

# Home away from Home

*An Investigation into the feelings of home and belonging of international students in Groningen*



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17-06-2022



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International students face many challenges to their wellbeing due to them leaving their origin country, which also applies to students in Groningen. The home is a place to address these challenges, and therefore this study investigates international students' sense of home. While international migrants are often investigated regarding home, students are an overlooked sub-group in this research field. Literature highlights the importance and interconnectedness of the concepts of home and belonging. Thus this study uses belonging as main conceptualization to investigate students' experiences of home. Through the qualitative research methods of photo-elicitation and semi-structured interviews, different themes are investigated. The research concludes that people, daily activities, and time are important for students feelings of home and belonging. Furthermore, places, objects, memories, and emotions play an important role for students to feel they belong. Thus, the interconnectedness of belonging and home depends on the theme of discussion.

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# 1. Introduction

Between 2000 and 2008, the number of students that were enrolled in a country of which they were not citizens increased by 70% (Beine, Noël and Ragot, 2014). The Netherlands has multiple university cities with a high number of students in them. One such city is Groningen, where 25% of the inhabitants are students, and around 24% of the university students are international, which is a number that increases every year (University of Groningen, 2021; Marketing Groningen, 2022). With international students being such a large group in the city, it becomes essential to understand the wellbeing of these international students.

International students may face many different challenges regarding their wellbeing, such as homesickness, loss of support systems, loneliness, perceived discrimination, cultural shock, language difficulties, an altering sense of identity, unfamiliar academic approaches, and unrealistic self-expectations (Church, 1982; Sandhu and Asrabadi, 1994; Mori, 2000; Lee, Koeske and Sales, 2004; Poyrazli and Lopez, 2007; Russell, Rosenthal and Thomson, 2010). In the context of these many challenges, it will be important for international students to have enough resources to overcome them.

Challenges such as homesickness, the building of support systems, and loneliness can all potentially be addressed in students' home situations. Furthermore, a home also provides a location where students can express their home culture in their destination country (Tolia-Kelly, 2006). Thus, if students do not establish a sense of home, or rather experience negative feelings due to these challenges in their home, this may result in negative consequences for their wellbeing (Poyrazli and Lopez, 2007; Robeyns, 2020). If, however, students can build a sense of home that allows them to address these challenges, this may result in positive consequences for their wellbeing. Therefore, international students' feelings of home are important for their overall wellbeing, making it important to investigate this concept.

A 'Sense of Home' concerning international migration has been studied by a wide range of researchers through many different conceptualizations (Blunt, 2005; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). However, most research seems to focus on international workers, and students appear to be an overlooked group in research into migration and experiences of home. Therefore, this article will investigate the relationship between international students and their 'sense of home' through the following research question:

*How do international students' internal and external belonging influence their 'sense of home'?*

Belonging has been chosen as the main conceptualization through which students build a 'sense of home', and belonging within this research question can be interpreted as feelings of being emotionally attached and identifying with their destination and/or origin location (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Internal and external belonging is a distinction between belonging to better determine a sense of home (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Internal belonging depicts how a student subjectively thinks about their sense of belonging in a place, and external belonging describes how others believe a student belongs in a place (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Thus, this distinction makes it possible to investigate how students feel their belonging based on their individual experiences, but also how the interactions with people around them in the city influence their feelings of belonging. The following research sub-questions are proposed to further investigate the main research question:

- 1) *How do international students define their sense of home?*
- 2) *What practices, social relations, and memories and emotions make a student internally and externally feel they do, or do not belong at the destination location?*
- 3) *How do these practices, social relations, and memories and emotions make a student internally and externally feel they do, or do not belong at the destination location?*
- 4) *Does a sense of belonging at the destination location, result in the student having a 'sense of home' at the destination location?*

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Dodge *et al.* (2012) define wellbeing as an equilibrium between challenges and resources, within a psychological, physical, and social realm. This definition is specifically applicable to people from different cultures (Dodge *et al.*, 2012). International students face many challenges to their wellbeing in their destination country, which means that for them to experience positive wellbeing, this needs to be balanced through enough resources. A place to find these resources can be found in the home.

### 2.1 *Feelings and definitions of home*

When asking people what their home is, it may become clear that many people arrive at different answers. Some people will refer to a specific place, but others may mostly refer to certain people (Blunt and Varley, 2004; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Home is then also a concept that, for many people, extends past the boundaries of the house (Lewicka, 2005). In a review of literature about cultural geographic research on the home, Blunt (2005) states that: 'As a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear, the home is invested with meanings, emotions, experiences, and relationships that lie at the heart of human life'. When discussing home in the context of transnational migrants, Ralph and Staeheli (2011) augment this conceptualization of the home by referring to it as being 'dreamt, conceptualized, and experienced'. Furthermore, they refer to the home as a 'tricky and slippery concept', as it shows multiple ambivalences and complexities through its possible conceptualizations as either sedentary or mobile. Additionally, the building of a 'sense of home' depends both on the current home situation and memories of the previous home situation(s) (Blunt, 2005; Wood and Martin, 2020). Thus, the home in an international setting is a complex concept, and this research will contribute to this concept by investigating how the increasing group of international students experience 'the home'.

When investigating the definitions people have of home, an interesting perspective found in literature can be the perspectives of people that lack a physical house to form a place-based definition of home. Kidd and Evans (2011), in their research into the meaning of home for houseless young people, found that depending on how long the investigated young people were on the streets, they would have different definitions of home. Young people who lived on the streets for longer, more often defined it as a state of mind related to one's friends, while the other group would define home as a physical place, which was in direct opposition to their experiences of living on the street (Kidd and Evans, 2011). Relating this to international students, the concept of time may be important for their feeling of belonging. Furthermore, in cases where international students will not have a sufficient physical location they can call home, their definition of the home might change more towards one related to their friends. This relation of the definition of the home being related to friends, which are social relations, is in line with Blunt and Varley (2004), who argue that not only within, but far beyond the household do social relations influence the geographies of the home. When contextualizing this around international students, these students may refer back to their social relations made in other countries/places across the world to define their definition of home.

Furthermore this research is held in a setting just after the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to consider how the pandemic may have affected international students' definitions of home. One way in which the pandemic influenced definitions of home, is through the necessity of an increase in the meaning of the home (Gezici Yalçın and Düzen, 2021). People had to spend way more time at home, and due to the burdens they faced during the pandemic, people were compelled to make home a safer and more secure place, increasing the meaning of home as a safe harbor for people (Gezici Yalçın and Düzen, 2021). Depending on the experiences of international students during the pandemic, they may also have formed meanings of safety and security in their definition of home.

Lastly, Blunt (2005) also names everyday practices as important for defining 'at home'.

Everyday practices can, for instance, be how to do groceries without standing out to the locals, but can also consist of being recognized by people when moving through the city (Prazeres, 2018). This research expects these practices to be important for an international student to feel connected and more 'at home' at the destination when experiencing more positive everyday practices. Everyday practices leading to negative social interactions would then rather lead to feeling less 'at home', and more connected to the origin country.

## 2.2 Feelings of Belonging

This research will also look at the concept of belonging, which can be interpreted as feeling emotionally attached and identifying with a specific location (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Belonging, within this research, is split into internal and external belonging. A migrant can experience a doubling up of their sense of belonging and alienation (Werbner, 2013). This means that, as transnational migrants participate in more than one nation-state, they can experience belonging to more than one place, but also strangeness to their 'places of home' (Werbner, 2013). This means that international students might have different experiences in their so-called 'modalities of home', as their experiences with belonging might differ (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Multiple studies have illuminated how belonging may result in a 'sense of home', but this relationship works two-directional (Antonsich, 2010; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011; Boccagni, 2014). For instance, important for a migrant's belonging is that his/her 'identity is 'at home' in a place (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011, p. 524). When a migrant then feels their identity fits in with the people at a place, this makes them feel at home, which allows them to belong (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Furthermore, migrants may bring objects regarding social relations (photos) or memories and emotions to their destination home, reinforcing their sense of belonging at their destination location (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011; Boccagni, 2014).

The literary relationships between home and belonging are combined in the conceptual model (figure 1). In the model, the boxes in grey relate to the research sub-questions, while the boxes in blue are more prominent because they relate to the main research question.

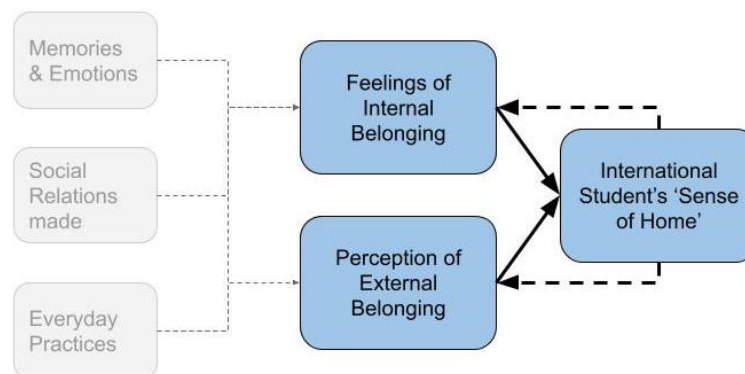


Figure 1 – Conceptual Model describing how Internal and External Belonging may influence Student's 'Sense of Home'

## 2.3 Expectations

Literature has established many aspects that are important for international migrants to feel they belong or feel they are at home. However, this previous literature has overlooked international students as an independent major group that also participates in this international migration. This research will investigate many of the established topics regarding home and belonging, but places specific emphasis on the experiences of international students, and the importance of belonging.

Based on the theoretical framework, the concepts used in the conceptual model are expected to explain international students' feelings of 'belonging' and 'sense of home'. Based on the literature,

this research would expect that both social relations created at the destination location, and relations that bind the student-migrant to the origin location, will influence if a student internally feels at home at destination-location, origin-location, at multiple sites, or rather nowhere at all. Additionally, these same social relations are expected to be incremental in a student's perception of how others feel them to be 'at home' in the destination country. Furthermore, it is expected that time, and everyday practices will have an impact on the feelings of home and belonging of students. Time has not been included in the conceptual model as it may influence all the concepts included. Finally, memories and emotions are also expected to influence internal and external belonging, because memories and emotions can both be from the past in the origin country, but can also be created in the destination country. These memories and emotions can already be about the past social relations and everyday practices of the international student.

### 3. Methodology

This research has utilized the qualitative research methods of photo-elicitation together with in-depth interviews to investigate students' feelings of belonging and home. Photo-elicitation interviews are a method in which researchers introduce photos into the interview that either originates from the interviewee, or the researcher (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). Photo-elicitation adds value to research as it allows a crossing of cultural bridges. From a principle where two people looking at the same thing will see different things, using photo-elicitation in research will allow participants to describe how the picture conveys home in their world of meaning (Harper, 2002). This research has been done with international students with various cultural backgrounds, while the researcher only has a Dutch cultural reference frame. Thus, using photo-elicitation allowed the participants to better convey the information about their experience with the home across this cultural division. Additionally, an advantage of using a photo as guidance during an interview is that 'images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness that do words' (Harper, 2002, p. 13). Not only does this mean that the interview can lead to more information, but also other kinds of information (Harper, 2002). When investigating the home, a topic that is very dependent on the individual, this allowed participants in this research to decide for themselves which aspects were most important for them to feel 'at home'. Finally, photo-elicitation serves as a model of collaboration between participant and researcher, where the interview is stimulated and guided by the photo (Richard and Lahman, 2015). In this collaboration, participants' values, beliefs, meanings, and attitudes, but also suppressed memories and/or understandings can be explored (Prosser, 2005; Richard and Lahman, 2015). The ability to access these suppressed understandings of the concepts of home and belonging resulted in a deeper understanding of the students' experiences.

Photo-elicitation, in this research, uses the method of participant-generated photographs (Harper, 2002; Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; Richard and Lahman, 2015). Students have been asked to bring a photo to the interview that conveys what, who, and/or where in Groningen they feel most at home. It will specifically not be determined if a student chooses to show a 'what, a 'who', and/or a 'where', because literature has already illustrated how the home can mean different things to different people, and therefore it is very important to enable the students to determine from their viewpoint how 'home' is best illustrated.

The choice of having both semi-structured and photo-elicitation interviews as part of the research was made because photo-elicitation results in different information. Topics that have been discussed in the interview range from students' social relations and the influence of places and objects to the influence of students' daily practices on their feelings of belonging and home. The interviews lasted between 29 minutes and an hour. More information about the exact questions that were asked during the interview can be found in appendix B.

#### *3.1 Conducting the Interviews*

Participants have been recruited through convenience sampling. This meant that the researcher contacted international students either physically, or through social media to ask them if they wanted to participate in the research. In collaboration with the participants, it was decided when and where best fitted their schedule to be interviewed.

At a minimum of 48 hours before the interviews were held, participants were sent a request to bring the photo of home, and the consent form about how their data would be processed, how the researcher would protect and pseudonymize their data, and that the participant at any point during the research can withdraw their participation and be removed from the dataset. 48 hours was chosen because students were then expected to have enough time to take/find a picture that best showed what they considered to be home, and ask questions about the research. The consent form brought



specific attention to the use of photo-elicitation in the research report. The consent form was signed at the start of the interview and can be found in Appendix C.

### 3.2 Ethical Considerations

The research methodology brings with it several ethical considerations. Privacy is very important to consider in this research, and therefore it has been made sure any participant cannot be traced through his or her participation in the research through pseudonymization of people, locations, and phenomena named by the participants that can be used to find out who the participant is. The photos used in the photo-elicitation interviews also bring specific ethical considerations with them. This research will use the photos in the results section but will anonymize any people through pixelation and/or black bars before their eyes. Furthermore, location-specific objects that may identify where a participant's photo is taken may also be pseudonymized based on the participant's preferences.

### 3.3 Descriptive Participant Information

Table 1 shows demographic information about the 7 participants in this study, and if they have feelings of being 'at home', and 'belonging' in Groningen. All participants were studying at the University of Groningen at the time of the interview and their ages range from 21 and 26. Five out of 7 participants were male, and 2 were female. This is not completely representative, as there is a majority of female students at the University of Groningen (2021). Furthermore, the participants were all from different countries, with almost all participants having only lived in their origin country, the Netherlands, and a maximum of one other country, often for a minor abroad. The only exception is Samuel who has lived in 8 countries during his life. Most participants felt at home, and like they belong in Groningen, except for Samuel, who did not feel like he belonged in Groningen, and James, who did not feel like he was at home in Groningen.

**Table 1 – Summary of demographics and main feelings of home and belonging of pseudonymized participants**

Participant Pseudonym	In-Person	Gender	Age	Country/Region of origin	Lived in other countries	At home in Groningen	Belonging in Groningen
Eddy	Yes	Male	21	South-Eastern Europe	1	Yes	Yes
Neil	No	Male	21	United States	0	Yes	Yes
Wesley	Yes	Male	23	Northern Europe	1	Yes	Yes
Veronica	Yes	Female	23	Central Europe	0	Yes	Yes
Jessie	Yes	Female	21	Southern Europe	1	Yes	Yes
Samuel	Yes	Male	21	South-East Asia	8	Yes	No
James	Yes	Male	26	Western Europe	1	No	Yes

### 3.4 Analyzing the Data

The interviews have been transcribed verbatim. Then, they were added to the software of Atlas.ti, which can be used to categorize and code data. The first step in the analysis was to go through all the interviews and label all quotes that provided answers to any of the research sub-questions. The next step in the analysis was to go through these labeled quotes and provide them with codes that in one or two words describe the theme the quote was referencing, which will be important for answering the research sub-questions. The thematic codes were then categorized and related to one another so it was possible to provide answers to the research sub-questions, which were used to answer the main research question.

The analysis has been done by combining deductive, and inductive coding. It was expected that participants would mention a large variety of different themes regarding their home and belonging,

and therefore, it was not possible to include these all in a predetermined code table. Nevertheless, it was possible to select a few main codes before analysis based on the literature that can either be used to group in more specific codes or as specific codes themselves. Table 2 shows the combination of the predetermined deductive codes, and the inductively determined codes during analysis:

**Table 2 – Deductively and Inductively determined codes, based on the literature**

Feelings of home	Daily/Weekly Activities
Feelings of belonging	Characteristics of a house
People	Memories
Places	Experiences
Objects	Time
Characteristics of a house	Safety
Acceptance and Rejection	Familiarity
Locations outside the Netherlands	Locational Values
Student Amenities and Facilities	Student Housing
Bicycle	University
Place Attachment	

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Definitions of Home

The participants of this research had multiple similarities in their definitions of home. One thing multiple participants mentioned is that home was a feeling. Eddy mentions the following:

*Home is a place where you feel comfortable. When you know that your safe from uncertainties. (...) And this is not necessarily just one building or one room or one city.*

This quote also illuminates the second aspect of home that differed for participants: The spatial extent of the home. For some participants, home was very much centered around their living space (studio, house, or room in a house), while for other participants home extended into the neighborhood, or sometimes into large parts of the city itself. Additionally, for all participants, certain people are important for them to define home. Neil mentions the following:

*So as long as I live there, it is almost like, what would make it not a home? And I only lived in 3 places my entire life, and in all three places I feel like I could come home and be comfortable, like I could go home and interact with people.*

Not only certain other people are important for Neil to feel at home, but also the fact that home is the place where he is. And this illuminates a last commonality among the interviewed students. Home is often considered to be a place for relaxation/escape from the outside world. This is in line with the notion that home is a place where the resources can be found to deal with challenges in daily life (Dodge *et al.*, 2012).

Thus, home is a concept with multiple definitions attached to it, with differences between students in what is important. Some students focussed a lot on the comfort/relaxation aspect of home, while other students concluded that without certain people home would never be home. Home is a place that depends on personal experiences that consist of multiple aspects, which will be elaborated upon in the next sections.

