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The different types of student residences in the city of Groningen: How do these influence the well-being of students?

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Colophon

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Table of Contents

Abstract

The city of Groningen counts many students, and therefore, student residences. Research on well-being has developed more and more over time. However, research on student well-being, especially in the Netherlands, has been conducted less. When being a student, students face many challenges, such as the pressure to perform. Everyone wants to prove themselves. In addition, students have high expectations of their families and themselves. Therefore, this research focuses on student well-being in the city of Groningen and how different student residences influence this. A qualitative research approach was adopted in which students living in the city of Groningen were interviewed. The interviewees were divided into three groups based on the type of residence. Results were triangulated using document-and media analysis. With the COVID-19 pandemic changing lifestyles globally and, therefore, students' lives and mental health, students without housemates seek interaction outside their residences. In contrast, people with housemates seek more interaction within their house. Furthermore, green spaces, which were still accessible during the pandemic, became crucial places to visit. When discussing the respondents' background, there were some significant indicators of why they chose to study in Groningen. The most significant indicators were distance, friends, and the study they wanted to do. Outcomes were that the COVID-19 pandemic affected student well-being negatively, whereas the environment of the residence influences student well-being positively.

Keywords: Well-being, students, COVID-19, mental health, interaction

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Since its foundation, the University of Groningen has attracted students from the Netherlands and abroad (University of Groningen, 2012). Consequently, Groningen counts many student residences to accommodate all these students. Whereas in countries such as the United Kingdom, many students live on Campus (La Roche, Flanigan and Copeland, Jr, 2010), this is not the case for students in Groningen (University of Groningen, 2012). In Groningen, a student residence is a dwelling where exclusively students (or sometimes young, working people) form a residential community (University of Groningen, 2012). They are often existing buildings rented out on a room-by-room basis by a housing corporation, student association, educational institutions, or private individuals. Moreover, many students live in buildings which are called student flats. A student flat is a multi-story building specially built and designed for students. Often, several students live together in one corridor or department. A studio or one-room flat is a small flat consisting of one room, usually intended for one person. The one room of the flat serves as the living room and bedroom. Usually, there is also a kitchen and separate toilet and shower area. Nevertheless, how do these different residence types affect the well-being of students? Student well-being has been researched broadly already (Bladek, 2021), and also research has been conducted on student well-being in combination with housing preferences (La Roche, Flanigan and Copeland, Jr, 2010). However, little research has been conducted on how the type of house influences the student well-being of students in the Netherlands and specifically Groningen. The COVID-19 has had a significant influence on the well-being of students and makes the research societal relevant since it has had a significant impact on especially the age group students are amongst (RIVM, 2021).

1.2 Problem Statement and Societal Relevance

This research aims to investigate the well-being of students in Groningen and how the type of residence they live in affects this. The well-being of students consists of several components that will be discussed in-depth throughout this research. The results of this research can be of value to contribute to the increment of student well-being and provide new insights on how different residence types can influence student well-being. During being a student, students face many challenges, for example, the pressure to perform. Everyone wants to prove themselves. In addition, students have high expectations of their families and themselves (Pollard and Lee, 2003). Besides the pressure to perform, students have to deal with tension while constantly under psychological and physical strain. Tension is related to the flood of stimuli that come at them during the day (Pollard and Lee, 2003). Even in their rooms, many students are unable to relax. Moreover, because of everything that presents itself daily, many students are unaware about what is essential and what is not. Additionally, a side effect is loneliness. There is a desire for personal, deeper contact. Especially the combination between the pressure to perform and upholding social interaction is typical during the timeframe of being a student and therefore differs itself from other life stages (RIVM, 2021).

By adopting a qualitative research method approach, the perceptions and experiences of students living in Groningen, varying in different residence types, will be researched and aims to answer the main research question *"How do different types of student residences influence the well-being of students in the city of Groningen?"* The research process will be guided by the following sub-questions:
- *What influence did the COVID-19 pandemic have on the mental health of students?*
- *How does the amount of interaction with roommates influence student well-being?*
- *How does the background of an individual influence where they live now?*

1.3 Hypotheses

According to the study of Bladek (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affects students' mental health. Compared to other population groups, students face more difficulties regarding the lack of interaction and the feeling of being left behind. According to 145 studies divided over 60 countries examined by the RIVM (2021), lockdowns negatively influence the physical and psychological health of, especially, young people. Therefore, it is also expected that the most crucial factor that affects mental health via the COVID-19 pandemic is the decrease in social contacts (Chou et al., 2020). Moreover, the expectation is that a different type of residence, combined with mental health, will affect the student's well-being and that the differences per individual differ much (Holahan and Wilcox 1978).

1.4 Reading Guide

This thesis encompasses six chapters. The core concepts for this research are described in chapter two, the theoretical framework. Then follows chapter three, which describes the methodology by explaining the research methods that were used in this research. Chapter four presents the findings and results of the case area Groningen. In chapter five, the main research question will be answered in the conclusion. Finally, the discussion and future research will be made in chapter six.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Well-being

Well-being has been defined differently in many fields. Therefore, many definitions, indicators, and measurements have been put into practice variably (Pollard and Lee, 2003). According to Keyes (2002), well-being is about how an individual keeps up with personal and collective capacity and how this makes it possible to pursue the objectives. In later studies, well-being measurement includes positive attributes, such as potential, strength, and others, and it is not only about the absence of disorders and illnesses (Keyes & Annas, 2009). According to this perspective, student well-being is related to enhancing their capability and functioning within the school context. Furthermore, Suldo & Shaffer (2008) suggested that students with a high level of well-being show satisfaction towards school and higher quality of social relations. Whereas there has been much research conducted on the well-being concepts mentioned before, fewer studies were conducted about the well-being of students. Therefore, this research will focus on student well-being, which the following concepts will support; Type of residence, Sense of Place, Student's Background, Mental Health, COVID-19, and Social Interaction.

2.2 Types of student residences

As stated in the introduction, there are many different student residences. However, it is still unclear what influence a specific type of student residence has on a student's well-being. A study by La Roche, Flanigan and Copeland. Jr, (2010) researched the national trends in student housing and the results of surveys of student preferences both nationally and at one university. In this study, six housing trends were identified; Luxury, privacy, Privation, Live and Learn, Safety and Security & Go Green. "What were once considered to be luxuries in student housing –kitchens, private bedrooms, private bathrooms, social spaces and lounges –are now expected. (School Facilities) Internet connectivity–including wireless connections and cable are considered requirements" (La Roche, Flanigan and Copeland. Jr, (2010). However, whereas this study was conducted amongst students living on Campus, in Groningen, students do not live at a Campus. The city of Groningen consists of many different types of student residences. There are student residences where a front door, bathroom, kitchen and occasionally a living room are shared. There are also independent or private residences where a front door, kitchen, bathroom and living room are not shared. These residences are most of the time rented out by private individuals and housing corporations.

