

University of Groningen

# Putting a threshold on studentification

An international comparative assessment of a threshold measure in the context of studentification

## **Abstract:**

In cities across Europe, high student numbers are disrupting residential neighbourhoods. In university towns, there are increasing number of family homes being converted into shared student housing, due to a rise in student numbers. In turn, this leads to spatial marginalization of non-student residents, a process known as ‘studentification’. In response to this, various cities throughout Europe have introduced measures to combat the negative effects of studentification. This paper aims to provide an analysis of the threshold measure implemented in Groningen (Netherlands), Brighton (England) and Loughborough (England), in order to evaluate how successful the policy measure is seen by local policy makers and politicians. The comparative study is based on 7 expert interviews and policy document analyses of each city. The results show that the measure is seen to be successful in helping to lower the effects of studentification in all three cities. Although criticism is given to the policies inability to reduce studentification retrospectively, it is still seen as a useful tool to prevent the future overconcentration of shared student housing within neighbourhoods. The study concludes with the recommendation that a city aiming to implement the policy measure will have to take into consideration the availability of governmental resources and the context of the current student housing situation.

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An international comparative assessment of a threshold measure in the context of studentification in Groningen, Brighton and Loughborough

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The ever increasing importance of universities in the knowledge economy is leading to an increase of enrolment at universities worldwide (Smith, 2009). In turn, this is leading to an increase in the amount of students that seek residence in their host cities. Furthermore, this densification of these residential students can be one of the main contributing factors to a change in atmosphere and community cohesion experienced by the non-student residents in neighbourhoods. The impact that the difference in student lifestyles, activity patterns and rhythms have on the nature of a place is referred to in academic literature as ‘studentification’ (Revington et al., 2018; Munro and Livingston, 2012).

The increasing concerns of non-student residents in studentified neighbourhoods has led to the introduction of a variety of policy measures that are aimed at limiting the spatial marginalization of non-students. These include measures regulating the private housing market, the amount of students that are allowed to reside in a particular neighbourhood and steering the development of purpose-built student accommodation (Revington et al., 2018; Hubbard, 2008; Ruiiu, 2017). In the context of Groningen, the Netherlands and the English cities of Brighton and Loughborough a threshold measure has been applied in order to tackle the distribution of student densities across the city (Hubbard, 2008; BHCC, 2019; den Oudsten and Teesink, 2017a). Similarly, spatial policy measures of limiting the amount of houses in multiple occupation (HMO), which specifically target student housing, have been applied in the cities of Birmingham, Leeds, Nottingham and Bristol (Beech, 2018; BHCC, 2019). Other cities including St. Andrews (Scotland) and Bath (England) are starting to see the need for policy intervention (Brown, 2017; Mills, 2020).

Until today, the literature in the academic debate has mostly focused on analyzing the problems that come with studentification and only touching slightly on the different policy measures that might be used in order to prevent the nuance caused by students (Revington et al., 2018; Hubbard, 2008; Ruiiu, 2017; Smith, 2009). This analysis will therefore add a new aspect to the academic debate by introducing the perceived success of the threshold measure.

## 1.2 Research Problem

Throughout literature, there have only been a few attempts at analyzing the policy situation within a particular city and how this has or has not improved the situation in studentified neighbourhoods (Hubbard, 2008; Revington et al., 2018, Ruiiu, 2017). Moreover, little attention has been paid to the comparative study between the perceived success of the threshold measure implemented within various cities. Consequently, knowledge is limited about the policy being perceived as successful by policy makers and local politicians, in solving the spatial marginalization caused by studentification.

The aim of this thesis is to provide an insight into how successful the threshold measure is perceived to be by policy makers in the local municipality and politicians involved with the policy. The research will focus on a comparative study of the policy in the context of Groningen, Brighton and Loughborough. With this analysis, the research aims to create an overview of the successes and failures of the policy in order to provide suggestions on how cities might approach the implementation of a threshold measure against studentification.

In order to guide this analysis, the thesis will answer the following research question:

*To what extent is the spatial policy measure of threshold analysis, to limit spatial marginalization of non-students, perceived successful by local policy makers and politicians in the cities of Groningen (the Netherlands ) Brighton, and Loughborough (England)?*

In order to assist in answering the research question, the following sub questions have been defined:

*Q1: What is a threshold measure in urban policy?*

*Q2: Why has the threshold measure been implemented in relation to studentification?*

*Q3: What are the perceived successes and failures of the threshold measure in Groningen, Brighton and Loughborough?*

*Q4: How do these perceived successes and failures compare between the three cities?*

*Q5: What future suggestions can be made to city officials/planners that are considering implementing a threshold measure for student households?*

### 1.3 The three cities

#### Groningen:

Groningen is statistically seen the youngest city of the Netherlands. Of the 200,000 inhabitants that reside within the city, over 65,000 are under the age of 30 (Gemeente Groningen, 2015). A majority of this young population is enrolled in tertiary study programs at the University of Groningen and the University of Applied Sciences. With these high number of students, the municipality is recognizing a constant shift in the balanced coexistence of students and city residents, causing issues of studentification to arise (Gemeente Groningen, 2015; Den Oudsten and Teesink, 2017a).

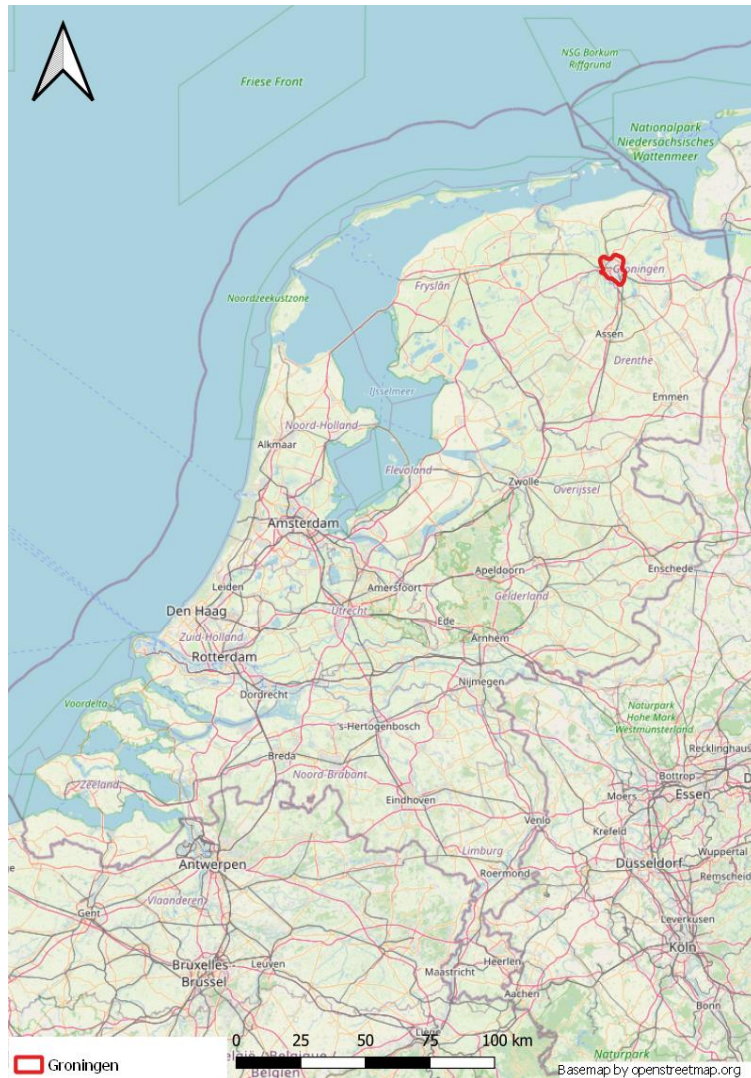


Figure 1: Map illustrating the location of Groningen, the Netherlands



Figure 2: Aerial view of the city center in Groningen, the Netherlands (Pintos, 2019)

*Brighton:*

The city of Brighton is located in the southern part of England and has a population of approximately 280,000, with a high proportion of young adults and students. In 2017, there were 38,000 students registered at University of Sussex and University of Brighton, which are the two largest academic institutes in the city (Brighton & Hove, 2018). As recent as 2018, Brighton has seen studentification taking large effect in parts of the city, which introduced anti-social behavior and families being pushed out of neighbourhoods, causing schools, doctors and other services to close (Wadsworth, 2018).



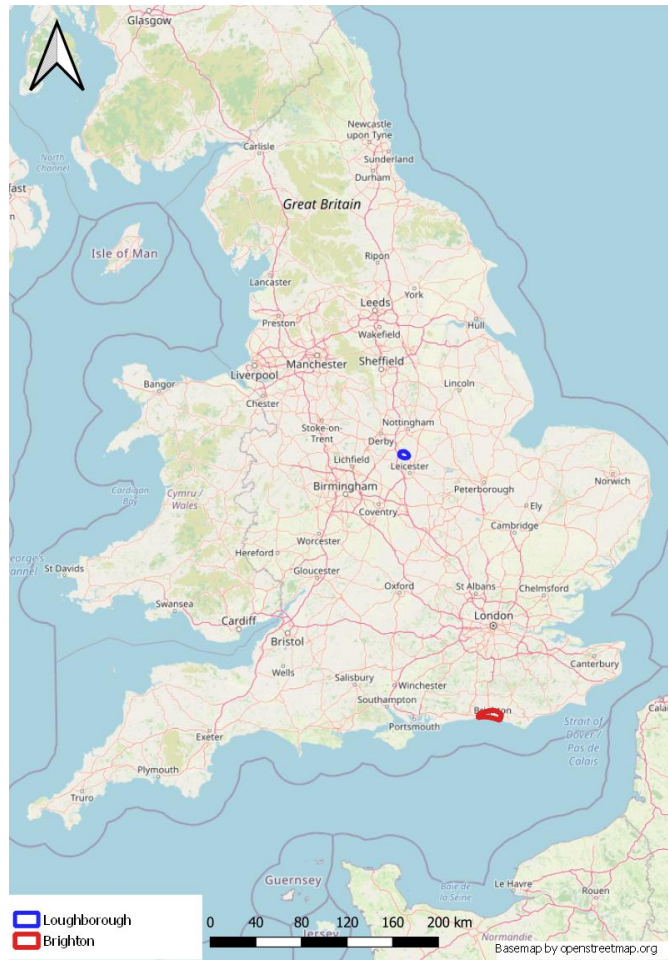


Figure 3: Map illustrating the location of Brighton and Loughborough



Figure 4: The coastline adjacent to the city of Brighton (Hagan, 2020)



*Loughborough:*

Loughborough with its population of 55,000 is officially considered a market town instead of a city. However, due to its rather large university, the town is home to around 17,800 students (Loughborough University, 2020b). This high proportion of student to non-student population indicates that the effects of studentification might be even more impactful compared to a city with a larger population (Hubbard, 2008). Recent studies have shown that there are still large clusters of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) spread across parts of the city, causing high concentrations of students (Ashe, 2019).



Figure 5: Aerial view of the Loughborough University campus (Loughborough University, 2020a)

#### **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. In section 2, the report discusses the most important concepts that will guide the research on studentification and explains how their relationship will help to conclude an answer to the research question. Further, section 3 discusses the qualitative research methods and tools used to collect the data for the report. It outlines both the strategy of data collection and processing. Section 4 provides a detailed overview over the results found throughout the research, which are further emphasized in the conclusions and discussion of section 5.

## **2. A theoretical framework for assessing the threshold measure against studentification**

### **2.1 Definition of concepts**

#### *Studentification*

The main concept in regards to the topic of this thesis is studentification. The term itself has not been present in academic literature for a long time and was coined by Darren Smith in 2002 (Hubbard, 2008). Studentification can be defined as the “social, cultural, economic and physical changes resulting from an influx of students” (Smith, 2002, p. 6) within an urban environment. The student population is well known for having unique behavior and time patterns compared to other populations that might reside in an urban area. Throughout literature, the term studentification is especially connected to spatial density and is often explored through analysis on how the spatial concentration of students leads to an intensifying of the phenomenon (Hubbard, 2008; Revington et al., 2018; Sage et al., 2012). Although many see students as having positive impacts, such as economic, social and cultural benefits, the term studentification is used rather degradingly in the media by trying to argue that students cause a decline in the quality of neighbourhoods. Noise, unsocial behavior, uncared for gardens, rubbish on the street and parking problems are only some examples of impacts students might have on residential neighbourhoods (Hubbard, 2008).

#### *Spatial Marginalization*

Spatial marginalization of non-student residence is a concept closely related to studentification. Marginalization of a certain population can be defined as the experience of “vulnerabilities which may arise from unequal or inequitable” (Mehretu, et al., 2000, p. 89) cultural, social or economic factors. Within cities, this phenomena can be experienced on a spatial scale, by uneven development of population groups leading to the neglect of others (Parry et al., 2019). This phenomena can take place on various spatial scales, but when considering studentification, is most significant on a neighbourhood or street level. Moreover, when considering studentification, spatial marginalization can be used to describe the process of how the increasing of student densities in a neighbourhood, lead to the neglecting of other residential groups.

#### *Threshold measure*

The threshold measure that is central to this analysis can be defined as a limitation on the spatial distribution of a particular object, which is often described in terms of a percentage over a particular area (Uitermark et al., 2017; Hubbard, 2008; BHCC, 2019). Moreover, it is often applied to cases that are aiming to solve a particular nuance that might be caused by a large group of a population living within a particular part of a city (Uitermark et al. 2017). In the case of this analysis, the threshold measure is applied to the limitation of student housing and in turn, the limitation of the ratio of student to non-student population within a particular neighbourhood. Through this measure, policy makers hope to decrease the amount of spatial marginalization that is experienced by non-student residents in neighbourhoods with high student density (Hubbard, 2008; Jones, 2018; Little, 2011).

#### *Perceived success*

The perceived success of the threshold measure that will be researched in this analysis, focuses on the evaluation of policy makers and politicians on the successes and failures they perceive regarding the

implementation of the policy measure within each of the three cities. The critical evaluation of the measure will give a detailed overview on how the policy has been capable or lacking of achieving the outcomes it was set out to achieve. Perceived success is a valid method of evaluation, as the success of the measure is rather difficult to express in objective terms, meaning the opinion of the respondents is a valuable assessment of the measures success. Furthermore, the measure under analysis has goals that are rather vaguely formulated, by wanting to decrease the impact of studentification, making it difficult to apply a concrete measurement scale (Kijn et al., 2010). However, it has to be kept in mind that the performance analyzed through the perceived success is self-reported by the individuals interviewed and is therefore less tangible than a more concrete performance measure (Igalla et al., 2019).

## 2.2 Conceptual Model

The conceptual model in Figure 1 displays the interrelationship of the concepts discussed in the section above. As seen in Figure 1, the overall context in which the phenomena is being researched is student cities. The studentification experienced in such cities leads to the spatial marginalization of non-students, by introducing nuance and various other vulnerabilities. This process is then mediated through the introduction of the threshold measure, by introducing a limiting factor on the amount of students residing in an area. The success of the measure to achieve this mediation is evaluated in this thesis through using the measurement of perceived success by local policy makers.

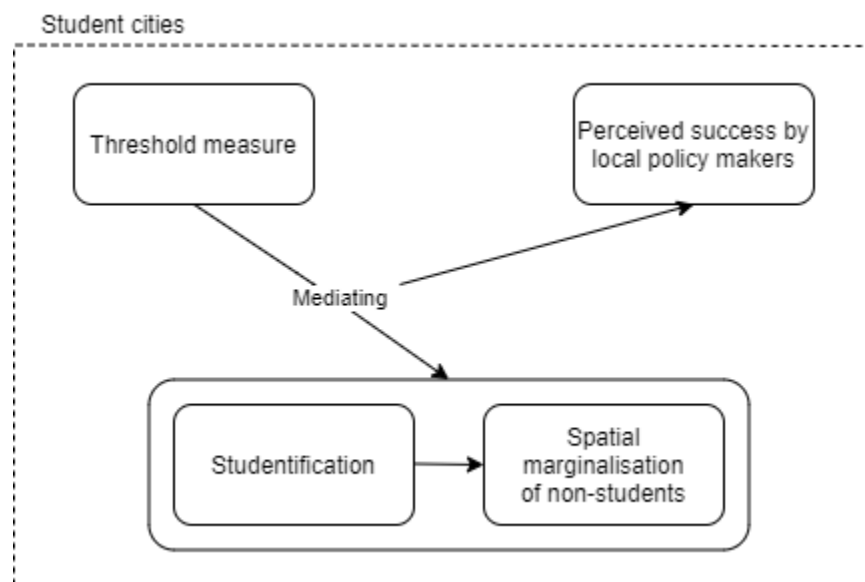


Figure 6: Conceptual model visualizing the perceived success evaluation of the threshold measure in the context of studentification

### **2.3 Expectations**

As discussed by Hubbard (2008), the measure is likely to be perceived as a success in spreading the student population evenly across the town, being adaptive to circumstances in each application situation and will be able to retain balance within the communities of the city. Although the context of application and measures themselves differ between the three cities (Hubbard, 2008; BHCC, 2019; den Oudsten and Teesink, 2017a), it is to be expected, that the policy has been effective in limiting the effects of studentification, as it has been implemented in various other UK cities including Birmingham, Leeds, Nottingham and Bristol (Beech, 2018; BHCC, 2019). If the measure would have shown no success in the context of studentification, it is unlikely that it would have been implemented in such a high number of cities.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research approach

This thesis takes a comparative research approach. The data has been collected from local policy makers and politicians and has been analyzed in a comparative fashion by establishing similarities and differences between the three cities under analysis. A detailed overview of the methodology can be found in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Overview of the research approach with the corresponding sub-questions

Question:	Which information:	Moment of collection:	Source:	Documentation method:	How to analyze:
<i>Q1: What is a threshold measure in urban policy?</i>	Definition and exploration of how the threshold measure is used and applied throughout spatial sciences	16-22nd March	Academic articles, Policy documents, Books	Digital collection of findings	Literature review
<i>Q2: Why has the threshold measure been implemented in relation to studentification?</i>	Theory behind the threshold measure being applied to limiting studentification	18-24th March	Academic articles, policy documents, books	Digital collection of findings	Literature review
<i>Q3: What are the perceived successes and failures of the threshold measure in Groningen, Brighton and Loughborough?</i>	Exact policy measures applied within each of the 3 cities	18-24th March	Academic articles, policy documents	Digital collection of findings	Literature review
	Provide insight into the perceived success of the threshold measures in the 3 different cities	8th April - 7th May	Interviews with policy makers, academic researchers, municipality officials	Recording, Transcript	Transcription and coding of interview (AtlasTI)
<i>Q4: How do these perceived successes and failures compare between the three cities?</i>	Comparative knowledge of the perceived successes between the 3 cities	9th May -31st May	Interview transcripts	Written comparative analysis	Comparative analysis of coding and interview transcript
<i>Q5: What future suggestions can be made to city officials/planners that are considering implementing a threshold measure for student households?</i>	Draw conclusions from the comparative analysis on how these findings can help future policy makers when implementing the threshold measure	9th May - 31st May	Interview transcripts, Coded transcripts, Comparative analysis,	Written conclusions	Apply comparative analysis to future implementation of policy

### 3.2 Data techniques

In appendix 7.1 and 7.2, the data collection instruments can be found. Appendix 7.1 provides a guide for a semi-structured interview with local policy makers and politicians in Groningen, Loughborough and Brighton. The reason behind the choice of a semi-structured interview is due to the research focusing on opinions. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are able to provide a platform for conversation and for familiarity to unfold (Longhurst, 2016). This benefits the research on perceived success, as it will provide a comfortable atmosphere for the interviewees to discuss their opinion of the measure. Moreover, a semi-structured interview provides the opportunity for the interviewer to ask detailed questions about topics that arise during the interview and provides the option to alter the interview according to the situation.