### 4.2 Home is where the heart is: People as a sense of home

Regarding feelings of home and belonging, all participants mentioned one of the most important aspects to be their social relations. However, for many participants, the social relations in question could differ in their nuances. Neil describes very well how finding friends, and thus creating social relations may immediately have an impact on feeling at home in a place:

*My first month I didn't feel at home, but I lived in [student housing] for international students, and there were so many people around me. And frankly, I was so ready to not live at home with my mom, and I made friends really quickly (...) So very quickly I felt at home.*

An important nuance Wesley adds to the importance of friends is how social relations can bring you to an outside environment. And for Wesley, this means that the physical location of home can then be a place of relaxation. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Wesley was often not able to leave his house for these social gatherings, making him lose this sense of home in his physical house location. This also relates to the literature discussing how the pandemic affected feelings of home concerning safety and security, but where literature said the pandemic increased these feelings, Wesley shows how for him, he lost part of these feelings (Gezici Yalçın and Düzen, 2021). Samuel further goes into this pandemic effect of losing the ability to see friends with the following:

*Then in the second year, when Covid hit, we had to stay at home, and I didn't really know what to do. (...) But by the end of the second year, I think things were slightly getting better, and my friends were really, like, we met up quite a lot (...) And after Covid I really wanted to spend time with these people.*

It is illustrated how the pandemic interfered with international students' social life, which affected the capability of students to form a sense of home through these social relations. Samuel, who mostly feels he does not belong in Groningen, did find a feeling of home because of this small group of friends. Even James, who mostly does not feel at home in Groningen, did mention that at times he would feel at home in Groningen because of his friends:

*So the photo I showed you, I gave you, is a picture of me and my friends and taken on my birthday just recently. And then in the days after, I was walking somewhere, and I remember looking around the streets of Groningen realizing I am comfortable here, and I have people that love me here, and this is where I live, so I am at home.*

This quote clearly shows that for the interviewed participants people are one of the first things that can create a feeling of home in a place. Every participant mentioned friends multiple times, either about their feeling of home, or their feeling of belonging. Eddy mentioned the following:

*Meeting the people means I've done something during the day, which means my day hasn't been "lost". And, having good friends, and people I can rely on, definitely enhances it, cause how can you belong in a community if you're an outsider?*

To belong in Groningen, Eddy needed to do things during the day, and this is enhanced by doing these things with the people he knows. During the interviews, often, specifically inquiring about people was not important, because not only were they already mentioned as being very important, but often students very clearly described how they were important. People almost seem to work as a conduit for belonging. Jessie describes this through the following:

*I have a friend that moves around a bit, wherever they are, I feel a little bit with, like, that place is also a bit mine. So I had this friend that lived with us in [Country A] a bit, (...) and then to [country B], and she also lived in [Country C], and I don't feel like [from Country A,B, or C], but when I would visit her, I'm like, if she's here, then I can feel a little bit like here as well.*

For Jessie, it is even possible to feel she belongs to places where she has not lived herself. Because her belonging is attached to people, and her belonging travels with those people. This also fits in well with Blunt and Varley (2004), who describe how belonging can be attached to people far away. Contrasting to this, Samuel, who did not feel he belongs in Groningen, mentions the following regarding people and belonging:

*Here your friends don't stay forever, and is that belonging then, if your friends move all over the world soon. Where would you say you belong afterwards? I think that's a bit hard, you know.*

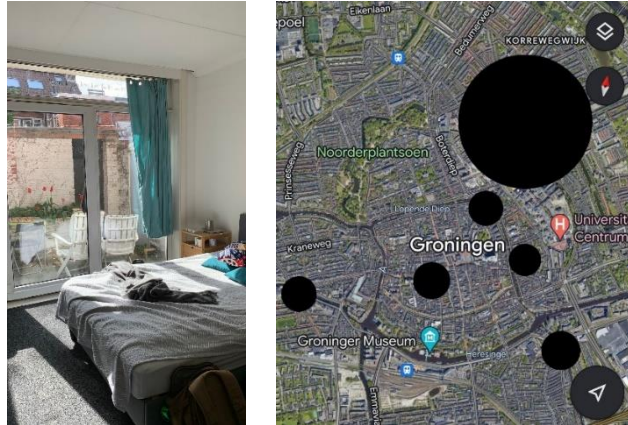
Because international students do not seem to tend to stay in a place, it can become more difficult to belong to that place. Important here is the distinction made between belonging to a place, and belonging to people. For Samuel belonging only happens when he belongs to people that are part of a place, whereas for Jessie, belonging solely depends on specific social relations she made. Thus, for many of the interviewed international students in Groningen, a feeling of home had everything to do with having, and interacting with friends. Belonging could further be formed by belonging to those friends.

#### *4.3 A mosaic of reoccurring activities: Daily Activities*

All interviewed students in this research mentioned certain daily activities to be important for their feelings of belonging, but it differed per student what these activities were. Furthermore, daily activities, for most students, seemed to be less important for the students' feelings of home. Examples of important daily activities for students were going for walks, going to a student hobby/sports association, or going to university locations. Another daily/weekly activity that was mentioned by Wesley, Veronica, and Samuel, was going to cafés or coffee places. Wesley mentions the following:

*I would say it's the routine I have here. So, I got a café I go to regularly. (...) And I guess those routines are a big part of belonging, since I feel like those are my daily activities. (...) if I go to a different place, those have to change, and I have to create new belonging through those things.*

Wesley states that going to a café regularly creates a routine resulting in belonging for him. The importance of this daily/weekly activity, but also study and other social daily/weekly activities comes back in his definition of home. Figure 2 shows Wesley's pictures that did best define home for him:



**Figure 2 – For Wesley, home can be found in his student room together with locations for his daily/weekly activities**

Wesley explained that during the Covid-pandemic he had difficulties forming a home at his residence because it became the place where he did all his daily activities. Therefore, when restrictions in the Netherlands were lifted, he started to feel more at home again in his student room, because this became the place where he could relax and enjoy the comforts of home. Except for Eddy, all participants mentioned comfort to be important for their feelings of home.

Thus, all students mentioned certain activities that helped them to feel like they belong in Groningen, while not all students indicated daily activities to be important for their home. Nevertheless, the comfort and possibility for international students to relax from their daily activities in their residence seem to be influential in their building of a home.

#### *4.4 Places and Objects*

The third theme of discussion is the (lack) of the importance of places and objects. In the previous section, it became clear that certain places were important for students due to their importance for daily/weekly activities. So, it seems, that while places play an important role in forming the setting for daily activities that allow for feelings of home and belonging, they do not in themselves provide that feeling of home and belonging. Samuel mentions the following:

*I have a difficulty to identify with places. Cause often, I know deep down, that I'm not a local. So, I think that's such an important aspect that you identify with a place. Cause, to say that you identify is really strong, so I feel it's something I never can say. So I think I can say I feel at home, but I can never say I think I identify as something. Or I feel like I feel I identify to the place.*

Regarding his belonging, Samuel mentions that for him it is not possible to belong when he does not identify with a place, and it is difficult for him to form this identification with a place when he does not feel like a local in a place. This explanation for his lack of belonging might be a reason why most international students did not mention many places (only coffee places/cafés and university locations) that were important for their belonging. It also relates to Wesley wanting to feel like a regular in the café he often went to. Difficulties to feel attached to places in Groningen may be an important experience limiting the extent to which international students can belong in Groningen.

Regarding objects, only Neil, Veronica, and James named certain objects such as their living

room table and couch, plants, or objects from their origin country to be important for their belonging. However, there was one specific object that was mentioned by five of the seven international students. James says the following:

*There are (...) objects which I have which allow me to realize that I am part of Groningen. For example my bike, not the racer, but the Dutch bike. Cause I know that means that I'm a Groninger, not in the strictest sense, but in a sense.*

For five of the international students, bicycles were important for their feelings of belonging in the city. Often it was mentioned that these bicycles were specifically related to living in the Netherlands, as this mode of transport is very popular. Furthermore, with the following quote, Eddy showcases that it also has to do with the importance of an independent mode of transport:

*Allowing facilities for biking transport in the city (...) gives me a lot of independence, without owning a car. That's a thing, I value being able to move independently. Like, it's 3am, I wanna be able to move somewhere. If I don't have a car, and there is no bus, here you can take the bike, and you go anywhere you want.*

This quote illuminates how important it is for international students to have an individual mode of transport in the city. This individual mobility is further supported by Veronica and Jessie. Jessie mentions the following:

*The fact that I can bike around, like, increases my quality of life so much. But also increases the way I feel here. If I take the bus, that's not the same. Like, biking here this morning I was the happiest person. And in [origin city] my Vespa, and then in the US, this is funny actually, it's always a transport thing, but in the US I would go around by my horse.*

This quote illuminates how at different home locations international students may find different modes of transport they use for their mobility. Furthermore, the quote also showcases the importance of individual mobility, such as the bicycle, Vespa, and horse are all modes of transport that at Jessie's home locations were more easily accessible for a student than, for instance, a car.

Therefore, international students have mixed experiences with places and objects. Places can be very important to facilitate the daily/weekly activities that allow international students to feel they belong, but they may also be a limiting factor because students may not easily identify with their destination location. Objects such as a bicycle are a cultural phenomenon that allows international students to connect to Groningen. These limited amounts of places and the object of the bicycle seem to foster students' feelings of belonging but are not often mentioned as important for their feeling of home.

#### *4.5 Memories, Emotions, and Familiarity*

Not many students mentioned memories, emotions and familiarity very often. A student that did mention the importance of an important memory/tradition is Jessie. For Jessie, it is important that she and her roommate will make extensive breakfasts on Sunday mornings (figure 3):



Figure 3 – For Jessie, it is important to have breakfast in the morning at the right time

The picture shows a combination of aspects that were important for Jessie's explanation of home. The picture shows how at this time on Sunday mornings, there is light on the table, she spends time with her roommate, and this time is spent having conversations and eating food, all things that Jessie mentioned were important for her feelings of home.

Having breakfast with her roommate creates a feeling of home because it brings back memories/experiences Jessie had in her home country. Through this activity, it is possible to bring part of her origin country's culture to the Netherlands. This importance of a connection to certain parts of a student's home culture is also experienced by Veronica and James. Veronica specifically has friends that also originate in her home country, because the interactions with these people are familiar. This concept of familiarity was also discussed during the interview with James, who specifically stated that it was not so much the emotions and memories that created his feeling of home, but he rather looked for certain familiarity in the activities he partook in with people:

*here in Groningen, I don't have that home, and my place of residence doesn't feel the same as my home. Which means I find my sense of home more in the people that remind me of the familiar sense of atmosphere that I have in my home, in my home in [origin country].*

Because James did not consider Groningen to be his home, and rather his parents' house in his origin country to be 'home', familiarity, and similarity in activities to those things done at 'home' seemed to give him a bit of feeling at home in Groningen. The idea that familiarity with certain cultural, or daily/weekly activities from origin countries is important is in line with Ralph and Staeheli (2011). It is also an interesting topic to further investigate, as it ties in daily and weekly activities, cultural background, and feelings of home and belonging. Nevertheless, only part of the students in this research seemed to experience the importance of these concepts for their home and belonging.

#### *4.6 A need for time*

A reoccurring theme throughout the interviews was the importance of time for feelings of home and belonging. All students did mention at some points during their interview that time was either necessary, or that took almost no time at all to either built a sense of home, or a sense of belonging. As mentioned in the section about the importance of people, Neil mentions that he already felt at home during his second month of living in Groningen. Veronica had similar experiences when she first moved to the Netherlands to study and immediately felt a sense of home and belonging. On the other hand, Jessie describes the following:

*I don't believe that somebody moves here and after some months like: 'Oh, this is my home'. (...) For me it is important to know all the streets, and have my places to go to, my little gems that I keep for myself. And I can't have that in even a little time, it took some years to built this.*

For Jessie, to feel at home in Groningen, she first needed to feel connections to the place she lived in, and this was a process that developed over multiple years. James, who does not feel a sense of home in Groningen further supports this through an expectation that if he lived here longer, while the friends he made in Groningen would also stay in Groningen, he would expect himself to build this sense of home. Nevertheless, James did feel a sense of belonging to Groningen which was less dependent on this temporal aspect.

Therefore, regarding time, international students show that this is often an important aspect to consider, even when it in the end did not seem to take a long time to build their sense of home or belonging. Depending on the definitions and feelings that students have of home and belonging, time can also take on a different role in their experiences.

## 5. Conclusion

This research tried to answer the following research question:

*How do international students' internal and external belonging influence their 'sense of home'?*

International students' definitions of home differed between students. Often, students did mention an important role for their studio, student house, or student room, but for some students, it was also important that the home reached beyond this spatial extent. For most students, home consisted of more than just a physical location. For them, home was a feeling, and people and time played an important role in forming their definition of home.

Regarding practices, social relations, memories, and emotions, there were multiple themes students discussed regarding their experiences. Social relations/People were important for all students regarding their belonging, as it seemed that international students formed their belonging to Groningen through people they belonged to. However, a distinction could be made between students who experience belonging to places when the people they belong to are there, while other students may experience a lack of belonging when the people they belong to will not stay in a place. Additionally, daily practices also seemed to be important for students, even though for international students they differed much. Specifically, the object of a bicycle is important for students' belonging because it allows for individual mobility, and connects directly to Dutch culture. Often, for these practices, social relations, and places and objects to gain importance, students experienced a need for time to develop this connection. Memories and emotions seemed of lesser importance for international students' feelings of belonging, as they were not often mentioned in the interviews.

The relation between a 'sense of home', and the belonging of students at the destination location differs depending on the theme of discussion. People seemed to be important to first of all form a feeling of home, but when this connection to people was stronger for some students this led to a feeling of belonging. For daily activities, it seemed to work the other way around. For many students, belonging was formed through daily activities, but their residences then became important as a place to relax from their daily activities, which then created a sense of home. Places and objects seemed to have some importance for belonging, while not being important for feelings of home.

Therefore, when answering the main research question, it is clear that belonging and home are often connected for international students, but this depends on how students define these concepts. Both concepts are inherently subjective, and this means that for some students feeling they belong needs to be supported by a feeling of being 'at home', while for other students feeling 'at home' can only happen when they feel they belong. Overall, these concepts overlap a lot, and it is important to investigate them through different themes that are shown by this research to have different importance for the concepts of home and belonging.

There were a few limitations to this research. A first limitation can be found in the fact that this research only uses a sample size of 7 students. This means that certain perspectives might be overlooked, and therefore it is recommended for future research to investigate the same topic with a larger sample size. Another suggestion for future research would be to further investigate the influence of definitions of home and belonging on the feelings of home and belonging. Finally, this research has been done in a Dutch student housing setting, where students often live in private housing or housing-organization-provided housing. Further research can also be done into the home and belonging in a resident hall student-housing setting.



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## Appendix A: Timetable

*Note: This timetable is only based on the research tasks and deadlines of this course, further deadlines of other courses will be added in the future*

**Table 1 – Timetable showing deadlines of tasks based on**

Kolom1	Mar. 7	Mar. 14	Mar. 21	Mar. 28	Apr. 4	Apr. 11	Apr. 18	Apr. 25	May. 2	May. 9	May. 16	May. 23	May. 30	Jun. 6	Jun. 13	Jun. 20	Jun. 27	Jul. 4	
Final Version research Proposal March 11th	█																		
Data Collection Instrument Developed March 18th	█	█																	
Collecting the Data		█	█	█	█	█													
Transcribing the interviews					█	█													
Creating Presentation Preliminary Findings April 22nd									█	█									
Presenting Preliminary Findings in week 18?									█	█									
Analyzing the Data									█	█	█								
Writing Concept of Bachelor Thesis May 20th										█	█	█							
Peer review Someone else's Bachelor Thesis May 27th											█	█	█						
Incorporating Peer Review on Bachelor Thesis												█	█						
Handing in Peer-reviewed Thesis to Supervisor June 3rd													█	█					
Incorporating Supervisor Feedback on Bachelor Thesis														█	█				
Final Version Bachelor Thesis June 17th															█	█			
Supervisor Explanation of Final Assessment																█	█		
If Necessary: Resit July 8th																	█	█	

## Appendix B: Interview Guide

- a) Specify what the research will be about: It will be about feelings of home in Groningen, but also about feelings of belonging.
- b) Repeat to the participant that data will be pseudonymized
- c) Repeat to the participant that they can withdraw at any point from the research. This can be done by contacting me through my contact details added to the consent form.
- d) Bring specific attention to the photo they brought to this research. Repeat how the photo will be anonymized through pixelation and/or black bars before people's eyes, and that before publishing the report, the participant will be asked if they deem anonymization of their included photo sufficient.
- e) Is it alright with you if I record this interview (phone) so that I can make a transcript?

### Introductory Questions

0) I will start the interview by asking about some background information:

- a) What are your age and gender?
- b) Are you currently studying at the University of Groningen or Hanze?
- c) Where were you born?
- d) Where do you currently live
- e) Have you lived in other countries than the Netherlands and your country of birth? If yes, where have you lived?

### Main Questions

*Defining a student's concept of home*

1) How do you define 'home'?

- a) Are there for you any specific components to a house, that turn it into a home?
- b) How do these components turn a house into a home?
- c) Are there other things that make you feel at home in a house?

2) Do you feel at home in Groningen?

- a) Why do/do you not feel at home in Groningen?
- b) Have your feelings of home in Groningen changed over time?
- c) How have these feelings changed/Why do you think these feelings did not change?

*Photo Elicitation and the concept of home*

3a) I made you bring a photo of what/who/where is most important for your feeling of home in Groningen.

- a) Can you describe to me what I can see in the picture?

3b) How does the picture you brought to this interview show what 'home' means to you?

- a) Why have you specifically chosen to bring this picture?
- b) Was it difficult to choose this picture?
- c) *In case of difficulties:* Were there other pictures you also wanted to bring? Why did you eventually choose this picture over other options?

4) Is there a difference between how you defined 'home' before, and what you show 'home' is to you with the picture?

- a) In case of a difference: Why do you think there is a difference between the previous definition and what you show with your picture?
- b) Did our discussion about your picture inform your definition of home, or even change how you want to define home?

### *Belonging*

5) I am interested in how feeling you belong in a place can be important to feel at home in a place. Therefore, I will also ask some questions regarding your belonging in Groningen. Belonging can for example be that you feel emotional attachment to a place. It can also mean that you start to identify with a place. Knowing this, would you say that you feel that you belong in Groningen?

- a) How do/do you not feel like you belong in Groningen?
- b) What do you think that contributes to you feeling/not feeling at home in Groningen?
- c) Are there other places you feel you belong to? If so, which places do you feel you belong?

6) The topic of belonging constitutes many different things for different people, and I am interested to see what this specifically means for students in Groningen. Therefore, I will ask you about a few things that other students may deem as important for their belonging:

- a) Are there any people that are important for you to feel you belong or not belong at [destination location]?
  - How are these people important?
  - *Or: Why do you think people are not so important for you to feel at home?*
- b) Are there any places that are important for you to feel you belong or not belong at [destination location]?
  - How are these places important?
  - *Or: Why do you think there are no places that are important for you to feel at home?*
- c) Are there any objects that are important for you to feel you belong or not belong at [destination location]?
  - How are these objects important?
  - *Or: Why do you think there are no objects that are important for you to feel at home?*
- d) Are there any daily or weekly activities that are important for you belong or not belong at [destination location]?
  - How are these activities important?
  - *Or: Why do you think there are no activities that are important for you to feel at home?*

7) Do you feel that interactions with others, and how others treat you influence your feelings of belonging in Groningen? If yes:

- a) How do these interactions influence your belonging?
- b) How does the treatment of others influence your feelings of belonging?

8) We have now discussed your definition of home, feelings of home in Groningen, and feelings of belonging in Groningen. How do you think the fact that you mostly said you feel/did not feel you belong in Groningen, has an impact on that you do/did not feel at home in Groningen?

- Here it is important to bring up those different things the participant brought up regarding their feelings of belonging:

- a) You for example said (a) regarding belonging...

### **Appendix C Consent Form: ‘International Students’ Sense of Home’**

*This interview will be voice recorded. These voice recordings will be used to make a transcript of the interviews, necessary for the analysis of the research topic. These voice recordings will be stored on the personal laptop of the researcher and deleted after the final grading of the thesis. The recordings will not be available to third parties.*

I fully understand the research project. I was able to ask questions and my questions were clearly answered. I had enough time to decide to participate in the research.

My participation is completely voluntary. I can withdraw from the research at any time, without having to give a reason.

I give my permission for using the interview data for the Bachelor project ‘International Student’s Sense of Home’.

I agree to participate in this interview.

I give my permission for voice recording the interview.

#### **Photo-Elicitation**

*This research uses the method of photo-elicitation. This means that the researcher asked you to bring a photo to the research relating to your sense of home. This photo will be used in the research report. Any person, item, or locational aspects in the photo that can lead to your identification will be blurred, and a black bar will be put before people’s eyes. The researcher will reach out to you with the added alteration to ensure you agree with the measures taken to protect your privacy. The photographs will be stored on the personal laptop of the researcher and deleted after the final grading of the thesis. The photographs will not be available to third parties.*

I fully understand why my photograph was used in the research project. I was able to ask questions and my questions were clearly answered.