2.2.1 Sense of place

Sense of place is a concept used to describe people's mental bonds for a place. These mental bonds are different for each individual and based on experiences that a person goes through in his life (Getz and lev-Ari, 2016). This study has researched behavioral aspects that were expected to influence the sense of place formation. The behavioral aspects studied are; the total number of activities undertaken and the type of activities undertaken in a specific place. Subsequently, it was studied whether connections with a sense of place could be demonstrated. "It is generally assumed that young people with lower socio-economic status (SES) face restricted access to higher education institutions, and particularly to those which are considered to be more prestigious" (Getz and lev-Ari, 2016). Therefore, differences in student placement in higher education institutions by place of residence are usually explained by their SES (Getz and Lev-Ari, 2016). According to Adams (2013), the sense of place is about the ties between people and places. It is a multidimensional concept consisting of place attachment, whereby an emotional bond with a place is experienced. Above that, it consists of place identity which means that the place says something about who someone is. Furthermore, place dependence, meaning the place is functional and enables the activities or goals.

2.2.2 Student's Background

People enter residential communities at different stages of life. They come from different backgrounds and have been shaped by their life path so far. This life path affects how they see and interpret the world, express themselves and often feel and react in certain situations. Growing up in a particular setting has a significant impact on the rest of an individuals' life. According to research conducted in the United States, a higher parent's income is linked to a higher child's income, better educational outcomes, and a lower risk of teenage motherhood (Chetty et al., 2014). Income mobility in the Netherlands is relatively high: both low and high wealth are passed on from generation to generation, only to a limited extent passed on from generation to generation (van der Brakel & Moonen, 2013). Children who grew up in low-income families can often improve this unfavorable income position. This means that people are not so much influenced by their background but rather can climb the socio-economic ladder through their own capacities (van der Brakel & Moonen, 2013).

2.3 Mental Health

According to the World Health Organization (2021), mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her capacities, can cope with the everyday stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to his or her community. However, cultural differences and personal experiences make it difficult to define mental health. What it means to be mentally healthy varies from person to person and also from culture to culture. For example, in the Netherlands, someone is mentally healthy if he or she feels good about himself or herself, suffers less from stress, enjoys life, copes well with change, and better handle setbacks (Volksgezondheidtoekomstverkenning 2020). Furthermore, connecting it to the COVID-19 pandemic, experiencing stress and uncertainty during a crisis is expected, according to Volksgezondheidtoekomstverkenning (2020). It does not lead to severe psychological problems in most people. However, prolonged stress, which is possible in this crisis, can lead to physical and psychological complaints.

2.3.1 COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic made it more and more impossible to access university campuses, libraries and in-person services, increasing the concerns about student well-being (Bladek, 2021). Data from student campus health services, mental health organizations and advocacy groups show that college students have been struggling to manage the pandemic's stress, anxiety, isolation, and related pressures (Anderson, 2020). A survey by Wang et al. (2020) administered among Texas A&M University students showed that almost three-quarters of students indicated that the COVID-19 crisis had increased their stress and anxiety and about half exhibited depressive symptoms (Wang et al.,2020). This study will focus on whether the COVID-19 pandemic also has these influences or other influences on students at home and how their residence type plays a role in this. How does living with or without roommates influence the well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic? Here, two other concepts will be linked; social contact and mental health. As stated before, the COVID-19 pandemic made college students struggle to manage stress, anxiety and isolation. Students had less social contact, which was harmful to their mental health.

2.3.2 Social Interaction

Social interaction is the general process whereby two or more persons are in meaningful contact, resulting in slightly modified behavior (Holt-Lunstad, 2021).Therefore, social interaction is the basis of the whole social order. Human interaction is not only physically beneficial but also imperative for mental health. Loneliness and social isolation are twice as harmful as obesity to physical and mental health, according to Holt-Lunstad (2021). According to Zaitseva and Pelepeychenko (2022), effective social

interaction is essential in our time, as it ensures social well-being, sound activity in all domains of society and, consequently, the development of any country as a whole.
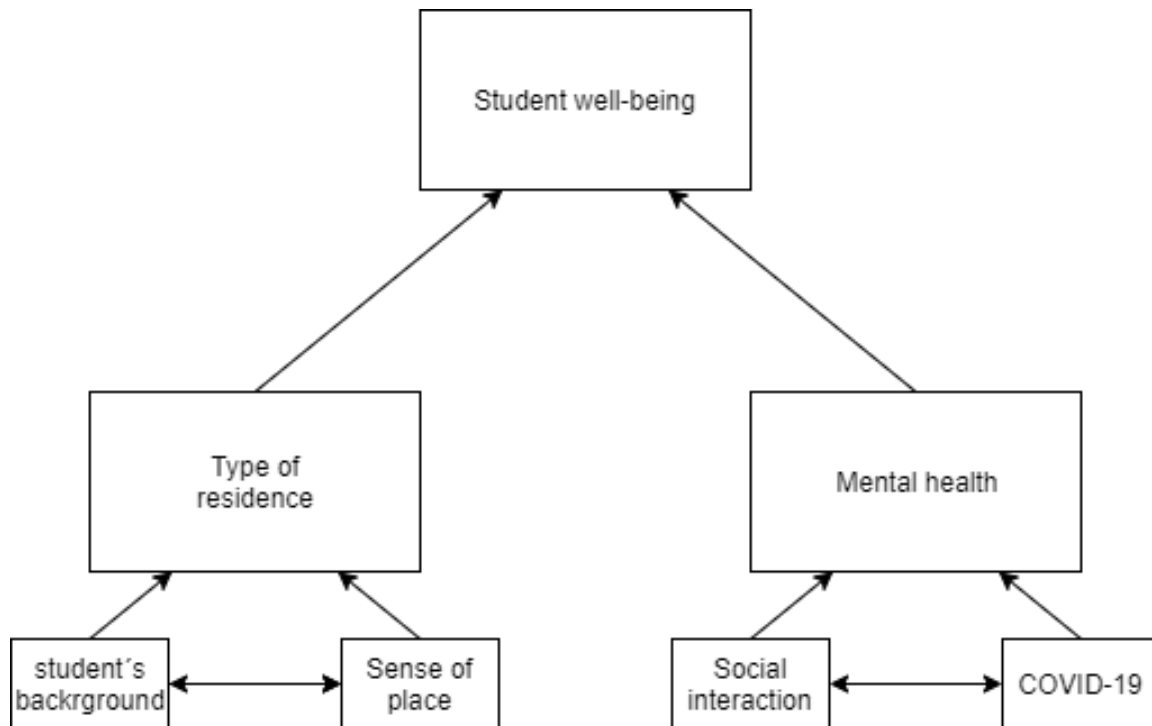
2.4 Conceptual Model