In order to deal with this uncertainty, 3 main topics have been established, namely; the threshold measure, success of the measure and improvement of the measure, each including a guiding question. Following the guiding questions, a few themes have been noted down in order to guide the interview. This further enabled the interviewer to go back through the list of the discussed topics and make sure that all important points had been covered (Longhurst, 2016).

In order to place the interview data into a larger policy context, a policy document analysis was conducted, which assesses the housing policies of the 3 cities. To establish a guideline for the analysis of the documents, an outline of questions has been created (see appendix 7.2). These questions aim to provide a lens through which the policy document can be analyzed and enables the researcher to make sure that all the necessary information was collected out of each document.

### 3.3 The participants

The recruitment of participants for the interviews took place in an online format via email. Most of the contact information was able to be found on governmental websites, but in some cases, the contact to individuals was further made possible through personal recommendations. The interviews were conducted with 7 different policy makers/politicians from the three cities and were conducted between the 8<sup>th</sup> of April and 7<sup>th</sup> of May. The exact list of participants for the interviews can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Participants of interviews

City:	Name:	Occupation:
Brighton	Steve	Town Planner
Brighton	John	Councillor
Brighton	Tracey	Councillor
Loughborough	Margaret	Councillor and Cabinet member
Loughborough	Clare	Town Planner
Groningen	Eva	Policy Advisor
Groningen	Eva and colleague <sup>1</sup>	Policy Advisor

When considering Table 1, it can be seen that all the participants of the research are involved in the government and planning environment. This was an important characteristic, as the participants needed to have existent knowledge about the housing policy field within their city in order to express their perception on the success of the policy. However, during the current corona pandemic, this made it difficult to find a

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<sup>1</sup> The interviews in Groningen were conducted in different fashion compared to the other cities, due to language and time constraints. The participants were sent the questions in the form of the semi-structured interview guide by email (see appendix 7.1). The interviewees used this guide to fill out the questions in a text form, which was then reviewed by the researcher and used to prepare a short interview with Eva to clarify some of the aspects discussed throughout the text answers.



large number of participants, as many governmental sectors were busy with the management of their local circumstances.

### 3.4 Data processing and analysis

The data that is collected in the interview process was audio recorded on a mobile device. This provides an opportunity to accurately record any information that is being mentioned in the interview and enables the entire interview to be transcribed.

Once the transcription has been completed, the texts were imported into AtlasTI, in order to code the various interviews. A code tree (Figure 2) was created in order to guide the coding process and make sure that the interviews will be able to be compared later on. The code tree is composed through both a deductive and inductive approach. The main topics of the code tree were established deductively through the use of the interview guide. The rest of the code tree was then added inductively during the analysis process. Once the coding was completed, the coding categories were used to provide an overview of the different topics discussed and provide ground for comparison.

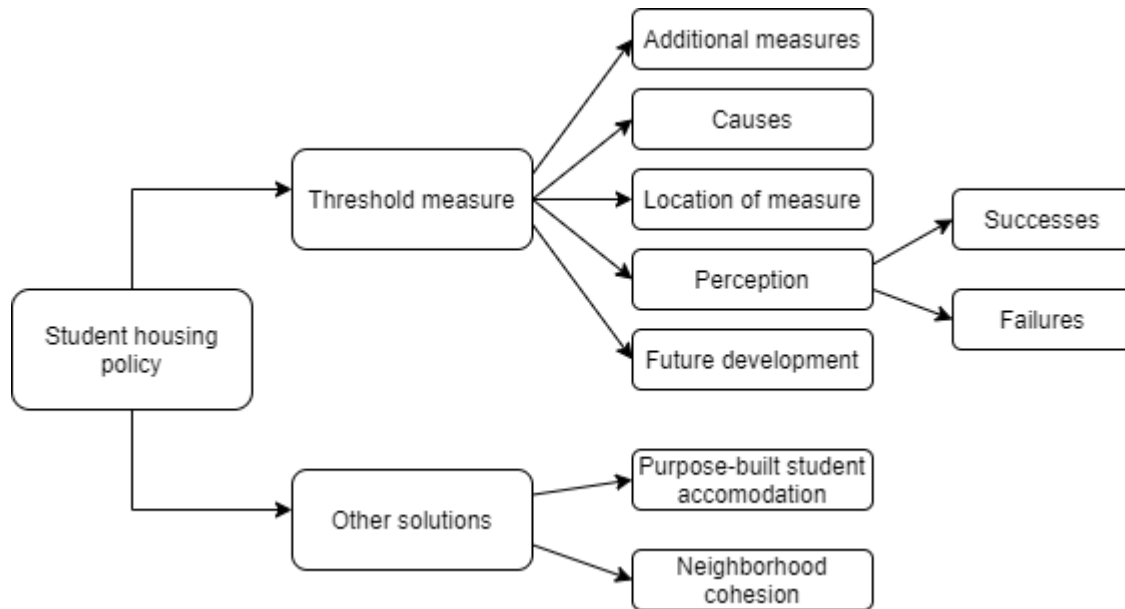


Figure 7: Code tree used for the analysis of interviews

### 3.5 Ethical considerations

As the research conducted in this thesis involves the collection of primary data through interviews, it is important to take into account the ethical considerations that come with conducting interviews. This includes the consent to recording information and anonymity of participants. In order to provide information about the research and what the collected data is used for, the participants will be given an information sheet (see appendix 7.3) describing the outcomes of the research. Furthermore, to ensure that each participant is able to clearly indicate if they would like to remain anonymous during the research and whether it is alright if the interview is electronically recorded, a consent form will be sent to each individual (see appendix 7.4).

## 4. Evaluation of the threshold measure in the context of studentification

### 4.1 The threshold measure in studentification

In order for this report to be able to evaluate the successes and failures of the threshold measure in the context of studentification, it is important to outline the methods through which the measure has been applied in various urban contexts. When considering that a threshold measure is implemented to limit the spatial distribution of a particular object or group (Uitermark et al., 2017; Hubbard, 2008; BHCC, 2019), it becomes quite apparent why this measure has been applied to studentified neighbourhoods. Whilst in some city neighbourhoods, the student population may lead to a healthy balance of population mix and provide positive effects on neighbourhood cohesion, Smith and Hubbard (2014) discuss a ‘tipping point’ at which the balance of students in a neighbourhood is brought out of its equilibrium and issues of studentification start to arise. Moreover, it is therefore essential that policy which is implemented to limit the impacts of studentification aims at maintaining a balance of students in the population mix that is below the level of the ‘tipping point’.

The development of student housing policy has differed over time for each of the three cities. This is illustrated in the combined timeline of the policy analysis (see appendix 7.5) in Figure 3. To further illustrate the events found in the timeline below, the next sections will discuss each cities student housing policy context in more depth.

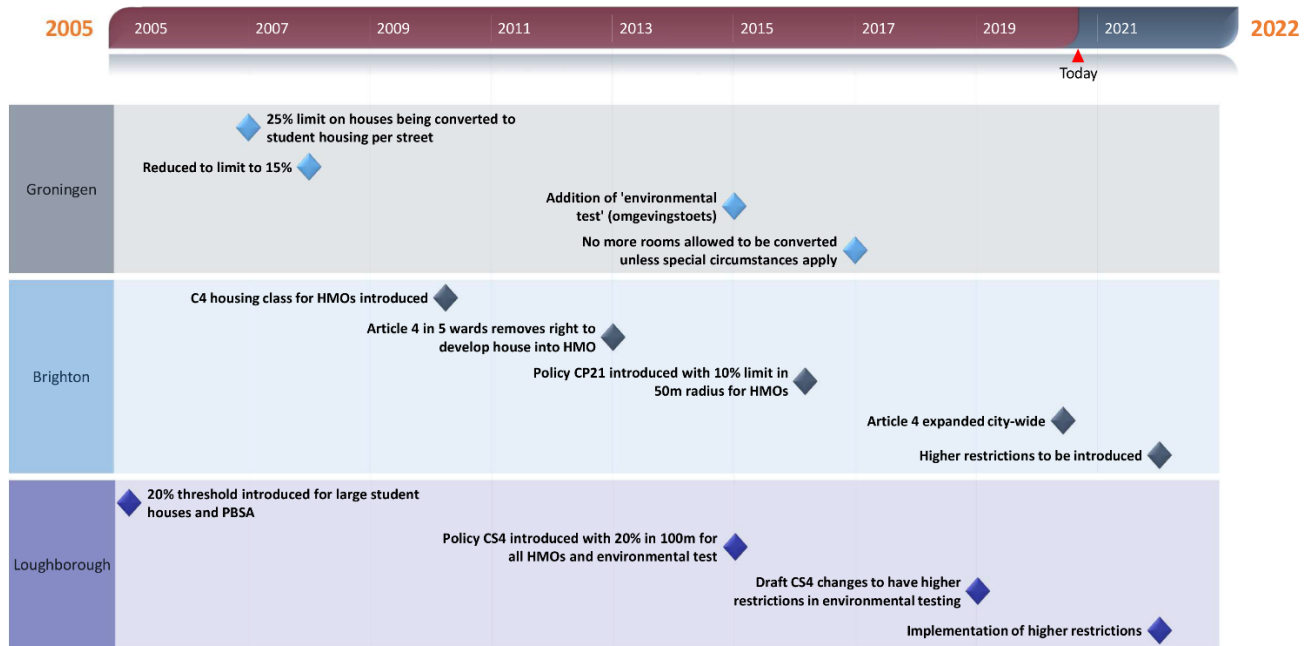


Figure 8: Timeline of threshold measure development for student housing in Groningen, Brighton and Loughborough

## 4.2 Groningen

In the city of Groningen, the policies aimed at reducing impacts of studentification have had a vital role in shaping the city's image over time. A threshold measure was firstly implemented in 2007 and set a standard of allowing only 25% of the houses per street being occupied by students (Wallage and De Vries, 2008). At the time, this measure was seen as temporary in order to stop the sudden influx of students within neighbourhoods. In 2008, the municipality then introduced a permanent measure and reduced the threshold to 15%. In turn, this led to the further distribution of student houses throughout the city (Den Oudsten and Teesink, 2017b). A couple of years later, the municipality recognized that having 15% limit was too generic for the urban development experienced in the city, which led to them introducing an environmental test (omgevingstoet) in 2015. The test was aimed at providing an assessment framework for the impact that student housing might have on the livability of a particular neighbourhood. Moreover, the environmental test takes into consideration the following criteria (Den Oudsten and Teesink, 2015):

- Public housing situation / policy;
- The most recent quality of life monitor;
- Complaints and reports (Reporting Center for Care and Nuisance);
- (Construction) technical condition of the house;
- Numbers of withdrawn homes;
- Number of smaller apartments for specific groups;
- Consequences at neighborhood, street and / or block level

Although the introduction of the environmental test called for a much larger assessment for the implementation of student housing, the 15% limit was still used to determine whether student housing would impact the social cohesion of the neighbourhood. Furthermore, in 2017 the policy was further tightened, introducing a complete cut of the threshold, or 0%, meaning that no new permits are given to landlords (Den Oudsten and Teesink, 2017b; Eva, app. 7.11). This move to further tighten the regulations was mainly due to neighbourhoods still experiencing pressure from new student housing and a switch in the policy focus of the municipality (Eva, app. 7.11). The new aim was to maintain the amount of converted student houses at relatively the same level, whilst trying to develop more purpose-built student accommodation (PSBA) (See figure 9 below), which had been revealed as the new demand of the student population through survey data (Eva and colleague, app. 7.10). However, even though the threshold was reduced to 0%, the municipality claims that if there is a case in which a student house does not seem to impact the neighbourhood image in any way and meets all the criteria in the environmental test, it will still have the chance of being implemented (Den Oudsten and Teesink, 2017b).

## Legenda

- in voorbereiding / nog niet gerealiseerd
- gerealiseerde projecten BouwJong/Campus Groningen

- 1 Enceha — ca. 330 eenheden
- 2 KPN Hoendiep — ca. 103 eenheden
- 3 Gembeton — ca. 410 eenheden
- 4 Tuincentrum Hoogeweg — ca. 393 eenheden
- 5 Rabobank — ca. 80 eenheden
- 6 GAK — ca. 320 eenheden
- 7 Zonnelaan Grote Beerstraat — ca. 254 eenheden
- 8 Planck — ca. 135 eenheden
- 9 Voormalig Belastingkantoor — ca. 136 eenheden
- 10 Hunzerheem — ca. 235 eenheden
- 11 Cortingborg — ca. 240 eenheden
- 12 Tribune Antillenstraat — ca. 322 eenheden
- 13 Hete Kolen — ca. 132 eenheden
- 14 Nebollat — ca. 58 eenheden
- 15 De Uitgeverij — ca. 154 eenheden
- 16 Nelf — ca. 440 eenheden
- 17 Lissabonstraat — ca. 80 eenheden
- 18 Jongerenhuisvesting Eendrachtskade — ca. 63 eenheden
- 19 Bodenterrein — ca. 345 eenheden
- 20 De Groenling — ca. 151 eenheden
- 21 Diaconessenhouse — ca. 198 eenheden
- 22 Niemeyer — ca. 61 eenheden
- 23 Steenhouweskade — ca. 215 eenheden
- 24 Woldring — ca. 400 eenheden
- 25 ACM — ca. 400 eenheden
- 26 Zernike Campus
- 27 Stationsplein
- 28 Trompsingel
- 29 Student Hotel Ebbinge — ca. 365 eenheden

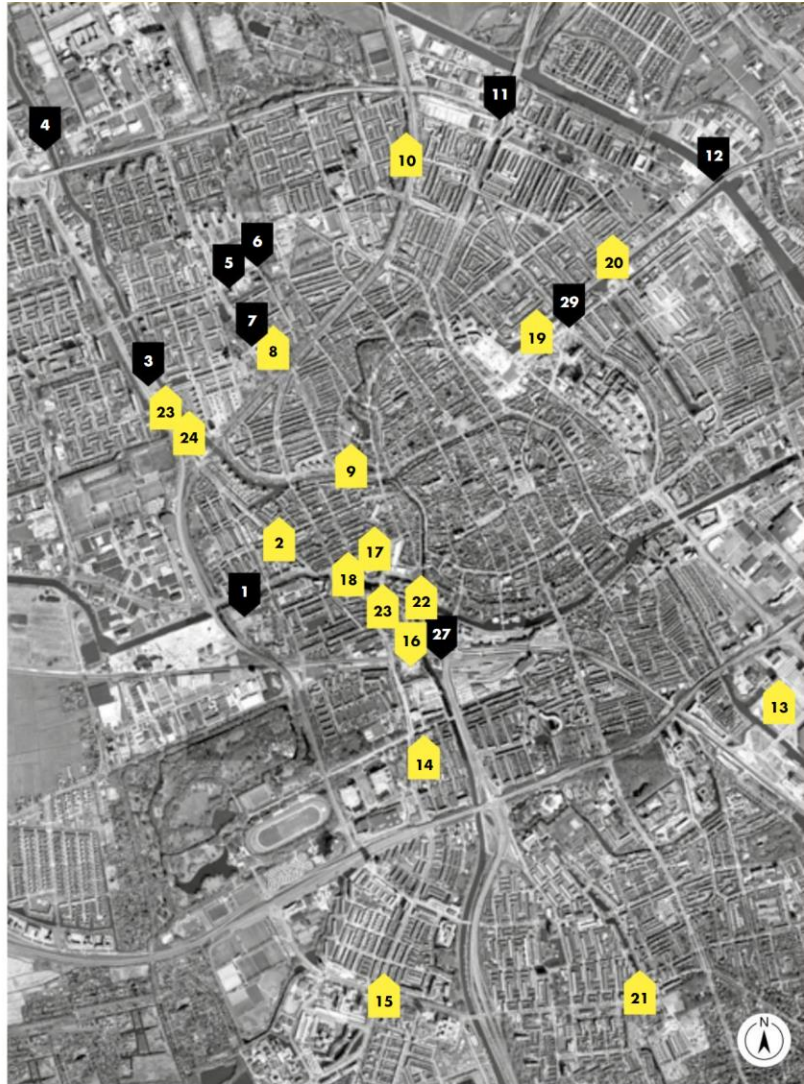


Figure 9: Map of the planned (black) and already built (yellow) PBSA developments in Groningen (Gemeente Groningen, 2015)

### 4.3 Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the English context

Before discussing the student housing policy approaches taken in the two English cities of Brighton and Loughborough, it is important to mention the distinction between student housing and houses of multiple occupation. In the English planning system, the amount of shared student housing is limited through the regulation of the amount of HMOs within a particular area. Furthermore, a shared student house is not given its own housing type classification, but is listed under the broader label of HMO. This means that not all HMOs may be occupied by students, as they are also seen as quite an attractive option for young professionals (Steve, app. 7.6). However, bearing this in mind, the initial cause for the HMO threshold limitation in both Loughborough and Brighton was due to the nuance experienced through studentification (Steve, app. 7.6; Clare, app. 7.9).