I give my permission for using my provided photograph for the Bachelor project ‘International Student’s Sense of Home’. I can withdraw my photograph from the research at any time, without having to give a reason

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

You can contact the researcher through: [b.j.r.fokkens@student.rug.nl](mailto:b.j.r.fokkens@student.rug.nl)

#### **Researcher:**

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Transcripts Interviews:

### Transcription Research Subject 1:

0) Okay, so, you have filled in a consent form saying I'll record this, so that's fine.

1) Yes

0) I will start the interview, by quickly informing you again what the consent form says, and what the interview will be about. So, the interview will be about your feelings of home in Groningen and also your feelings of belonging in Groningen. And the feelings of home will specifically relate to the picture you brought. The data will be anonymized. You can withdraw at any point from this research. This can be done by contacting me through the contact details on the form, also through Whatsapp. And, specific attention to the photo, I will anonymize it through pixelation and through putting black bars before people's eyes. And I will get back to you, to ask you if the protection of your privacy, in that case, sufficient.

1) Okay

0) So you are certain, that what I put in the paper, does not harm your privacy. So that was what I wanted to repeat regarding the interview, and now I'll get to the questions.

1) I think the picture is quite non-descriptive anyway, so...

0) Yeah, but I will have to see, because some people might exactly know where in Groningen it is, so that might be difficult.

1) Unless they live in this house, I very much doubt if they're able to discern it, but that's for you to decide, not for me.

0) Probably, I have know idea where this is.

1) Haha, great start...

0) As an introductory questions I will just ask some demographics, so, what are your age and gender?

1) I'm 21 still, and male.

0) What is your name, just for me personally.

1) My name is [Name participant]

0) Are you currently studying at the University of Groningen or Hanze?

1) Groningen, yes.

0) Okay, where were you born?

1) In [city in South-Eastern Europe], do you want it more specific?

0) No, because that would be to easy to identify.

1) In South-Eastern Europe, haha

0) Haha, probably it will be that. And where do you currently live?

1) In Groningen.

0) Have you lived in other countries than the Netherlands and your country of birth, and if yes, where have you lived?

1) Yes, for 6 months in [City in Eastern Europe]

0) Okay, so that were the introductory questions, and I will now go to my main questions. First, going into the concept of home. So, how would you define home?

1) Home is a place where you feel comfortable. When you know that, ehm, your safe from uncertainties. Your home is the place where you know where everything is, where everything should be. And you know that there you can retreat and sort of have your own timeframe for yourself, if you like to. And this is not necessarily just one building or one room or one city. It's depends really. But for me the main thing is feeling a safe space.

0) A feeling of safety and a place where you can retreat to. Okay, so are there any specific

components to a house, or a larger space as you say, because it isn't in your definition based on one specific residence, that turn it into a home?

1) I wouldn't say physical characteristics as much. Because I feel, ehm, like you can, at least in my perception of things, what you see is not the most important part. It's more about what you make of it yourself. And of course I would say, not a gigantic space. Because in a gigantic space, lets say a four story house that has like a 1000 square meters, you can get lost a bit. You kinda start, you have your home within this house, at least in my perception. But lets say something rather more modest, rather more as the characteristics of a house. I'm more used to an apartment or somewhere where I have my own room and there is other people with their own room. But, for example, I would find it hard to feel at home in a house that is on the very first ground floor. Cause that's a bit, I don't know if the word is scary, but ehm, cause I've grown up on the sixth floor of an apartment building, so it's quite safe in terms of like someone trying to break in. Unless they break in through your front door, or they're like ninja's or something I don't know, it's very hard for them to get in. So, I feel like those are some characteristics, like not being first, like not living on the ground floor, having some other people as well, and just in general having some decoration, what you put on the walls, what type of furniture you have. But that's also like, I wouldn't say I have one particular set of characteristics I would like in my room.

0) So, like, a lot of decorations that can make the home, but specifically, you don't want your home to be on the ground floor, because that takes away from the safety what is a core feeling for your home.

1) And I also don't want it to be massive, that is a core feeling for me.

0) And you prefer it to be with other people

1) Yeah.

0) Okay, ehm, then, ehm, how would those components, so those components of it is on the sixth floor, you live with a few other people, it is decorated, and it isn't too large. How does that turn it into a home?

1) It doesn't, just on its own. With those physical characteristics for me, you can't make a housing unit a home. And also like, not necessarily the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. You can be like now I live on the first floor of my house, and I still feel at home in my house. Ehm, it's just like those are things that contribute to the feeling of safety. And then it's just the meaning you attach to it, and the way you feel there. Cause, when you move in somewhere new, at least for me... When I move in somewhere, I don't necessarily feel home in the first week, I don't feel home immediately. I need some time for me to settle in, and actually start building a connection with a place. So it's these physical characteristics that are necessary for me to start making a safe space plus just a place attachment and a connection to the place.

0) So, if I summarize, if you have the right components that create a feeling of safety, and you spend a while in such a location, than it can turn into a home.

1) Yeah, you start building memories, you have experiences in this place, and this enhances your connection with it. Because home is not a house, it is more something abstract, not only in the physical space, for me.

0) Home is a feeling

1) Not only, it is both, it's both. You can have the feeling of a home, but if you don't have the physical house itself, you are still homeless.

0) Fair point.

1) Haha

0) Okay, so, yeah, ehm, are there any other things that make you feel at home in a house, or has this probably covered it.

1)...



0) The answer can just be these are the main aspects.

1) Yeah yeah, I'm just thinking... I should know that in this place I don't stay there temporarily, but that's about it.

0) Okay, okay, so a last aspect...

1) Temporal

0) So you don't need to know like in three months I need to move somewhere else.

1) Yeah, that would like, limit my feeling to the place, my connection to it.

0) Okay, then my second question would be, do you feel at home in Groningen?

1) Yes

0) Why do you feel at home in Groningen?

1) Because I feel, it sounds a bit meaningless, but I feel the values of the city, and the city itself if we look at the city as like a bit of a living organism. It really matches with how I'm feeling right now, and how I feel myself as a person. And I realized this, when I went back to the place I used to live before. Because there I now feel out of place, I don't feel like I belong in that space, in that area, in that society a bit. And when I come here, I feel perfectly fine, and I feel very free in the whole city, to do whatever I want, to like bike and dance on my bike while cycling. Or that, I don't care about being judged, being somehow attacked, violated, screamed at, or discriminated upon, and that's a thing that, not that that happens when I go back at home, but I'm sure that here I'm, again the concept of the safe space, the city as a whole is a bit of a safe space. I know that when I'm here I feel good.

Yeah, that's why...

0) You feel at home, because you feel safe in the city?

1) Yeah, and it's also, I'm a student, and this city is in my opinion one of the best cities to be a student. Cause it's not too small, cause people say Groningen is small. Depends from where you come from. If you come from a place where the village is a 100.000 people, it's a small city. But I don't, so it's a medium sized cities at least. It's not a small city like Wageningen or something like that. But, ehm, it's also not massive and a lot of the things like the bars... the shops... the streets themselves, they are catered towards students. They are catered towards me. That makes it easier to feel at home here.

0) Okay, so the city is catered towards you. You feel safe in the city, ehm, but it is also contrasted towards where you come from that you feel those things here right now.

1) Yeah

0) Okay, ehm, have your feelings of home in Groningen changed over time. So at a certain point you got here, and now you lived here for a while. For how long have you lived in Groningen?

1) I've lived here for, it's a hard calculation. I moved here two and a half years ago, but I haven't lived continuously here for two and a half years. I need to do the maths from like how long exactly I have lived here.

0) But for two and a half year you have experience of and on with living in Groningen.

1) Yes.

0) Okay, so then back to my questions, have your feelings of home in Groningen changed over time?

1) Yes, because I haven't lived in the same housing unit. While I was here cause for the first eight months I lived in a different place that was in a unfavorable location, that's what I'm going to use, unfavorable location. It was built out of shipping containers, and it was mostly for international students like me. And this created a sense of feeling very alienated a bit. Like your out of the city, on the edge of the city, living with like other outsiders like you. And now I'm starting to feel more and more comfortable with it, even though like now when I reflect back on it, it wasn't the best experience compared to what I have now, which still isn't the best... whatever... It was, ehm, living in a safer environment but under completely different at all. Cause first of all, it wasn't that safe, literally any person could've walked into the hallway. The hallways weren't locked and it wasn't a

closed complex. So yeah, that was the first part where like, I don't wanna feel on edge when I go to the shower.

0) Because you shared showers through an hallway that was open to anyone?

1) I could go there now, and no one could tell me anything. No one could stop me from going in and cooking my meal if I wanted to. Cause I also know the place. Yeah, it's not the greatest, and also in general it's just, it's just student housing and that's a bit big dorm, yeah... So, after that I had a break of half a year of not living here, and I came back and I moved into a new place, which is the place I currently live in now. Which is a place I have the picture of. And it's more towards the center of the city, you live with a lot less people. Even though the dorm looks like if a kickboxer came and kicked it, it would fall, it still feels a bit more safer cause just the general feeling of the neighborhood is just very: There's a lot of students living around, young families on the ground floors. And it feels just very peaceful and serene. And for a while I wasn't really feeling at home there, mainly because I was moving and first living in that place, then going away, then coming back here, then going away a bit for a week or two or something. But, with time, and with living there, and especially leaving again for half a year and coming back to the same space 2 months ago, now it's a lot more, it feels like the place I want to be, even though the house has a lot of problems. Some are out of my control, some are in my control, but I don't have the time or energy to deal with them, but over time it definitely changed and definitely with comparing with different places, it's been enhanced more and more and more.

0) Okay, that's a good explanation

1) That's a big ramble

0) I think you gave some great quotes, so that's nice. Ehm, and then now, I finally get to the photo elicitation part. So why you brought a photo. I made you bring a photo of what/who/where is most important for your feelings of home in Groningen. So, can you describe to me what I can see in the picture.

1) So, this is, ehm, one of the few balconies in my house. Essentially this is also what you would see out of the window in my room, but I took it outside on the balcony because the window is dirty.

0) One of the problems in your house you can fix yourself?

1) Yes, ehm, and it essentially shows the inner courtyard of the housing complex, I don't know how you call it in the Netherlands, cause this is a typical format where you have all the houses in one big shape.

0) I think we call them translated row-houses.

1) Row-houses yeah, but like, in this case it's more of like trapeze-houses I would call that. Ehm, you can see all of the other balconies, the sun bringing my shot a bit here. Ehm, you can see all the gardens in and the shed, not necessarily inside the gardens, but you can see the fences, the top of the sheds, and this is what I see when I wake up in the morning, this is what I usually see when I close the curtains in the evening. I will smoke my sigarets on the balcony, I will have a drink sometimes if its sunny. And it's a place that's very serene, very quiet, and you feel just, unless the fratboys and rest are screaming, but that's just. I also scream sometimes so it's fine. Coming back, it feels just very safe, it's a space you're surrounded by the building, you're not visible to the street, you're visible only to the people in your complex. And even though I don't know anyone of them it brings a sense of community, cause I will see the people from the house like on the bottom left, like everyday taking out their child or something. And I'm like, ah, I know who these people are or something. And there can be, it's one of the main pictures I could've taken, cause essentially it's not one thing. But, ehm, it's a thing I see everyday, it makes me feel, it makes me feel glad for example to not live in the other room that looks towards the street that's very noisy and loud, and whenever a bike comes down next to the street it's like [bike noises with hands], this is completely different, even though they are 2 meters apart.

0) So, thank you for the description, it was a really good description. So, how does the picture you brought to the interview show what home means to you. I think you already partially touched on that. So if I have to summarize what you just said, it gives safety and serenity, and a feeling with the community around you.

0) And comfort.

1) And comfort.

0) Like, I know that I can go there in like my dirty sweatpants and like my hair tied back, and I wouldn't care what anyone else thinks. Even though I'm like, in sort of a public space, it doesn't feel that public.

1) So, why have you specifically chosen to bring this picture, yeah, like specifically chosen to bring this picture over other options for example?

0) It was the easiest picture to take first of all. I didn't think also... my room changes a lot, I can reorder things from time to time. And I think as I said, this is the first thing I see when I wake up and the last thing I see what I go to bed, and it is part of my daily life, instead of some other things I may see in the city. It's literally my home, but in a different way. Other than just a closed room.

1) So was it difficult to choose the picture.

0) I had a good hour of thinking of what I should choose. So medium difficulty I would say.

1) What were for example other options you thought about you could bring.

0) My room itself, the façade of the house itself from the house itself from the side of the entrance, so the other side of the house in the picture. The little park with the lake near my house, it's like 2 minutes walking distance away from my house. And, cause also I feel at home in the city, but I wouldn't say the whole city is my home, my home is this house. So it would've been something else in this house.

1) So, something always related to this house, except for the lake nearby...

0) I would consider the lake nearby as the same sort of space. Cause it's literally on the other side of this road.

1) So just a bit of a very location-specific part of the city is your home, while the city is the place of your home.

0) Yeah.

1) Okay, and then I will go back to how you defined home before, and what you show home is to you. Do you think there is a difference between what you show with this picture, and what you before described as the definition of you home.

0) No, I don't think so necessarily, cause it's not so much about safety, it's a lot about the connection you have with the place. With feeling comfortable, like, not feeling that someone could interrupt your private space. So, yeah, I think it ties in well.

0) I personally agree, and did our discussion about the picture, and about home, inform your definition. Made you think about, maybe even change how you thought about home before.

1) Not necessarily change, maybe just extend it, for example the lake nearby, which I don't go there to often anymore. But still, it's interesting for me to see that it's this little exclave of like, the home outside my house.

0) Okay, thank you, that was the first part of my interview, I have a long interview, and then we'll go about the part of belonging, which is the second part. So, I'm interested in how feeling you belong in a place can be important for your feeling of being at home in a place. And therefore I will ask some questions regarding your belonging in Groningen. Belonging can for example be that you feel emotional attachment to a place. It can also be that you start to identify with a place. Knowing this, would you say that you feel that you belong in Groningen.

1) Yeah, cause, I believe based on what you said, and based on what I talked about earlier, that as a definition of home, for me my home has to be in a place where I feel I belong. Because, as we said

earlier, I lived in a third place, not only my hometown or here. And leaving the temporal part aside, cause I knew the point of time where I will leave, also I never felt I probably belonged and integrated myself in the community there, and that really. At some point I was just waiting to come back here essentially.

0) So, basically, when you felt you weren't here anymore, you felt like you wanted to be here in Groningen.

1) Yeah, cause I felt like here I belonged more, and I feel more comfortable than where I lived in the moment.

0) So, for example, I talked about emotional attachment and identification with a place, in what aspects do you feel like you belong in Groningen?

1) Just, being the thing that the city's currently made for. Cause the city is currently made for students. I don't know if it really is a city policy, I don't know if they are consciously doing it, but for me as a student that's the outcome. And I feel that students are usually a demographic that is very ignored, and very brushed to the side. Cause you're neither, when you're a child or a teenager, you're very much the responsibility of your parents, and when you're an adult, you're very much responsible for your own. But when you're a student, you're neither a responsibility of your parents anymore, but you're also neither really, some people, not all people, they don't really want to be responsible for themselves. So, some help, some nudge is needed from the outside. And not so much as me and my friends sometimes say, a beta-adult. And I think this is happening here, I don't think that is conscious or subconscious by the leaders of the city or the leaders of the university, but it feels very welcoming, excluding one part that probably with some other people, you mentioned that, but I never had some problems with the housing crisis. And that for me, makes a lot of difference, cause I always get kinda lucky, and I managed to find things that suit me more or less quite quickly. And I feel like it turns out what I want it to be, and also the people are open to me speaking a foreign language, which is very important. Cause, lets say in a country like Germany, people are not very happy to speak in a country like English. And also if you have an accent, they also probably won't be happy to speak to you in German as well. And I don't know if people are happy to speak to you in English, but it doesn't come across as some sort of animosity here, towards not being from here.

0) And you specifically talk about policies from the city towards students, what would be an example of those policies of the city facilitating things for students.

1) Organizing events, even though I feel like most of... Organizing a lot of events, cultural events, events where you can meet people, sports events, but on the other hand, I feel like in this city that's done more by the university, rather than the city itself. But I feel like the city has given kinda free range to the university. The university has a bit of its own little city government, and it's, I think the university has a lot of power to do a lot of different things in the city. And I think that's nice, cause I cultural night is not organized by the city often, sometimes, but I feel like it's mostly the university. And I think there is the space, and the finance for the university to do that. So I think the city can provide that space and the financing for the university to have that free reign, and to make the life of students a bit more comfortable, and give them the opportunity to do more than just working and studying. And also just allowing facilities for biking transport in the city, which gives me a lot of independence, without owning a car. That's a thing, I value being able to move independently. Like, it's 3am, I wanna be able to move somewhere. If I don't have a car, and there is no bus, here you can take the bike, and you go anywhere you want. And it's also safe to do this, and that's also a big part of the city. I don't necessarily think they only do this for the students, but that's also a big part.

0) Okay, a lot of policies that might or might not be for students, but give a lot of things like cycle policies, like cultural events that are somewhere by the city or university facilitating, that give for extra room than just living, studying and working.

1) Yeah.

0) Okay, and then, a last question here, would be, are there other places you feel you belong to, and if so, which places would that be?

1) Currently, no. Maybe, we will see this summer if I feel any different, but no I don't. That's part of the reason I wanna stay here a while longer, even if I decide against immediately continuing to study. I feel good living here.

0) Then I will get to my 6<sup>th</sup> out of eight questions, which is: The topic of belonging constitutes many different things for different people, and I'm interested to see what this specifically means for students in Groningen. So I will ask you about a few things that other students may deem important for their belonging, and what you think about it. So, are there any people that you think are important for you to feel you belong, or not belong in Groningen?

1) Definitely, cause I'm a very social person, I need to meet people every day. Otherwise I feel... meeting the people means I've done something during the day, which means my day hasn't been "lost". And, having good friends, and people I can rely on, definitely enhances it, cause how can you belong in a community if you're an outsider, and you don't have anyone to communicate with. I don't think you can belong in such a situation. In such a situation, a lonely piece of society.

0) And having friends can make you feel like an insider of the community, of society.

1) Yeah.

0) Secondly, are there any places in Groningen that are important for you to feel like you belong or not belong in Groningen.

1) Maybe just like nothing out of the top of my head. But, maybe, any university building, cause there are lot of people like me. Not in the literal sense, but in the same face of life, sort of similar struggles, similar situations, similar goals. But at the same time also very different and colorful. And, I'm not like the only person that tries to live away from home, and has to make it through their studies and all kind of stuff, yeah...

0) So all kind of people that are similar to you in any way. Okay, are there any objects that are important for you to feel you belong or not belong in Groningen.

1) Not really, I think objects are too small. But one thing that could be would be the bike, cause I only had one bike here, and I have a history with it in Groningen.

0) Your Groningen bike.

1) It's barely going anywhere, but it still can go to 30km/hr., we've tested it, don't ask how.

0) You tested how quickly you could bike?

1) Not with that particular goal in mind, but it happened in a race with a scooter.

0) Also a very Groningen thing to do haha

1) Haha.

0) And my last part that other students may think important is: Are there any daily, or weekly activities that are important to feel you belong or not belong in Groningen?