Figure 1: Conceptual model

This conceptual model implements the concepts of student well-being, type of residence, mental health, housing composition, sense of place, social interaction, and COVID-19.At the bottom of the conceptual model on the left side rents, the student´s background and sense of place can be seen. The housing composition means with how many people the individual lives in the house and with the sense of place, it is meant where the individual (prefers to) live(s). Together, all these concepts influence what type of house the individual lives in (Thomsen and Eikemo, 2010). At the bottom right, the concepts of social interaction and COVID-19 are connected. According to Merrill, "Social-interaction is the general process whereby two or more persons are in a meaningful contact, as a result of which their behavior is modified however slightly." During the COVID-19 pandemic, social contacts were reduced, which affected people's mental health (Chou et al., 2020). Therefore, both the housing type and the mental health of an individual significantly influence the student's well-being (Holahan and Wilcox 1978).

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

For this research, qualitative methods are used for data collection, since these are the primary choice when conducting a case study (Ridder, 2017). A triangulation of research methods was used consisting of a literature review, a document analysis, a media analysis, and in-depth semi-structured interviews, which strengthens the validity of the research outcomes (Taylor, 2016).

3.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews allow for primary data collection that adheres to the desired structure, but simultaneously leaves room for the interviewee to talk freely about their views, experiences, feelings and attitudes towards the topic (Taylor, 2016). Therefore, Semi-structured interviews effectively gather open-ended qualitative data while analyzing data (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). All sub-questions are intended to be answered via the semi-structured interviews. However, especially the sub-questions *'How does the amount of interaction with roommates influence student well-being?'* and *'How does the background of an individual influence where they live now?'* were suitable to be answered by semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, allowing interviewees to respond in their preferred language can result in more authentic answers and subtle nuances, enriching the data results (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). For this research, twelve semi-structured interviews have been conducted to gain sufficient primary qualitative data that could be triangulated using secondary data. Per group, four interviews were conducted to create a valid comparison between the different groups and a clear view per group. The recruitment criteria for all groups were that (1) they should live apart from their parents, (2) they should live in the city of Groningen, (3) they should be a student at the Hanze Hogeschool or the University of Groningen. An overview of the interviews can be found in Table 1. The interview guide used during the semi-structured interviews can be found in Appendix 2 and was used to enhance the aim of the interviews, answering the main research question and the sub-questions. The topics that were included in the interviews were housing characteristics, social interaction and COVID-19.

Respondent	Date interview	Number of housemates	Duration
R1	04-11-2021	Multiple	44.53 min.
R2	06-11-2021	Multiple	27.58 min.
R3	06-11-2021	One	28.15 min.
R4	08-11-2021	None	35.55 min.
R5	24-11-2021	One	26.40 min.
R6	24-11-2021	None	30.48 min.
R7	25-11-2021	Multiple	27.54 min.
R8	01-12-2021	One	32.35 min.
R9	03-12-2021	None	24.57 min.
R10	22-12-2021	One	25.17 min.
R11	24-12-2021	Multiple	25.21 min.
R12	29-12-2021	None	28.20 min.

Table 1. Overview of the Interviewees

3.1.2 Literature

A literature review was conducted to create a clear focus for this research and elaboration on the concepts in the Theoretical Framework was possible. The literature review set the basis for further data collection, and therefore, answering the sub-question. Especially for the sub-question *'What influence did the COVID-19 pandemic have on the mental health of students?'* Literature review was suitable to answer this question, since there was much recent literature regarding this topic. Moreover, the literature review

made it possible to compare the results of this research. The literature was found by search engines Google Scholar' and 'SmartCat'.

3.1.3 Media analysis

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, much media attention has been given to this topic and to universities and students. Therefore, media analysis was conducted to provide a valuable addition to the data collection process and several media articles were gathered via 'Nexis Uni' and triangulated data from the in-depth interviews. Therefore, media analysis was especially useful for answering the sub-question *'What influence did the COVID-19 pandemic have on the mental health of students?'*. An overview of the used media articles can be found in Table 2.

Author	Title	Newspaper	Date of publication
N.A.	"Ook Groningse studenten pleiten voor coronabeleid op maat in brandbrief aan kabinet en burgemeesters"	Groninger Internet Courant	January 24th, 2022
Kruijf, de N.	*"Caroline coacht studenten die eenzaam of depressief zijn: 'Helft van studenten heeft psychische klachten"*	Algemeen Dagblad	January 22nd, 2022
Burgers, J. & Dijkstra, B.	*Stress en wanhoop bij studenten die een kamer in Groningen zoeken. Een lijdensweg vol afwijzingen, valse verwachtingen, frustrerende ellenlange treinreizen en 'vleeskeuringen'*	Dagblad van het Noorden	Ocotber 31st, 2021
Hebel, van F.	*"Groningen kan groei aantal studenten niet meer behappen"*	Dagblad van het Noorden	September 10th, 2021

Table 2: Overview of the media analysis

3.1.4 Document Analysis

The document analysis was used to further explore and triangulate data from the in-depth interviews. Moreover, this analysis was used to establish the dimensions of well-being for the students and gain insight into the specific COVID-19 measures taken and the recovery interventions that the Dutch Government implemented. Documents that were used for this analysis were governmental documents that encompassed information on the number of infections of COVID-19 and regulations that were implemented during the pandemic.