### 4.4 Brighton

The introduction of HMOs as a class of housing in Brighton started in early 2010. Through this introduction, the council was then able to implement a permitted development right, which in October 2010 meant that you could convert a house into an HMO without needing to make a planning application (Steve, app. 7.6). In 2013, the city then saw the introduction of an ‘Article 4 direction’, which was implemented in 5 wards of the city (see Figure 4) and removed the permitted development right, meaning that developers wishing to convert a family home into an HMO needed to gain permission from the council in order to do so. With this, the council was able to claim jurisdiction over the amount of HMO conversion taking place within the city, which was further detailed in the ‘City Plan Part 1’ with policy CP21, which introduces a 10% threshold in a 50m radius of the site of application (Brighton & Hove, 2016). The ‘City Plan Part 1’ was introduced in 2016 and the measure has stayed active until the current day.

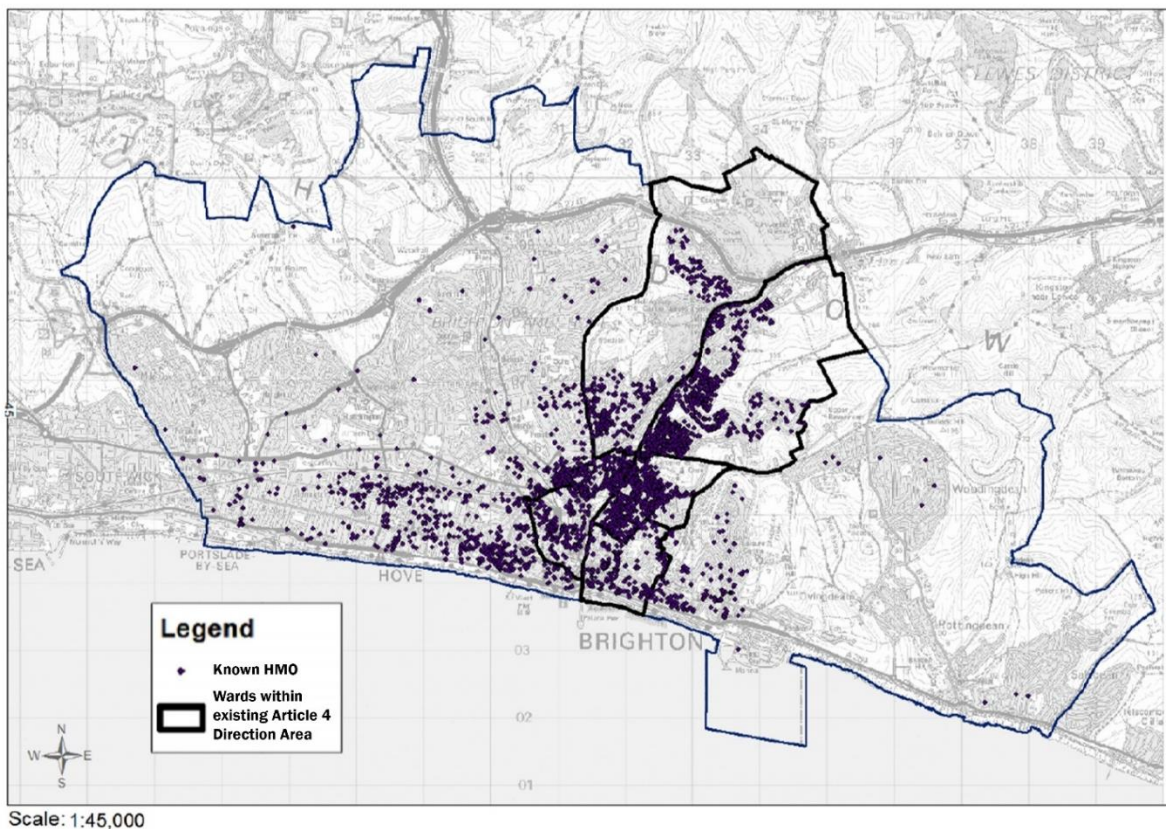


Figure 4: Map of Brighton HMO distribution and Article 4 Direction area (Tremlett, 2019)



However, Steve (app. 7.6) mentions in his interview that there is increasing evidence for the need for an extension of the current measure to a city-wide implementation. One important argument for this is that through the limitation only being effective until the boundaries of the 5 wards, there has been an increase in the number of houses being converted to HMOs right outside this limitation area, which creates a “cliff-edge scenario” (Tremlett, 2019). This can further be seen in Figure 4, where there are clusters of HMOs right outside the area effected under the Article 4 Direction. Additional to the expansion of the city-wide Article 4 Direction, the Brighton & Hove city council is further planning to introduce stronger HMO restrictions in their new ‘City Plan Part 2’, which will come into effect in 2022 (Steve, app. 7.6).

#### **4.5 Loughborough**

Similarly to Brighton, in Loughborough, the restrictions on student housing are managed through the distribution of HMOs throughout the city. However, Hubbard (2008) mentions in his article that the drive towards implementing policy to combat the negative impacts of studentification in Loughborough was already coming into discussion around 2004. By 2005, a plan had been drawn up with six solutions for the management of student housing within the town and by October 2005, a threshold measure had been introduced to limit the amount of student housing. The policy response entailed a checklist with threshold categories between 10 - 20% and a list on whether various student housing developments may be allowed according to the particular threshold (Hubbard, 2008).

Furthermore, in February 2012, the Charnwood Borough Council (CBC), who are the council responsible for the town of Loughborough, introduced an Article 4 Direction, which meant that developers would need to request permission in order to convert a regular home to an HMO (Charnwood Borough Council, 2019b). Additionally, in 2015 the ‘Charnwood Local Plan 2011-2028’ was adopted, introducing a policy measure called ‘CS4’, which outlines all the regulation and limitation for HMOs within the town of Loughborough. Policy CS4 includes a guidance threshold for the implementation of new HMOs, which states that there should not be more than 20% within a 100m radius of the site of application (Clare, app. 7.9; Charnwood Borough Council, 2017). The term ‘guidance threshold’ actually indicates that the threshold is used within a similar policy context as the one applied in Groningen, as it is only one of the many factors considered when a new HMO application is submitted. Although there is not a clear cut test, the ‘Local Plan’ states that “Whether a proposed House in Multiple Occupation will be appropriate will generally depend on the character of the area, the prevalence of existing homes used in this way and the effect the additional use would have on the amenity of the area” (Charnwood Borough Council, 2015). This indicates that the council will take into consideration a multitude of factors during the assessment of an area, however, Clare (app. 7.9) mentions in her interview that the threshold is a big part of the decision making process and if there are areas above the 20% threshold, they will usually not even see new applications come in, as the developers are aware that their request will be declined.

#### **4.6 Threshold evaluation**

##### **4.6.1 Successes**

After considering the institutional context of the threshold measure discussed above, it is quite clear that the threshold measure has shown its successes and failures throughout the years. Eva and colleague (app. 7.10) mention that the threshold measure has been successful in Groningen, as it has been able to keep the balance of student housing and family housing at a reasonable level throughout a lot of the city neighbourhoods. Clare (app. 7.9) agrees with this, as she claims that in Loughborough the threshold has



been effective in ensuring that the HMOs would not further concentrate in some areas and in others, preventing studentification from becoming a problem in the first place. Moreover, Tracey (app. 7.8) backs up this argument for Brighton, mentioning that in areas where the concentration was below 10% before the implementation of the measure, it has stopped a lot of planning applications coming in for new HMOs and therefore decreasing the overall density of HMOs in the city. These findings coincide with Hubbard (2008), who mentions that the policy measure is seen as being “innovative, but designed to tackle effectively the desire to retain” the balance within the communities (Hubbard, 2008, p.336). This further links back to the argument made in the interviews that the measure has helped in preventing the situation from becoming an even larger problem in all 3 cities (Steve, app. 7.6; John, app. 7.7; Clare, 7.9; Eva, 7.11).

Additionally, in the case of Groningen, Eva (app. 7.11) argues that she perceives the amount of noise and disturbances to have decreased within the areas and she believes that part of this is due to the implementation of the threshold measure in Groningen. However, she also argues that it is important to remember that the policy is not implemented on its own and the decrease in nuance may also be influenced by subjective factors or even other policy measures that are aimed at increasing the social cohesion between students and neighbors. Similarly, Tracey (app. 7.8) mentions that she has run a meeting group over the last 5 years, which has included stakeholders from the 5 wards under the Article 4 Direction. The meetings were held every 3 months and over time, the attendance at the meetings was decreasing. She mentions that by the end “there was only about 4 or 5 people there” (Tracey, app. 7.8) and that “a lot of the anger seems to have dissipated”, which in her perception seems to show that the measure has been successful in dealing with studentification. However, she further goes on to mention that the university was also a large help in creating a more communicative approach by bringing students and neighbors together, which had further had an impact.

#### **4.6.2 Failures**

Considering the failures or negative perceptions of the threshold policy, one argument that was mentioned in 6 of the 7 interviews conducted, was the failure of the threshold measure to solve the high density of student housing retrospectively (Steve, app. 7.6; John, app. 7.7; Tracey, app. 7.8; Clare, app. 7.9; Margaret, app. 7.12; Eva, app. 7.11). Moreover, this entails that the policy is not able to reduce the density of student housing within areas that are already at a higher density than the threshold, when the measure was being implemented. Throughout the interviews, this was seen as a major drawback of the measure, as it clearly did not provide a solution for areas where the implementation of a measure against studentification was most needed. In all 3 cities, this led to the governmental bodies, Universities and even local residents of studentified neighbourhoods having to take action and provide guidance for the students to fit within the neighbourhood (Eva, app. 7.11; Steve, app. 7.6; Margaret, app. 7.12; Tracey, app. 7.8). Furthermore, this failure of retrospectivity provides a contrast to the argument made by Hubbard (2008), who mentions that the threshold measure is able to “restore balance within communities” (Hubbard, 2008, p.336), whilst this is actually a weakness of the measure itself.

Furthermore, Tracey (app. 7.8) made two interesting remarks about how the threshold measure negatively impacts the image of houses within certain neighbourhoods. For one, if there is an area in Brighton that is below the 10% threshold, the city council has no argument to deny a house from being converted. Moreover, this can make property owners adjacent to the new HMO frustrated, as they cannot be certain that their new neighbors will comply with their current lifestyle. Similarly, Kinton et al, (2018) find that some families actually start to feel trapped in these studentified neighbourhoods. Further, there has been evidence that these family houses located in close proximity to HMOs can actually drop in value by more than 10,000

pounds, as they are suddenly seen as being worth less (Tracey, app. 7.8). Additionally, Tracey (app. 7.8) and Clare (app. 7.9) both mention the difficulty of house owners trying to sell their houses in areas with an HMO density above the threshold. Kinton et al. (2018) further illustrate this argument through their findings by mentioning that landlords become reluctant to purchase properties that are located in areas with high density of student housing.

In their interview, Clare (app. 7.9) and Margaret (app. 7.12) both highlight the problematic implementation process that the threshold measure went through in Loughborough. One important factor to consider is that a threshold measure to limit a certain amount of housing will require a large dataset of detailed data, which outlines the exact location of the housing type that is to be limited. In Loughborough, the access to such housing information was rather scarce, as the University registry often contained students home addresses instead of the address they reside in within the town. In order to gain an understanding of which houses were occupied by students, the council undertook the strenuous task of going from door to door and simply figuring out which of the households were occupied by students. It is therefore rather essential for a city to have a detailed database of their residential distributions, before being able to implement a threshold measure.

Lastly, it is vital to mention that in Groningen and Loughborough, the threshold measure was not implemented by itself in order to achieve success in limiting studentification. In both cities, the threshold measure was implemented as part of an overall assessment of the application site, in order to ensure that a new student house/HMO will not have a significant impact on the livability of the neighbourhood (Eva, app. 7.11; Den Oudsten and Teesink, 2015; Clare, app. 7.9). Sage et al. (2013) further emphasize the requirement for such an assessment, by illustrating that for the planning of future student housing, it is important to consider the “implications on community cohesion, quality-of-life and belonging in established residential community” (Sage et al., 2013, p. 2623). Therefore, the threshold seems to be a policy measure that is too generic in its nature in order to be the only guidance in complex housing situations such as Groningen or Loughborough. Moreover, this suggests that the success of the threshold measure in Groningen and Loughborough can be a reflection of the situation specific assessment conducted for each application, which took into consideration factors beyond the scope of a simple percentage threshold.

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

To conclude, this thesis used an analysis of three different cities and their policy approaches to tackling the distribution of shared student housing, in order to provide a reflection upon the successes and failures of the threshold measure applied in all three cities. Although the context in which the threshold measure has been applied varies, there was still apparent similarities in the evaluation of the success of the threshold measure. For one, in all three cities the threshold measure was able to provide a concrete cut off for the development of new shared homes and prevent the situation from getting even worse in certain parts of the city. However, although this was perceived as a success, the threshold measure was not able to help solve high concentrations of students retrospectively, meaning that in areas where the concentration was already above the threshold level, the measure was not able to provide relief. Furthermore, both Eva and Tracey bring forward arguments to why they perceive the situation improving and less noise and complaints being reported progressively, since the implementation of the measure. On the other hand, Tracey and Clare both go into the discussion of how the threshold measure has negatively impacted the private housing markets and caused disadvantages for families trying to relocate within studentified areas.

Overall, the threshold measure is perceived more as a success rather than a failure. Although there are certain limitations that come with the nature of the measure and it might not be able to completely solve the negative impacts of studentification, it is able to provide an effective solution for stopping the overconcentration of students within particular neighbourhoods and is able to force the number of shared student houses to spread more evenly across a city. Moreover, the measure is able to provide an effective solution for preventing the impacts of studentification from worsening within a city context.

The ‘tipping point’ discussed by Smith and Hubbard (2014) links well to the discussion on the perceived success of the threshold measure, as this ‘tipping point’ almost directly suggests whether the policy will be able to achieve its goals. If the threshold is implemented early enough and able to limit the student concentration before it hits the ‘tipping point’ it is able to dampen the negative effects of studentification. However, if an area is already above the ‘tipping point’ at the moment of implementation, the threshold is rather useless in trying to save the situation. Furthermore, as the threshold measure lacks in retrospectivity, it should be implemented alongside other policy measures to provide a more effective solution for cities in which the student concentrations are already high. However, as the topic of studentification is still new in the academic arena, the evaluation of other policies to work in combination with the threshold measure is still lacking.

As a final comment, it is valuable to consider the possible limitations of the research that has been completed in this thesis. Firstly, the research is based on qualitative findings and would therefore benefit through the addition of more quantitative data of student behavior and perceptions in order to draw larger conclusions. Secondly, only a small number of participants were interviewed, which does not provide enough evidence to draw upon generalizations. For future research, it would be interesting to evaluate other policies that have or might be implemented alongside the threshold measure, in order to provide a complete overview over the strategies a city might take when tackling studentification.

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## 7. Appendix

### 7.1 Semi-structured interview guide

Introduction of the research:

- Focused on analyzing the limitation of student housing within an urban context
- Aims to provide a comparative analysis of the success of these measures between the cities of Groningen, Brighton and ...
- Conclude with possible recommendations for cities that might be considering the implementation of the policy

Practicalities:

- Consent (audible consent enough or do you need a form?)
- The interviewee has received the questions of the interview in advance
- Any concerns before the interview starts?

Contextual questions:

- What is your occupation?
- How long have you been working in this field?
- How does your job relate to limiting the impact of students in the urban environment?

Threshold measure questions:

- What are the exact measures undertaken in order to limit student housing in (city)?
  - Necessary information:
    - How is it decided to what extent the student housing must be limited?
    - Through which ways is this limitation enforced?
      - Is it actively monitored?
    - Who has the authority over extending or adjusting the measure?
    - At what scale is the measure implemented?
    - Reasons behind choosing the particular measure
      - Possible historical factors

Success of the measure:

- Do you believe that the measure has been successful in achieving its goals?
  - If yes, what are the aspects it was successful in achieving?
    - Successful in particular areas?
      - Why there?
    - Has it been successful as part of other policies or is it acting alone?
    - Do you see that it might need to be adjusted in the future?
  - If no, what has the policy failed to achieve?
    - How could the measure be adjusted to be more successful?
    - Has it failed everywhere in the city?
    - What other policy solution might have worked better?
    - (Might link quite quickly to the next section)

Improvement of the measure:

- (If the policy was seen as unsuccessful make sure to link back to the arguments)
- Do you believe the policy is in the need for changes/improvement?
  - If yes, what changes should be made?
    - The area that is covered?

- Method of assessment?
- Who has control over the policy?
- Monitoring of the policy
- Scale of implementation?
- If not, move onto next section and emphasize how they might suggest the policy to be implemented successfully in another context
- Would you recommend the implementation of this measure?

Close off:

- Do you have any recommendations for other city councils that might be considering implementing a similar measure?
- Is there anything that might have been left untouched or might still be relevant information to add to the interview?
  - Any other contacts that might be able to help
  - Particular documents to look at
- Would you like to receive the results of the study?

## **7.2 Policy analysis guiding questions:**

### **Policy Document Analysis:**

What is the aim of the policy?

How is the measure being implemented?

What is the limiting threshold that has been implemented?

How has the policy been divided over the city?

Links:

## 7.3 Information sheet given to participants



university of  
 groningen

faculty of spatial sciences

research ethics committee

### Information sheet – Research Ethics Committee (REC)

in research project:

Title: Limiting studentification through lower student numbers

Subtitle: A comparative analysis of student housing threshold measures

*The project aims to provide a comparative study of the perceived success of a threshold limitation measure on student housing between Groningen and cities in the UK. The researcher will make use of semi-structured interviews in order to establish what parts of the policy are seen as successful and unsuccessful by various stakeholders.*

Thank you very much for taking the time to consider getting involved in my research project.