1) Being involved in student life, which can be anything from going to a lecture, to going to the library and looking at the people there sleeping on the table next to me. Just, going to a park, cause I also consider that a student activity, cause it's still 90% of the people you see there are students. So, doing anything student related.

0) And how are these activities important for your belonging?

1) They make me feel that I'm part of something, that I'm not just here and be on my own. Cause belonging is being able to connect with other people for me. And, doing things like that shows me that having like small talk, or deeper conversations, help me to see, and connect to other people. And this fosters like, feeling like you belong.

0) Okay, then I will go to my 7<sup>th</sup> question. Do you feel that interaction with others, and how others treat you, influences your feelings of belonging in Groningen.

1) Yeah, if I'm like walking down the street, and I'm getting dirty looks, then of course I'm feeling bad.

0) Does that happen in Groningen.

1) No, that's why I feel I belong here.

0) But do you feel contrast

1) Not necessarily, maybe because I don't really care, to notice or to remember. But one example is when I was back home for the winter holidays this or last year. I went to a bar with my friends, very good friends I've had for like years and years. And we're still very good friends, even though we see each other a lot anymore. And they were like: 'You don't look like you belong here anymore'.

0) Oh.

1) Even though like, the only difference is a slight change of hairstyle, and a slight change of like clothing style. But it's immediately enough for them to see that I don't really belong there anymore. Like, no one else would tell me that, but my closest friends see it, and cause we're close, they have the initiative to tell me. Not in a derogatory way, not in a mean way, but just as an observation. But it speaks to me very much of the difference. And here I feel like it's very easy to belong, cause the community is very colorful, so you don't need to fit in one particular mold to belong.

0) And if you hear a comment like that from friends in [country of origin], like, you do not any longer like you are [resident of country of origin], does that add to the fact that you do no longer feel like you belong in [country of origin], while you do feel you belong in Groningen?

1) It enhances belonging here more, cause it shows me that my personality, and the way I view myself, and the way I want to present myself to other people, starts to be catered more to this place than that place. Cause I don't feel like anyone will tell me something like... Also, here I feel I belong to the student population, what are they gonna tell me, you look like you're not a student of Groningen. I don't think you can discern that, I think at least. I wouldn't be able to tell any person around my age that for example. So, it's very easy to belong here as I said, but also like somewhere you felt like you belong to before, you don't belong to anymore, it just enhances... like you're kinda gripping to the one place that's left a bit, and this creates a bit of problems, with, cause you don't feel like you belong at the old place as a whole, like the whole situation, but there's still some people there that are still very accommodating. You still belong in your own little group. And it's kinda hard to making sure you have enough attention for them, but also living more in a place where you feel comfortable.

0) Would you still consider those people in [home country], like you still belong to those people. Are they still your home?

1) Yes, when I go there because of them. If these people weren't there, I wouldn't go there. But it's a very different type of home, I wouldn't call it a home. It's still a bit of a safety net, a bit of a comfortable space, but it's not a home anymore. Cause to me, a home isn't just a person, or a feeling, a home is a much wider concept. I rather say I feel attached to those people, but I don't think that's enough for me to constitute it as a home there.

0) Okay, I think that with the last discussion, we also got the last question, so, thank you very much for helping with my research. I hope it didn't take to long of your time. It was very interesting.

1) I think that too.

### Transcript Research Subject 2:

0) – Repetition Consent -

0) So, I will start the interview by asking some background information. What are your age and gender?

2) 21 and male

0) Okay, are you currently studying at University of Groningen or Hanze?

2) yes (UG)

0) Where were you born?

2) In the US.

0) And where do you currently live?

2) In Groningen.

0) And have you lived in other countries than the Netherlands or your country of birth, if yes, where have you lived?

2) No, I haven't.

0) Okay, so those were the demographics, and then I will get to my main questions, which are quite a lot. So it will take some time. Defining students' concept of home is the first theme, so my question will be: How do you define home?

2) Well, I define home as [streetname], where I live right now. And, home, which... actually no, when people ask me when I talk about home, I usually talk about where my mom lives, where I grew up in [City in the USA], but I also very much feel this is home as well.

0) So are there any specific components of a house, that turn it into a home.

2) Not in itself, only that I live there, and I guess that I feel comfortable there.

0) Okay, so how does that feeling of living there, feeling comfortable somewhere, turn a house into a home?

2) Well, I feel like a home is somewhere you live that has some attachment. I lived in a, you know... it's even in the name: Homeless shelter. Like, there are people that live in housing like a homeless shelter, but that is not a home. So as long as I live there, it is almost like, what would make it not a home? And I only lived in 3 places my entire life, and in all three places I feel like I could come home and be comfortable, like I could go home and interact with people. I felt like I could go home and belong, and not be on edge or worry about things. So I guess that's sort of what I would like that to be, and I would expect that from anywhere I live. And only if it's really uncomfortable, really where I don't belong, then I would not be at home.

0) Okay, and what is the comfort that... What is the type of comfort that a house would give you so that you feel at home?

2) Well, just wanting to be there, like, not dreading going home. I've never dreaded going home. Literally, sometimes you wanna hang out with friend later. I never dread going home, I always feel that I can relax going home. Those are the 2 main things.

0) And when do you want to be at home, what makes you want to be at home?

2) Being tired, or like being sleepy, but I don't dread like, oh I have to get to home to sleep. It's like, it's the end of the day, I get to get home and sleep, you get to get home and eat. I get to get home and relax.

0) A place for eating, a place for sleeping, a place for relaxing.

2) Yeah

0) Okay. Are there any other things that make you feel at home in a house, next to what we already discussed?

2) The only thing I'll say is having like clean personal space, because I always thought I had a home the first 18 years. But my mom had a big issue of like collecting stuff, and not getting rid of stuff, so our house was, like, kinda cluttered. And only later, when, like, I helped her clean up. I was like a

teenager, did I realize, how uncomfortable that had been, I could never go back to that. So, even though I didn't mind when I was 10 or 12 or 14, if I had to live in that specific situation again, I feel like it would not feel like home. So, I guess, to some degree, not even like, cleanliness, but also like spaciousness. But I guess that's hard to compare, because I never lived somewhere that didn't feel like home. So I can only imagine like hypothetical things that would make it feel not like home.

0) That's fair. So it's very much that it changed over time for you. So, first, when you were in a situation that was worse than that you're now experiencing in regards to how messy it was, and now far cleaner, because you didn't know, it felt like home. Because you didn't know, it felt like home, but now you know the difference, you wanted to remain what in your eyes is better for home.

0) Okay, then my second question is, main question at least. Do you feel at home in Groningen.

2) Yes, I do.

0) Why do... you feel at home in Groningen?

2) I have roommates that I really like. I live in a house that I enjoy living in. In terms of balancing money and amenities and location, I think there is very few tradeoffs I would make besides living in this house. I feel like I can be myself here when I'm at home. I enjoy living here, I enjoy living here. And I refer to it as home every now and then. Not as often as I refer to [origin city] as home. And sometimes I will use that work, and people would be like: 'You call where you live for, like, university, home? I'm like: 'Yeah, now, not forever, but now.' And people are like shocked, and I'm shocked that they're shocked. Cause, I would think that only in the worst situation that would not feel like home for people, hopefully.

0) So basically, you have developed 2 homes in a way, [origin city], and Groningen?

2) Yeah, and thirdly, I feel more, like I always refer to the one in America as home for a while at least. It feels like where I'm based, I will always be based there permanently, like, it's not going anywhere. Meanwhile this home will. But, I feel more comfortable here, cause I can have friends over, I don't have a [age] year old mom 10 meters away, like, there is not enough room. So, I actually do feel more comfortable here, but that's the place that always gonna feel like home for a while, cause that's like the base.

0) Home-base, and temporary, but definitely home in Groningen. Have your feelings of home in Groningen changed over time? So you started at a certain point going to Groningen, living here, and at a certain moment in time, did you find that you immediately felt that feeling of home in Groningen, or did it develop, is that stronger, less stronger, did it increase/decrease during certain periods?

2) Honestly, it felt the same level since October 2019, my second month here. My first month, no, I didn't feel at home, but I lived in [student housing] for international students, and there were so many people around me. And frankly, I was so ready to not live at home with my mom, and I made friends really quickly, I found new things to do really quickly, I liked living in Groningen a lot, I liked to study a lot. So very quickly I felt at home, and since then, even though I moved now to this home I live in now for the last 2 years, I nevertheless felt 'at home' pretty consistent.

0) I hear you mention friends a lot, how do friends help you feel at home in Groningen?

2) Like, at this stage in my life, I couldn't imagine not living with people I like. Obviously, the first 18 years of my life I lived with family, I guess I like my family, but it's a bit different. And now I couldn't imagine living more than 2 months at a time living with family, but also right now I couldn't imagine living a month or 2 or more by myself. I think someplace I really enjoyed living, would have to have roommates around my age.

0) So that's another important aspect for your home, people to live with, and especially now friends.

2) Yes.

0) Okay, then I now arrive at the point of photo elicitation. So you send me a photo of what/who/where the most important was for your feeling of home in Groningen. Can you describe



to me what I can see in the picture?

2) So, this is my living room and kitchen. And I included this, cause this is... Well, also my room is very small, it's only 7 square meters, and I definitely feel comfortable in there, but if that was my only living space, I would hate it here, it's so tiny. It's really only the place I sleep. But what's so interesting about this house, is that it has this living room, it has this kitchen. So, like, I'm doing this interview right now from the living room, or, like, my default place to hang out, unless I really specifically want privacy, is my living room. And this is where dinner is cooked with my roommates, this is where I go to study, this is what makes this house a nice place to live for me. Like, I could've shown a picture of my bedroom, where I actually sleep, but I feel like that is not, for instance when I have friends over, only like 5% of the time are we in my room. Like, 90% of the time we are in this living room. So I feel like this place is my favorite part, that's why I showed it.

0) Okay, so, how does the picture you brought to this interview, show what home means to you?

2) Well it has communal space, so it has a couch that like multiple people can sit on, a kitchen that multiple people can cook on. It's a bit messy on purpose, I didn't make it messy for the photo, but I didn't make it clean either. Cause it shows that it's being lived in, the things on the kitchen counter, just my roommate's speaker on the counter, my laptop's open. So I guess it really shows that it's being lived in, which is also why I really like it.

0) The fact that it's being lived, and that it's not completely clean. So this is quite contrasting to what you said before, where you said, my mother's house was once really messy, and that made it feel less like home to me, and now, it's not really messy of course, but it seems like it being messy and lived in makes it also really home-like. How does that relate to each other?

2) It's different levels, cause if you asked me to do this interview in [year] and asked me to send a photo of my apartment, I might've asked, could I not? I was totally like embarrassed, and now if you ask me for a photo of my [city in the US] where my mom lives, I would definitely send you a photo of this house. I wouldn't have send you that in 2014. So it's just like the level, cause all this stuff can be put away in like 5 minutes. It's mostly like the day-to-day stuff. So tomorrow, my backpack won't be here, my jacket will be in my room, but like [roommate]'s shoes will be around, but the next day they will be gone. So it's a bit like that.

0) That makes sense, so, when you thought about choosing a picture, was it difficult to decide what you wanted to make a picture of? Did you have other things in mind for the picture?

2) So, I considered my bedroom, cause that is like 'my' living space, specifically mine. But, like I said, I chose against it, because it doesn't feel like the place I really live, it feels like the place where I sleep, and sometimes I do a bit of studying. I feel like most of the time I live at home is being done here (living room).

0) Okay, then I arrive at my 4<sup>th</sup> subquestion, is there a difference in how you defined home before, and what you show home is to you with the picture?

2) I guess a bit, because I talked about where I feel comfortable. And I guess I told I feel comfortable in my room, only because it's mine. So that's a bit different, cause I chose the photo to emphasize a bit more the communal, even though that's probably homelife for now, in this stage of life, probably not forever. I think it shows more about my perception of home right now, cause in my stage of life a home needs roommates in it. But then when I'm 30, a bed will be more indicative, cause I expect to want more privacy.

0) So you really have expectations that during different stages of your life, you will get different preferences in what you want in your home.

2) Yeah, and then maybe my roommate's speaker on the counter will like annoy me, but for now I actually enjoy it, because it's a sign that my house is shared.

0) Then I get to my second part of the research belonging as a concept. I'm interested in how feeling you belong in a place can be important to you feeling at home in a place, and therefore I will ask

some questions regarding your belonging in Groningen. Belonging can for example be that you feel emotional attachment to a place, and it can also be that you start to identify with a place. Knowing this, would you say that you mostly feel or not feel you belong in Groningen?

2) Yeah, I do.

0) How do you feel you belong in Groningen?

2) I have a social network here. I feel like I'm part of Groningen-community. I get to say things referring to Groningen like 'we'. Not in the same way that people that were born and raised here get to do. But as much I feel as any Dutch student can say when they refer to Groningen can say 'we', and certainly as an international student in Groningen I can refer to Groningen like 'we'. Maybe not when it comes to referring to earthquakes, or like the challenges of buying a house here that I can say 'we', but more in a way of saying 'what is it like', or 'how is it to live here' I feel confident saying how 'we' feel in Groningen.

0) So, in general you feel like you can talk like you're part of a group, which is people in Groningen.

2) Yeah.

0) Okay.

2) Not on everything, but on a lot of things.

0) Okay, and what do you feel that contributes to that feeling of being part of the group?

2) Social network, like knowing people, there's a common student identity that forms. Like a Groningen student identity. And within that an international student identity that forms. So like, when I meet someone from the RUG, anywhere outside here, I'll go like, eyyyy, I know you, you went to the RUG, I went to the RUG. And if I meet anyone that is an international student at the rug, even more so I would feel like that connection. So it becomes an identity of being a [origin city in US], like being an American, being [cultural identity], and maybe not that strong, but also real is then being a RUG student, and being a Groningen student.

0) Would one of them come first, being a Groningen inhabitant, being a Groningen student, or specifically being a RUG student. So like the university or city?

2) I think the city.

0) And why is that?

2) Mostly because I had a roommate, who was like from Hanze. And it mostly didn't seem to matter, like, in terms of connection. If anything, like, being an international student would be the highest of all. Like, an international student in the Netherlands. Yeah, when I meet international students from Amsterdam, or the Hague, we're like, "ohh, lets talk about our experiences in the Netherlands, nice to meet you, I'm an international student from Groningen". Yeah, that's the strongest one.

0) Okay, so it's mostly international students in the Netherlands, then followed by Groningen student, RUG student. Okay

2) Yeah

0) Are there other places you feel you belong to. You already mentioned the USA a lot in mentioning 'home'. Which places do you feel you belong to?

2) So, [origin city in USA], and then Summer Camp I went to as I kid. And I worked there ever since, and that place feels like home.

0) So you have multiple places at once that feel like home and that feel like you belong to?

2) Yeah

0) Okay, then I come at my next question which is: 'The topic of belonging constitutes many different things for different people, and I'm interested to see what this means for students in Groningen. Therefore I will ask you about a few things that other students may deem as important for their belonging, and see, of course, what you think about that.

2) You've talked about this already, but are there any people that are important for you to feel like you belong or not belong in Groningen.

0) Friends, yeah, and there's no one in particular who have left today, who would no longer feel like home. Of course, some friends are more closer, who would need a larger adaption if they were no longer here.

2) Okay, and how are friends important to feel you are at home in Groningen?

0) Well, I feel people are like everything. Like, one of my favorite places in the world is London, but, I would rather live in Groningen with like 20 friends, than live in London with none. I think friends are so important to your happiness. And you can't actually be happy somewhere when you don't have friends there. You might be happier in like one place with 20 friends, than another, but I would feel like, of course you cannot quantify life like this on a time, but if given a choice I would prefer the friendships, and the strong friendships too of course, having people you can really be honest with and talk to, I would pick that every time above the place itself.

2) Friends above place. Not very place-bound if it comes to where you can find friends.

0) Are there any places in Groningen that are important to you to feel you belong or not belong in Groningen.

2) So this house, [address], cause of my roommates and the little community we've built. Both [RUG location 1] and [RUG location 2], cause I actually spend a lot of time at those places. Actually [RUG location 2 a bit more], cause I spend a lot of time here. Which makes me feel I belong, I'm not surrounded by strangers, I study there, I see a friend from [hobby-association] come by, and then we come over, and we get coffee for 10 minutes. That makes me feel like I really belong here.

0) Okay, so university buildings, and specifically [RUG location 2] in the city, and your house/home itself. Would you rather say that Groningen as a city is your home, or specifically your house is your home?

2) It's hard to answer, cause if this house went away, I would still feel at home in Groningen, and if this house was in America with the same people, it would be like home. But, I kinda see them as connected, it's hard to separate them.

0) Then I get to a next thing other students might find important, which is, are there any objects that are important to make you feel or not feel at home in Groningen.

2).....Oh! My bike, it's like the easiest way to access to feeling like a Groninger, is to have like a bike. And, ehm, yeah, the bike, and I would say even like my living room table and like my couch, cause again, that's like communal area, that's where socialization happens, and if this room I'm now in was like my bedroom, then it would feel a lot less like home for me, and more of a place I live at functionally. So, one thing I was looking for in a house after my first year, was couch, living room, table, and I get that in here.

0) And how does a bike give you a feeling of belonging?

2) Cause it's such a Dutch thing, and it's the easiest way to assimilate and 2 of my favorite things about Groningen. And also I have a very Dutch bike, like the 'omafiets', and I would never ride this bike in [origin city in US], but I also wouldn't want my [origin city] bike here, cause I feel like the Dutch bike, it makes me feel like I belong, it feels like I'm doing things right. I don't feel like a huge pressure to fit in, but I do feel a little pressure to fit in, and this is how I fit in. Not like being a lot of these German students that keep bringing their bike from home that have 21 gears and 2 sets of breaks, and they're pretty good bikes, but they're not Dutch bikes, and it doesn't feel like Groningen, it feels like a German bike in Groningen.

0) Your Dutch bike connects you to Groningen.

2) Haha.

0) Okay, and then the 4<sup>th</sup> thing that may be important, which is, are there any daily or weekly activities that are important for you to belong or not belong in Groningen.

2) Going to uni, [hobby-association] is something I do weekly, and that's always gonna be a sense of community that's gonna be here. But that's very much connected to the student world of Groningen,

cause there's no non-students there. In my first year, it used to be the Vismarkt, but then I lived too far away for shopping to be practical, but it still feels like home nevertheless. So I felt like that in the first year, but now it doesn't feel like necessary.

0) How do these activities like going to university, [hobby-association]

2) Cause I meet people, it's always about people, cause I meet people I know, I meet people I make references with. Well, even if I don't meet someone, even when I go to [RUG location 2] and I don't meet anyone I know for 2 hours, just being with the other Groningen students, I feel more at home a bit.

0) That brings me to my 7<sup>th</sup> question, which is, do you feel like interaction with others, and how others treat you influence your feelings of home in Groningen?

2) A 100% yes.

0) And how do these interactions influence your belonging?

2) Well, like I said, people are everything, and if I didn't have people here who I could text to hang out. If I didn't have people who I could talk to, or study with, I wouldn't feel happy here in Groningen. And I have that, and I do feel happy, and because I'm happy I feel like I can be at home. Yeah, that's it.

0) And then my eight question is, we've now discussed your definition of home, and your feelings home and belonging in Groningen. How do you think the fact that you mostly did have a feeling of belonging in Groningen, and that you did have a sense of home in Groningen, how did the fact that you did feel you belong in Groningen impact that you did feel at home in Groningen?