3.2 Data Analysis

The interviews were audio-recorded so that they could be transcribed afterward. The recordings were transcribed using 'oTranscribe' and analyzed by using ATLAS.ti. This software is helpful for qualitative research analysis through a coding scheme. Here, deductive coding was used to create a better connection between the primary data and existing theory (Cope & Kurtz, 2016). The coding schemes can be found in Appendix 3. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, not all interviews could take place in real life. Therefore, two of the interviews took place online via the program Zoom. The other ten interviews were in real life, on a neutral location conducted, so that the interviews were least biased.

3.3 Ethical considerations

Throughout the research process, the total anonymity of the respondents was ensured. This is done due to the important ethical considerations that every research containing interviews is confidential and anonymous (Longhurst, 2016). Therefore, no names, addresses or any other information that could identify the respondents´ identity were used during the analyzing and coding process. Interviewees were notified of the research aims and goals and were asked to sign a consent form beforehand, which can be found in Appendix 4 & 5. If the respondents wanted to withdraw their participation, then this was possible for whatever reason that might be. Furthermore, a neutral perspective from the interviewer was

conducted to avoid any influencing the interviews and interviewees. According to Longhurst (2016), this is very important to prevent positionality and ensure the power balance between the researcher and the respondents will be equal.

3.4 Sampling method

This paper adopted a mixed sampling approach of purposeful sampling and snowball sampling to recruit interviewees. Purposeful sampling was applied for the first three interviews to select students that met the requirements. Once for every group an interview was conducted, snowball sampling was applied to select the other respondents.

4. Results

4.1 Research Area

In figure 2, the exact location of the city of Groningen can be seen, which is the research area of this research. Moreover, in the legend, the border of the city of Groningen, the city center and two green spaces, Stadspark and Noorderplantsoen are marked.
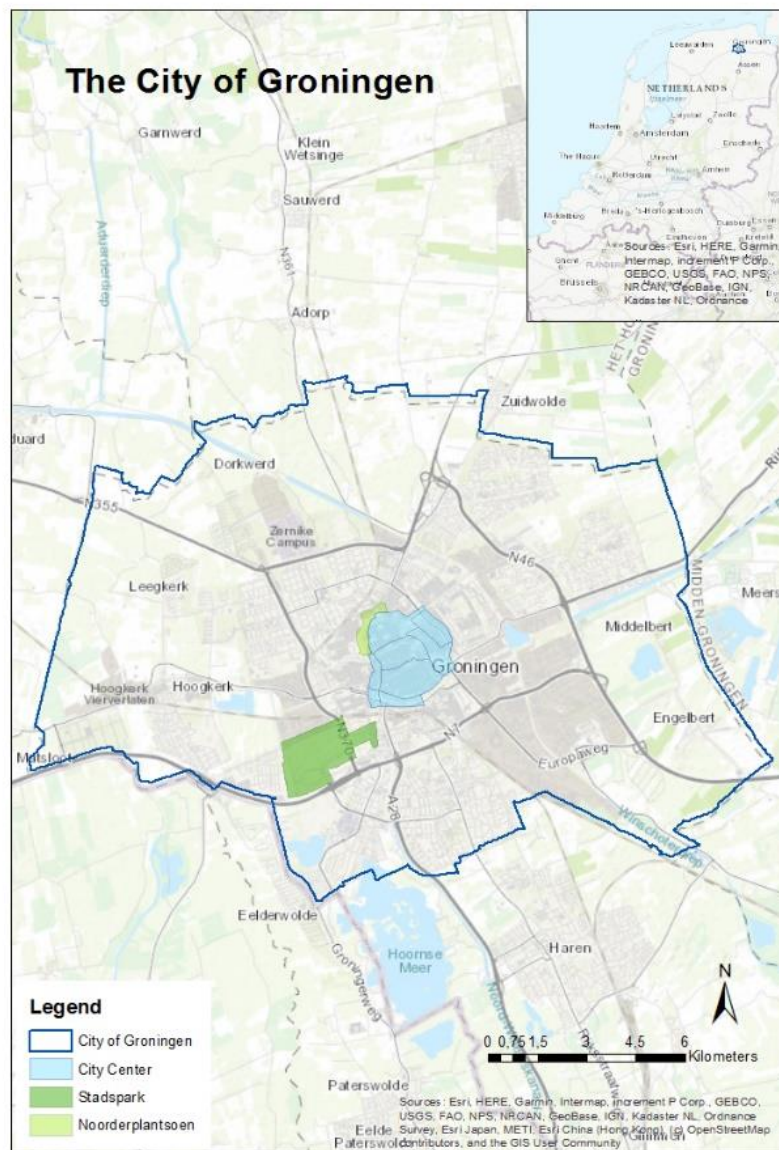

Figure 2: Map of the city of Groningen

4.2 Covid-19 pandemic, residence types and the influence on mental health

The COVID-19 pandemic started in 2019 and has since then changed lifestyles globally and, therefore, the life of students. As a result, the mental health of students changed. Interviewees who lived on their own experienced a feeling of loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Significantly the curfew harmed the mental health, which R3 states: *"The curfew, in particular, hurt me a lot, so I found that the freedom you had before was much less now, really to a minimal extent."* Therefore the outcome of the interviews matches with the research of Wang et al. (2020), showing depressive symptoms. However,

in the conducted interviews, these symptoms were not as worrying as in the research of Wang et al. (2020). For example, R5 stated: *"Yes, everyone has stress from time to time, but they have not really been made worse by the corona or anything like that."* Furthermore, it was stated that when living with multiple housemates, yet not having a shared living room, still caused lack of interaction with housemates. When interviewing R7, it was stated that even though living together with three housemates, a shared living room was still being missed to provide more interaction with housemates and space in the residence: *"It would be nice if we also had a space that we shared besides the whole kitchen or the garden, so that you can also see each other a little bit faster so to speak, that you are sitting there all day instead of really in your own room, because that feels a little bit more separate."* While for respondents living with multiple housemates and sharing the living room, interaction with housemates increased as well as the importance of interaction for them. Furthermore, many of the interviewees had either a job or were a member of one or more associations in Groningen. This form of social interaction was an essential part of their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though they did not see as many members or co-workers as they used to, it still created a positive influence on their well-being in a timeframe where social interaction was lacking. R1 states for example about an association:

"That is, I must say that was also something to fall back on, of course, you could not physically go to the pub anymore because it was closed and you cannot get together in big groups either but you still have your clubmates or people you know from the club so you can fall back on them."

