking up on me like them checking up on me, like, you know, obviously makes you feel better. Support is a big, you know, plays a big role in all this because they are supporting me through my studies or at least they were at some point financially, and emotionally they're still supporting me. So yeah, that plays a role also like if they were having financial troubles it would affect my well-being as well when I was in when I'm in Groningen and that did happen the first few years so that was kind of affecting my mental health a lot. But now because I'm financially independent, it doesn't anymore that much, but just the emotional support means a lot to me as well.

Interviewer: Yeah. And you also mentioned studies and finding something that you're interested in, how does that influence your well-being?

Interviewee 14: Um, well, in first year, I was doing a different programme. I was doing English Language and Cultures, and all of that on top of the accommodation thing we're talking about and like being in a new country and, you know, studying something I thought I wanted to do, and actually I didn't really like it made me really depressed. I was having like, a tough time in first year. Because I didn't also know how to you know, tell my parents, you know, you spend so much money sending me here and now, I want to change my study. So it was like dragging me down a lot. And, but in the end, I told my parents and it was fine. So it's just, it was about communication. Mostly it was connected to communication, and then just me figuring out what I actually want to do with my life. Which is hard to do at 19 really. You were in the same place as me I think.

Interviewer: Yeah, definitely, completely. So yeah, do you think communication in general not just with your family but in general plays a role in your well-being?

Interviewee 14: Definitely! Communication is key it comes the same with when you're feeling something about someone, you're pissed at your roommate or something and you're not communicating that feeling in the end will affect the well-being on both of you because you don't know why this is happening. This tension or something between two people. And like, I feel like communication is always like there to like, ease the matter because it you need to communicate to like solve the issue in the end of the day. Does this make sense?

Interviewer: Yeah, completely, completely. And you also mentioned at the beginning environment, what did you mean by environment?

Interviewee 14: Just like, you know Groningen, **the environment here is completely different than the environment back home** and it's with like people and with nature as well like, I live in a village back home and like I have a garden, I have multiple gardens and there's mountains behind my house as well. So I can like I can take a break you know from life or whatever, take a walk in the on the mountain. Whereas here **like you can go to the park but it's packed. There's no like sense of like nature**, you know, where it's pretty zen and chill. It's just, it's chill, but there's also like another hundred people in the park with you. So that also played a role because I wasn't used to, I never lived in a city. This is the first city I lived in and this is quite a small city so you can't really call it a city I guess if you come from a city, but for me coming from like a suburban area. This was like a big change for me like buildings everywhere, wow.

Interviewer: Yeah, so the, the urban versus rural factors. Yeah.

Interviewee 14: Yeah.

Interviewer: Um, you also mentioned people, what will do people play in your well-being?

Interviewee 14: Well, it's, for me, I always need people around me that I feel comfortable with. I'm not always but it's like if I do have people around me, I need them to be close to me instead of like, just, you know, hanging out with people you don't really like and it's just I don't know. Urm.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 14: But in general here, if I compared to home, like people in general, it's just the mindset is so different that I feel more at home here with the culture, let's say than I do back home because of how open minded people are in the Netherlands and the fact that all the international students come from different places and they live here, that is like a common ground for us because we have this common experience that we just came from a different, a completely different place. But we're both here now. And we're both experiencing the same kind of life. Yeah, that's really interesting to me. Like, it's like, it's a way to bond with people as well. You know, you're living the same reality now.

Interviewer: Yeah, completely, completely agree. And how do you find being an international student in Groningen, though?

Interviewee 14: Um, yeah, I found it quite hard in the beginning because I felt that not speaking the language was like a big barrier. But then I realised actually, you don't need the language as an international student if you're not planning to live in the Netherlands. So it was hard in the beginning also adjusted to such different culture, and the food and everything, but now I feel fine. I don't feel like an outsider. I feel part of the city because the city is a student's city. So it comes with the students anyway. So I feel like regardless of Dutch people I don't feel like a foreigner anymore.

Interviewer: Yeah. And you also mentioned earlier identity. What role does that play for you in well-being?

Interviewee 14: Well, identify, well it doesn't really play a role for me anymore. Because I had issues with identity. When I was younger, because my parents, my parents, they're Cypriot, but they grew up in the UK, so they don't identify as Cypriot but there are also not British. So it's like it was always like the we'll talk about the Cypriots in a certain way. And it was like, I would also get that. But then I was born and raised in Cyprus, so I am Cypriot, but my parents don't identify Cypriots. But then when I moved to the Netherlands, I don't want to identify Cypriot anymore because I don't identify with the culture there. Yeah, so this identity issue like manifests itself in like my, like, psychological things, but then it's like, identities is also a social construct for me, and I don't think it's important if I feel a certain way. If I feel like Dutch, then I'm Dutch, I guess but I don't. That's not the case. I just, you know, I'm a citizen of the world. I'm European. You know, all that shit. I yeah. I don't want to identify as something because I think you need to like, grow a little bit more, experienced more stuff. And then you can attach yourself to something if you want to. Yeah, like I don't see it as a necessity to identify with something, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah, no you're not it does definitely make sense and yeah, I understand that it's more so how you feel than actually complete arbitrary categorization yeah for example.

Interviewee 14: Yeah.

Interviewer: And when you moved to Groningen in 2015, how long did it take you to settle in? Do you think you adapted quickly or slowly to the to your new surroundings and way of life?