2) Well, it allows me to not feel so limited to this house. So, when you asked, which do you feel more like, the city or this house. The nice thing is that, even though I enjoy living here, it's hard for me to imagine not living here, like I know that I still could move in Groningen, and feel at home in Groningen, even without this house. If I didn't feel a sense of belonging in Groningen, I'd be much more dependent on this house.

0) Okay, I think that were my interview-questions. Thank you very much for participating in my interview, and, I will now stop the recordings.

### Transcription Research Subject 3

0) – Introduction –

0) What are your age and gender

3) I'm 23 years old, and I'm male

0) Are you currently studying at the university of Groningen or Hanze

3) Yes, I'm studying at the RUG

0) And where were you born

3) I was born in [Northern European country]

0) Where do you currently live

3) I live in Groningen, and I live in [neighborhood of Groningen]

0) Have you lived in other countries than the Netherlands, and your country of birth, and if yes, where have you lived?

3) I lived in [Chinese city] for 6 months

0) Okay, those were the introductory questions, and now I get into the real interview questions. My first question is, how do you define home?

3) Home is more of a feeling for me, it's not a place. Currently, or for the past 5 years, even before moving to Groningen, I felt kinda a no home situation. And it's something that like at some point, you go to a place, and then you get the feeling like, huh, this feels like home. And like currently, when I say I'm going home, I'm saying I'm going to bed to sleep. And that's how I define home, as like the feeling you get when you get like: 'this is the place I should be'.

0) As a follow-up question, are there any specific components to a house that turn it into a home. You already mentioned the bed?

3) Yeah, so like the bedroom and the bed are like a key part of it. At the moment this is the place where I can relax, where I can rejuvenate. So, I think, if I have to name a component, if it's like a material, of course in your home you need like some kind of comfort item as well. Like, how would I say it, like a sofa, a dining table, which I don't currently have. It has to be a place where you can be doing like all your daily living functions the way you want to be doing. And of course, because it is a feeling, you want to have family there as well, if you don't already. That's the things that are inside the house to make it a home.

0) So for you it is important that you have family, that you have specific comfort components, which are very physical things, and that you have a bedroom, a place to relax. Is that very limited to a bedroom, or if you live something else, could that be another room as well.

3) It's important to not have any external stimulation, so if I'm alone in there, for sure, yeah. But currently the bedroom is the only place I can be alone.

0) How do these components named, turn your house into a home.

3) Well, it's just a room you know, they turn it into a home, like, I guess through, going back to just helping me relax. And, I think the items I described are not necessarily somethings that invoke memories in me, and there, my sense of home right now is purely through calming me down. And yeah, that's the only thing I can think of right now.

0) But you do mention memories, is that something that's important, but because you don't have it it changes your feelings of home?

3) I wouldn't say so, it never has been important to me to have like these vocal items. They're nice, but they don't really contribute to my feelings of home, they contribute to other things, but not my feelings of home.

0) Okay, what are these other things?

3) Like, feeling good, but not specifically that this is home to me.

0) Are there other things that make you feel at home in a house?

3) Well, the surrounding environment is important, and the second picture I send is a big testament

to it, because I kinda experience the city as my home. Of course, specific my bed is my home right now. But then you have the 'home', and that's the city for me. So, if I had the exact same room in the middle of, lets say, Friesland, it wouldn't be the same as if it were in the middle of here. And, like, the environment, you have these places you go to, the people you see, and they, they make the sense of like, not community, but like the sense of home to me.

0) So, it's like very much the combination of like the house you're in, but also the location and actually the city at large.

3) It is, and in my hometown, when I started to finish my high school, I really started to lack the sense of home, because the environment was like worn down, it wasn't really worn down, but I had seen everything, there was nothing new. It started to lose like the novelty factor, like any factor it had. And when I started lacking the environment in the home, then it really started to feel like, what is home to me? And yeah, I need a nice environment that I can interact with, that I've places to go to when I want to, and places to go to where I go to regularly. I need to have that for the home.

0) Okay, then I arrive at my second question, which is, do you feel at home in Groningen?

3) Yeah, right now I do, not a 100%. I would say, currently I don't have a home, but I feel most at home in Groningen.

0) Why is that the case?

3) Around 5 years ago, I started lacking the sense of home, and ever since that I never had a full feeling of feeling at home, but that feeling, the place in [Norther Europe] going down, is constantly going and going and going down. It's more and more just a place where my family is, and, when I moved in [Northern European country] to that cabin or region for a while, it never felt like home, same in [Chinese city], but here, I mean, this is where I live, this is where I'm building my life right now. So it's more and more feeling like home, I know more and more the things I want to be doing here. And, like, I know that, like, there's always this place, no matter where I am, I can go back to to be.

0) But you did mention before in your definition of home, that family is important. Is that a main factor why this doesn't feel like home?

3) Could be, and when talking about family, I'm not talking about like parents, or my sisters or cousins which I don't have many of, but I'm talking about, not even a relationship, but just like having someone in your house who is someone of significance. It can be my family, but I don't want to live in a house with my family, even though it would be nice to have them around of course. But it's more or less probably like for a future relationship, I'm not craving it right now, but I know that at some point that, to feel 100% at home, I need to have that.

0) Okay, so a relationship is also important for your sense of home?

3) Yeah, in like the 10 year or 15 year plan, I know that I need that to feel 100% at home.

0) Okay, have your feelings of home in Groningen changed over time.

3) Yeah! When I moved into my current apartment, so I lived in a student house, with like a 100 of rooms. That never felt like home, it was just a place to sleep in. But here, more and more, especially with my new roommate who just moved in, who's a friend of mine, it feels more like home. I can actually interact with someone in the house, instead of being alone. My previous roommate like barely was even in the house, or around, maybe once a month. So, it has like gradually increased, and more than ever since I got back from [Chinese city], which was 4 months ago, before, I think, all the corona things were hindering my sense of home. I had to spend way too much time in that place, for it to have like any meaning, and by place I mean home now. And, now, that life is actually getting back to normal, like, I can start building that feeling, like, 'oh, this place feels like home, this is my headquarters'. So yeah, it has been a significant increase during this year.

0) I'm very interested in what you said about: 'because of corona I had to spend too much time in this place to feel like home, because I didn't have to go back to it.' How does that work for you?

3) Well, like I said, the environment is a big part of the home, and if I can't interact with the environment, then the place I come back to doesn't feel special, because that is my environment. You can't mix those 2 things.

0) you need to have an outside environment of friends and places to go to, for the place where you can relax to be a home.

3) Yeah, that's exactly what I'm aiming to explain here.

0) Okay, then I get to the photo elicitation part of my interview. So, I made you bring a photo of what/who/where is most important for your feeling of home in Groningen. Can you describe to me what I can see in the picture? Do you want to discuss both, or one at a time?

3) I guess I can get into both, because I talked about a lot relating to this already.

0) Then we start with the first one.

3) The first one is a picture of my bed. And thankfully in the photo it's a beautiful day outside, and for me, the bed in here, that's the place in my house that's the most home. I drop electronics and stuff when I'm in bed, so that's the place where I can relax. And right now, as a person that has possibly a lot going on, it's the most important thing that I can go home and relax, so that's the reason why the bed feels like home. And also, haha, honestly, that little backyard has started to grow on me, it's nice to wake up and see some tulips in the backyard, especially when it's sunny. I can open up the door, and let the outdoor air come in, it feels comfortable, it starts feeling like, 'oh this is nice to wake up in here, this is home'. So that's that picture. And then the second picture is just the city, I wanted to show mostly the area that I interact with. And it's just a screenshot from google maps, and I feel it's important, because it's not only the place for me. I talked about the Friesland example, and it's important that this specific house is in this specific place. And otherwise my interaction patterns change, and then I wouldn't know what I consider home if the environment wasn't exactly this.

0) Okay, so again the combination of your environment, and your bed, your room.

3) Yes

0) So you showed through the picture how it shows what home means to you, and why you specifically choose these 2 pictures. Which brings me to the question, interesting in this case, why was it difficult to only, instead of choosing one picture, you chose to bring 2 pictures, why was it such a difficulty?

3) The main thing was that I wanted to get a picture from a roof or something, and I couldn't go get that. And I also wanted to include the bed somehow, so I had this micro and macro contrast there, which I couldn't capture in any other way.

0) Okay, then I will go to the 4<sup>th</sup> question, which is, is there is a difference in how you defined home before, and what you show home is to you with the first picture?

3) Yeah, I guess, there is a bit of a difference, since, I said previously like, throughout everything, I didn't even think of how I feel at home, or what I feel at home like, until I started losing the feeling. It used to be, and even I started this interview with, it is a feeling. But here, I clearly describe that, right now it's the place to relax and calm down, and perhaps someday in the future have family around. So I guess there's something of a difference of what I use the pictures for, which is very concrete examples of very like specific places or patterns that I deal with. But all in all, I think, it's still like more of a feeling you can't make home, at some point you will feel home.

0) So, in your definition of home, it is a feeling, but how you currently experience home to feel to you, it's very location bound. Why is there this difference?

3) Between feeling and location? I wouldn't say there is a difference, but I'd say it's in the nature of feeling home, and for me homemaking has never been a thing, and I like living in this... I like making my room look like a hotel room. Sometimes I've seen that people have these home-making elements like having cosy items on the tables, not cosy items, but decorations like pictures and paintings. And I like making my room look like a hotel room, and that's a part of why I think you just at some point,

you've done enough in there, and then one day you feel like, 'oh, this is my home'. And it is not really a contrast, but I just, they don't give me any feeling of home: Items, material decorations. And I feel that's why there is a difference, it's just my character.

0) Okay, then we'll go to the second part of what I wanted to research, and that's belonging. I'm interested in seeing how you can belong in a place is important for how you feel at home in a place. And therefore I will ask some questions regarding your belonging in Groningen. Belonging can for example be that you feel emotional attachment in a place. It can also mean that you start to identify with a place. Knowing this, would you say that you feel like you belong in Groningen?

3) I've applied to study elsewhere as well, but what's keeping me thinking about it is that I want to stay here a bit longer, so yeah, I do feel like I belong here right now.

0) And how do you feel you belong in Groningen?

3) I guess, this is a 100% about the people I interact with. Of course, it's nice to do research in places, but it's nothing you could replace, it's about the people.

0) And how do those people create a feeling of belonging?

3) Well, can you specify that a bit?

0) Yeah, so regarding back to what I say belonging is, it's emotional attachment to a place, and identifying with a place. Those are then things you can go in to, but you can also talk about other ways you feel you belong. But how do people create those type of phenomena?

3) Okay, so for me, the people... they're more or less their interaction, so the way that... it's a bit difficult... So, they're more spontaneous than the people back home, so in here I get this feeling of anticipation from the people, like what's gonna happen next. So that's real fun and keeps life exciting, and that's really important for me. And like, creating this network of people that you know you can count on them at times where you need them, there's always somewhere around, and only here, nowhere else. And that's why I specifically feel I belong here. Like the people are available here. And of course you have phones, but it's not the same. I was in [City in China] and I didn't have the same contact with these people. You didn't feel them physically around the spot.

0) Okay, what do you think that next to of course people you've named, are there other things that contribute to you feeling you belong in Groningen.

3) I would say it's the routine I have here. So, I go to a café I go to regularly. I have some other places I go to regularly. I have like a walk I do quite regularly, which is like around the center. And I guess those routines are a big part of belonging, since I feel like those are my daily activities. And those contribute to my feeling... Again, if I go to a different place, those have to change, and I have to create new belonging through those things.

0) Okay, so routines are also very important for your belonging in Groningen.

3) Yeah

0) Are there other places you feel you belong to, if so, which places would that be?

3) Right now, no. There's no other places, I don't feel like I belong in [country in Northern Europe], I don't feel like I belong there. Of course it's nice to go there, but right now, this is the place to be.

0) Okay, then I'll get to my 6<sup>th</sup> question, which is the topic of belonging means different things for different people, and I'm interested to see what this means for students in Groningen. Therefore I will ask you about a few things that other students may deem important for their belonging, and then I will immediately get to the second one, because people you explained very much. Are there any places that are important for you to feel you belong in Groningen?

3) Specific places... Of course, it's nice to feel like you belong in university. I think that's pretty important, especially trying to well in university myself, I think succeeding is pretty okay. I feel if I didn't get this feeling of belonging in university, I wouldn't put my best effort in, which happened during corona. I feel like it's important you want to go to this place to do these functions which are learning things, researching. So university would be one place I specifically would want to belong to.



Otherwise, so I talked about my regular café I go to. A big part of it is like, I want to feel like a regular in there. I go there, I just sit down, and I get my coffee, that's how it goes. And that's pretty important to me, if the dude came to me every time and asked the questions like I was some completely random customer, I wouldn't go there daily. I really want to belong in this place. It's pretty comfortable to know you actually have a place in the city. When other people ask where do you go, you can say: 'I'm a regular in this café'.

0) Okay, so very much a few places in the city you need to belong to: university, a local café. And that forms that you belong in the city.

3) Yeah.

0) Then my next question would be, are there any objects that are important for you to feel you belong or not belong in Groningen?

3) No, I can't go any deeper into this, but no, there are no objects. I'm used to moving around long distances right now, and travelling, taking just the suitcase with me, my luggage, I can't take any objects with me. So there are no objects, like everyone has a bed, so there are no objects I would consider as home.

0) Okay, we talked about this a little, but are there any daily or weekly activities to feel you belong or not belong in Groningen?

3) Yeah, so if I wasn't able to go to the gym, I'll do these additions here as we talked about the café and walk. If I wasn't able to go to the gym, that would suck, which happened during corona. That's really a good example right now of what happened, because that's my hobby, and if I can't do my hobby, I would be somewhere that doesn't feel like home. In my first part, the second definition I had of home today, I said it was like somewhere you could go to do the things you want to do. And going to the gym is part of that. And if someday I didn't live in the city, I would have to have a home gym. Like when I live 30km in the farmside. So right now, that activity is really important for me, and otherwise, if I think about it, those are the activities. So the walking, the routines, going to cafés, going to the gym. Going to parties doesn't contribute to my feeling of home. Those 3 things I can confidently say contribute to my feeling of home.

0) And you talked a bit about corona both in home and belonging. It mattered to you that during corona, certain things you mentioned to be important to feel at home and belong weren't available. What happened exactly?

3) You lose the things, cause you can't access them during corona. And I didn't think of it back then, but after all the restrictions were gone, I realized like oh, this thing sucked really bad. So let's say something like the 'avondklok' (curfew). If I want to do evening walks, which I do a couple times a week, that's gone, I can't do that routine anymore. And then, like, during lockdowns you can't go to places. Again, you lose the feeling that you can interact with your environment, and afterwards I realized it. But not during the time, I was like, it's the same for everybody. Some people really need it and some people don't. And, I lost the gym. Again, it's not the same, you know, if you change the sport you do, you do something else. But for me, it's the gym I go to, and not the workout park, and losing it was a big deal. And not during, but after when you go there, you're like: 'Oh, this feels so right'. Instead of the workout park, which is like: 'I have to do this so I can maintain myself'.

0) Okay, so specifically corona disrupted routines that are important to you for you to feel you belong and feel at home. Then my next question is, do you feel that interaction with others and how they treat you, influences your feelings of belonging in Groningen?

3) Yeah, as I said, belonging is a lot about the people, and if I didn't have that much of a match here, it wouldn't feel like home. If I would go back to when I was in [City in China], I didn't get a good mix of people, and it was difficult for me. But I didn't make that happen in that time, and I didn't feel at home at all. And then I've traced it later back to that, it was really about the people why I didn't feel like I should be there. And here, I have the people with me, and the network that I talked about, the

trust network, it's really important for me in the sense of belonging.

0) Okay, how do interactions, or treatment of others influence your feelings of belonging?

3) I guess what I love about the city is how tolerant the city is. Like, for example, even in [country in Northern Europe] in my hometown you regularly see white 40/50 men treating some groups like shit. Even if you do something slightly differently, you might get some weird looks, and even if you're not doing anything differently, but someone just heard something about you, people look at you like: 'Oh, what is this guy, does he think he's better than us'. But here in Groningen nobody cares in a good way. And I feel that's a really important part of this city and how it makes me feel at home. I don't really have any features or like, I'm very privileged myself. But I feel comfortable to have an environment where I know a lot of people can be more comfortable than they could be somewhere else in the world. I know people here aren't just a bunch of racists as much as in another place in the world. That makes me feel better.

0) Okay, then we arrive at the last question I have. We've now discussed your definition of home, your feelings of home, and your feelings of belonging in Groningen. How does the fact that you mostly said you feel you belong in Groningen, has an impact on the fact that you mostly feel at home in Groningen. Do you have an idea on that?

3) I feel like they're actually pretty related, like feeling like belonging is needed for me to feel at home in Groningen. They go hand in hand. But the feeling of home is not required for the feeling of belonging, since I think, that's the difference on how they connect together for me. I need belonging for the home, but not home for the belonging. I could move into a hippie community, and I could feel like I belong there, but I wouldn't necessarily feel like home. But if I just moved into the most beautiful place somewhere lets say in the middle of Paris, in the most ideal apartment I wanted to be in. And if I didn't have the sense of belonging, that place wouldn't feel like home. It would feel like the place to be, that you want to be in, but if you don't have the trust-network, not have the people, I wouldn't consider that as my home.

0) Okay, so you mostly say, the part of belonging that is my trust network of people you know and can interact with, is a main basis for you to feel you belong, and the main basis for you to feel at home.

3) Yeah, definitely, it's a requirement of home, belonging, for me.

0) Okay, that was the interview, so thank you for participating. Then I will now stop the recording.

#### Transcription Research Participant 4:

- Introduction -

0) First some background information: What are your age and gender?

4) Yes, I'm a 23 year old female

0) Are you currently studying at university of Groningen...

4) yes

0) where were you born?

4) [Central European city]

0) Where do you currently live?

4) Groningen.

0) And have you lived in other countries than the Netherlands or your country of birth [country], if yes, where have you lived?

4) No

0) Main question: How do you define home?

4) I think my relation with home is a bit haunted by the fact that my parents divorced, so I lost what I called my home when I was around 15, and then I had moms home and dads home. So at this point that meaning of home decayed. And I feel like I don't really have a home. Like, this house I occupy, I like it. I feel safe, I've got food, there's my roof. There's all I need to sustain my physical needs. But I don't think I have a home, honestly. So I would say home is where I feel good, and I do feel good here, but at some point in my life there will be this final destination that I will call home and I think it will be something I own. So once I will buy my own apartment, no matter where it will be, I think I will call that home. And I can alter it, I can change it.

0) Home needs to be yours?

4) Yeah, home needs to be mine, I'm able to exclude everyone you know? Whatever happens, if I lose a job, if I don't have a job, if I'm in an accident and I lose my work, this place is mine, and I can exclude everyone from it.

0) Ehm, are there any specific components to a house, that turn it into a home.

4) For me, for sure, oven. The fact that I have this ridiculously small kitchen, I think oven is very important. Because when you have an oven, you have access to cooking cheaper, healthier and faster, than frying everything on this shitty cooktop you know. So access to an oven for sure, also the smell of food from an oven makes it home. For me, I was raised with a cat, so I think pets also make it home, because someone waits there for you. But I think it's a bit decision to have an animal, and that's also connected to your own house, because animals are not welcome in rented places. So, oven, animals, and for me it's a bit of a bathtub. Because I never had a shower at home, my parents only used a bathtub. So when I was a kid I only used a bathtub, I only showered the first time when I was 14. And when I have my final home, I will have a bathtub in there.