Moreover, due to COVID-19, many respondents' lack of interaction with fellow students was an issue. Students with multiple housemates started having study schedules with their housemates as R2 stated:

"Because we often also started motivating each other to study. And everyone always got up at the same time, drink coffee in the morning and then went studying, have lunch in the afternoon, have another study session for a few hours, and keep each other busy studying, as a kind of social control."

Yet, for students living without housemates, this was way more difficult (NOS, 2021). Furthermore, students living with more housemates noticed that they now had a different view on the importance of housemates as stated by R7: *"And after living together for 1.5 years, you become very good friends and you can talk a lot more about things, so I think it will only get better."* Moreover, the many of the respondents visited their parents and family less often during the pandemic. This was experienced unfavorable but necessary, as R3 states: *"Well, I visited my parents les actually, because I just did not want to infect them or something and I was vaccinated early and they were vaccinated late, so I deliberately stayed at home more then."*

4.3 Interaction and the influence on student well-being

According to Holy-Lunstad (2021), loneliness and social isolation are harmful to physical and mental health. Especially for students, social interaction is important (RIVM, 2021). The interviews results of the interviews showed that the respondents need social interaction on a daily basis and if this becomes less, the feeling of loneliness occurs. The interaction students had with their roommates gained more of a conscious meaning during the COVID-pandemic. During the pandemic, interaction with housemates became more important for students living with roommates, as is stated by R2: *"I think ninety percent of them are roommates. Because in the end, they are and have become good friends of mine."* On the other side, students living on their own or living with one housemate missed the interaction with possible housemates during the COVID-19 pandemic R6: *"But I also had a period when I was a bit jealous of certain friends who had housemates and so on, who were always together to some extent."*

A differentiation, therefore, can be seen that students living with housemates had also more interaction with their housemates, while people living on their own have to put more effort into getting interaction R4:

"Before the curfew, I could just visit friends for whole days. Of course, I had known those people for a while and you have to make sure that people do not like you as if you are pretending to be someone else, but I think the relationships were good enough to allow me to see people."

Besides the effort they have to put in, the difference with who they have interaction is also different. People without housemates tend to search for interaction outside of their house, whereas people with housemates search for more interaction within their house. Not only with friends from themselves, but also with, for example, friends from their housemates, which eventually results in having interaction with people that are not friends from themselves directly, as stated by R1:

"Because if you have a lot of housemates, you also get to know people because of course you have your own friends, but you also get to know the friends of the friend of your housemates et cetera et cetera so also very good for your social contacts."

In general, the results of the interviews match the results of Bladek (2020), stating that social interaction is lacking during the COVID-19 pandemic and that it affects society negatively. Especially during the interviews it was mentioned that study time in Groningen is more than studying.

4.4 Sense of place

The environment and location relate to in what kind of residence a student will live. While conducting the interviews, it was often addressed that green spaces like parks are pleasant to have within walking distance. According to some respondents, having green spaces around their residences provides them with a feeling of happiness when stepping out of their house and above that, it was a pleasant environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The WHO (2021) also states that green spaces have positive effects on the well-being of people. Besides green spaces, the respondents preferred to live in a neighborhood nearby the city center and have amenities like supermarkets within walking distance. Living further away from specific amenities was experienced unfavorable. However, it does not influence the respondents´ well/being, as stated by R10:

"The city and going out, pubs, it's a pity that's not nearby of course. And what would be useful, especially since I am now busy with the house a to make it look nicer, is a hardware store where you can get a nail or whatever you need. But that is not something to complain about for me personally."

Furthermore, respondents who live nearby the Faculty they study mentioned this was pleasant, affecting their well-being positively as R6 stated: *"I also had quite a few viewings in the south of the city, but, then my faculty would be a lot further away and the fact that this is also really 5 minutes from my Faculty, that was also really just part of the reason why we wanted in."* Students living further away from their Faculty never mentioned anything about this. Two interviewees mentioned that they live in a neighborhood where fewer students live, but more middle-aged and older adults. Both interviewees stated that they would rather live in a neighborhood with more students if possible. However, the type and space they have in their current residence weigh heavier than living in a residence or neighborhood where more students are living. When comparing this with the research of Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu (2009), it relates to the part that sense of place can refer to positive bonds of comfort, safety, and well-being engendered by place, home, and dwelling. However, the interviews were not received the emotional bonds and attachments people develop or experience in particular locations and environments.

4.5 The relation between students' background and their residences

Student have different backgrounds and therefore experienced a different life path in their lives. Specific ties that were build during their youth still affects their current life. During the interviews many respondents mentioned that having friends already studying in Groningen or friends going to study in Groningen was a motivation to move to Groningen as well. Besides friends, distance was also a reason to move to Groningen. Respondents living relatively nearby Groningen stated that more of their friends moved to Groningen because of the relatively small distance. R6 clearly stated all of these indicators:

"And my friends all live in Groningen. I was one of the last ones to go to Groningen, so I think that was perhaps the biggest motivation of all, maybe even bigger than the study, because I lived at home the first year of the study and then I took the train every day. Maybe that's another reason, by the way. I was fed up with traveling every day, it takes up a lot of time."

Being provided with knowledge about the city and study and knowing people positively influenced the respondents' well-being. This matches the study of Jennifer, D. Adams (2013), which stated that the sense of place ties people and places. Therefore the students' background is connected with the sense of place a student has with the current and past environment he lived in. Furthermore, respondents who grew up relatively further away from Groningen stated that they were more likely to leave Groningen after their studies than respondents who grew up relatively nearby. Again, this matches the research of Jennifer, D. Adams, (2013), where students who grew up nearby Groningen, still have closer ties with the place they grew up.

5. Discussion

For this research, a single case study, the city of Groningen, was chosen to gain profound and integral knowledge about a specific context. The research aim was to investigate how and whether the different types of student residences influenced the student well-being of students living in the city of Groningen and was researched through qualitative data gathering in the form of semi-structured interviews. The results show that the COVID-19 pandemic was experienced negatively by all respondents. However, compared to Wang et., al. (2020), no respondents stated that the pandemic made them depressive or worse. However, the lack of social interaction was experienced negatively by the respondents. According to Holt-Lunstad (2021), social interaction is the general process whereby two or more persons are in meaningful contact, as a result of which their behavior is modified however slightly. Therefore, social interaction is the basis of the whole social order. The results show that this social order was pressured due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well. Respondents stated that social interaction was what they missed the most during the pandemic, especially with fellow students. The meaning of social interaction became more critical to students, which can be seen in the interviews, where it was stated that respondents are now more aware of the link between social interaction and mental health. Even though the study of Roche, Flanigan and Copeland. Jr, (2010) states that internet connectivity and other technological things had to be present in a residence, the results show that respondents did not mention them during the interviews. On the contrary, they mentioned that they would like to have the so-called luxuries in student houses. However, a difference in 'student culture' could be the reason for these different outcomes.