Interviewee 14: I think it took a year and a little bit for me to adjust to life in Groningen and because as I said before, like in first year, I had all these issues with like my study programme, so I wasn't at ease at all like I was always stressed and I was always like, I was like, why am I here? Why am I in Groningen? I don't like this place is like it's raining and dark. Um, so yeah a year and a little bit I think I think in second year, adjusting a little bit more because I actually was admitted to the programme I was enjoying. And then I could see like purpose. You know why I was here. Because then in first year I quit uni in, well, I quit mentally in January, but like, officially I quit in March. And then I was still in Groningen for like those three months until July for some reason. So it was just me, like in a student house doing nothing. So I was very helpless. And maybe, you know, I wasn't really adjusting to life in Groningen, because I will never live my student house and it was just, I will be there all the time. So yeah. In second year, I explored the city more and that's when I thought Yeah, actually, I like this place. And I felt like I can put roots or whatever.

Interviewer: Yeah, so education then as well as living situation affected your well-being then for that year. Obviously, I want to like stress that we are talking about before Coronavirus and we'll address it in like a quick minute. But before that when you are feeling, just generally speaking, when you are feeling negative emotions of well-being or not feeling that happy, do you actively seek out change?

Interviewee 14: Urm it took me a while for that to happen to be honest, I'm quite lazy. And I'm not, like it took it took a few years to seek like that change you're talking about. And what I'm talking about is like mental health. Like it took me what like four years to stick help. And I'm still on a waiting list. So I don't think much changed to be honest. I seek the change, but then I don't really fight for it. If that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee 14: So yeah, it's kind of in between doing something and not doing something. It's like the minimum effort you're putting in.

Interviewer: Yeah, no, I completely understand that. Yeah. And so yeah, obviously, a lot has changed in the past few weeks because of people on Coronavirus and how in relation to like everything we've just discussed, how is this affected you?

Interviewee 14: Well, it affected me more than I thought it would because I do love being at home. But at the same time, I cannot be like, I'm sick of my room now. So I changed my room last week. I changed it around so it's just, you know, something new to look up. Yeah. And the fact that I can go outside, and I never thought I will miss work you know, as long as like, it's so strange to me because I never was like, like constrained from going outside I could always have the liberty of like, yeah, I'm gonna go for a walk with like four of my friends, now I can take one friend you know or like none at all or like I can't be, like, I haven't hung a person outside my roommates for like, so long. And like, for me, like, physical like, affection is so important. Especially being far away from your family and everything. It's a hard time you know, to be in a house. At least I have my roommate, other people have it worse. So I'm grateful for that. But at the same time, it's hard. Like I can imagine for other people, it's harder, but it's hard for me as well.

Interviewer: Yeah. And you mentioned work do you mean job or studies?

Interviewee 14: No job, because it's like a physical activity to do. And it's I mean, I get paid as well. And I missed that part of life

Interviewer: Yeah. So your job also is an important, plays an important role in your well-being?

Interviewee 14: Yes, it's important because it's a change from my, like house reality because I see other people, completely different people than I see from university. I socialise with more Dutch people because it's a restaurant. So the waiters are mostly Dutch. So I'm around Dutch a lot. For some reason, even though like I live in the Netherlands, at uni, I don't hear Dutch so much. So when I'm at work, I hear Dutch more and then it makes me want to learn it. So I try to whenever I hear something, I always repeat it or something like that. So it's a nice change from like, uni house uni house it's like, maybe like work and then uni then half. But it's just it breaks your routine a little bit because it's not always like it's not a stable program either so I, I, there's no like stable weeks, days of the week I work in, it's just what the schedule is that week, I would work. So it's nice just to have that fluency as well just do something else.

Interviewer: Yeah. And do you think stability in the wider sense plays a role in your well-being?

Interviewee 14: Yeah, of course, because now it's like, I don't have a stable job anymore. Not that it was very stable because it was like zero hours contract job. But having that stable income, if that can be considered stability. Yeah, that was way. Like, rewarding for me as well, because this is like, I haven't been financially independent since I was like 19. So it's very important to me to do that. And as I said, it affects my well-being as well because being financially independent, kind of makes me like, breathe a little bit that I don't have to stress my parents for money anymore, stuff like that. So, yeah, stability does play a big role, I think.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I think and that was the last question I have.

Interviewee 14: Yeah?

Interviewer: Is there anything that we've discussed that you want to go back to, or anything we haven't covered in terms of well-being and happiness and living in Groningen that you want to mention?

Interviewee 14: Urm I mean, weed? Weed is a factor I would think in people's well-being here, not always a good thing. I just think because for me, now, smoking weed is such a staple part of my life. Because I have access to it and is not illegal.

Interviewer: Yes

Interviewee 14: Sometimes it calms you down. But at this point, I dread so much that it's just part of my everyday life. I don't know, maybe you should, you know have a question with your interviewers as well. If drugs play a role in people's well-being.. Yeah, I don't do drugs except weed. By yeah, maybe something like that.

Interviewer: Yeah, no, it's really interesting! Do you think, well you said now, it's like just part of your routine? But do you think without it, it would really impact your well-being?

Interviewee 14: Well, I don't think he would have impacted that bad it's just for now for now. Like, I haven't had dreams in a long time because I smoke at night, and it helps me sleep because I have a lot of anxiety. Smoking weed before I go to bed helps me not have nightmares, because then if I don't smoke, then I think about all the things I need to do the next day or things I have on my plate and it's just it causes like insomnia and then I can't sleep because I'm anxious and stuff like that. Whereas with weed, you just forget about it. But then it also makes you procrastinate and stuff like that. So it's not always a good thing.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, completely. And I think it's a really interesting factor, and especially also living in the Netherlands and like you said, how it is, how it's not illegal. And it's, there's a safe space where you know, you can access it, you know, all of that adds to it as well, I think. Yeah, that was super interesting. I'm going to stop the recording and just save it.