0) You have some specific things haha

4) I have haha

0) How do these components, so a pet, the fact that you have an oven, a bathtub, how do they turn it into a home.

4) I think they match how I want to live like. So cooking, I don't like fried or boiled stuff, I like things from the oven. You could put a whole chicken in there and make it a dish. It encourages my lifestyle and supports it. A bathtub is just for like relaxation. I'm used to it, so I want it back. And a pet is just this little loving thing that's always good.

0) Home for you needs to match, or support you in doing the things that you love.

4) Yes, my lifestyle, and possibly allow me to grow and develop as well.

0) And how do they allow you to grow and develop?

4) If you have a lot of space and surface, you can have a large kitchen, a place to work out, a place to do your skin care what I try to. And look, I do everything in this like 8 square meters. And I know I would be more comfortable at doing yoga, if I wasn't hitting everything in my way. I think your house, if the surface around you to separate between different activities, it helps you to develop these activities and maybe even go further. So maybe I'll have a space to freely exercise, this place isn't it, I'm also really broad. I think my fitness journey would look different, but here I'm very limited.

0) So lack of space is already a problem for forming a home here?

4) Yeah, I try to adapt to the place. Here in Groningen you don't choose the place, the place chooses you. And I got this place. I was happy when I got it, it's a studio and I like to live alone. I don't want to live with other people, like normal, I'm not extreme. So yeah, I don't have my things, maybe it looks like I do, but I got rid of a lot of items. Like 3 years ago, I started a minimalism journey. So I gathered a lot of stuff, and every month I get rid of 10 items, and if I buy something, I got to get rid of an additional item. And this place kind of encourages me to do it, because I don't have space for my shit. So I have to keep asking doing I need this, so the fact this place is so small did make me adjust to it.

0) So, this place asks for some adjustment?

4) Yeah, I had to make some inventory

0) But also you compare to living with other people, how is that important for your sense of home?

4) My housing journey, I lived with my parents obviously, then I was a kid that didn't matter. Then I lived with 6 boys in student housing which was wretched. And I liked them and they liked me, but when I go to a shower and I see someone's dirt, I'm like nah. I'm very hygienic, I'm a pretty clean person in terms of not liking dirt, just simple stuff. And I think that people, like you know, 6 boys, they're just dirty. And for example tonight, one of the frat boys, there's a lot of frat houses here. And I guess by mistake, he just blasted music at 4am, and he turned it down after 3 seconds, but these 3 seconds was enough to wake up everyone here. And that doesn't happen often, but it happens here. So I can't say anything about noise, because I still have that here. And I used to live with my ex-girlfriend, and we lived together in an appartement. So like cohabitation within an appartement was also like, wow, this is intense. Cause I was the person that usually cleaned up her mess. And that's not something that I want to find time for. So that's something, living with other people is a hassle. Cause they will leave the conditions you see, are not the conditions you wanna see. And then you have to take your time and effort to clean it, buy your cleaning products to make it how you want it. So it costs money you know.

0) So it's important for you to live in a clean space, without too much noise, where you don't have to spend too much time and effort to create that because other people disrupt it. And that's why you want to have your own space where you can control that?

4) yeah, I like to control my own space. I'm not a control freak, but in my house I want to control the space. So, you're not a girl, but when you're a girl and there's these like cleaning standards. I have these [origin country] friends, and this applies to people from there, and I have this [origin country] girl, and she comes here, and she starts cleaning my house. And all these arrangements here are made by my friend who came here to clean the room. And I don't mind if people come here and arrange things like these books, but for me it's clean and sustainable.

0) Other people can have an impact, but you have the final say in a way?

4) Yeah, she did ask me if she can put these books here, and I was like, yes, you can. It doesn't obstruct anything, so it's all good. So not control-freak in how everything stands, I'm not pedantic in any way, I just like cleaning standards, breathing and I don't sense the dust. And I'm pretty blind, so I have good smell.

0) Are there other things that make you at home in a house?

4) Food, for sure, makes me feel better. Because I can now, my physical needs will be fulfilled in this

house. So food is very important. And I think what I would miss, I really like the curtains, I really like having curtains, these windows are big, they don't look out to anywhere. But the people there, you see their kitchen, they see me naked so often, so I like having curtains in every room. That's something my mother also tells me, cause you need to be able to cover the windows so people don't see you naked. And I rarely shut them, but sometimes when it's really explicit when I sit here without shirt I do. Cause it's very often very hot in here. And that's why my greenery is so lush, these plants have no idea they're in Western Europe haha. So yeah, I like food and privacy.

0) Do you feel at home in Groningen and why?

4) Yeah I do, I feel at home, I have a lot of friends. My closest friends they live over there. I feel like part of a small community here. There are 2 [Eastern European country] guys living over there, and then I help one of them with transferring money to his wife. And he had problems, and I helped him and now we're there for each other, so if I need help he would help me as well. [Friends name] doesn't live far away from here. So seeing people I know makes me feel at home, talking with them makes me feel at home, having some kind of relation with them makes me feel at home. And also [café] is nearby, and I go there so often that the owner likes me, even though he's often rude to people. That makes me feel at home, that the people that serve at those places know me. And I also have a job, I work at uni now, I also worked at a restaurant before. I work too much at uni. And when I go to my office, that's also so nice, I have an office close to my house. And then there's people that work with me, and another group of people. And because I work that job, I have money to sustain myself, and I feel respected and appreciated. And with that money I can give myself that food in house. So the job is important, and friends are important, university is not that important for me. University gives me more of a job place than an actual study place, because I prefer working over studying. So that gives me a home.

0) If I summarize: Important: People, but specifically, but also people around specific places, your home forming a community, a person at a nice coffee place that knows you and treats you well, people at your job, but also at the end you talked about that it's important for you to be able to sustain yourself. That also makes you feel more at home.

4) Yeah, if you don't have resources and support yourself, that also doesn't make you feel at home. And I'm a simple person, I don't want much and if I'm able to sustain myself, that makes me feel good. So the job structures that well, if you live alone, you just need people. Sometimes, I don't because I'm so social, but sometimes I think that people only open their mouth at like 7pm when they first leave their house. But I never feel lonely, like truly, even when I'm alone for a day because I want to, I still feel there's all these people here that I can just go to, and be like: 'Hi'. They would hate that obviously, so I don't, but I could.

0) So it's important to have your own space, outside of that have enough opportunity and be connected with a lot of people.

4) Yes

0) Have your feelings of home in Groningen changed over time?

4) Yes, when I lived in student housing with those 6 boys, I felt really crackheady you know, because the house was one crackhead den. And all my friends were like partying, not in the house, but you could see this is not a house of people that go to school at 9am. These people would drink alcohol, smoke weed, and have sex ridiculously often. And all of that, so I didn't feel belonging there, because that's not my lifestyle, not my thing. It felt, I really wanted to move out, also the kitchen was terrible, once you get mice it's this grave slope. It was dirty, there was no kitchen to cook, they were loud. And I could sit down and drink alcohol with them, but I didn't feel connected. And no-one cared about each other, we just lived there. And then I changed home for quite some time, I lived with my girlfriend, she does UCG, and lived in [University student housing]. So she lived there, and in my second year of my studies, first year of her UCG she lived there, so I couldn't find housing and lived in

her room together. That's not allowed, and was very tough. I would go to [friend] very often and just hang out. We shared like living spaces and bathroom with a lot of other people and we had to say: 'Look, this is my girlfriend, she has nowhere to live, she's gonna chill around here', and people didn't mind obviously. But I was homeless and I hated it. Then we moved to the apartment together, so it was also Covid, so place deserted, everyone left. Everything was closed, so I could really, the only activity I could do was walking. And by walking I felt really connected to Groningen. So when I walk around I know where there will be cats and plants. So I know the city really well, but that happened kind of because of Covid, and because there was nothing to do. And that's where I built the familiarity of Groningen. So, that was really, I really felt at home in that apartment. But it was a bit tainted, because my relationship with my ex-girlfriend wasn't perfect. So there were a bit tensions, but that apartment made me feel safe, and knowing this calmer side of Groningen, made it clear that I feel at home. And then after we broke up, and we had to move apart and I found this apartment, I felt good. I lived on [street name close to current address], so when I moved that close, I still felt at home. Because it's the same neighborhood and walking paths and everything. So now I still feel at home and I still walk, haha.

0) So the pandemic has given you even more of a feeling of home in Groningen, because it forced you to start walking as activity, and that made you get a connection.

4) Yeah, so walking you can be very observant, so I started to look in these windows. I know you're not supposed to, but it was not normal to me that I could look inside. I'm just curious, I wanted to see their decoration, is there a cat in the background. And I also look a lot, I have a really good memory, so all the combinations of walking around and getting to know the city and walking and looking and remembering.

0) Then I arrive at the photo elicitation part of the interview.

4) [Photo not taken yet, but showed what it will be]

0) Then my first question is, can you describe what I would be able to see in the picture?

4) Yeah, so, it's my table that I have from [store], and my table is the center of my life, I eat here, I touch it, I love my table. I love that I my drawer where I have my most important stuff. There used to be no table here, no desk, so I brought it, and I need this. I need a table on which I can lay. You see a lot of my plants, that plant my mom gave me. And I purchased one leaf, and now I have all this, and it breaks all the time, so when it breaks I make new plants. And I already gave 4 friends a plant. So my plants are important, because I take care of them. And I love my view, I like that it's red, that it has this red hue to it. I like that it's an old building, and I like the tower, which you can probably just about not see in the picture.

0) One things that bothers me, is that there are way more green plants inside, than there are outside. So when I leave the house, I never know if it's windy, because there's no trees to show how cold it is. The view is absolutely dead, it just breaks, but I like it, it could also be medieval. If you remove all the windows, this could be medieval haha. So, the table the view, and the plants. And also, when I walk through the door, this is what I see.

4) So, how does the picture you will make, for the interview, show what home mean to you?

0) I think combinations of utility and aesthetic values. Because I'm an aesthetic person as well, I like aesthetic objects that I keep a lot here as well. Like plants that I keep a lot of. So yeah, the combination of functional, and nice view that makes me happy. And my plants that make me happy too.

0) Okay, why did you make to specifically take your photo of this.

4) Because when I enter home, I see this.

0) Was it then difficult to decide what you wanted to make the picture about.

4) I immediately knew when you asked me.

0) Is there a difference how you defined home before, and how you show it with the picture.

4) No, it's pretty much the same, a combination of the functional, and aesthetic life you have at home.

0) Functionality and aesthetics, but I remember that when you talk about the definition of home, it was very much about cleanliness, and noise, and friends...

4) Yeah, but that's very much aesthetics, cleanliness is very aesthetic. I could live without my vase, without my pots, I could live without all the little things I have. But I couldn't live without cleanliness. And the view could be better, but is aesthetic. It's such a tiny room as well, it's difficult to talk about different places. I could live in a place that had just a mattress, a desk, a chair, and one storage thing. I could live there and call it home. As long as it's clean, functional, and mine.

0) Okay, did our discussion about the picture you will take, inform your definition of home, or change how you want to define home?

4) I think it questions to what extent plants are important. Because I could easily get rid of all these little inanimate objects I have. But plants, even though they are aesthetic, they are alive. So I'm wondering now during our conversation, are plants essential, are plants important? But now that you said it, I don't think I can get rid of them, they are important.

0) Okay, that's great, so you really got informed

4) Yeah, haha.

0) Then I arrive at the second part of my interview, I wanted to also get into belonging, So blab la. Knowing this, would you say that you feel that you belong in Groningen?

4) Yes, I think I belong here for now. I think belonging is a bit timed, and for now I belong here.

0) How do you feel you belong?

4) I feel like this is my neighborhood, those are my streets, I'm the perfect demographic. Young, female, studying, there are so many people that do like the same thing. I'm from a big city, and a different country, and that city is this big agglomeration and busy. And when I'm here, I feel connected to the city center. And outside of the city center, at some point it's just residential, and I don't feel I belong there. I enjoy the fact that I live in the city center, because it's entertaining, I need entertainment because I'm from a big city. I need the city center, I need the input and stimulation I know from [Origin city]. So that's important for me to live in a city center. That was a priority for housing when I looked for housing. And when I moved here I had to hustle big time to afford it, but this month I turned 23, so finally 'huurtoeslag' (rental support) is starting now. I'm very happy. What was the question?

0) Repetition:

4) Yes yes, because so many people that live here being relatable, and that I live in the city center, I like it. It brings me pleasure because I'm from a big city. And I don't really feel afraid here, I feel Dutch society, I feel accepted here. I just came here, and it was like, this is my home here. I know about politics, I stay informed, I work and pay taxes this year. So yeah, also that, makes me belong here, because I stay here, because I want to be here. I belong here now, I don't overthink it, I don't really, I remember when my dad brought me to Amsterdam, I felt like, I'm home, I belong here. There's something in this country that automatically make you feel welcome. Once you start thinking like, 'oh, I'm an Oostblokker' and things like that. You would account yourself into this. But if you just present yourself as you are, I feel accepted and belonging. And Groningen is my home just as much as it's any Dutch person's home. The nationality thing, doesn't matter. I don't even feel [from home country] you know.

0) And there's something temporal about belonging, what do you mean?

4) At different stages of life, you belong at different places, but you define those stages yourself. So once I stop my study and become a young professional, this apartment becomes to small. If I were to say I work from home, and stay at this kitchen, and be in this room, I would feel tired. I don't have the amenities I want to have. And I would then have to advance, get an upgrade. Now it's fine,

because I study and I do work a lot as well. Because I go to the office or something. I find my ways around it because I'm a student and I have so much free time. And it makes sense to be here, because I have time, I have time to clean the dust around here. Today I had to bike 10km out of town for an interview. So the belonging changes with your faces of life. At some point, also what I say about demographics. When I get too old, that's not good, but when I'm past 30 I say, and you live in Groningen. That's like, what are you doing, do you work at the uni or something. I think this town is also so specific like that. Because it's so driven by the university, once you're 30, everyone is older or younger than you. What will you do, how do you find a partner, or a house. At some point you have to move out of here. And I'm also gay, and the gay scene here does not exist, so if I want to find a partner I probably have to move out of here to find another gay woman. Because that's very hard in here.

0) So the desires you have in life, you expect them to change over time, which of course is something that is very much said in science. And that's both in the sense of your housing itself where you have different aspirations, the idea that at a certain point you want to find a partner which you don't expect to find here. You feel like the amenities the city provide are very well adjusted to you as a student, but at a certain point you expect to want different things and want to move to another location. So right now, you feel you belong, but you already expect that in a few years maybe, you don't feel like you belong very more.

4) Yeah, exactly, and I wanna milk these years that I belong, yeah.

0) Okay, you wanna make the most out of your belonging, okay. Are there other places you feel you belong to, and which places are they?

4) Funnily enough, I lived in Amsterdam for 1 year, and the neighborhood I lived, when I go there, I still feel at home there. And I worked for uber eats there, so I don't need an app to know the place. That's how I define belonging, if I can myself in a place, and like know it. So Amsterdam, even though I lived there only for a year, when I go to [neighborhood], I feel at home there. And that's why I think at some point I will move back to Amsterdam. [Origin city], I go there, it's very uncanny, cause I'm [from origin country], and I'm hardcore from there, I only speak [origin language], and English, my parents are both [from there], and I'm a perfect [from there] person, but when I go there I'm like: 'You people are weird, the way you talk, the way you behave is weird'. So I don't feel at home in [origin country], I feel at home in the Netherlands.

0) So, while you do find your way in [Origin city], it's in a combination with how people behave?

4) Yeah, that's a very good point, cause I know [Origin city] by heart through 19 years of living there. And people there aren't nice, they are rude, and that makes me not want to belong there. And I have no problems with my identity, I worked all through that already and I'm okay with being from [Origin country], but when I go there, I don't want to belong there. I don't have a problem with my identity, I'm a proud Easterner, but I don't want to belong, it's just not good for me. And because I don't want to, and I realized something is off with that country for a while now, which has been for a while, since I was like 12 or 13. I think that's what took the belonging, because when I go there, I speak the language, know the place, my mom lives there, my room is sort of there. So yeah, I would say that [country of birth], because of how unpleasant it is to be there for me personally, I just, like reject the belonging that I could have.

0) Belonging is a choice?

4) I guess it is, I guess it is a choice.

0) Okay, that brings me to blab la bla: Are there any people that are important for you to feel you belong in Groningen:

4) Oh yeah, for sure [friend], since day 1

0) And can you explain who he is for the transcript.

4) He is a friend from uni, we were together in a [tutor group], and we're friends. We're I guess best



friends since first lecture. When I think about Groningen I see his face. But only [Origin country] people I know. So [friend] is the focal point, but outside of that though we have, like I also spend quite some time with [origin country] people. Because we basically have the same approach. So I would say, yeah, 2 of my [origin country] friends come to mind as well. [Friend] is mostly for school and my beginning here, but after 3 years, them as well. And we have a supportive relationship, if anyone needs something we can count on each other in a [origin country] sense. And this goes back to having built relations with people speaking different languages. Because when I think of them, and [friend], I think differently, because those relationships are built in different languages.

0) But then, it is important for you to have friends that speak your origin language?

4) I didn't think it was important, but I think it's just easier. You always have a conversation topic, you have a shared sense of humor. And it is nice to go into that world, and enjoy the culture you know. I think it's important for my [origin culture] side. I think if I only had English friends, I would miss out on developing my [origin country] identity.

0) So you have an [origin country] identity to develop.

4) Yeah, but then I don't want this, so it's kind of weird, because I don't really want to belong to the [origin country] nation, but I think it's coming from aggregate to individual. That collective [origin culture] society that makes me not want it, but once I see a nice [origin culture] person with whom I can make jokes, that makes me feel good.

0) Then, the next thing I want to ask about is, are there any places that are important for you to feel you belong in Groningen?

4) Yeah, my neighborhood for sure. I wake up at 8, and usually go for a walk around it. And it's usually deserted, and I really like walking around here. From [street name], to [street name], and then to [area]. And sometimes I just meet people working here, and they are like, what are you doing? And I'm like, I'm just walking, I live here, which is uncommon. I also like [University location], where I go daily. I grab coffee at [café], I get a sandwich at [restaurant], I meet with people. That's my place, I go there a lot, and if you ever go past there, you just have to look and I'm probably there, even when it's rainy. And those are very, also like my friends houses. Where [friend] lives, also like the street. When I go there it's like, yeah, this is [friend's] area, and he lived there for quite a while and I go there regularly. And I think the city center. And I think that's growing, my relationship with specific places. And when I started walking, because I work at [location University Groningen], and I usually don't go there, but recently I had to, and I realized how nice it is, it's just so lovely.

0) So really in development are the places you feel you belong to in Groningen.

4) Yeah, cause the ones I have are like set, but I believe there will be more.

0) The third thing is, are there any objects that are important for you to feel you belong in Groningen?

4) I guess my bike, which is important. Without my bike, well, I actually walk most of the time. But the bike does give independence, and mobility, that's very important. How could you live in the Netherlands without a bike, you would have a weird live probably. And I think that's it referring to objects and belonging in Groningen. Yeah, yeah. Maybe the plants, if you call those objects. Because they wait here, when I go somewhere I have to arrange someone. Because of [going abroad] there will be a dude living here, and he will water the plants. But, the bike is Dutch specific, and Groningen specific, and plants are everything specific. They are part of me. Just, my like, belonging creation I guess. If I move them to Eindhoven or something, and I move to Eindhoven with them, they would bring some belonging in Eindhoven for me.