Qualitative data gathering allows more insight into the reasons and thoughts why and how students make certain decisions, have interaction with certain people and how they experienced being a student during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore the chosen research method yielded the most valuable data in terms of validity. As the results of this research relate solely to the city of Groningen, the results cannot be generalized for all cities. Since the COVID-19 situation changed during the timeframe when the interviews were conducted, it can be assumed that the opinions and feelings of the respondents might have been different. This could result in a different outcome.

5.1 Future Research

As a result of this research, two recommendations can be made for future research. Whereas it appears that students' mental health dropped due to the lack of interaction they had with, especially fellow students, the Dutch government should pay more attention to this issue. Furthermore, students who were not living in a building with other students, but with people from middle age or elderly stated that they would have liked it more if their fellow inhabitants were students as well. Therefore, it is recommended to research if and how students might live more separately. This research could also help increase the interaction these students have with fellow students during a pandemic like the COVID-19 one.

6. Conclusion

This case study attempts to answer the main research question "*How do different types of student residences influence student well-being in the city of Groningen?"* The COVID-19 pandemic affected the social interaction of students negatively and experienced a lack of social interaction. Especially for students living with one or no housemates, the lack of interaction was the most. Therefore, it is essential that students living together with multiple housemates had more interaction with them and did not have to seek as much interaction as students living with one or no housemates. Therefore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, living in a residence with multiple housemates affected the social interaction, and therefore, students' well-being less negative.

The location and environment affects the well-being of students positively. Not only has the residence an influence on their well-being, so has the environment. Having specific amenities nearby resulted in a feeling of happiness. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the environment of the respondents' residence was important to them. Stepping outside and having green spaces within walking distance contributes to their mental health. Furthermore, having certain amenities like a supermarket within walking distance was perceived positive too as well as living nearby the Faculty or city center. Amenities for which a respondent had to travel further within the city did not have a negative influence on the well-being. Therefore, the location and environment shows to affect student-well being positively due to amenities being nearby.

The main finding on how the background of students influence where they live now were that friends of them were already studying in Groningen or that the distance was (relatively) low. This shows that ties regarding people and places from years ago, still influence specific choices nowadays. However, reasons on how their youth or ties with their parents was, could not be answered, which is where the research gap in this research is shown.

This research method was suitable for answering the sub-questions and, therefore the main research question. The student well-being is influenced via several factors, based on the type of residence a student lives, supported by the sense of place and background and by the state of mental health, which is influenced by the social interaction and nowadays, COVID-19. However, since the case study was focused on students in the city of Groningen, there are some limitations regarding the generalization of the findings. As the results of this research relate solely to the city of Groningen, the results cannot be generalized for cities in the Netherlands or abroad. Furthermore, since the COVID-19 situation changed during the timeframe when the interviews were conducted, it can be assumed that the opinions and feelings of the respondents might have been different. This could result in a different outcome. Additionally, the last three interviews were conducted slightly later than the first nine interviews due to lack of time at that moment. Therefore, the last three interviews have a bigger chance of being more biased. Strengths from the research were that they give new insights into student well-being in the city of Groningen. Nevertheless, it is desirable that future research will be conducted to better understand how different types of student houses influence the student well-being in Groningen.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

Inleidende vragen:
- Vind je het goed dat dit interview wordt opgenomen?
- Hoe lang woon je al in je huis?
- Woon je met plezier in dit huis en in deze buurt?
- Ben je op de hoogte van het onderzoeksdoel en het doel waarvoor deze interviewgegevens gebruikt zullen worden?

Woonkenmerken:
- Kan je jouw optimale huis aan mij beschrijven?
- Hoe ziet jouw huis eruit?
- Welke dingen vind je niet prettig aan je huis?
- Met hoeveel huisgenoten woon je en hoeveel kamers heeft je huis?
- Hoe ben je bij dit huis terecht gekomen?
- Hoe lang ben je van plan in dit huis te blijven en waarom?
- Ben je tevreden met de hoeveelheid ruimte die je in je huis hebt?

COVID-19:
- Kan je mij vertellen hoe je de COVID-19 pandemie hebt ervaren?
- Toen je alleen woonde; miste je kamergenoten vanwege de COVID-19 pandemie?
- Met wie ging je het meest om tijdens de pandemie en hoe en waarom?
- Wanneer kamergenoten; vond je het prettig dat je kamergenoten had tijdens de pandemie en hoe heeft het je geestelijke gezondheid beïnvloed?
- Bij huisgenoten; Hoe was de interactie met je huisgenoten tijdens de pandemie?
- Hoe heb je je mentale gezondheid ervaren tijdens de pandemie?
- Heb je nu een andere mening over het belang van interactie met je huisgenoten?

Gevoel van plaats:
- Kun je de locatie en de omgeving van je huis beschrijven?
- Wat zijn je meningen over de ligging van je huis?
- Zou je mening over de locatie van het huis anders zijn wanneer je op het punt staat het huis te verlaten? Zo ja, waarom?
- Wat was de invloed van de locatie toen je besloot in dit huis te gaan wonen?
- Heeft de locatie een invloed op je geestelijke gezondheid? Zo ja, hoe beïnvloedt het je geestelijke gezondheid?

Afsluitende vragen:
- Heb je het gevoel dat je relevante informatie of ervaringen heeft waarover je tijdens dit interview niet heeft kunnen uitweiden?
- Wil je de transcriptie van dit gesprek ontvangen om te controleren op feitelijke onjuistheden?
- Heb je nog andere vragen of zorgen met betrekking tot het onderzoek?

Appendix 2: Interview guide (English translation)

Introductory questions:

- Are you comfortable with recording this interview?
- How long do you already live in your house?
- Do you enjoy living in this house and neighborhood?
- Are you aware of the research aim and the purpose for which this interview data will be used?

Housing characteristics:

- Could you describe your optimal house to me?
- What does your house look like?
- What things do you dislike about your house?
- With how many roommates do you live and how many rooms does your house have?
- How did you get to his house?
- For how long are you planning to stay at this house and why?
- Are you happy with the amount of space you have in your house?