#### Confidentiality and participant rights

- The interviews will be audio-recorded and notes will be taken during the interview.
- You have the right to ask to have the recording turned off whenever you decide and you may also end the interview at any time.
- If you wish so you will be sent a copy of the interview notes, and you will have the opportunity to make corrections or request the erasure of any materials you do not wish to be used.
- The information you provide will be kept confidentially in a locked facility or in a password protected file on my computer up to five years upon completion of my research.
- The main use of the information you provide will help me towards my doctoral thesis (for PhD candidates), which upon completion will publicly be available on Internet.
- The data may also be used for articles, book chapters, published and unpublished work and presentations.
- Unless you have given explicit permission to do so, personal names or any other information which would serve to identify you as an informant will not be included in this research or in any future publication or reports resulting from this project.

As a participant you have the right to:

- decline to participate;
- decline to answer any particular question;
- ask for the audio-recorder to be turned off at any time;
- end the interview at any time
- withdraw from the study up until three weeks after participating in the research;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation; and
- ask for the erasure of any materials you do not wish to be used in any reports of this study.

Once again I thank you for taking the time to find out more about my (doctoral) research. I am at your disposal for any questions you might have. You can also contact my supervisors at the address below.

Yours sincerely, Finn Winkelmann.

Researcher contact details: Finn Winkelmann (S3435865) <a href="mailto:f.n.winkelmann@student.rug.nl">f.n.winkelmann@student.rug.nl</a> +31683668020	Main Supervisor contact details: Ward Rauws <a href="mailto:w.s.rauws@rug.nl">w.s.rauws@rug.nl</a>
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*Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee Ms. Tineke Dijkman: email: [gradschool.fss@rug.nl](mailto:gradschool.fss@rug.nl) Physical address: Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen, Landleven 1, 9747 AD Groningen, The Netherlands.*

## 7.4 Consent form given to participants



university of  
 groningen

faculty of spatial sciences

research ethics committee

### Agreement to participate - Research Ethics Committee (REC)

in research project:

Title: Limiting studentification through lower student numbers

Subtitle: A comparative analysis of student housing threshold measures

*The project aims to provide a comparative study of the perceived success of a threshold limitation measure on student housing between Groningen and cities in the UK.*

- I have read and I understand the information sheet of this present research project.
- I have had the opportunity to discuss this study. I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the study up to three weeks after interview, and to decline to answer any individual questions in the study.
- I understand that my participation in this study is confidential. Without my prior consent, no material, which could identify me will be used in any reports generated from this study.
- I understand that this data may also be used in articles, book chapters, published and unpublished work and presentations.
- I understand that all information I provide will be kept confidentially either in a locked facility or as a password protected encrypted file on a password protected computer.

Please circle YES or NO to each of the following:

I consent to my interview being audio-recorded YES / NO

I wish to remain anonymous for this research YES / NO

#### **If YES**

My first name can be used for this research YES / NO

#### **OR**

A pseudonym of my own choosing can be used in this research YES / NO

**“I agree to participate in this individual interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet.”**

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**“I agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet and I ensure no harm will be done to any participant during this research.”**

Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 6/4/2020

Please fill in the following information. It will only be used in case you want to be sent a copy of interview notes so that you have the opportunity to make corrections.

Address:

Email:

## 7.5 Policy Analysis:

### 7.5.1 Groningen:

*What is the aim of the policy?*

The converting of small/cheap family houses into student rooms has caused a large decrease in the amount of available cheap family housing in the city. The government therefore wants to only allow it where the environmental test is not a major argument for refusal and it seems like a good location to convert the housing into rooms. (Den Oudsten & Teesink, 2017)

*How is the measure being implemented?*

The extraction permit to convert a house is given to the municipality and it is assessed. Since 2008, a 15% threshold was applied, which led to the refusal of some room conversions, but led to the rise of student houses in other neighbourhoods throughout the city. In a lot of neighbourhoods, the 15% was already reached before the policy was implemented, so it wasn't really able to help there. (Den Oudsten & Teesink, 2017)

*What is the limiting threshold that has been implemented?*

The threshold is almost at 0. The generic 15% limit has not been used since 2015, due to the introduction of the environmental test. Now, the municipality is only granted cases where it truly seems alright to do and there is no breaking of the environmental test, which ensures livability. (Den Oudsten & Teesink, 2017)

Although it is undesirable, in places that show no deterioration of the quality of life through the implementation of another family home, the conversion is still granted. This might be the case in neighbourhoods where the amount of families is still very high and the conversion of one house might not have such significant impact. (Den Oudsten & Teesink, 2017)

The generic 15% rule is being abolished and a customized situational test is put into place instead (Gemeente Groningen, 2015)

*How has the policy been divided over the city?*

It has not been divided, it affects the entire city. In the beginning, the 15% threshold was aimed at providing more distribution throughout the city, but it was quickly clear that this distribution was not going to be very balanced throughout the city. (Den Oudsten & Teesink, 2017)

*Additional information:*

- There has been a decrease in the amount of permits that the individual landlords have applied for. This shows a significant decrease in the amount of houses that have been converted from family homes to students homes.
- In recent years, the demand for independent units is going up, which is causing a switch from the conversion of family homes to the construction of
- There has been a decrease in the demand of rental rooms over the years as well, which leads to a decrease in the amount of requests for licenses (Gemeente Groningen, 2015)

For the environmental test, all aspects of a neighborhood are weighed with a view to scarcity, neighborhood improvement and quality of life.

To determine the scarcity, improvement of the neighborhood and quality of life, we look at:

- public housing aspects / policy;
- the most recent quality of life monitor;
- complaints and reports (Reporting Center for Care and Nuisance);
- (construction) technical condition of the house;
- numbers of withdrawn homes;
- number of smaller apartments for specific groups
- consequences at neighborhood, street and / or block level (Den Oudsten & Teesink, 2015)

#### Sources:

Den Oudsten, P., Teesink, P. (2015) *Beleidsregels onttrekkingsvergunning woningvorming* [Online].

Available at:

[https://decentrale.regelgeving.overheid.nl/cvdr/xhtmloutput/historie/Groningen%20\(Gr\)/383351/383351\\_1.html](https://decentrale.regelgeving.overheid.nl/cvdr/xhtmloutput/historie/Groningen%20(Gr)/383351/383351_1.html) (Accessed: 26 May 2020)

Wallage, J., De Vries. (2008) *Evaluatie tijdelijke maatregel kamerverhuurpanden* [Online]. Available at:

[http://decentrale.regelgeving.overheid.nl/cvdr/xhtmloutput/historie/Groningen%20\(Gr\)/14321/14321\\_1.html](http://decentrale.regelgeving.overheid.nl/cvdr/xhtmloutput/historie/Groningen%20(Gr)/14321/14321_1.html) (Accessed: 26 May 2020)

Gemeente Groningen (2015). *Wonen in Stad, woonvisie gemeente Groningen*. Groningen.

Den Oudsten, P., Teesink, P. (2017) *Evaluatie kamerverhuurbeleid en tweede wijziging beleidsregels onttrekkingsvergunning ten behoeve van onzelfstandige woonruimte en woningvormingsvergunning Huisvestingsverordening 2015*. Groningen.

Van der Schaaf, R., de Jeu, J., van der Wijk, P., de Boer, L., Bregman, P., Holwerda, S., Jochems, T., Bruinewoud, J., Meijer, D. J., Sibma, E. (2018) *Covenant. Studenten- en Jongerenhuisvesting in Groningen 2019-2020* [Online]. Available at:

<https://www.rug.nl/news/2018/nieuwsberichten/ondertekening-convenant-studenten-en-jongerenhuisvesting-groningen-2019-2022.pdf> (Accessed: 26 May 2020)

#### Timeline Items:

2007 – temporary measure including a 25% limit introduced per street

2008 – 15% standard is used as the maximum per street (A max of 15% of the houses in a street were able to be converted from a family to a student home)

2015 – More detailed additions to the policy, as a pure 15% is simply too generic. A ‘omgevingstoets’ was introduced in order to assist assessing the criteria. The 15% still used as an initial assessment, but an environmental test with various different criteria considering quality of life is introduced

2017 – The policy was tightened, in which no new permits are permitted. Introduction of the ability to convert rooms to apartments. (Den Oudsten & Teesink, 2017)

2020 – 8000 new homes have been built as purpose-built student accommodation over the last 10 years. (Interview with Eva)

2025 – An addition of 1000 – 1500 additional rooms to be constructed (Van der Schaaf et al., 2018)



### 7.5.2 Brighton:

*What is the aim of the policy?*

- “This policy will be used to control future changes of use to small (C4), mixed C3/C4 uses and large (sui generis) Houses in Multiple Occupation to address the potential impact of concentrations of HMOs upon their surroundings and to ensure that healthy and inclusive communities are maintained across the city.” (Brighton & Hove, 2016)

*How is the measure being implemented?*

- The city of Brighton is split into different wards (neighbourhoods), which are able to be classified differently according to the amount of HMO buildings that each individual ward holds (Tremlett Interview)
- The limitation on student housing is enforced through requiring planning permission when wanting to convert a single dwelling house (C3) to a house of multiple occupation (HMO or C4). Through this planning permission, the city is able to limit the amount of shared houses that are put up in various areas (Brighton & Hove, 2016)

*What is the limiting threshold that has been implemented?*

- “HMOs will not be permitted where more than 10 per cent of dwellings within a radius of 50 meters of the application site are already in use as an HMO” (Brighton & Hove, 2016)

*How has the policy been divided over the city?*

- The 5 most effected wards were included in the Article 4 direction in April 2013. These include ‘Hanover and Elm Grove’, ‘Hollingdean and Stanmer’, ‘Moulsecoomb and Bevendean’, ‘Queen’s Park’ and ‘St Peters and North Laine’. These areas were chosen in response to “increasing numbers of small HMOs in this area. (Tremlett, 2019)
- It has now been suggested that the measure should be extended over the entire city. This suggestion has been made due to HMO pockets being found outside the already existing policy areas. There have been examples of a “cliff-edge scenario” right outside the current limitation areas. This means that there have been a higher concentration of HMOs found right outside the areas that already been limited. (Tremlett, 2019)

Sources:

Brighton & Hove, City Council (2020) *Planning permission for houses in multiple occupation* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/planning/planning-applications/planning-permission-houses-multiple-occupation> (Accessed: 26 May 2020)

Tremlett, S. (2019) *Small Houses in Multiple Occupation: evidence to justify a citywide Article 4 Direction* [Online]. Available at: [https://consultations.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning/hmoarticle4direction/user\\_uploads/hmo-citywide-article-4-june-2019.pdf](https://consultations.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning/hmoarticle4direction/user_uploads/hmo-citywide-article-4-june-2019.pdf) (Accessed: 26 May 2020)

Brighton & Hove, City Council (2016) *City Plan Part One: Brighton & Hove City Council’s Development Plan* [Online]. Available at: [https://new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/article/inline/FINAL%20version%20cityplan%20March%202016%20compreswith%20forward\\_0.pdf](https://new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/article/inline/FINAL%20version%20cityplan%20March%202016%20compreswith%20forward_0.pdf) (Accessed: 26 May 2020)

#### Timeline Items:

April 2010 – C4 use class for HMOs is created (Tremlett, 2019)

October 2010 – Introducing a permitted development change from C3 to C4 without the need to make a planning application (Tremlett, 2019)

January 2013 – Article 4 direction approved for the 5 wards. Removed the permitted development right. (Tremlett, 2019)

March 2016 – City Plan Part 1 is introduced. Including Policy CP21, which takes the need for an HMO to have planning permission and compares it to the threshold introduced in this policy (Brighton & Hove, 2016)

June 2020 – The Article 4 direction is expanded city wide. (Tremlett, 2019)

Beginning 2022 – City Plan Part 2 with stronger restrictions about HMO limitations. (Steve, 2020)

### **7.5.3 Loughborough**

#### *What is the aim of the policy?*

- “We value the University and College and the significant economic, social, and cultural contribution our student population brings to Loughborough. However, a negative impact has been experienced in some neighbourhoods because of the over concentration of houses in multiple occupation. These impacts have affected some community facilities, the character and appearance of the area and caused disturbance and parking problems” (Charnwood Borough Council, 2015)
- “We will support the well-being, character and amenity of our communities by managing the proportion of houses in multiple occupation.” (Charnwood Borough Council, 2015)

#### *How is the measure being implemented?*

- When an application comes in for a new HMO, the threshold is first and foremost considered. However, this is only a rough guideline to what the decision will be. The neighbourhood will be more thoroughly assessed in terms of other characteristics in order to determine whether it is appropriate to implement HMOs in the proposed area. (Charnwood Borough Council, 2015; Charnwood Borough Council, 2017)

#### *What is the limiting threshold that has been implemented?*

- “Whether a proposed House in Multiple Occupation will be appropriate will generally depend on the character of the area, the prevalence of existing homes used in this way and the effect the additional use would have on the amenity of the area.” (Charnwood Borough Council, 2015)
- “It is important to note however that we will not adopt a rigid approach to decision making. The threshold will provide one material consideration to be considered alongside a number of other matters identified in Policy CS4 and this SPD related to the impact on the character and amenity of the area and safe operation of the highway.” (Charnwood Borough Council, 2017)

- “The proximity to Halls of Residence or purpose built student accommodation will be another material consideration which will inform the decision making process.” (Charnwood Borough Council, 2017)
- “There will be instances where the impacts of a new HMO in an area with a low proportion of HMO properties may be judged to be so significant under the provisions of Policy CS4 that planning permission should not be granted. Equally there will be instances where the impacts of a new HMO in an area with an already high concentration might be considered acceptable in accordance with Policy CS4 and planning permission granted accordingly.” (Charnwood Borough Council, 2017)
- It is rather given as a guidance principle rather than a black and white threshold.
- “seeking to resist further Houses in Multiple Occupation (small or large) where there is already 20% or more Houses in Multiple Occupation within a 100m radius of the application site.” (Charnwood Borough Council, 2017)

*How has the policy been divided over the city?*

- The policy is implemented throughout the whole town

Additional information:

- “The Council’s database indicates that there were 2,503 HMOs in Loughborough in August 2016 with the highest concentration of HMOs being found in the wards adjacent to the University.” (Charnwood Borough Council, 2017)

The assessment process of the request for a new HMO license (‘Similar to the environmental test in Groningen’): (Charnwood Borough Council, 2017)

- First the threshold of 20% in 100m of the application site will be taken into consideration
  - Additionally, halls of residence and purpose built student accommodation is not taken into the calculation, but will be considered when assessing the impact the new HMO will have on the area
- The potential issues that might arise due to the implementation of a new House in Multiple Occupation will be assessed according to the social and physical character of the street
  - This includes anti-social behavior, waste, littering, poor standards of property management
- The potential for the HMO itself will cause noise or disturbances will have to be taken into account
  - Greater traffic in and around the house might create disturbances
- The effects on parking will have to be considered, as the number of cars associated with one property will most likely increase for an HMO

Sources:

Charnwood Borough Council (2015) *Charnwood Local Plan 2011-2028* [Online]. Available at: [https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/adopted\\_core\\_strategy1/Charnwood%20Local%20Plan](https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/adopted_core_strategy1/Charnwood%20Local%20Plan)

[%202011%20-%202028%20Core%20Strategy%20Adopted%20November%202015.pdf](#) (Accessed: 26 May 2020)

Charnwood Borough Council (2017) *Housing Supplementary Planning Document* [Online]. Available at: [https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/housing\\_supplementary\\_planning\\_document\\_2017/SPD%20Update.pdf](https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/housing_supplementary_planning_document_2017/SPD%20Update.pdf) (Accessed: 26 May 2020)

Charnwood Borough Council (2019a) *Draft Charnwood Local Plan* [Online]. Available at: [https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/draft\\_charnwood\\_local\\_plan\\_2019\\_36/Draft%20Charnwood%20Local%20Plan%202019-36.pdf](https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/draft_charnwood_local_plan_2019_36/Draft%20Charnwood%20Local%20Plan%202019-36.pdf) (Accessed: 26 May 2020)

Charnwood Borough Council (2019b) *Planning control of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/hmo#:~:text=This%20planning%20control%2C%20which%20is,will%20always%20require%20planning%20permission.> (Accessed: 6 June 2020)

Hubbard, P. (2008) 'Regulating the social impacts of studentification: a Loughborough case study', *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 40, p323-341.

Timeline Items:

2004 – Charnwood Borough Council to engage into developing a SPD

2005 – Threshold measure is introduced for large student houses and purpose-built student accommodation

2012 – Introduction of the Article 4 Direction

2015 – Local Plan adopted, introducing policy CS4 for limiting student housing etc.

2019 – New Draft of Local Plan introduced, showing new regulations and changes to CS4 (eg. Sandwiching of houses is introduced)

2022 – Implementation of the new Local Plan

## **7.6 Interview Transcript 1: Steve – Brighton**

Finn: Thank you for participating in my research. I'm focusing on analyzing the limitation on student housing within different urban contexts. I'm particularly looking at how different cities have limited the amount of student housing within particular areas of their city, in order to reduce the sort of nuance and negative impacts that have been experienced in the city, due to growing student numbers. And I'm trying to provide a comparative analysis between here in the Netherlands where they have actually implemented this measure as well and in the UK. I just wanted to ask you did you have a look at the consent form that I sent to you?

Steve: Yes, I saw that.

Finn: Okay. Is that alright with you, that I record this and put your name into my research?

Steve: Yeah, that's fine.

Finn: Okay, perfect. I wanted to ask you, what your occupation is and how you relate to the field of student housing?

Steve: I'm a town planner. My job title is a team leader in planning policy at Brighton and Hove City Council and part of my role is I lead the drawing up of policies for student accommodation in Brighton and Hove.

Finn: Okay, perfect. So, when looking at the city of Brighton, what are the exact measures that are undertaken in order to limit the student housing?

Steve: When you say student housing, what do you mean?

Finn: I'm referring to shared houses, so more of the private market and not the purpose built student accommodation.