0) So if you want to belong somewhere you need to have or bring plants.

4) It's not like I look at plants and I'm like, yeah. No, they need to be my plants, there has to be a story between me and the plant.

0) So, I think for both your home and belonging right now, plants are very important for you. They

are very emotionally attached objects.

4) Yeah, I didn't think about it often, because then you think about yourself and plants and that's weird. But these plants are important for me, and I need to take care of them here, and not the other way around.

0) And you also talked about how your bicycle is important. How does your bicycle help you belong in Groningen and the Netherlands?

4) Imagine, someone says: 'Oh, lets go to a party', and it is in Zuidwolde, no, you don't bike to Zuidwolde. Lets say Hoogezand. If you go there, I would be excluded if I did not have a bike. And regarding Zernike, I probably couldn't even afford the bus. So it allows me to go to places. And I got this bike when I was in second grade of middle school. So I had this bike for like 8 years now. So I think this can be a bit broader, I'm very much attached to it. And it looks like a rusted piece of shit right now, because I didn't have shelter in my last housing. But I think it means independence, and living in the Netherlands means having a bike. And I go to 'kringloop' with it, almost anything I have is from 'kringloop', and yeah, I like that. It would be sad for me if I had to walk to 'kringloop' or not go. Again, it sustains my lifestyle.

0) So the bike is important for accessibility, as well as an object that has some meaning to you.

4) In case of my bike yes.

0) And the last thing: Are there any daily or weekly activities that are important for you to feel at home in Groningen?

4) Yeah, my coffee, at [café]. I used to go more often, but I have a regular route I take, and then I go to [café], and then I go sit at nearby [university location], and sometimes I read a book, sometimes I meet someone. And I Can sit there for 20 minutes to 2 hours, and then I go back home. That's my very important ritual I do a lot. My morning walks, but this is also usually within my morning walk. And sometimes, when I don't have time, I do a quick morning walk to [supermarket] or something. So walking, yeah I like walking. And the coffee ritual. And is there anything that happens weekly? No, not really. I usually know that I see [friend] once or twice a week, I see [home origin] people once or twice a week. I have [other culture] people once or twice a week. And I've other friends I want to see, and they want to see me. So I see different people in different frequencies, which is a constant.

0) So, morning routine, that sometimes includes a coffee routine, and in various frequencies meeting friends.

4) And school, to be fair with you, I don't really do school a lot. When an exam comes up I open the slides and somehow keep getting decent grades. And my work, I always do something else as student assistant. So every week this looks different. So my coffee ritual, my walk ritual, and my friends are stable in my life.

0) Are those unstable factors also important for your belonging, or not at all?

4) Nah, I don't think so, if I wasn't a student, I would be like, why am I here. But then I would deal with it really fast, because I would be like, yeah you're here because you work here or something, it's fine. And you are young enough to live here well. So I guess, studying is what I came here for, so I can forget it all together. So I still remember being a student and enjoying student life. And I do enjoy the free time we have, also at work. As student assistant you get paid for some hours and you do completely different things, sometimes you get paid for doing nothing. But the university does not really matter. So yes, it is why I'm here, but the activities themselves, no.

0) That brings me to my 7<sup>th</sup> question out of eight that I have. Do you feel that interactions with others, and how others treat you influence your feelings of belonging in Groningen?

4) I had one time a homeless guy was calling me a lesbo, and I did not care about that. One time my hairdresser called me an 'Oostblokker', and that was shocking, because he said it, not because it was offending. And I was like: 'You say it, like 'Oostblokker'', and since then I asked people, and some Dutch people think it's fine, saying 'Oostblokker', but no, actually not. No, I'm pretty resilient, so I

really don't care.

0) So you notice it when other people say those negative things, but it doesn't really bother you.

4) Yeah, I notice it and note it down as a societal thing. I will ask Dutch people about it, but I'm not really bothered about it, no.

0) If you don't look at positive ways of treatment by others, does that affect your belonging?

4) Yeah, I think so, I think it's always great if other people are nice. So I go to [name] cinema a lot, not so much anymore, but before I went like 3 times a week. And the ladies there were always nice to me, and I don't know if you know this guy [name], he studies with us, he is a bit older. But he also works in the [cinema name], and when I see him it's also nice. And all these nice interactions, they do not improve my sense of belonging, but they are a nice addition. They are like, this is why I'm here, this is like nice. So they don't improve, but they legitimize my feeling of belonging.

0) So they legitimize your belonging, and you are a resilient enough person to let yourself be affected by some negative interactions?

4) Exactly yeah

0) Then I arrive at my 8<sup>th</sup> question, a bit of a difficult one, but we have no discussed your definition of home, and feelings of home and belonging in Groningen. How does the fact that you mostly said you feel you belong in Groningen, has an impact on that you mostly feel at home in Groningen?

4) That's a hard question. Wait but, can you have a sense of belonging, but not feel at home somewhere?

0) That's a good question, how does that work in your case?

4) Well, for example, when I go to my moms house, I don't belong there, but it used to be my home, so I call it a home. But it's not a home in my head. So, I feel it is very fortunate if it happens that you feel at home somewhere, and you belong somewhere. And I feel like this is what happens to me in Groningen. I mean, I don't have like this home I love to have. I don't have my own private property I can do whatever I want with. But, so, yeah, I guess my sense of belonging here is full, but my sense of home is a bit impaired by the fact that this is not perfect conditions. But at the same time, these 2, I'm not bothered by it. Because I know, there's no way I can have this perfect house, unless I was really crafty to the point getting a sugar daddy you know. Like really getting out of my whole life to get my own appartement, I would have to do something crazy, something I don't want to do. Because I feel like at some point it is going to come, and I will get that sense of home somewhere. And at the same time I belong here, because I relate to people here, I have a purpose here, I can maintain myself here, I am safe, and have shelter, and food, and I can eat. Does that answer it a bit?

0) Yeah, exactly, I've had this question with other people as well, and it always goes somewhere else, because everyone relates other things together. But to summarize, you feel like you fully belong, you don't feel you have a full home here, but you accept that, because you do not believe that you are able to find a full home right now, and you expect that to come in your life.

4) Yeah, I'm realistic, I have expectations, and I have dreams, and they meet somewhere in the middle.

0) That was the interview, so I'll stop the recording. Thank you for participating!

4) Thank you very much, it was very interesting to do.

**Transcription Research subject 5:**

0) – Introduction, consent form etc.

0) First some background information. What are your age and gender?

5) I'm a girl and I'm 21.

0) Are you currently studying at the university of Groningen or Hanze

5) Yes, university of Groningen.

0) Where were you born

5) [city in Southern Europe]

0) And where do you currently live

5) In Groningen

0) And have you lived in other countries than the Netherlands and your country of birth.

5) Yes, I lived in the US for one year, in [State in the USA]

0) Then let's go to the main questions, with the first one being, how do you define home?

5) That's a hard question, it depends, most of the time I define home as, home being the place where my parents are, so in [city in Southern Europe]. So when I'm going back home, it means I'm going back home to [country in Southern Europe]. But, when I think of my home in my head, it's where my cluster of people I love are. So it's [City in Southern Europe] of course, but also in the US, where the people I live with became a bit of my family, so I would also call them my home as well. But here, it's a bit different, because it's my own home, I created it myself. There wasn't like preconstructed. Of course I was born in [city in Southern Europe] and somebody decided that was my home, then I went to the US where I was randomly assigned to a place, so somebody decided that was my home, but here, I created it myself, and I can decide if this is my home or not. And in the beginning, I felt like studying abroad, like it's my temporary place. But now, I do feel it is also home, yeah.

0) Would that matter in how strongly you feel connected to your home here, that you have chosen yourself where you live here, instead of someone else deciding your home.

5) Yeah, I think it does matter, because I can also choose to remove myself from here. When I was living in [City in Southern Europe] I couldn't remove myself, same in the US, so here I have the power to decide if this is home or not. The rest was given to me, yeah.

0) And, what are components of a house, that turn it into a home.

5) The people there in the house, I guess it depends on that. So, the person that I live with right now, she really makes me feel at home, because of who I live with as well.

0) How does that happen?

5) I don't know, just like strong connections, just like creating a routine that's not just like you co-live, but you share bits of your life. And when you know a lot about a person's daily routines, and they come home and they're like: 'Oh, I saw that funny person when I was biking', it is very like small talk in a sense, cause you don't need to make major life updates. Cause when I call my friends back home, our conversations are like: 'Okay, so now I'm doing another degree'. And instead when you have a person you're connected to in your house, you create a dynamic where you do not have to say big things, and you learn a little about each other's life. And I think that, yeah I feel like she makes me feel at home in my house.

0) Through those little connections, through small talk and just small connections, small updates.

5) Yeah, like we cook together, and we share a lot of our lives, but it's without effort, it's like that's what we do yeah, haha!

0) And are there other things next to your roommate that make you feel at home in a house.

5) Light, I cannot stand being without sunshine in my house. I'm moving houses now actually, and I'm going to a much better house, but my old room has these giant windows, and there's so much light coming in. And my one criteria for the new house which is so much better already, is that I need to make sure that the sunshine gets in, cause when I don't have that I don't feel at home. And it's

funny, cause my mom called me yesterday and I was telling her I was moving, and she was like: 'Does your room get light?' Cause she knows that even in my house in [Origin City], they needed to put me in a room where they knew there was sunshine going in. I don't even have curtains, I don't need that, I need to have light. So yeah, that makes me feel at home a lot. In the morning, when I sit down and I have some sun in the kitchen, I feel like: 'Oh, I feel so relaxed and at home'.

0) Okay, so that's really a very...

5) Yeah! Specific thing haha. No, but like, totally, I was talking about it yesterday with my mom. And she was like totally, this is my one thing to feel happy in a house, I need to have sunshine.

0) So, for you, people and light, that's what important in a house.

5) People and light yes!

0) Then my second question, do you feel at home in Groningen?

5) I do feel at home in Groningen yes. With highs and lows. There were times when I didn't feel at home in Groningen, and actually, I was just thinking about it. It is weather dependent sadly, and also a bit with my mood, how stressed I am. But, I think, I definitely can say I feel at home since this year. And also cause I chose to stay an extra year, I wouldn't choose to stay an extra year if I wouldn't feel at home. I do feel at home right now. To the point that I don't need to go back to [Country in Southern Europe] that often. I used to go every 3 months. Now I haven't since [4 months ago], and I won't go until [2 months in future], and I'm fine with knowing that. But the first year there was no way I was not going home to my mom, I needed to go home every 3 months.

0) Okay, so you have mixed feelings about feeling at home and not at home in Groningen, with now it being stronger.

5) yeah, definitely, I think it does take some time, like, I don't believe that somebody moves here and after some months like: 'Oh, this is my home'. Like, it seems, from how I am, it seems like impossible, like, how can you do that if you don't even know the place. For me it is important to know all the streets, and have my places to go to, my little gems that I keep for myself. And I can't have that in even a little time, it took some years to built this. You know, it's like building a relation with a person, you need to built the relationship with the place.

0) So you say, it's important for you to be here for a while to built a relationship with a place, it's weather dependent, it's dependent on if you're stressed or not, if you have a better mood or not. How does that all combine into how you did or did not feel at home?

5) Well I guess, like, when I'm mad at something, I tend to be mad at the place I'm in. So like, if uni is not going well, or I don't feel super connected to the people, it's like: 'Oh, it's because I'm here, it's because I'm in this place.' And in those cases it's not my home you know, but this was more like the beginning of these years. Now I think I'm at a point at which like, I established that it's not the place, it's how my mood is, and once you get to that point, it really is your home, cause you accept it no matter what, and it's not the place that makes it a bit worse that day, week or month. But it's like how life is going, it's independent of where you are, it's life.

0) So also your view of home changed a bit over time.

5) Yes, my view of home definitely changed, and I think it does connect to, like, before it was just what was given to me, I accepted what was given to me. And, I'm so thankful I was born in [City in Southern Europe], cause I'm so honored to call that place home, cause I love it so much. But it was given to me, I didn't have to go through this process of: 'I hate this place', and, 'No, I don't hate this place, it's just how I feel this week', because in [City in Southern Europe], you're born, and then you go to a house, and then that's your house, it's your home, and your family is there. Of course it's your home, it cannot be. So, I think it's also a part of going on your own. Separating a bit from your family. I think my family did that a bit for me, they did not actively think about it, they created my own, but here I need to create my home. So yeah, I said the same thing over and over but yeah.

0) Okay, now we have talked a bit about changes of feelings of home. So I will go to the photo

elicitation part. So you brought a photo of what/who/where is most important for your feeling of home in Groningen. Can you describe to me what I can see in the picture?

5) Yes, okay, so this is a brunch that me and my roommate make. We're vegan, so we love to cook together. It's amazing that we're both vegan, cause it doesn't happen so often that you always cook together, we instead always cook together. And we do this on like Sundays, and you can actually see that there's sun going on the table, and this is like at a certain time in the morning. Our kitchen isn't on the sunny side, my room is on the sunny side, so there's like this hour between 8 and 9 where there's light on the table, and we always actively wake up to like cook there and sit at the table and eating. So here we made pancakes, scrambled tofu, and like a Focaccia kind of thing. We love coffee, we made coffee. So I think this connects to how my person, in my house, creates also this feeling of home. Cause we can share this passion of being in the sunshine and eating good food.

0) Okay, so, how does the picture you brought show what home is to you?

5) I think it does lead a big back to my Italian origins, cause for us, like, food... when you're home, you're eating most of the times haha. Like, we connect through sitting down at a table. There's no way that you're gonna have lunch alone. It's like, you sit down, you take your time, you're at home with someone in your house. And it does create a feeling of home very strongly. Whenever there is something important, there's a meal attached to that. And, I do carry this a lot, and here I do think it's a bit different culturally. And food is not this important time, and you know, you guys connect in a different way, it's not always food, and for us it's always food. So, my roommate is from [other country in Southern Europe], and in [Other Southern European country] I don't think they have this either, like, she always tells me that they have lunch standing up and eating fast. This would never happen in my house, like honestly. But she, when I moved in, and I shared this with here, and we started eating all the meals together, she was like: 'O my god, this is so beautiful and I love it so much!' And the only person I can actively have this little part of tradition that I still keep, and we can, sit down and eat together, and this really makes me feel at home. I think it does relate to [Country in Southern Europe] a lot, yeah.

0) Okay, so a bit of your home culture brought into your home.

5) Yeah, exactly.

0) Why have you specifically chosen to bring this picture?

5) So, I think the specific things I mention, like, really honestly, I look and it's: 'Oh that's my table', and like, do you see the things under the plates. Not many people do that here, and in my house in [Country in Southern Europe] it's: 'If you put the plate on the table like that, you're not giving it enough importance, it needs to look nice', you know. So we're always putting these down, and I appreciate it. My roommate always does it, because she knows how much I care about it, and it really does represent what I care a lot about. It's my person, and food, and nice sit-down time to then share something.

0) Okay, so was it then difficult to choose this picture?

5) No, when you said, 'bring a picture that makes you feel at home', because I take so many pictures of my meals, it had to be a picture of one of my meals. And this specifically, because the light was on it. Honestly, like, I look at it, and I'm like, oh my god, it probably was so warm just sitting there in the sun haha

0) I feel like everything you explained of home, comes back through the picture, yeah.

5) Yeah, haha!

0) Then, I can go to the belonging part of the interview.

5) Yeah, it's still recording right, yeah yeah yeah

0) – fixing the recording -

0) ehm, I'm interested in feeling how you belong in a place can be important for you to feel you're at home in a place, and therefore I will ask some questions regarding your belonging in Groningen.

Belonging can for example be that you feel emotional attachment to a place, it can also mean you start to identify with a place. Knowing this, would you say that you feel that you belong in Groningen?

5) I am very attached to this place, I don't know if I identify with the place a lot. Like, we're all Europeans, so we do share similar basic values. I don't know if I'm close to the Dutch approach. Not in a better or good way, it's just like, I don't think I belong to the Dutch culture. But Groningen culture, maybe a bit more. Cause Groningen is like, very, it's like, what I identify with in Groningen is this appreciation of how many different people there are. And I really identify with that. And I love that I can meet people from all over, and even within Dutch people, you meet people from Utrecht and here and Friesland. And I think that everyone here values that a lot, or at least everyone in my bubble appreciates this, and I identify with that. But I don't know if I identify with the Dutch thing, but more with the like, little city that has so many people from all over thing.

0) Okay, so you make a distinction between Groningen and the Netherlands. And how do you not define yourself with the Dutch thing?

5) Well, for example, when we were in the US, we went to [City in US], and I was talking to some people, and they were like: '[City in US] is so ugly, why would you live there', and I was like, 'I don't know, just, for me it's not what it looks like', and I had this discussion with this person like, 'what do you mean how it feels? It's ugly', and I'm like: 'No, that doesn't matter, it just feels good'. Or like, we were in [Part of other city in US], and that was this Mexican neighborhood, and I honestly thoroughly enjoyed it, and someone said it was ugly, and I was like, 'no, that's not how I feel about it', haha. 'Do you see how lively it is, how that person on the corner knew that other person on the corner, and they ran of the street and were like: 'Oh hi hello hi''. And it's not how it looks like, and a lot of times it happens to me that people make comments to me how things look like from the outside, and I'm really like, I don't really look at that. And it's more how it feels.

0) And that's a bit Dutch culture.

5) I don't know if it's Dutch culture, but I experienced it a lot here. And, like, honestly, I'm so glad to be in this country, and I enjoy the people and the country. It's just like, I think there is some differences, and I wouldn't say I identify with that. But again, I'm so glad I can be here, and I'm so thankful for that, like: Thank you Europe! Haha

0) Yeah, of course, but I also get that that not always mean you per se feel you belong completely with some things.

5) Yeah, which I think is beautiful right, like, on a certain level we don't all need to identify with a place. It's actually really cool that we all identify with a different place, and we're all together and happy to share you know.

0) Yeah, okay, then the question, oh no, I also wanna get a bit into Groningen. So the Netherlands not so, and a bit more Groningen, how does that work, how does the belonging in Groningen very much work?

5) Well, I think, first of all, the fact that the outside is very appreciated by everyone. If one day it rains, and the day after it's sunny, I would put my head outside, and people brought like there couches outside. I love that, I love this thing that everybody just enjoys, appreciates when it's nice. I think I identify with that a lot, and then in general this curiosity about others, and this, being willing to really go outside your bubble and meet these other people and then you go to a class, and you share things. Like, you are doing your thesis on international students, and how they feel at home, and I think that's really cool, I love that someone wants to know that. And, yeah, I identify with that, I identify with this curiosity that, kinda like, the more people are here, the more curiosity circulates. And I think it's a cool system, and it feeds itself a bit. And that's like, one of my, yeah, I think I am like that, and that's why I ended up here. And probably, yeah, of course I chose it, so I knew what I was doing. And the student city thing, this is the first time I live in a student city, and so, yeah, it really

feels like everybody wants to know about each other. And there's always new things coming. Also, the uni is organizing many things, like workshops, and there's like, even not uni related, there's activities all over. And if your vegan, you will find vegan-nights somewhere, if you're queer, you will find your community around you. I really think that everyone's so in harmony with each other, and I like that.

0) So, really the student city things of curiosity into other people, a lot of things organized for different people, and for different variations in a way. And that in contrast to what's a bit more Dutch culture then, and maybe not per se Dutch culture, but what's also in this country of saying: 'This is ugly', while not very much looking at...