COVID-19:

- Can you tell me how you experienced the COVID-19 pandemic?
- When living alone; did you miss to have roommates because of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- With who did you interact mostly during the pandemic and how and why?
- When roommates; did you like it that you had roommates during the pandemic and how did it affect your mental health?
- When living with roommate(s); How was the interaction with your roommates during the pandemic?
- How did you experience your mental health during the pandemic?
- Do you now have a different opinion about the importance of interaction with your roommates?

Sense of place:

- Could you describe the location and the surrounding area of your house?
- What are your opinions about the location of your house?
- Would your opinion about the location of the house be different when you are about to leave the house? If yes, why?
- What was the influence of the location when you decided you live at this house?
- Does the location have an influence on your mental health? If yes, how does it influence your mental health?

Concluding questions:

- Do you feel like you have relevant information or experiences that you were not able to elaborate on during this interview?
- Do you want to receive the transcript of this conversation to check on factual errors?
- Do you have any other questions or concerns regarding the research?

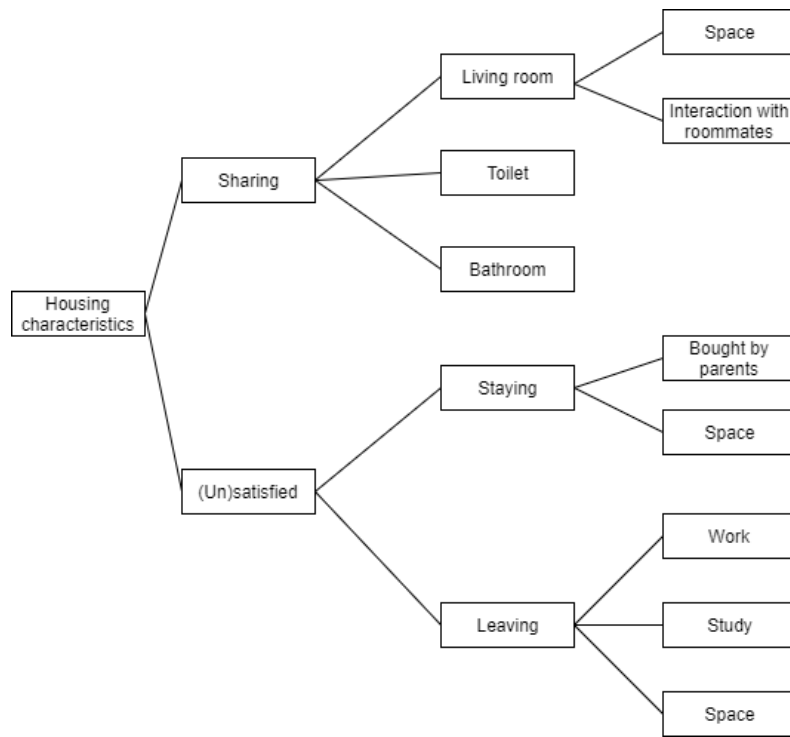## Appendix 3: Deductive code-trees for data analysis

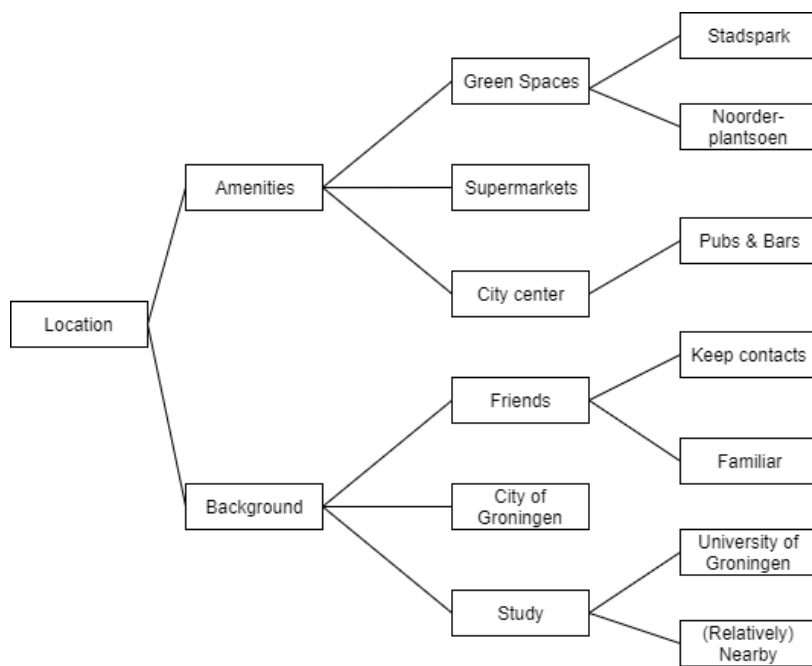Figure 3. Code Tree: The housing characteristics and how they relate to the student well-being

Figure 4. Code Tree: The location and environment and what factors have an influence on the well-being.
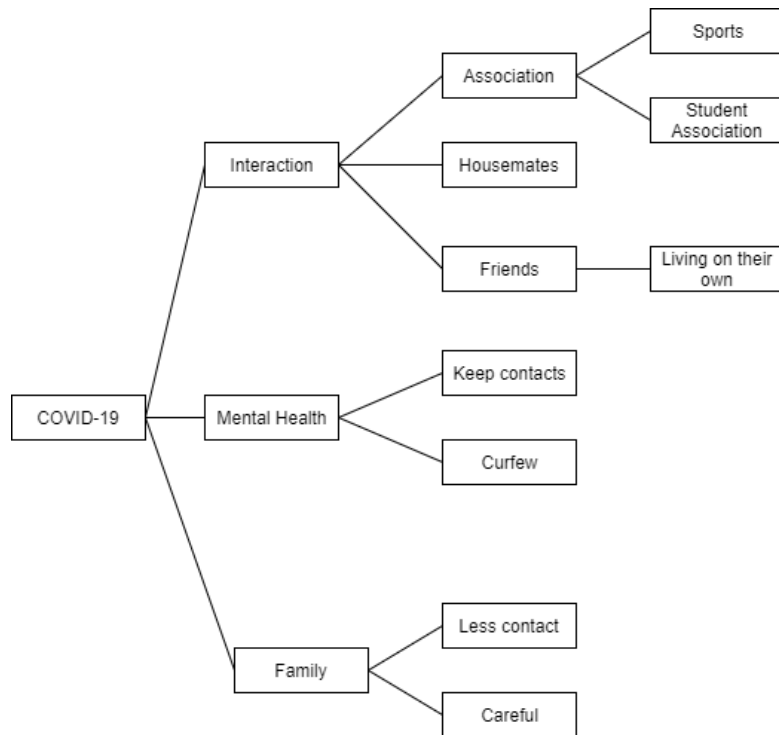
Figure 6. Code Tree: COVID-19 and the influence on Interaction, Mental Health and Family.