Steve: Right, I just wanted to clarify that. In shared housing, in England they are called Houses of Multiple Occupation or HMOs. That's the ethical name for them. We introduced in 2013 something called an Article 4 direction. Normally in England, when you want to change a family home into a shared home, you don't need planning permission to do that. But what an Article 4 direction does is it removes that, what is called a permitted development right and it means that if you want to make that change from a family home to a student home or a shared home, you need to gain permission from the local council to do that. We introduced that measure in 5 wards of the city. The city is split up into numerous smaller wards, so this measure is introduced in 5 of those along Lewis Road, which is the area where there are the most students and the most shared houses.

Finn: Is there a certain number of houses that are being limited? Does it depend on each ward or is there a general, overall for the 5 wards, a certain measure to it?

Steve: Well the way it works is that the Article 4 direction means that people need to apply for planning permission to make the change. When an application for planning permission comes in, it is then judged against a policy in our City Plan Part 1, which is policy CP21, which you can see online and that states that planning permission will only be granted, where less than 10% of other dwellings are in a 50 meter radius of the application site are already in use as HMOs.

Finn: This measure is then enforced by the planners in the city?

Steve: By the planners. Yeah, that's right. The person that receives the application, they will look at other measures as well, like when determining the application, they will look at the size of the rooms, the living conditions, you know, factors like that as well. Also this requirement that concentration within 50 meters should be less than 10%.

Finn: Alright, so there is even an assessment of the housing before, like an inspection of sorts.

Steve: Yeah, like some developers will try to convert the lounge into extra bedrooms or split up bedrooms to make them very small and living conditions really bad, so we would try and ensure that the living conditions for the people that live there are satisfactory.

Finn: The policy is not only implemented to make sure that students have a certain quality of housing, but then also to make sure to keep this kind of atmosphere in a neighbourhood?

Steve: Yeah, that's right.

Finn: To make sure that students don't overrun the neighbourhood.

Steve: Yeah, because there are problems with... You should note that HMOs are not only occupied by students.

Finn: Yeah.

Steve: In Brighton, the cost of housing is very high, so a lot of people who are not students and on low wages, are also living in HMOs. But when this policy was introduced in 2013, it was mainly aimed at the student market, as it was in the 5 wards where most students lived.

Finn: Correct me if this is wrong, but I have seen on the website that they are trying to extend this measure to cover a bigger area of Brighton?

Steve: Yeah, that's right. That is something that I have been dealing with. Basically, this Article 4 Directory currently covers the 5 wards and we are extending that to cover the whole city.

Finn: Would you say that is because it's been successful in keeping the other parts of Brighton the way that you have wanted it to? Or what is the reason behind this extension?

Steve: I think the reason is, that we have seen the number of HMOs in other areas of the city starting to increase. The current Article 4 Direction, the 5 wards, was almost implemented too late, because the high concentrations of shared houses as HMOs were already there and we have started getting feedback from residents and local Councillors in other parts of the city that these concentrations are starting to increase elsewhere as well, which is probably due to the restrictions that have already existed in the 5 wards. So this is a proactive measure to try and manage the concentration. We are not trying to put a limit on the number of shared houses, just make sure that they are spread more evenly across the city.

Finn: Yeah, that makes sense.

Steve: I did a document with support and setting out evidence for doing it and supporting a public consultation on this, I don't know if you have seen that, but I can send it to you.

Finn: Yeah, that would be great actually.

Steve: That steps out the reasons more clearly than I actually can on the phone.

Finn: Okay, perfect. In the parts where it was applied first, in the 5 wards is there sort of, even in your own opinion, do you feel like this limit has been successful? Maybe in reducing the amount of trouble that you might get from HMOs?

Steve: It can't be applied retrospectively. When this policy was introduced, there were already many HMOs in this area and it can't reverse that process. All it can do is manage the distribution of new ones. So in these areas there are still a hell of a lot of HMOs. I think it's probably been successful in preventing the situation getting even worse, but the situation was already pretty bad to start with and it is still quite bad in some areas.

Finn: Okay, and because you have seen this policy has been implemented too late, that's why you are now extending it?

Steve: That's part of the reason, yeah. We don't want to wait until the situation gets bad elsewhere. We've seen pockets where its starting to increase and we want to start managing it proactively.

Finn: Okay, yeah that makes sense.

Steve: In terms of reducing the impact in the existing bad areas, what is more effective is talking to the universities, getting dialogue going between students and local residents and things like that which are outside the planning process.



Finn: So you would say having certain actions measures taken on top of this... Limiting the HMOs is not as successful as then trying to incorporate the students into the neighbourhood and then somehow trying to get a social coherence going?

Steve: Yeah, especially dialogue with universities, so that neighbors know that if they live next to students and there is a problem, they can contact the universities or take some ownership of the problem and speak to the students.

Finn: Okay, so has that been done or is that still in the making, like the sort of being able to contact the university?

Steve: I'm not quite sure. I think universities are aware that they need to have good relations with the public in Brighton. I'm not involved in what they do, as I just work in planning and I don't work directly with universities, but I know that they have taken steps to do that and give themselves more of a presence and be more available to residents that want to contact them in regards to student behaviour.

Finn: Yeah, that makes sense.

Steve: University of Sussex, for example, opened opened up a shop front on Lewis Road to have somewhere where students and residents could go in, without going to university campus, to speak to a university representative.

Finn: And that's been done just for the complaints of the residents?

Steve: No, not just for the complaints, but you know to also help the students themselves with any issues that they might have regarding housing or anything.

Finn: Ahh okay. Do you know about the amount of student housing in Brighton? Like is that a problem in the city? Because I know that there is quite a lot of students in Brighton.

Steve: In terms of the shared houses, the HMOs it has been a problem, but that's why we've introduced these measures. Especially over the last 15 years, the number of students in Brighton has increased quite dramatically. We do expect now that the number of students will stabilize. We are not expecting any further increases and there is also quite a lot of new PBSA being built at the moment or being planned at the moment. So what we are expecting is that a number of students that are living in shared housing will start to decrease.

Finn: So then the PSBA was also built as also sort of relieving the pressure off of the HMOs?

Steve: Yeah, that was the intension. But it only relieves the pressure off of HMOs if the student numbers are not increasing. If you build a new development that has 500 beds and the university expands by 500 students, then there is no difference in the number of HMOs. But now that universities are not expanding, we should hopefully see a change.

Finn: Is there also action taken to sort of reverse the HMOs that have been converted from family houses to convert them back to their original purpose?

Steve: The council can't make that happen. We don't own these houses, they are owned by a private land lord. One aspect is, as I have mentioned before, there is a lot of demand of HMOs from elements of the population that aren't students, like low income groups. So they might just choose them to keep them as shared houses or HMOs and fill them with people that aren't students. We have heard anecdotally that some HMOs particularly near universities are struggling to fill their rooms this year, which might suggest

that the demand is decreasing. So it is communicating with landlords and tell them that we suspect this process might continue and if they want to ensure their rented properties are full, they might wish to consider not renting it to students, but converting it back to family homes. But all we can do is inform the landlords there are and suggest that the demand of students is decreasing and hope that they decide to make an essential economic decision and change it back.

Finn: So I just wanted to ask about when you implemented this policy... If you were to implement this policy in another city and you could make a recommendation to another city, what would you recommend them to do in order to limit this? I guess one of the things would be to implement the policy earlier, so that the HMOs are already at a certain threshold, but are there any other suggestions you might have?

Steve: I think that is the main thing really. In Brighton we have been behind other cities in a way, because when we were looking at extending this, I did some research on other university cities, that are of a similar size, such as Southampton, Portsmouth, etc. They already had this measure in place across the whole city, whereas we just had it in these 5 wards, and we were quite surprised that this stronger measure was already in place, because we thought the government might be reluctant to allow that. So we were like "Okay it's quite a common thing to do" and we were kind of behind some other cities doing this. It is quite a common policy approach, as pretty much any university city in England probably has an Article 4 Direction.

Finn: Yeah, I've seen quite a few cities that have implemented it. That almost wraps it up. Is there anything that I may have not covered that you would still like to discuss?

Steve: Not really, but I just want to draw your attention to the policy we use, Policy CP21, in our city plan part 1 about HMOs with a 50m radius, we are also producing a city plan part 2, which also has a policy about HMOs in it, policy DM7. This has not been adopted yet, so we are not using it, but it includes more and stronger criteria for different planning applications for HMOs as well and that's just as a result of pressure from local communities and local councillors as well. So that has additional restrictions, for example that we wouldn't allow a new HMO where it is sandwiched between 2 existing ones or leads to a continuous row of 3 or more of them.

Finn: And that is still in the process of being implemented.

Steve: That is still in the process of being developed. We still need further consultation on that and then it needs to go through the, what's called the .... After plan making process. In England it needs to go through a public examination, where a government inspector will look at it and listen to people that have objected to it, to make sure its sound, its reasonable and able to be used. So that's not being used at the moment, but that's in preparation.

Finn: And that is being applied on a city-wide scale or just on the 5 wards?

Steve: That will be city wide. All planning policies within the city plan are applied across the city.

Finn: So will that then work parallel with the new implementation of trying to spread the existing policy outside the 5 wards? Like, will that be implemented together?

Steve: No, the Article 4 Direction city-wide, that comes into force on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June this year (2020). The new city plan part 2 won't come into force until the end of next year or the beginning of 2022. And it might also change until then, as it depends on what happens until then in the examination process.

Finn: Yeah, then I will have a look at those policy documents definitely and if you could send me that reaction that you were talking about. The comments that you had.

Steve: Yeah, what I can do. I'll send you the links to the city plans and as part of the process of implementing this city-wide Article 4 Direction, I had to write quite a few reports to our communities to get decision approved by the councillors and they would be quite useful to you as well, just to read those and I can send those to you as well.

Finn: Yeah, that would be perfect.

Steve: If you have any other questions, feel free to email me or happy to talk to you again if you have any follow up questions.

Finn: Alright that sounds good. Just finally, would you want to receive the results of my study, so when I've written my thesis, would you like to have the document?

Steve: Yeah that would be interesting.

Finn: I'll make sure to forward that to you.

Steve: Thanks.

Finn: Alright, thank you very much.

## **7.7 Interview Transcript 2: John – Brighton**

Finn: Just to start off, I wanted to ask you about your occupation and how you relate to this field of student housing?

John: Right, I'm an elected city Councillor on the city council in Brighton and Hove and I also live in one of the ward, which is a political division in this country, which has a high concentration of houses of multiple occupation and therefore has been affected by the policy changes. I've been a Councillor for 5 years now. One thing I would say is that the policy that is followed by the council is not specifically about students in houses of multiple occupation, it is about the density of houses of multiple occupation. Now, mostly, in the main, residents in houses of multiple occupation in our area are students, but not entirely, there are working sharers, professional sharers and people that are just living with other people. So it's not just about students, and it makes it quite blunt, I mean the policy is around short term occupancy or relatively short-term occupancy and the people have less investment in the community and neighbourhood as a result. Unfortunately that does not necessarily apply to other HMO sharers, as they may be very long-term residents and they may be affected by that, because that is just the way it works.

Finn: So the limitation that is in Brighton, especially in your ward, that was introduced because of students, right? Because of the negative impacts of students?

John: It was introduced because of the negative impact of short term residents, who are almost in the large majority students. It was introduced with the goal of enabling more sustainable and stable communities that people had an investment in and not that all students don't have an investment in their community, but in the main, it won't be their long-term home and therefore they are less committed to community life.

Finn: When they are less committed to community life, does that reflect upon the complaints of the residents. So do the residents come forward and say that they are experiencing these short-term residents to not have this commitment?

John: I think what they certainly complain about is the lack with things like rubbish left outside houses of multiple occupation in terms of the neighbourhood and people don't like living with lots of bins left on

the street and things like that. I would say definitely. People also complain about lifestyle issues around parties and noise. That is probably a big issue. We all live with students nearby and 9/10 students or HMO dwellers work fine, but there are some that have no investment in their relationship with their neighbors and so they make noise and are anti-social basically. Those are the two things that are more aggravation. I would say students are more likely to be involved with activities relating to their universities or their institutions than they are with their community. I wouldn't say there is strong evidence on that really. It is just that the feeling is that the commitment to the community is less because its not felt as being a temporary home.

Finn: Yeah, that's interesting. I have never thought of it in the way of it being their sort of commitment to the community. I've just always thought that it has been this image that people have of students and also its obviously somehow supported by evidence that the stereotype of students being quite noisy and quite following the rules, that this is the reason people complain about it. But I guess, the sense of community must also be part of it.

John: Well partly, but maybe because they are not following the rules because they are young or maybe because they don't feel embedded with their neighbours or they don't feel the need to fit in so much because its not where they are going to be in many cases in a years time.

Finn: That makes sense. And do you feel like since this policy has been implemented that these complaints have sort of gone down or are the problems still remaining?

John: That is quite a subjective thing for me to say, I mean I think probably yes, I mean there is other things that we've done as communities in terms of working with the universities to support and help with issues where there has been neighbour unhappiness, so there are staff from the university that work with students that are being a bit anti-social and that has helped. The community groups have come up with some information to periodically welcome students, but also say 'this is your recycling and this is what you do with your rubbish'. Because for some students its their first time away from home and it's like "Oh my god" suddenly its very new and they are free and its important to try and provide some information about how things are. And often neighbours will go around and tell them "we don't make noise after 12 o'clock", but obviously people have parties and it's the households where its every night and kind of constant. So my sense is that, as a councillor we pick up the complaints and I haven't picked up a complaint about students significantly this year, this academic year, so certainly it has prevented what was a growing issue in terms of unhappiness. I mean the idea is that within 50 meters of a House of multiple occupation, there shouldn't be another one and that there should be less than 10% within 50 meters and in most areas of this ward, there are more than 10%. So it's a bit like we are trying to contain the density after its already become dense than we would like. But that has meant that whenever landlords have applied for permission for houses of multiple occupation, it has mostly been refused. Or they have done it illegally and they have then been forced to stop. Some, I'm sure, happen under the radar.

Finn: So because you mentioned that it is already higher than what you would like the concentration of HMOs would be. You are then focusing on other ways of dealing with the issue, so you try to have these community members... I guess community groups, do you have community groups with who you meet and discuss?

John: Yes, we've got something that was used to be called the local action team, it is now called the communities \*torence\*? And on that community group there are like student representatives I'm not sure if there are at the current moment. The problem with the virus is that we have virtual meetings now and you can't always know who is in the meeting. The idea is that these have student representatives and they have action plans about the harmonious integration of students within the community. So, yes, I think its

fair for you to conclude that there are other things happening on a community level and that university level to smooth relations and assist administration, given that even though the expansion has been halted by the policy, still the level is higher than it where it would be ideal.

Finn: So they are also trying to expand the measure, expand it over the city, is that correct?

John: Yes, I'm trying to think. There has been two things that have been happening in terms of Houses of Multiple occupation. One is licensing and that is expanding across the whole city, so that is about the standard of the accommodation. Like the accommodation being particularly fire safe, but also adequate in terms of damp and better insulated. So that's all very positive in terms of ensuring or trying to ensure higher standards for students or anyone living in Houses of Multiple occupation. That has been expanded across the whole city. The restrictions in the density in the Houses of Multiple occupation have been expanded, but not across the whole city. I don't absolutely quite know this, because not a committee that I sit on. Licensing has, but the limiting on the planning and this is a planning decision. The planning limits have, actually they maybe have, I'm not sure. I know that there was talk about it and a decision was made to expand it, but I'm not sure if it was the whole city or if it just was. Sorry I can't tell you definitely on that.

Finn: No, that's fine. So you were talking about the standards of housing, is that also something that is monitored in your ward, so the standard of the student housing itself?

John: Yes, it's not monitored in a very systematic way, but at a similar time to the planning restriction or just before the licensing was introduced, we have had reports about how many homes have improved fire safety and have got more insulation and had damp addressed and things like that. So its one of the ways where the private rental sector can be a little bit more controlled. Just to make it a little bit safer.

Finn: In terms of, is there anything done to try to reduce the concentration of HMOs or is it more or less accepted as being, I know that its obviously the private market, so its quite difficult to influence, but is there a way to lower the amount of HMOs? So is there a way to somehow convert the HMO back to a family home?

John: The policy is to try and prevent, the family homes being converted into HMOs, but alongside that there is an expansion of student accommodation, sort of purpose built, if you like. The idea with that is that more people will live in student accommodation as supposed to the city in the whole and therefore some of those homes will then be sold to people to buy or will be more aimed at permanent sharers or will be rented. And that is happening, seemingly happening, and student numbers are also likely to fall, with this virus and everything. But that is happening in some areas not hugely In our area, but it certainly in one area called Moosecomb and Beverdean, which is quite near the university, where the housing is a bit less attractive, landlords are finding it very hard to lend to students, so they have to do something else.

Finn: And is your ward quite close to the university as well?

John: Quite, it's in the so called Lewis Road Corridor, so Brighton University is about a mile up the road and then Sussex University is about 2 miles up the road and then this corridor is where a lot the students live.

Finn: Alright, so the access to the university is why most of the students reside there?

John: Yeah, it's good access, very regular busses and cycle lanes up the Lewis Road.

Finn: Is there anything else that I forgot to mention?

John: No, I don't think so. I think we've covered that it has achieved some success. It's limited the growth, there are other policy measures happening, with that consequence in mind. My perception is that this policy alongside other things, support from the university and community stuff has made living more harmonious in the area. I think that's fair enough, yeah.

### **7.8 Interview Transcript 3: Tracey – Brighton**

Finn: I usually just start off with doing a little introduction to my research and then just asking a few questions, but I'm more trying to have a conversation rather than a strictly formatted interview.

Tracey: Alright, okay.

Finn: So I'm studying Spatial Planning and Design and I'm focusing my bachelor research on studentification in cities that have high percentage of students living within it and in particular I'm focusing on housing policy and how different cities have managed to limit the amount of shared houses that is being rented to students. So I have realized that in England it's called Housing of Multiple Occupation or HMO and these are limited in quite a number of cities and so they actually have quite a similar limitation here in Groningen as well, because we have a high percentage of students as well and there has been over the years big debates about how this should be handled and how they can prevent students to have any nuance or negative impacts on the neighbourhood. And just to start off I wanted to ask what exactly your occupation is and how it relates to this sort of field of student housing and HMOs.

Tracey: Yeah, well I'm a councillor with Brighton and Hove city council so I'm an elected representative and between 2015 and 2019 I was the lead councillor for private rented housing. So, I dealt specifically with a lot of different issues to do with rented housing. And one of the big issues in certain parts of the city was complaints about regular housing, if you like, family housing being converted into student housing and the impact of that on the supply of housing and the neighbourhood. I had a lot of discussions with residents, resident groups, with council officers, the universities and with landlords and letting agents about all of this. Was involved in tightening up some of the regulations around it.

Finn: Okay and so the exact regulations that are within the city, I've understood that there was an Article 4 Direction introduced in 2013 and that this covered 5 wards in the city and that this was to put a limitation on the HMOs, is that correct?

Tracey: Yeah that is correct. You have obviously done your research there. Yeah spot on and as you have mentioned this has happened in numerous other university cities and towns in this country as well. So it just means that if you want to convert a house into a small house of multiple occupancy, you have to get planning permission and then there is another planning policy that says that if there is within a 50 meter radius if more than 10% of households are already HMOs then permission will be refused. So it's a very stark, numerical, straightforward policy that simply refuses it above the threshold. It's recently been rolled out across the city. So it will move from 5 wards to all wards in the city.

Finn: Yeah, I heard about that. I actually talked to Steve Tremlett yesterday, I don't know if you know him.

Tracey: Ahh yes!

Finn: Yeah and he sent me the documents that are explaining why the extension is being put into place and the arguments behind it. But it's not a lot to do with student housing anymore, is that correct? It



seemed like it was very much based on the housing cost and also that they are seeing a lot of low income, young professionals moving into HMOs.

Tracey: Yeah, I suppose that. I mean HMOs have always been needed for people who need to sort of live on low cost. Typically sort of young people who have just started off and can't afford and independent place. So they have always had that role. The regulations around HMOs are not only about student housing, that's for sure, but I would say that one of the reasons why the number of HMOs proliferated in some areas around the city, especially around 2011, 2012, 2013, was drive the demand for student housing. So you know in the ward that I represent for example, most HMOs that have come into being in the last 5 years that have come into being have been for students, because that's where the market was and that is where the demand was and that is something that might be changing, as Steve might have said we're seeing some evidence now that demand for student housing is falling off and we're hearing that landlords have spare rooms and so on. So that is something that might be changing.

Finn: When this increase in 2011-2012, when they were having all these student houses, was there also and increase of complaints and sort of nuances that were experienced in the neighbourhood?

Tracey: Yeah, absolutely. It was a big political issue. Again, quite localized, not across the whole city, but in areas that were handy for the university campuses where the students were wanting to live, students became the political issue for local councillors. So there were a lot of concerns about the loss of homes for families, people were worried about that, because we have such a shortage and the rents are very high and house prices are very high. So there was that and then there was also the impact of having a relatively large number of houses in a street that were student houses, because it sort of changes the nature of the street. You have got more people living independently in the street, I suppose, It was associated with noise complaints, issues with refuse and recycling, parties, that kind of thing. There was and there is still quite a lot of negativity around it and I think students sometimes even becoming scapegoats for bad things. Being seen in a negative light because of some of these issues.

Finn: If they experience some sort of issues they somewhat push it on the students then.

Tracey: Yeah, I think so. "There was some anti-social behaviour, I guess it must have been the students." Although it could have equally been someone else.

Finn: And do you think that through that introduction of the limitation, was that successful in lowering these effects and lowering the negative impacts?

Tracey: Well yes and no, I would say. I think in areas where there were already a lot of student homes, you couldn't make it retrospective, so those student homes are still there. So I would say in those areas it is less effective. In areas that were below the 10 percent, I think it has been effective, because there are just fewer planning applications coming forward. Developers have realized that they won't get permission when it's above 10% and they are provided now with the information. There is a map, that they can go to, they can see where the HMOs are, they can calculate it. So they don't put an application in. It effects the value of the properties, it doesn't get sold to an HMO developer in the first place. So when these properties tend to change hands, they tend to stay as family housing, that's certainly true for the area that I live in. So I think it has been effective at limiting it. I mean residents still feel frustrated, every time one of these come up, I mean developers are still converting these homes, where it does comply with the policy and you know, we can't refuse. If it is below 10% and there is no other reason for refusing it, then it will be approved and residents find that frustrating. They say "I thought we have stopped all these HMOs". What they want, is that they don't want any more. But developers are looking for homes that are below the 10% so they're looking in different areas.

Finn: So they are strategically trying to choose the place that is below 10% in order for them to develop there?

Tracey: Yes, exactly. Arguably, that is what they are supposed to be doing, if you like. The policy is to prevent the overconcentration of HMOs in particular areas and they are becoming more spread, if you like.

Finn: Yeah, so through the developers focusing on this policy in development, they are achieving a more equal spread than and overconcentration in one particular area.

Tracey: Yeah, that's exactly right. I mean, it's difficult for people who, say you've got a family home that has HMOs on either side of them, it is difficult for them, because they won't be able to sell their home to an HMO developer now, because the developers know that they will not get permission, so some of them are worried that they are going to struggle with selling their homes now. That is a difficulty.

Finn: Yeah, I've never thought of it that way actually. So then the family has to search for another family to live within that house and it makes it less attractive.

Tracey: Yeah, it impacts those people, arguably, in a negative way. Although, I don't know, there is always someone. When I bought the house that I'm in at the moment, there was a student house next door and I thought: "Well it's a mixed area, I'll do it". So they would, but it does make it more difficult. And it also has effected the prices of houses. I mean the difference in the market value between a house that has permission to be used as an HMO versus the one that is not, is 10s of thousands of pounds.

Finn: Ohh wow.

Tracey: It's a big difference. Or so I'm told. This is as well one of the reasons why landlords are reluctant to moving away from using a house as an HMO, because what we ideally want to do. As Steve probably said, there is a lot of purpose built student housing being built here in the city at the moment and already we're seeing this decline for demand in HMOs. So what ideally we would want is for these HMOs coming back to being family homes. But the barrier for landlords is that if they do that, the value of their property will drop by 30-40.000 pounds. So they are reluctant to do that.

Finn: So I guess, if they have an HMO, its also because they are renting it out. So you have a higher amount of people living in the house, you are obviously collecting more rent than if you would just rent it to one single family.

Tracey: Yes, exactly. You can charge more rent. If you've got 7 students, you'll get more for that than for a family of 5. What we are trying to do is encourage people, there is a flexible use, Steve might have mentioned this, there is a flexible use that you can apply for, where you can get permission for it to be either an HMO or a family home and then you can switch between the two uses and what we are hoping is that we can encourage landlords to do that, without it effecting the value of the property, but what that means is that those homes become available for families who desperately need them, rather than having rooms empty in student houses.

Finn: Would that house then count as an HMO or as a family home?

Tracey: Oh em, it could be either. Because they are free to move between them.

Finn: So I'm thinking in terms of the policy aspect, then do you count that within the 10% of the policy limitation, or would you then say, no this is a family home.

Tracey: You know, I'm not quite sure about that. I've not asked that question. It might depend on the use that existed at the time of application was put it. That's probably how it would go, but I'm guessing a bit now, I'm not entirely sure.

Finn: That's okay. Might be another thing to find out somewhere.

Tracey: Yeah, exactly.

Finn: You also talked about just that you had a lot of interaction with a lot of these stakeholders that are involved with the HMOs and the neighbourhoods. All these actors.

Tracey: Yeah, I did. When I first came into that role, there were about 12 maybe more resident associations or groups of residents in those 5 wards. And I thought I could go around to all the groups and talk to them, but instead of that, I set up a meeting, where they could come to it, so I invited 2 people from each residents group, to come to a big meeting, about specifically HMOs. There was a lot of demand, like everyone wants to come to this meeting and I invited the universities and student unions as well and it was a big noisy meeting and a lot of people had a lot of things to say. But the 3 big issues, one issues was that at the beginning, when we put the regulations in, a lot of landlords were trying to claim that their property had been an HMO before April 2013 and therefore it would already have had permission. There were some question marks about some of those claims. As well as that, some landlords were trying to do the conversion and then ask for permission afterwards and then when it was refused they would get into an argument about that and appeal the decision. So there were a lot of issues about enforcement. Then the second biggest issue was refuse and recycling, with the bins not being big enough, people not putting recycling out on the right day, rubbish blown around in the streets, the seagulls getting all this rubbish. The third issue was noise so there is parties, but there is also just people coming and going at different times than a family house would later on at night. Going out very late, perhaps having had something to drink already. Coming back in the early hours and then also a lot of the houses around these areas are terraced houses. So, if you've got people that are just staying up late chatting, and it's in a room with a shared wall to a house next door, then that be disturbing even though the noise is not particularly unusual. So those were the 3 issues: enforcement of the rules, refuse and recycling and noise.

Finn: Yeah. That makes sense.

Tracey: People felt very strongly about it and felt that their areas were being ruined, so it was very strong. I would say over the 4 years, I have continued to have these meetings, the last one I had was in 2019. I had them every 3 months or so and gradually the attendance went down. The last one, there was only about 4 or 5 people there. A lot of that anger seems to have dissipated, or else people feel that everything that is being done is already being done and there isn't anything else to ask for, if you know what I mean.

Finn: Yeah, so you could say that less trouble with students, right?

Tracey: Yeah, I think there is. I think people have gotten a bit more used to it I think. The universities have been very good, I have to say. They have set up community liaise on people and if there is a problem with a student house and they know its their students, then they will go and talk to the students that are living there and try to sort out the problem and that is quite a good service, as it has been quite effective. They have also done things, particularly University of Sussex, they have set up community ambassadors that go around knocking on doors, to try to make people more aware that they live in a mixed neighbourhood and that there are people there with young children and so on. So they have really stepped up to take more responsibility for it I think.

Finn: And that seems to be something that they should do, right? That seems like the university should also take part in this not only the just the planning committee of the government?

Tracey: Yeah, definitely. There is also things that the residents groups have done as well. So, at the beginning of the academic year, some of them put leaflets around saying 'Welcome to our Area', 'This is how you ask for a bigger recycling bin'. 'This is the day you should put out your recycling'. Because a lot of these people are 18 years old, you know, they have never been away from home before. A lot of them, particularly at the University of Brighton, their first year students, they have never done this kind of things before, so they are just trying to guide them like that and just point out that it can be disturbing to stand in the streets and talk very loudly, when you are waiting for your taxi to arrive. I think resident groups have been quite positive a lot of the time.

Finn: Yeah and I guess some people also just don't know this, I mean it's easy for the neighbors also say 'Ohh it's the students acting all mean and not recycling properly, but maybe they are also not brought up with just being taught how to recycle property and being a nuance late at night.

Tracey: Yeah, I think that's right. I don't think they are deliberately causing a problem, but the recycling services are different everywhere you go and it wouldn't necessarily occur to people that they could ask for a bigger recycling bin, if their bin isn't big enough, it's not a thing that you would think of doing perhaps.

Finn: Yeah, that makes sense.

Tracey: So yeah, I mean there have been partitions come up every now and then. There has been a big partition around 2 years ago. It was around 2017 that the residents of Bevendean, put in a partition about HMOs, because there were a number of applications. And that was an area where the number was lower, so they were coming in and they were being approved, because they were below the 10% and so it may all come up again, but what I'm hoping is that the market will deal with this, as there is going to be a lot more purpose built student housing, there are a couple of big developments, one of them is called Preston Barracks, and there is another one called Circus Street and they are all between them providing an awful lot of accommodation and there are commercial developers as well that are building blocks of student housing. I mean there are expensive, really expensive, but they are filling them, so the number of HMOs can't just go up and up and up, at some point there is going to be more than there is needed. So it's a matter of, there is going to be a delay before developers accept that, but I'm really hoping that just where we are at the moment, that things would just even out.

Finn: And the purpose built student accommodation, was that just purely market drive, or was that also a policy drive initiative?

Tracey: It was both, there was a number of strategic sights. The 2 that are mentioned are both sights that the council was working on with other partners to bring forward mixed use sites that bring forward student accommodation, so they were very much involved in that. But there were other sites were its simply commercial developers coming forward themselves, wanting to build student housing. So there is one opened quite close to me called Hollingdry place and that is a couple of hundred purpose built student homes that opened in September and there is several more that have opened up in the last couple of years?

Finn: Do these also receive opposition from residents in the area?

Tracey: Well when the planning applications come in, then yes, they do, but it's a little bit different I think, because some people say everything here is for the students, there is that feeling that it shouldn't be student housing, but it should be family housing, because that's what the city needs. So why are we

giving it to the students? The students come here and take everything and take our housing. And other people, I think what I try to argue, is that if we have purpose built student housing, that ought to decrease the demand for HMOs, which is good. And it is better for students and for non-students that they live in student housing if they can. So there is that argument as well. There was quite an interesting one in Moulsecoomb. There was opposition to it and there were a lot of people in support of it as well, because it was a good site for student housing as I think before it was a waste-site. It was a place where builders went to dump all their trade waste. And people thought, you know, we would rather have student housing rather than traders waste. So, yes, there is some opposition, as you hear it around that 'everything is for the students', but there are other people that accept the argument that the city has for many years been short on purpose built student housing and that's why the University of Brighton is in particular not being able to accommodate any of its first year students. And I was told recently that they are the only university in the country that can't accommodate their first year students and that is something that they know they need to change, because they won't be popular as a university, when they can't do that.

Finn: They actually have had a similar problem here and they have built purpose built student accommodation here for first years only, which I think is a very interesting way of dealing with it, because the you have the problem of, when they move into second year, they all have to move out and then there is no accommodation for them to then move into, which is then creating the problem of all the second year students looking for private homes, but because that's also limited, they are then struggling to find anything.

Tracey: Okay, that's interesting. I mean it's similar here, but I suppose what the university is saying is that they are not expanding, so if they bring new accommodation in for first years, it does not mean more students, it does not mean that instead of living out, for three years. They will be in for one year and out for 2 years, so it should reduce demand, but that's only if they don't put up the number of students.

Finn: But the number of students, is that just the universities decision that they are not increasing it, or is that also an initiative of the government.

Tracey: I don't think there is any cap on student numbers, so I think it is up to the universities. The council certainly doesn't have any say of the matter. I mean what the universities both said, I mean Sussex said that they were increasing their numbers up to 2018 and then they stopped, so they kept it steady. The University of Brighton I think their numbers might even have gone down slightly, but they are not expanding as a university. And there are a number of issues that universities are facing at the moment, I mean they don't know what the full impact of Brexit will be for example. So there is that. There are quite a few other, it's not only the universities, there are quite a lot of other higher education establishments in the city as well, so we've got Brighton institute of modern music and King's school. There is quite a few other organizations. The Kings school, that is particularly for foreign students, as far as I can tell, it's kind of like a preparation for university. I think they do English language studying and of sorts, I'm not really sure. Their students seem to be quite well off, which is how they are able to afford this purpose built student housing. That's so expensive. It isn't just the universities, although they do account for the big numbers.

Finn: From my side, that is pretty much all I wanted to ask. Is there anything that I might have missed that you might still want to touch upon?

Tracey: Let me just read your list here. You've asked some questions about enforcement. I mean it's a constant battle with the developers, because you can buy a house, you can convert it and use it as an HMO before you get permission. It's not illegal, you do not need to get permission in advance and a lot of developers do that. Because they know that even if they get refused, they can then appeal the decision and

it takes a very long time for the appeal to go through and in the meantime they are still operating as an HMO, so they take the risk and it's very frustrating for residents.

Finn: So then they are using it as an HMO as long as the legal enforcement hasn't taken place.

Tracey: Exactly, and then they will do things like apply for permission for a 6 person HMO and they get that permission and then they apply for 9 people, because they have sub-divided the rooms, so they go down to as small as possible, they go down to the legal limit. They basically just turn the house into a dormitory. So they apply for 9 people, it gets refused, they then appeal it, the appeal is dismissed, they apply for 8 people, it's dismissed, they appeal it, they apply for 7 people, it's dismissed. So this can go on for years.

Finn: Yeah and during that time, they can already rent it out.

Tracey: Exactly, and during that time they can make a lot of money on it. So that is something that people get very exercised over and it's not really good for the people living in the house either, because the standard isn't great and there have been cases where people have been given a contract for a year although the enforcement may kick in during that year. So a letting agent is knowingly offering students a contract even though they don't know if they will be able to honour that contract and that's happened a number of times.

Finn: And then the students simply lose their housing?

Tracey: Yeah, they have to move. So it's not good for them. I'm just looking down the list. So you've asked about if the policy needs to be changed or improved. I mean there is an argument for planning law to make a distinction between permanent homes and homes that are being used only by full-time students. There might be a case for making that distinction.

Finn: So that would be like a sub-category of an HMO?

Tracey: It would be a sub-category of a type of residential use, yeah. Because if you've got a small HMO that people are living in all the time, that is different I think from its impacts and the way it works from an HMO that has students in it that change every year.

Finn: Yeah, because you have a constant cycle of people.

Tracey: Exactly, and you can argue that the standards ought to be higher in some ways or different for an HMO that is used in that way than something that is used as a residence. So that is something that I would like to see. That would make sense and a related problem that we have here is short term lets. So there is a case for a home that is only used by people who are there for a short period of time or on holiday that are considered different in planning law and that is not really the case at the moment.

Finn: So all of the HMOs are being put under the same sort of category and therefore the law might not work efficiently in some cases.

Tracey: Yeah exactly. I can't think of anything else.

...

Tracey: I mean people do accept that the University adds a lot to the city in terms of its economy and energy and diversity and so on. So that's something that I try to stress as well. It's good that we are a university town.



## 7.9 Interview Transcript 4: Clare – Loughborough

Finn Winkelmann

Yes, I would just get started if that's okay. All right, so I'm doing my bachelor thesis on the subject of studentification. And in particular, I'm focusing on how the spatial policy has been implemented in order to mitigate the effects of students that they have on the urban environment. And also, in particular, within that how the limitation of the amount of student housing in a particular area has impact on that negative effect. And so I'm looking at comparing the success of this policy and how this policy has been implemented in different contexts. And one of those contexts is Loughborough. One is Brighton and one is here in Groningen, because they actually also implemented a very similar thing here. Yeah, and just Like started I just wanted to ask you like what your occupation is and how you relate to the field of students or student housing.