Appendix 4: Consent form interviews

Toestemmingsformulier interview

Project: Bachelor Scriptie Human Geography & Planning –Giovanni Kiewiet
Universiteit: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen
Naam onderzoek: The different types of student residences in the city of Groningen: How do these influence the well-being of students

Doel onderzoek: inzicht verkrijgen hoe de verschillende typen studentenhuizen in de stad Groningen, gebaseerd op het aantal huisgenoten, invloed heeft op het welzijn van de studenten.

Beste meneer/mevrouw,

Bedankt dat u mij wilt helpen bij mijn onderzoek naar het studentenwelzijn in de stad Groningen en hoe dit wordt beïnvloed door de verschillende typen studentenhuizen in Groningen, gebaseerd op het aantal huisgenoten.

Het interview zal ongeveer 30 minuten duren. Tijdens dit interview bent u vrij om op ieder gewenst moment te stoppen of om geen antwoord te geven op een vraag wanneer u dit niet wenst. Het interview zal deels een open structuur hebben, wat ervoor kan zorgen dat het iets uitloopt wanneer u extra uitleg wenst te geven bij een bepaalde vraag.

Het interview zal opgenomen worden, waardoor deze achteraf getranscribeerd en gecodeerd kan worden. Na afloop van het onderzoek zal de audio-opname verwijderd worden. Als u dit wenst, heeft u na het interview de mogelijkheid om het transcript te controleren op onjuistheden. Het doel van het transcript is om achteraf de mogelijkheid te hebben om de verkregen informatie goed te kunnen analyseren en te verwerken in het onderzoek. De verkregen gegevens van het interview en het transcript zullen vertrouwelijk behandeld worden en zijn enkel toegankelijk voor mij en mijn begeleider, Dr. Dimitris Ballas. De scriptie zal na afronding opgenomen worden in het archief van de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. Het transcript is hierin niet opgenomen. In de scriptie zult u volledig anoniem blijven.

Met het ondertekenen van dit formulier verklaar ik dat:
- Ik het doel van het onderzoek begrijp.
- Ik begrijp dat ik volledig anoniem zal blijven in de uitwerking van dit onderzoek.
- Ik begrijp dat deelname aan dit onderzoek volledig vrijwillig is en dat ik mij op ieder gewenst moment tijdens het interview kan terugtrekken en dat ik de mogelijkheid heb geen antwoord te geven op een vraag wanneer ik dit wens.
- Ik begrijp dat de verkregen gegevens volledig vertrouwelijk behandeld zullen worden en dat, zonder mijn schriftelijk bezwaar, deze gegevens gebruikt kunnen worden in de scriptie (in het algemeen of in de vorm van citaties).
- Ik begrijp dat alle verkregen informatie vertrouwelijk wordt opgeslagen op een met wachtwoord beveiligde computer.
- Ik begrijp dat ik na afloop van het onderzoek het transcript kan controleren op feitelijke onjuistheden en daarbij enkel deze feitelijke onjuistheden kan wijzigen.

Wanneer u verdere vragen heeft, kunt u contact opnemen met:

Giovanni kiewiet (onderzoeker)
G.j.kiewiet.1@student.rug.nl

Of

Dr. Dimitris Ballas (begeleider)
d.ballas@rug.nl
(Enkel contact opnemen in het Engels)
Wanneer u akkoord gaat met hetgeen wat bovenstaand is beschreven, graag het volgende invullen:

Naam deelnemer interview:
…………………………………………………………………………………………...

Datum: …………………………………………………………………………………………

E-mailadres (als u wenst het transcript te ontvangen om deze te controleren op feitelijke onjuistheden):

………………………………………………………………………………………

Handtekening:
………………………………………………………………………………………….

Appendix 5: Consent form interviews (English translation)

Interview consent form

Project: Bachelor Thesis Human Geography & Planning -Giovanni Kiewiet
University: University of Groningen
Research name: The different types of student residences in the city of Groningen: How do these influence the well-being of students

Objective of research: to gain insight into how the different types of student residences in the city of Groningen, based on the number of housemates, affect the well-being of students.

Dear sir/madam,

Thank you for helping me with my research into student well-being in the city of Groningen and how this is affected by the different types of student houses in Groningen, based on the number of housemates.

The interview will take about 30 minutes. During this interview, you are free to stop at any time or not answer a question if you do not wish to. The interview will be partly open-ended, which may cause it to run late if you wish to provide additional explanation for a particular question.

The interview will be recorded, so that it can be transcribed and coded afterwards. At the end of the study, the audio recording will be deleted. If you wish, you will have the opportunity to check the transcript for inaccuracies after the interview. The purpose of the transcript is to be able to analyse the information obtained properly afterwards and to incorporate it into the study. The data obtained from the interview and the transcript will be treated confidentially and will only be accessible to me and my supervisor, Dr Dimitris Ballas. After completion, the thesis will be included in the archive of the University of Groningen. The transcript is not included in this. You will remain completely anonymous in the thesis.

By signing this form, I declare that:

- I understand the purpose of the research.
- I understand that I will remain completely anonymous in the elaboration of this research.
- I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time during the interview and have the option of not answering any question if I so wish.
- I understand that the data obtained will be treated with complete confidentiality and that, without my written objection, this data may be used in the thesis (in general or in the form of citations).
- I understand that all information obtained will be stored confidentially on a password-protected computer.
- I understand that I may check the transcript for factual inaccuracies after completion of the research and only amend such factual inaccuracies.

If you have any further questions, please contact:

Giovanni kiewiet (researcher)

G.j.kiewiet.1@student.rug.nl

Or

Dr. Dimitris Ballas (supervisor)

d.ballas@rug.nl

(Contact only in English)

If you agree to the above, please complete the following:

Name participant interview:

 ....

Date:

 ....

E-mail address (if you wish to receive the transcript to check for factual inaccuracies)

....

Signature:

 ....