Clare

Yeah, so I'm a town planner and I'm employed by Charnwood Borough Council. We're a local government working on behalf of the government for planning policy and make decisions on planning applications. My actual job is group leader for plans, policies and placemaking which is, which basically means I oversee the local plans team. So the policy parts but also an environment team, who deal with things like conservation, design, and environment operations. And I also oversee development which is related to the planning world and that's also my remit but my my part of the reason been put in touch with me on HMOs is that I have a history I've come from .... That's fine. That's where I came from in terms of my employment at the Council. And so I was involved in writing, implementing the policy that we have on HMOs in Charnwood. So yeah, it's just currency is really the one of the managers that's probably less relevant to you.

Finn Winkelmann

That's okay. And so what is the exact policy that they have implemented? So yesterday I've talked to I'm gonna pronounce her name wrong, but Margaret. Yeah. And she told me she told me quite a long story about the whole of the whole student situation in his in the in the town, and how it sort of converted the entire town. But I'm also she didn't talk a lot about like the policy itself. So do you know like, what Exactly the policies are.

Clare

I don't know how much you know about British system planning Really? I will try to provide a bit of context.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, yeah, that would be okay. I've done a little bit of research in Brighton. So I know the basics.

Clare

Alright, brilliant. So and there's no national policy on HMOs. And actually you can convert a dwelling house to HMO without planning permission. And so, we have something called an Article 4 direction, which takes away that permitted development. And that means you do need to come and get planning permission from us and in Loughborough we only apply to town and not the whole borough for and you do have to get planning permission to convert from dwelling to a HMO and it's always been the case that if you're converting into the large, HMOs, so six or more, anywhere in the country you have to get permission for that, but in places like Brighton and Loughborough, we've, we've had article four direction in place and taken away that permitted development for most things. So and policy framework as it stands today is we have a local plan for Charnwood. And the government a few years ago wanted us to write a suite of documents in order to make your local plan up. And so we've got a core strategy, which is our local plan and I'll show you that got this document for tomorrow and I can send you a link to that.

Finn Winkelmann

Okay, yeah.

Clare

So yeah, we call it core strategy. And the idea is we write a core strategy and then we go on to write more detail policies on topic areas later. And the government have since said, "No, we don't need to do that anymore. We want you to write a single local plan. That covers everything", which is what we used to do. And so we're now working on that sort of thing called the local plan. But anyway, that's all by the by so are our local plan policies and core strategy. And, and then we've also got a supplementary planning document, which is really is intended to provide guidance on policy. It absolutely shouldn't set out new policy and the government are really clear about that. It needs to be explanation of how you use local plan policies. So the policy we have is known as policy CS4 and I can send you a link. But it's it's not very long policy, okay. And it's called Houses in Multiple Occupation. And the policy, basically talks about that, in England, we generally have a positive policy where we write things in a positive way. So it's not "you cannot do this", it's what you can do. It always takes a little bit of interpretation to work out what we're saying you can't do. We basically said, Well, we will support the well being character and amenity of our communities by managing the proportion of houses in multiple occupation. So we basically are saying that in order to protect the well being character of our areas, we're going to manage the number of HMOs in in a sort of area, and we sort of set proportions. So that's quite important. And, and we say that we will prevent houses and multiple occupations that are either in themselves, so individually or cumulatively, so, you know, as a result of being part of a big concentration are going to do one of the following things. Then we've got some bullet points about what we're looking for. So it's, it's damaged to the social and physical character, it's noise and disturbance, and it's to do with car parking. So those are sort of our measures. When you now go into our supplementary planning document, we then expand on that, and we explain how we're going to work out that you are cumulatively having an impact. And one way we've done that is to identify threshold. So we've got a threshold. And it's it's known as a threshold policy, but it's not a policy Charnwoods case. And I don't know about Brighton actually, there may well have policy on it. Ours is a guidance threshold and our thresholds 20%. And so we are starting point for any discussion on having application for a new HMO is to have a look at what the percentage concentration is today in that locality. And, and our current approach is to look 100 meter radius. So we take the property

that's being proposed as a HMO. And we literally take the center point of the built property, and we draw 100 meter radius circle around it, and we work out how many homes there are in that, circle and how many of them are HMOs already and that gives us a proportion. But in the, in the guidance note, we're clear that and again, I can send you a link to that as well, in the guidance note we're clear that that should be a starting point. So say you've done that piece of work, and you found out that the concentration is 18%. So it hasn't breached our threshold. There are some other things you should do you should then think about. So for instance, if you had, say 18%, but you also within the radius had halls of residence, that's clearly going to tip the balance in terms of the number of students and and HMOs that you know, sort of activity you're going to have. And this is actually a really important point. And we we've discovered through work done by the University, the HMOs on all students. Now, originally, we'd always believe the thing and the reason we put the policy in place was because we had a quite a big university in quite a small town. So we have quite big concentrations of students in HMOs. And actually, when we did the research with the guy from Loughborough university, we found out actually getting around 50% of them haven't got students in. And that that's fascinating to us. We had no idea. But then it turns out that they're, they're providing something that we're not providing in the market, which is cheap accommodation. And I'm more than just cheap, though. It's also fairly flexible. So you can, we find that people like work at the airport, who are taxi drivers, ex-university students that are doing their PhD, or just starting out in their career in the area. And lots of different people are starting to compare generally in HMOs, a fairly flexible, easy piece of accommodation that that can come and go, varies, the contracts aren't very long. And so yeah, it's fascinating me HMOs. So not just students that we've had a really big push to sort of make sure that our policy is correct, because actually HMOs are the problem, not students. And students, you know, there's the whole identity, you've heard the term town and gown. So yes. And there is that real push because the university give the town so much they give it definitely contributes to our economy, that, you know, it's a massive part of what makes Loughborough a really vibrant place. But it has its downsides. And the downsides is the student costs, you know, generally less respectful to their neighbors, not always, sometimes they have more parties, they're living a slightly different lifestyle to your average family. And so there is that fear of putting up between the two groups. And actually, some of the issues that we see students also apply in a primary environment that's not students. So for instance, if If you've got three or four people, and three or four, up to six people living in a property, you potentially can have a lot more cars, you can have a lot more coming and going front doors, shutting constantly, you know, it's quite particularly terraced housing and we live in quite a dense environment, in England. So it's, you know, terraced housing is quite common in Loughborough, shutting of doors, cooking it maybe three or four times a day instead of just the you know, average family doing it together. All those extra smells and noise, you know, has an impact. And, and you might be talking about for people with their own TVs and laptops, watching for different programs next door, you know, rather than again, a family perhaps sitting down and watching one TV that all of that noise disturbance and comings and goings, that's relevant whether you're talking about for professionals or you're talking about four taxi drivers or four students. It's the same issue. So we've tried to drive that home with our members which are out elected members that we're not just talking about students when it comes to HMOs in Charnwood. So um, but but having said that, you know, like, the point I was making, our radius has a halls of residence in the middle of it or on the edge of it. And that can sometimes have quite a big impact because it pulls references pointing into the area that we're looking at. And the universities on the other side of the chances are all students from that hall of residence will walk through that area to get to university. That's a massive impact. Now 18% doesn't seem like a very good idea to be adding to, if the if the halls of residence were too near the entrance is somewhere else and they're all heading in the other direction. That may be 18% is something we can expect moving into a 19% then that's, that's the sort of judgment call we have to make planning application level. So got policy, we've got some guidance, but in the end, we have

to look at it on a case by case. You know, each application on its merits has its own And the way we describe it in our planning environment. And, as always, there are lots of shades of grey and planning. And so you do have to work out what's relevant for this particular application. So, yes, that's our planning environment, if you like, for making those decisions.

Finn Winkelmann

So you're using the threshold more as like a first sort of guideline and then assessing the on a case by case basis.

Clare

Absolutely, yeah. You know, we we always say it may be a case that in a high concentration area, you may allow some, something to happened. And, and in a low concentration, we may not, you know, there's every possibility happen. But I would say more times than that, you know, more times than not, the threshold is quite a big part of the decision making. And then and it does guide really because if to accept that sort of wider research that's going on to identify that tipping point. So and we have this debate quite a lot of planning applications, what harm is one more, what's it? What's the matter? You know, one more house on a street that's already got so many? What difference is it really going to make? And that's the point. It's not about that one property is about trying to stop something that's already started. And then and you know, there's very good reasons for us to do that. And the research that goes behind the policy is all about, you know, community cohesion, and community balance, really, and making sure that our communities are balanced and work well together. Because any one group coming out balance can be problematic. Yeah, you know, we've we've had this conversation that having, you know, lots of old people congregated, in one part community has its problems, the whole different set of problems, but any, any community that becomes completely imbalanced, that comes with issues for that

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, that makes sense. And so when you say you were saying that it's obviously only partly of the HMOs that are occupied by students. So is there still trouble with the students in the town? Like, are there is there still noise sort of pollution and residents complaining and things like that?

Clare

Yeah, but there certainly is we have I think the best way of sort of recognizing that is we have a liaison group that meets and between the University Students Union in the council, and includes people like the police, and they meet on a regular basis because this is a this is a key concern from the community. So yeah, there is there's there's a there's an ongoing issue. It hasn't gone away. And the reality is that the policy came in far too late for some areas. So, they're already very concentrated.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, that's one thing I really have learned, like during my research now during the last few days is that the problem of this policy is really not being retrospective. And so not being able to solve the issues that are already there.

Clare

We can't you know, we can't chuck people out of their homes and say, actually, you know, that can't happen anymore, it's just not something that is open to us. Really, what we need to work out is, is opportunities to go back, you know, so, and unfortunately, local authorities are not well resourced, and so things like enforcement. So if we know for instance, property has been, they've had three students in there, and at the end of term, they will move out and the next year it's, it's only occupied by two. They lose their their permission to be a HMO straightaway. So, there's, there's not three people in there. It didn't have to be a family. It could just be two people in there and they lose their status. But we don't police it. We don't enforce it. So because we don't have the resources, we rely on people like Margeret to bring it to our attention. So we think there might be a family in there actually, can you go and have a look? And we can knock the door and find out and then we can be reallocate that property is no longer a HMO, which is really resource intensive, particularly when you think student movements happen annually.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, yeah, that's what she was also mentioning is that a lot of students are just not also, they were trying to sort of do it through the addresses that the students were registered at university. But the problem was that a lot of them were putting their home addresses into it or other or their parents addresses in just towns right outside that. Yeah, right next to it, and so they weren't really working.

Clare

Yeah, we really had some random addresses in there.

Finn Winkelmann

But so since the measure has been implemented, so that's the threshold I'm talking about. Do you think that it has helped with the nuance of the students? Or is it rather just completely, because it's not retrospective, it's kind of useless in dealing with it.

Clare

No, No, it's been really effective from the point of view that it stopped the issue and you know, further concentrating I suppose, or further becoming an issue. So, and we have been really successful in planning appeal. So, in the English system, if we, if we make a decision and somebody doesn't like the decision we make to refuse the application, they can appeal it and it then went through the planning Inspectorate and that's somebody central that comes and has a look at the case. And they work on behalf of the government and say: "Okay, yeah, we think the counselor right or wrong" and we have been really successful at the

appeal, and our decisions have been upheld, which is great. So the policy is working and the majority of applications in areas of more than 20% get refused, the vast majority. So from that point of view, it's positive. It will take years, maybe generations to get areas back to being a genuine mix where the concentration has already happened very severely. And, and it's very interesting actually so Loughborough has lots of terraced streets, which would traditionally where the students went because there was cheap accommodation. They could turn the living room into a bedroom so you could get two upstairs and one in the living room. That worked rather well and it's all close to university and those were the streets that got hammered first. Completely accidentally we permitted a housing state right next to the university for family homes. So quite big properties, you know, four bed properties and, and bigger and we didn't see it coming but they all got taken up by people looking to let students. So we've ended up with this little enclave of it's called the Kingfisher estate, it's there, you know, it's quite nice. It's very nice residential street, big property, and we have a lot of party houses. And in, you know, pool tables and hot tubs and all this great stuff for students. That's certainly not like when I was a student, I was in a moldy like backroom space but apparently that's not how students live anymore. They are they Yeah, it's become really sort of very popular. Now, interestingly, as HMOs sort of level off and we see HMOs going across to other groups, that area we will be the last to go because it's really popular. So no matter what we do, it's not going to solve the problem for that state and we still have families living there. So they, you know, they are really trapped where they can't sell their house because we won't let them turn into a HMO now. And nobody wants to go and live there. So, they become trapped in their own homes. And we have had a lot of criticism about that. And we have talked about just letting it go. And how about if we just let all those houses become HMOs because well, you know, what's the harm? But the police interesting, they were really anti that. They said, you need a bit of a mix, even a little bit of mix is keeping things in control. And you've got that little bit of community that's steady over the years. So we Yeah, we've stayed with refusing applications in that area is that I can't see that going back to family homes. For Yeah, probably a generation at least.

Finn Winkelmann

And just also because the properties are too attractive for the students. Yeah. Okay. And when was when did that happen? What year was?

Clare

Um, I think it was...

Finn Winkelmann

but it was before the before the whole policy and everything?

Clare

Yeah.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, that make sense. And you were talking about that you're writing new was a town plan or Yep.

Clare

Yeah, a new local plan.

Finn Winkelmann

And, yeah. Is, is there any, like changes to the policy that you're thinking of or anything that they're trying to improve?

Clare

Yeah, we are. It includes the threshold in it. So that's quite big change for us. We're moving from the threshold thing as a guidance not to it being part of the policy. So we will have to really justify that examination. And we've also looked at dropping percentage down to 10%. So that is quite a big shift for us. It hasn't happened yet. But that's where we're heading. And that really is to respond to the local feeling that by 20%, you're, it's too far gone, the problems exist, and you should really have stopped it earlier. And because we've stopped it in those areas, it's starting to go out to new areas. So we're finding that student population and the HMO population is increasing in sort of the next band round University. And if we've got an opportunity, we've got an opportunity to stop that at 10% rather than letting it get to 20, so that's what we're intending to do. And that's, you know, that's we've got to try and justify through our public plan.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah. And that is being implemented when?

Clare

It will be, it would be adopted in January 2022. It's quite a long process. And yeah, would you be doing further consultation on it later this year? And then we what we do is we have we have a number of consultations on plans and then we hold an examination in public. And that's the Inspectorate, again, the planning Inspectorate come, they sit and they listen to everybody around the table. And basically everyone gets their views about why our plan is wrong. And we get to say why we think right. And the inspector goes away and writes report and says, what he or she thinks?

Finn Winkelmann

And there's also like resident groups and the university present as this at this. Everybody has to say,

Clare

Yes, every now and again we get somebody who will support us. Not very often?

Finn Winkelmann

So the university is not in support of this?

Clare

No, the University are really supportive actually. And they work very closely with the, with the council. And, yeah, they've always been very supportive. And, you know, they've developed quite a lot of on-campus accommodation to try and draw students out of the community. But the reality is there will be there's a sort of tendency, and I don't know if it's the same in the Netherlands, that we, we use student blocks in our first years and then year two and three, we want to live out in the community, we want to, we kind of want to be part of a town or place and you don't want to feel quite so like you're being institutionalized through the university, rite of passage. So I don't know that no matter how much accommodation is created on campus, I think they'll always be that feeling that you want to move out into, you know, normal life.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, I've talked about that as well with, with some people in Brighton and they said the same thing that it's sort of this image or like culture, I guess almost that you have that like, the students want to sort of live their own life live in a house also with other students and just get away from this whole authority of the university, and then them having any sort of supervision on them. And so just doing their own thing, and that that also Yeah, just increases them wanting to move to HMOs.

Yeah, absolutely. I find it I find it fascinating. I held a range of interviews with people that live in streets with lots of HMOs in them. And, you know, they said one year we'll get a lovely group of students who are really lovely, they look after to us, they pull our bin in for us, you know, they're just, they're just really good neighbors. And then following year, they just battle from day one till the day they leave and it's a nightmare. It's a genuine living hell because it's their it's their home. I feel I really do feel for these people, for that partition.

Is there's also something like somewhere that those people can go if there's a problem like that they can like write a complaint or go to somebody?

Clare



Yeah, so we have environmental health officers at a council, who will collect up complaints and investigate those and will go out and if they think there is an issue, they'll issue well, they can issue warnings and then eventually orders and you can get taken to court if it's real bad. And there's also the Students Union have set up with the university where they've got somebody who is available all day or night, and can go out there and then because often the council you're in, you leave a message will get back to in a few days time, whereas they can ring the Student Union number and they will get through to the security on site at that point in time. And so if it's really bad, they can go out and knock the door there and then and say you need to turn it down you need to calm down, whatever it is so that that works reasonably well. What I've heard from people living on street like this is that if it's a really serious issue. You know, you go to the police, that's fine if it's semi serious you're call the University, but it is the thing that gets people down is people parking their cars over in the driveway or just having a meeting a couple of people that are too loud, or just banging doors all day or you know smoking in the garden. They're not they're not sort of thing you're going to ring a helpline about, because quite frankly, it seems a bit petty no but you know, this constant, you know, having somebody smoking in their garden next door, constantly can upset some people, you know, so but it's a bit too petty to ring up and complaining about so we always know that our data completely underreported. It doesn't represent the full picture.

Finn Winkelmann

But it's also very difficult to figure out something to change the behavior of those people. Because it's, I mean, it's also their house. So they can also do what they what they believe is okay.

Clare

Yeah, we do. We do a really big program at the beginning of term. So council workers and university staff go and knock on the doors of all the students, and they tell them when their bins will be collected. And here's some bin backs. Do you know you know, you've got elderly neighbors next door look after them. And they kind of try and say, look you're part of the community and we're, we're here to help you. You're here to help them. We're all in this together. And that has significantly reduced the amount of problems that we've had having sort of pro-active engagement. I mean that's way outside of the planning environment, but It definitely has helped

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, I mean, it works together. With the planning policy as well, in order to prevent the whole issue. Yeah. Um, yeah. So that covers the changes as well. Is there anything that you would personally implement, like that we would hope happens for the town in order for it the situation to improve even more or to. Yeah.

Clare

Well, when you when you see our policy, which are some things that we've added in or things like sandwiching, have you heard of that?

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, yeah.

Clare

That's something I'm quite keen on. And which we're testing it out, see if we can get that into the plan. I don't know, there's lots of very small things that you sort of think, and we're not all that joined up. So my biggest problem at the moment is data. And in order to work out where students are, I have to use University data, which is really poor. As we've discussed, I have to use council tax data and electoral register data and planning data. And it's a, it's a lot of data. And it all needs coordinating. And so that's, that is definitely a difficulty for me, because we can't get the university to bend their data to the point we need it, there's no benefit to them. So that was, that would be something I would like I'd like the better data set. And actually, we've got the best datasets in the country. But it's not accurate. Because it's still it's still based on some assumptions. So we've assumed if there are five surnames in a property, the chances are it's a HMO, it could be, but you know, five probably is but when you get down to three surnames, well, that could just be a complicated family, mother in law and her daughter You know, her husband and she's kept her maiden name in it, you know? It could be, oh, yeah, quite easy to work a scenario out where you've got three surnames in a house. So, that doesn't feel very accurate. And I don't as a planner, I like to basing what I'm doing on really good evidence. So I do feel like we are making predictions sometimes, which is frustrating. So that that's probably one thing I'd like to do. I'd like to get back to understanding what a brilliant thing that university is for the town, and perhaps to take the heat off the students. I feel like the students get a lot of bad press and they're not always the problem. Sort of my personal ambition to try and get out that HMOs isn't just students and students aren't a problem, you know. And, and, and then yeah, the sort of coordination role so, like transport issues are dealt with by the county council, not the Borough Council. So we've got a two tier system in this area. I'm sure Margaret has talked to you about that. And we've got people who are dealing with the sort of community side, the planning side, the transport side. And it's not very coordinated. So it's more during our bits. But what we really need the resources to do something more cohesive and collective, that would be better. But they are nice to have in an environment where we don't have a lot of resource.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah, I mean, that's pretty much all the questions I had. Is there anything else that I might have not asked or left untouched?

Clare

I can't think of anything. I'll send you through the policies.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, that would be great.

### **7.10 Interview 5: Margaret – Loughborough**

Due to the wishes of the participant, the transcript of this interview is not included in the appendix. For further information or concerns, please contact the author of the thesis.

### **7.11 Interview 6: Eva and colleague – Groningen**

Here are some examples of the kind of topics that will be asked during the interview about the limitation of student housing:

Contextual questions:

What is your occupation?

We are both policy adviser at the municipality of Groningen. Our policy field is housing. Within this field, Eva mainly consults with housing corporations like Nijestee and Lefier about their housing programming. Marije focuses on student housing.

How long have you been working in this field?

4-5 years, of which one or two years at the municipality of Groningen

How does your job relate to limiting the impact of students in the urban environment?

Proposals that arrive at the municipality for new (student)housing projects are assessed by Eva. In doing so, we follow the rules that we have drawn up in our policy and zoning plans. Marije is working on plans for the longer term, in which supply and demand are coordinated. We therefore regularly consult with the RUG and HG about their expectations regarding studentprognosis.

Threshold measure questions:

What are the exact measures undertaken in order to limit student housing in (city)?

How is it decided to what extent the student housing must be limited?

We have revised our student housing policy several times to achieve balance in neighborhoods (quality of life) and to meet changing student needs. Since 2008, the 15% standard has been used as the maximum percentage of student housing per street. The 15% norm meant that a maximum of 15% of the number of homes in a street could be converted from family home to student house. However, popular neighborhoods (center, old neighborhoods) were already above the 15% standard when introduced.

In 2015 was decided to lift the 15% standard. The standard was too generic and did not take into account the specific situation in a street, neighborhood or district. Many situations require customization, on which the 'omgevingstoets' (a kind of assessment) has been introduced. With this assessment, each application was individually tested, to see whether adding more student housing could not affect the quality of life in a neighborhood. If that was the case, a permit was no longer granted. The 15% standard still played a role in this as assessment criteria. Streets above 15% were not granted anyway, but streets below 15% were now subject to the environmental test and the permit could therefore be refused if this would affect the quality of life.

In 2017, the room rental policy was further tightened, as a result of which no new extraction permits have been issued in recent years. We noticed that landlords subsequently looked for other options: splitting homes and utilizing the planning space by building additional courtyards and special congestion. With regard to house splitting, this has been anticipated by the zoning plan "House splitting". We can stop unwanted house splits by conducting an environmental test. The basic principle here is that an existing house is greater than or equal to 140m<sup>2</sup> and that each independent house that arises as a result of the split is not less than 50m<sup>2</sup>. The zoning plan has also been reduced with the zoning plan "Revision of zoning rules for housing".

With the exception of splitting homes under certain conditions, it is no longer possible to intensify or expand existing room rentals. In addition, it is possible to convert room rental into independent apartments by means of a housing permit. The starting points are: the number of residents must decrease by at least one (for example by converting three rooms into two independent units), the surface area of the independent units must be at least 24m<sup>2</sup> and the units may be occupied by one household. We have created this opportunity to increase the quality in the existing room rental market. By converting rooms into apartments, the quality increases and the number of tenants decreases. In addition, we see that apartments are tidier than rooms in a room rental property. We hear that this generally leads to less nuisance in the neighborhood.

**Through which ways is it enforced?**

**Is it actively monitored?**

Apart from applications for self-contained units, applications for student housing (rooms) are refused. Besides that, we rely on reports from residents who suspect illegal rental. Developers know now well how our policy works and what can and cannot be done. In case of breaking of the rules we enforce. In a number of neighborhoods we have good contact with the residents who indicate this, for example in the Schildersbuurt.

**Who has authority over extending the measure?**

This is a task of municipalities.

**At what scale is the measure implemented?**

The implementation of new student rooms is no longer permitted throughout the municipality.

**Are there any particular reasons why this approach was chosen?**

We saw and heard from local residents that a number of neighborhoods were under too much pressure of students. The city council also considered that it's important that there would not be more student housing in a number of neighborhoods. In addition, surveys revealed that students actually need and wish independent housing units. Both signals have led to the addition of self-contained youth units and to stop adding room rental in existing neighborhoods.

**Success of the measure:**

**Do you believe that the measure has been successful in achieving its goals?**

Yes, it has helped maintain balance in a number of neighborhoods. Otherwise there is a good chance that many homes here would also be converted into room rental. In addition, we hear from the neighborhood where many students live that converting to self-contained units creates slightly less pressure on the neighborhood.

In addition, we have succeeded in adding many numbers of new homes for young people in the form of independent units. In total 8.000 units in 10 years.

**If yes, what are the aspects it was successful in achieving?**

**Successful in particular areas?**

**Why there?**

It is successful as otherwise there would be a good chance that the balance would be lost in even more neighborhoods. We also hear that converting rooms into self-contained units means less pressure in the neighborhood.

**Has it been successful as part of other policies or is it acting alone?**

It is not acting alone. In addition to legislation and rules we need assistance and dedication of students and stadgers. They can bring energy to organize things together and they have the creativity. And more important: knowing each other helps to understand. We try to promote this through: Wijs, Leven in

stad and StadClickt. Leven in Stad offers a subsidy for organizing activities in the neighborhood. Here is the connection between students and stadgers in the neighborhood essential. We also have a website stad clickt. This a city blog were we tell stories about the click between different groups, but also nice facts about the Groningen. When there is an activity with subsidy form leven in stad or nice initiative we will tell about it at this blog.

Do you see that it might need to be adjusted in the future?

Not yet.

If no, what has the policy failed to achieve?

How could the measure be adjusted to be more successful?

Has it failed everywhere in the city?

What other policy solution might have worked better?

The policy is clear and transparent. Converting family homes into student rooms is no longer allowed. However, this policy only applies to new situations. There are several neighborhoods and streets where there were already many student rooms before the introduction of this policy. We can only ensure that these neighborhoods and streets do not get further out of balance, but the number of rooms will remain high here.

Due to the large number of independent student units that have been added in recent years, we expect that the balance in these streets and neighborhoods will gradually return, but this cannot be regulated in policy.

Improvement of the measure:

Do you believe the policy is in the need for changes/improvement?

If yes, what changes should be made?

As indicated, it is possible to convert student rooms into independent units. We receive these requests regularly. However, we must avoid this at the expense of the affordable range of student rooms in the city. We want the new offer to remain affordable. We are going to investigate whether this can be solved by adding additional rules to the current conditions. Quality must also remain affordable for the future.

If not, would you recommend this measure to another city?

How might this city approach the measure?

Groningen is a unique student city. Of the 231,000 inhabitants, 70,000 are young people aged 18 to 30. Compared to other cities, Groningen is therefore a very young city. As a result, we may have different challenges in Groningen than in other cities. The policy we now maintain is in keeping with the way Groningen is structured, but does not have to work for other cities. But we do see that other cities such as Maastricht are also adopting, a part, of our system.

Anything that is left untouched or might still be relevant from your perspective to add?

- Any other contacts?
- Particular documents?

## 7.12 Interview Transcript 7: Eva - Groningen

Finn Winkelmann

Perfect. So when I was looking at the questions, one thing I was really wondering about was when you were talking about the how, in you have in 2017, I think that they changed it from being 15% to being no more houses at all.

Eva

That's true.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah. So what what was the cause of this? Like? Was it just a lot of students that like, was it just too many students in the neighborhood or was there a lot of complaints by the residents?

Eva

Yeah, also complaints by the residents and you saw that also the other neighborhoods, like the center and the old neighborhood were already at 15%. Also in the other neighborhood, that there are too much students coming. So and then we changed our policy and we're thinking about we have to build new homes, independent studios, and we're going to stop more room rental and also we're thinking that there are a lot of family buildings, and they are now gone to students, but there was also a lot of questions to that kind of houses. So that was the.. change remains that we're going to build new houses for the students so that the family houses are also (available) for the families. And then you have a better chance to find a good home.

Finn Winkelmann

And you mentioned it was like 8000 new homes right? in 10 years?

Eva

Yes, yes. Do you already know them there in Paddepoel? There are a lot of new flats.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah. I actually lived in the I lived in the Upsilon building for one year.

Eva

Oh, yeah, yeah. That's one of the buildings. But also at the Reitdiepzone, at Zernike, so there are a lot of new buildings, and now we are, I think most of is built and now there a lot of, kind of three or four big projects are coming and then we think we have enough buildings for students.

Finn Winkelmann

But they think that there'll be more students again next year or like they think you'll be increasing again?

Eva

The number of dutch Students are decreasing, but international students are increasing. We think that there will be a bit more when we look at five years further, we can see it this coming into balance or maybe it's going to decrease. So it's very difficult for us because of the international students we have the peak in September. Afterwards it's going fine, then there is enough but because of them all coming at the same moment, it's difficult to find enough houses. But for Dutch people, its easier, they can also wait one month at our parents home and then find their own. So that's not difficult, but we think that there is in the coming years there will come a balance between the available houses and students.

Finn Winkelmann

Okay, nice. No, because I know that that's like a very big problem here is the suddenness and it was also difficult for me to find something.

Eva

Yeah, all people are searching for a room in September or August and we always see that in October, it's fine. Everybody has found a home, but September that's difficult.

Finn Winkelmann

But then the so the, the 8000 homes, the ones that are like single units, they all get rented just from September? or do some of them also start earlier. Are they like do they adjust to the university like academic year? Or is it like just a regular rented room?

Eva

It's just like a regular room. There is the SSH buildings which adjust to the year, but then there is also the buildings that are also now when somebody is leaving, somebody come go. So it's regular and from the SSH, they are for the academic.

Finn Winkelmann

Okay. Yeah, that makes sense.

Eva

It was just for the international students that will also have those kind of options.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, because they obviously needed in September.

Eva

Yes. But that is also important for us, that SSH rents out those kind of rooms.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, for sure. And then I was also wondering what role the university plays in this. Do they also have contact with you or are they involved in the whole student housing process?

Eva

Yes, especially in international student housing, for the peak. We are working together. The housing corporations like Lefier and the university and the Hanze Hogeschool, we are working together and we have consonants and especially for the housing during the peak and also thinking about what do we need in the future? For example, we need the prognosis from the university about their, what they are thinking how many students are coming and we are working together.

Yes. And that's also really important, especially the last few years. I think you have probably heard the things in the papers and in the news, so yes, we're working together,

Finn Winkelmann

And then you also mentioned this, this might be another topic but the Leven in de Stadt or Leven in Stad and that they subsidized events right? I was wondering like what are some of the most popular events that they have or what are some things that you know that are subsidized a lot?

Eva

Do you know the Schildersbuurt?

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, that's where I live actually.



Eva

Ohh really? They always organize a barbecue in September, and they asked all the people to come outside and they are making pies and barbecue and to meet each other. So the people from Groningen, students and that really works there. Especially, often that kind of event to meet each other. To organize a BBQ or picknick or that kind of things.

Finn Winkelmann

And it's between the residents that are there like the families and so on and the students?

Eva

Yes, that's the goal. To meet each other and to know each other because it helps when you know each other you can ask or you can say that you have a party or if there is something wrong we hope to achieve that.

Finn Winkelmann

And also maybe then have less trouble going through the maybe municipality or the police or something if people are complaining so they can go there. Instead of calling somebody.

Eva

Yeah, it is better to ask your neighbor.

Finn Winkelmann

For sure, yeah. And then you were talking about the so that rooms can be converted into single units like into apartments. Has there has a lot of this happened like is there a lot a lot of rooms that have been converted?

Eva

Yeah, we see that It happens and I think every week we got two ask (requests) for that. And I think the last years there are two hundred converted and especially maybe in the Schildersbuurt with the people we talk with they tell us that it helps because there are living three that are five people in one house and there are three bikes instead of five bikes, so that help to keep the balance back. But we are also now looking if it is not too much because we also need small rooms and rooms that are a little bit cheaper than an independent rooms. So we are searching for a balance between converting the students houses and having enough rooms.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, that makes sense. And I was wondering about sort of the how this makes it how that is attractive for landlords because how I think about it is that, I mean, if you have a house you're renting to five people, you're probably going to have more rent than if it's for three people. Or do they then charge more rent if they have a single unit?

Eva

Yeah, they can ask for more rent. They can ask more money because it's an independent studio so they ask more money. And they say that there will other people be living there than in normal rooms, so they have less, how do you say...

Finn Winkelmann

Like trouble?

Eva

Yeah, less trouble and it's cleaner. So that's what makes it interesting for them.

Finn Winkelmann

Okay, then.

Eva

It is also financial, they can ask for more rent.

Finn Winkelmann

So in a in a house in total, they then have more rent than if they just have the rooms.

Eva

Yeah, or the same, but not less, otherwise they don't do it.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, that's what I was thinking. Then you said that there's some neighborhoods where the balance between students and people is obviously quite critical. And is there still a lot of neighborhoods in Groningen where it is critical, even though there has been new houses built and new conversions?

Eva

Yeah, you will see that especially in the Schildersbuurt, but also in the Korrewegwijk, do you know it?

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah.

Eva

There are a lot of students and it's fine, but the family houses are less there, so it's not really in balance. So it's important for us that there are still enough family houses and not more students are coming to that kind of neighborhoods. And also in the city center in city center and there are living a lot of students and that's, that's a good neighborhoods for it, so it's not really critical, but there's not a balance between all the different groups in the municipality. And you will hear a lot more noise. And how do you say, in that kind of neighborhoods...

Finn Winkelmann

Like disturbances and stuff?

Eva

Yeah, yes. Yes, but it's better than five or six years ago.

Finn Winkelmann

Okay. And why?

Eva

Yeah, there are less disturbance. I think so and noise.

Finn Winkelmann

Oh, And you think, is that due to the the policy?

Eva

Yeah, also, I think so, but also that we can use the conversion from and to independent studios and that is one of it, and it's also that you can get lucky with your students or another year you are less lucky.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah. Yeah, for sure. But so you that was actually my next question that you say that there are neighborhoods where the student numbers have decreased because of the conversion to the single units.

Eva

Yes. Yeah.

Finn Winkelmann

Yes. Okay. That's very good. Yeah. That was more or less the questions I had. Oh, and is there, so I know there's probably like an online forum where resident can make complaints or maybe say if there are problems or so. But is there also meetings or something where there's maybe like representatives of the neighborhood that talk about these kind of student issues and stuff?

Eva

Yes, we also talk with a little group in Schildersbuurt and also in the Korrewegwijk, but it's not at a regular time, but when there is something, and especially we have neighborhood managers. I don't know if that's the correct word. And they can ask them and they asked us to give some information or talk with them. Because that's important for us to hear from the inhabitants what is going on. What works and what doesn't.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, that makes sense. And then this is going back to the policy itself actually, they said that they or you said that in 2015 with the 15% they also had like an assessment of looking at the quality of life sort of in the if it's affected. Do you know what exactly they were looking at? Like what kind of things?

Eva

Yes, like how many students are already living there. I don't know the right word... how is it living there? Is there a lot of because other neighbourhoods its not the other neighborhoods, there are better neighborhoods, where its easier to have some different groups. And if there are living a lot of one person

households or a lot of families or so there we are looking for and also the kind of house. Is it? Is it a good place for this? So, they are looking into the whole neighbourhood.

Finn Winkelmann

There is just the whole analysis and everything.

Eva

Yes.

Finn Winkelmann

That's very interesting.

Eva

And we also ask the neighbourhood managers what he or she is thinking about it.

Finn Winkelmann

Okay. And in, in a lot of cases, do you think it was approved or declined or was it sort of balanced between the two?

Eva

I think there was a balance, but I was not working yet.

Finn Winkelmann

Yes, okay.

Yeah, so That was all the questions I had. Is there anything else you want me to know or?

Eva

No, I think Yeah, I hope that that policy is clear for you.

Yeah. No.

Finn Winkelmann

Okay.

And is there documents of the policy online? Like I know it's probably in Dutch but I would still want to look them up.

Eva

Yes, I can find some. Do you call it letters to the municipality or the yen? I can find it and we call it always bouw jong. And with that, it's a book and I will ask my colleague Marai, if there is a PDF or a word document. But it is all in Dutch.

Finn Winkelmann

Yeah, that's that's not a problem.