5) Yeah, but that was also a bit of an example, it really is not, like a bad thing, so I have a hard time that it's like, I'm not accusing anyone of anything, that's just how I experience it.

0) Yeah, exactly, but it's also a bit about how you experience you belong.

5) The one thing I'll be saying is, like, one thing that's super healthy is the 9-5 working day, and at 5 people just stop working, and it's very healthy, I agree. It's just not the way I am. One time I was calling, and my house was exploding, there was water coming from the thing. I was calling at 4:50 with the company, and at 5:00 they hang up the phone, and I'm like, 'Really'. And it's like, call tomorrow at 9:00, and it's healthy for your work-life harmony, but we don't do that. It's like, it's different you know, when you grow up in [Country in Southern Europe], everything is so chaotic, and here it's not, and it's good, but it's different. Yeah.

0) Yeah, haha

5) Yeah, haha

0) Okay, then, are there other places you feel you belong, and if so, which places do you feel you belong?

5) Well, the farm I lived in in the US. I, like, I belonged there, I really did. Because of the people that were there. They became my family within 6 months, I was calling them my family. And I love outside, I love animals, and I grew up in a city so I never had that so close to me. And then I moved to a farm, and everyday I would wake up, and take my horse and go for a ride before going to school, like the dream. And really think I belong there, and I go there really often. And it's this other side of my life, that doesn't really come up when I moved here. But it's really within me, and it's a place I need to go, because I need to see those people, and I need to feel there, cause I really belong there. I don't identify with American culture, the same thing I believe. But I really belong there, I truly did. And then in general, if I have a person that maybe moves around a bit, wherever they are, I feel a little bit with like that place is also a bit mine. So I had this friend that lived with us in [Country in Southern Europe] a bit, and then she went to the US, and then to [country in South America], and she also lived in [Western European country], and I don't feel like [from those places], but when I would visit her, I'm like, if she's here, then I can feel a little bit like here as well.

0) So, I feel like, for you belonging is far less places, and far more people.

5) Far more people, yeah, honestly yes.

0) Cause in America you have people you call basically part of your family, you have a friend that moves around that you belong to, and when she's somewhere, you belong a bit to the place because of her.

5) Yeah, exactly, exactly, yeah.

0) And my mum is from [Island from Southern European Country], and I spend a lot of my life there, cause I moved there every June, and go back to [origin city in Southern European Country] every September. So, for years, I would spend like 3 months there, which is like a lot. My mom is from there, she feels like [from that island], and I don't feel like [from that island], cause I'm from the Netherlands, and I'm vegan. I would not be able to feel Sardinian, but I go there every summer, I carry a necklace with the shape of that, my mom's really from that place. So when I'm there, I really



belong there. I don't identify with it, but I really do belong there. When I see my mom's eyes, it's so cheesy. But we get there with a ferry, and legitimately, when she goes outside and sees the island, she's so happy, and how can I not belong there if my mom is there. She lives through that place. So also that I guess.

0) So, if I just summarize, you belong to Groningen, not per se the Netherlands, part of your family in the US, Sardinia, and a friend that moves around.

5) Yeah yeah yeah that's good haha

0) Okay, then, I get to the next question. And that's: the topic of belonging constitutes many different things for different people and I'm interested what that means for students in Groningen. Therefore, I will ask you about a few things that other students may deem important for their belonging. I think we covered the topic of people quite a lot already.

5) Haha, yeah

0) So then, are there any places that are important for you to feel you belong or not belong in Groningen?

5) Well actually I think an important part for feeling I belong here is that I get to ride horses. Cause that's a constant in my life that wherever I am I get to ride horses. And I think it's a bit of my criteria if I'll stay in a place or not. So when I got here, it was really expensive to ride, so I couldn't afford it. And in [Country in Southern Europe] and the US I did it through helping people with their horses and I could ride, no big deal. And when I got here, it was a bit like, that's not really how you approach a Dutch person that has horses. It's not like: 'Hey, hello, I'm a random person that likes to ride your horses' and, 'eh, bye bye'. So I met this lady, and she's super nice, and I'm glad to have her here. She's really nice, and she's really good for when I have something here. So when I have a problem, like, I don't really know how the health insurance works I go to her. And she has horses, and I get to ride them every Friday, and in the US I rode, in [country in Southern Europe] I rode, and I think that's a big part of it to. If I can also follow my passion I'd say. Cause I also go to uni, I love to follow my courses, I really do. But there's this other side to me of the outside, of animals, I need to have that a little bit.

0) So, very much a daily/weekly practice of having horses. Would there then be other daily/weekly practices that are important for you to belong.

5) I need to have my places, like my little gems that I go to by myself or maybe I bring people that deserve to go there haha. In [City in Southern Europe], obviously, I have those. And when I there I walk around most of the days to those places, cause most of my friends go to school and my parents work. And when I'm there, I spend from 9 to like 5, walking around, and going to my secret spots, and at 5 everyone gets out of work and does social things. And here, it took me some time to find those places, cause Covid hit the first year, so I didn't really go around. But then the second year, cause Covid was really present, I was alone a lot and I need to be outside, so I was walking around and found those really spots that I really really truly appreciate. And honestly, from then onwards, I really felt, 'oh, I know this place enough that I can find my little spots where I can go by myself', and this is a factor that makes me feel at home and that I belong. Same in [Island in Southern Europe], same in the US. There's this turning point, when I know the place enough, that I have my selected spots, my [name]-spots, and yeah.

0) What type of spots are that for example?

5) Generally, places with a bench that I can sit and read, and this came up in somebody else's thesis, if there's a bench I can sit, and when I sit there relaxing and nice, that's a good spot.

0) Are there any objects that are important to feel you belong or not belong in Groningen.

5) My bike, I love the bike so much. I think to a bit scary extent, that I truly just love my bike, and I don't want to change my bike. But the fact that I can bike around, like, increases my quality of life so much. But also increases the way I feel here. If I take the bus, that's not the same. Like, biking here

this morning I was the happiest person. And in [origin city] my Vespa, and then in the US, this is funny actually, it's always a transport thing, but in the US I would go around by my horse. So, I didn't have a car or anything, so my only way to go around was my horse. So I would ride around through town, and tie my horse at shops like in movies. So, I wouldn't call my horse an object, cause that's bad, but it's always a mode of transport haha. My Vespa in [Origin City], everyone makes really fun of me, because it's my screensaver, cause I love it so much. And again, it's not like another Vespa could make it, no it's that one specifically. Here, it's my bike, if somebody stole my bike, it would be hard. My roommate said I'm a hoarder, and that I get way to attached to objects, cause if I changed my bike I would feel sorry for my own bike. Haha

0) Haha

5) Same with my Vespa, when it was broke, my mom said we need to through it away, and I was like: 'No, we're keeping it, cause at some point we're gonna fix it right?' She was like: 'No, it's from 1989, it's not gonna be fixed.' And I was like 'NO', haha.

0) Okay, so you have a lot of attachment to modes of transport.

5) Yes, stereotypically relevant to the place I'm in as well.

0) Is it important that those modes of transport are like very much your independent transport. Because they are for you alone of course.

5) Yeah, and I can choose where they go.

0) Okay, then I went through the things other people find important. Then I get to my 7<sup>th</sup> out of eight questions. It's quite a long interview actually. Do you feel that interactions with others and how others treat you influence your feelings of belonging in Groningen>

5) Interactions with others, yes. How others treat me, I guess so. On the low times, I think it was also because I was a bit culturally shocked by interactions at university or something. It was hard for me to get used to, this is a bit stupid but, literally like, it ruined some of my days when you said: 'Okay, thank you so much', and some people would respond with 'Okay', and I was like, 'what did I do wrong'. I always overthought every single answer I got, and then I realized this is just the way it is. Sometimes word choice does influence whether I feel I belong or not. There were a few instances when comments about Southern Europeans were made. And I was like, why are you saying that, it was not really nice, making assumptions. It's so weird that in Europe you would make assumptions based on like, Mafia movies you watched. And sometimes I had situations in which, yeah, it was a joke, but it wasn't really a joke. Like, mmm.

0) What would be an instance of that?

5) So, for example someone said my mom in [Country in Southern Europe] got the vaccine because she knew someone, even though she got the vaccine because she's a professor, and at the beginning they vaccinated the hospital workers and then all the teachers. And that's why she got the vaccine, and this person went around like: 'In [origin country], when you know someone you get the vaccine'. And I was like, mmm, that's my mom, she's also 60 years old and a teacher. And maybe here they didn't give the vaccine to teachers first, but in [Country in Southern Europe] they did, so why would you just assume that.

0) That's also a bit hurtful

5) Yes, it can be a joke, but no, don't just generalize a whole culture based on a few things you know. Because I don't do that, so don't do that as well.

0) You talked about the Netherlands, but the things you stated you mentioned might not be Dutch culture, just possible examples, a bit like that

5) Yeah, yeah, exactly.

0) Okay, so it's a bit bad for your belonging when other people make assumptions

5) Yeah, when other people make assumptions about your place or culture without really knowing or caring about knowing, because if you asked me I would be really happy to talk about it. And I also

make jokes about things of [origin country] that are funny, it's just, it feels so weird because like you know [distance], away, you go there in the summer, haha

0) They should know better haha

5) Yeah, but of course, this is not a common thing. It just happened a few times, and those few times I was like: 'I don't like that, I don't want to identify with this.' But I wouldn't apply this to everyone, because so many people are nice, and so many people do these things that are super great. But again, sometimes, sometimes, some comments about your place are not, yeah...

0) Which people do you talk about?

5) Mostly like people that are acquaintances, friends, people you meet at a party, yeah. Also, the my mom thing, probably this is also because I'm [from Southern European country], but when you talk about my mom... Really not a generalization, I wouldn't apply this to all, and even in the instances when it happened, they sometimes were friends, and I would explain why it was not the best thing to say. And during Covid there was a lot of this, and I was a bit more touched by Covid. Cause I was stuck in [Southern European Country], and it was though here, we couldn't go out the door. And when I came back it was like: 'You [from Southern European Country] exaggerate a lot', and I was like 'No', because imagine staying in your room and the ambulance sound was going all day. And you could meet anyone that lost someone close to them. Just, like, just..., And then it's 'You [from origin country]...'. And it doesn't matter where you're from...

0) Everyone got hit by it.

5) Yeah, it's not like covid had borders, it happened everywhere, and it's just a different way with dealing with it. And maybe during Covid I was a bit more sensitive about it, cause I felt closer to my country, had a bit more sympathy about it, and I was there. And when I got back, people were making fun about it, and making fun that we couldn't leave our houses. And I was like, 'no, don't do that'. But, like, this is a very little, it impacted me not so much, I'm just explaining it because you asked.

0) It's something, but not that big for you.

5) Exactly, I'm also really good about not caring about that haha

0) We've now discussed your feelings of home and belonging in Groningen. How did the fact that you mostly said you do feel you belong in Groningen, have an impact on that you also did say that you mostly feel at home in Groningen?

5) I think they go hand in hand. I don't really feel I could feel at home in a place I don't feel I belong to.

0) And does the fact that you don't really feel you belong in the Netherlands as a whole have an impact on how you feel at home in Groningen?

5) No, I don't think so. It's hard to talk about the country, because even if it's a small country, there's so much, so it's hard to say that even when I don't identify with the Netherlands, I do feel I belong in Groningen. Even though I don't identify with [city a in origin country], I do feel I belong in [origin city], cause that's my home.

0) Okay, I think, that was my interview, so thank you very much for participating. And I will now end the recording.

### Transcription Research Participant 6

0) I will start with some introductory questions. What are your age and gender?

6) I'm 21 and male

0) Are you currently studying at University of Groningen or Hanze?

6) Yeah, I'm studying at University of Groningen.

0) Where were you born?

6) I was born in [Place in South-East Asian country]

0) And have you lived in any other countries than the Netherlands or your country of birth, if yes, where have you lived?

6) Yeah, so I moved every 2 years, so I lived in [Southeast-Asian country, West-Asian country, West-African country, Central-Asian country, Western-European country, Southeast-Asian country, another Southeast-Asian country, Southeast Asian country, Netherlands].

0) Okay, so then we move to the main question, which is how do you define home?

6) I think for me, in middle school, I didn't really know there was a term for a child that moved a lot. But basically, there is a term for it: Third-culture kid. So basically, we move so often we often don't feel like home is where we were born, since we moved a lot. So there is this third culture kind of mindset, where for us really, anywhere can be home. But then also nowhere is home. So I think it's honestly difficult for me and maybe most to explain, but I think I've come to terms that for me, home is where the people are.

0) which people are you talking about then?

6) Now, cause I'm no longer with my family. I think even in the past, the people are usually the friends that I really consider family as well. So I think when I was in [Other Southeast-Asian country], at some point I was even closer to my friends than my family, and when I moved, it felt like moving home, yeah.

0) So very much centered around people. And then my second question might be interesting. What are components to a house that turn it into a home? Because in comparison with your definition of home, that might not be the case.

6) Yeah, it's true, I think a lot of people got very specific definitions of a house, even the size or anything. But even now I live in a small room, and I don't even have specific ideas or concepts that make the house, or the home. What makes the home, for me, is definitely, personalizing it. So in my home I definitely have photo's of my past memories. So I have photos of my friends in middle school, primary school etc. up on my walls. And I also have, for example, my friends would make sketches of me on my birthday. So those would be on my walls, and I think the memory of it is what makes me feel at home.

0) So, if I have to summarize, a home is very much about people, and to make a house into a home you have photos of those people that make you feel like at home. Okay, are there other things that make you feel at home in a house?

6) Probably, like, having, apart from photos I have a lot of things that I really enjoy or identify with. So, for example, I love movies. And on my wall, I have, not only posters, but screenshots and collages of movies scenes. And I think, those things that I'm interested and passionate about, and also art and all those things.

0) A lot of visual things for you.

6) Yeah, a lot of visual things for me.

0) Then my second question is, do you feel at home in Groningen?

6) Yes? I definitely do. But I think that's also because, for us, third-culture kids, we sometimes feel there's no option, so we have to feel at home, otherwise we don't feel at home anywhere.

0) So, you feel at home, because you have to feel at home cause that's the only option?

6) Yeah, I feel like that. That's not to say that I feel forced or anything, but, I think we're just so

adapted or accustomed to feel at home everywhere we are, that it's not really difficult at that to say.

0) So you're really accustomed to getting to feel at home in a lot of places.

6) Yeah, kind of, kind of.

0) Have your feelings of home changed over time.

6) Yeah, yeah for sure. I would say because we move so often, it takes me a long time to open up to people, and I have to say there was like this threshold end of second year where I really felt like, 'oh wow, this really is my family', and I think that really changed everything, cause at some time I didn't really feel like I needed to go to... [Country in South East Asia] anymore. I was gonna say home, but then, haha, yeah. I feel like this really does feel like at home, all these friends, all these people. And of course, other aspects, like for example the memories I made in Noorderplantsoen (Park in Groningen), or in the garden that I share with my friends. Those are also part of it, but really for me, the times that I had with my friends are really the things that made me feel more and more at home.

0) Okay, and you had that realization only after 2 years.

6) Yeah

0) Okay, so it really took a long time for you to feel actually at home.

6) Yeah, for sure, at least, I move every 2 years, so I have this thing that I really don't want to get attached, but then, I will be here for around 3 or 4 years. So after 2 years, I was okay to become attached, because I was gonna be here for 2 more years.

0) Basically after those 2 standard years, then you started to get attached to a place.

6) Yeah

0) So, you really had a long time before you felt at home here. So it's a bit of a difference, cause, how would you describe it, because on the one hand you say: 'Basically, I move so much I have to feel at home in places', but on the other hand, 'I cannot feel at home, because I will move.

6) Yeah, so it's very conflicting, but that basically means that at least the first 2 years, it's more our mindset that's like: 'Okay, this is our new home, but our heart's not there yet.' So we have this thing that our minds are already telling us: 'Okay this is our new home.', but everything feels just up in the air and superficial you can say. So those first 2 years, especially during covid, Groningen just felt like: This is University. And beyond those first 2 years, then it felt like: This is home.

0) So, basically 2 different forms of home in Groningen.

6) Yeah.

0) Okay. So then, why did you feel those feelings changed over time. Those feelings from stage a to stage b of home?

6) So I feel like the stage a, I do have a feeling that maybe Covid had a role to play, but I think it's mostly that in stage a I was so focused on my studies. In my first year, I would wake up at 8:00 or 8:30 to go to the UB, and I would go home when the UB closes for example. And that was pretty much my life kind of. But then in the second year, when Covid hit, we had to stay at home, and I didn't really know what to do. And a lot of those things impacted my sense of place. But in the end I had amazing friends that invited me over. But by the end of the second year, I think things were slightly getting better, and my friends were really like, we met up quite a lot, and I think there was this threshold where like, I'm not leaving yet, it's okay to get attached to these people. And I think that's when I really opened up, and really woke up a bit. And after Covid I really wanted to spend time with these people.

0) So that was the difference, with friends, and you allowing yourself to feel attached to those friends and friendships. And that's what constitutes home for you, those friendships

6) yeah yeah

0) Then I arrive at the photo elicitation part. I made you bring a photo of... What can I see in the picture?

6) This is a photo of me and my best friend [Name best friend], we knew each other since first year.

We met at [common activity], we were both volunteers. And it was really strange, cause we barely knew each other, but I will just quote what she said: She saw me in herself. So all of a sudden, especially in the second year we hung out so much, well not so much, but especially when we hung out it was really meaningful for me. And at one point we had so much things in common, and such similar mindsets, and I felt so comfortable with her, that at this point, she really makes me feel at home. And I think she's the closest I have to family, like in Groningen. And maybe she's even closer than my own family, so every time I'm with here it's the most home I can feel like.

0) Okay, so a person you really formed a bit of family with.

6) yeah exactly.

0) Why specifically this picture?

6) This was actually quite a recent photo that we took, I think 2 months ago. But when she send me this, she was so excited, she said, '[name], I know you're gonna be excited, because we finally got a picture', because we waited 3 years to finally get a good picture together. Our pictures were never flattering, and it took 3 years, but we looked at each other, and this is it, this is the picture. It was also, when I was at the café, I really had some hard times, and she really was there for me. And this is the most recent picture we have together, and it really summarizes all the hardships, all the highs and lows that she was there for me. And if I'm honest, I know a lot of friends who would be willing to be there for me, but for her, she really, she was very genuine, and I knew that I could always trust her. Or I knew that she would always be there for me, so that's the picture.

0) And you talk about a café?

6) Yeah, yeah, sometimes we would meet at my place, but it's very small and very much my personal space. But on this day, I think I really wanted to, well, I personally love cafés, I love people watching, and this specific café, is near [place in Groningen], and they have shelves of books and I like the environment of the café. And it's also that me or [best friend], we meet often, and we meet, we often meet at cafés, or at each other's place. And even though the picture of this was at a rave, and that was the first time we went, and we always wanted to go together, and that was the first time, so that was really nice.

0) Then my sub question here is, was it difficult to choose the picture?

6) Honestly yes, haha, I had to really think about it, and that's why I asked a lot of questions and I even asked my friend. I really had no idea, and at some idea I was like: 'If he said I could send an album, that would be so easy, but like one picture...' But in the end, when I filtered through my mind and thought about it, especially because recently during the hard times, she was really the highlight of everything. Yeah, I think the feeling of home... especially for me the feeling of home is the feeling of most comfort, and the place you can feel most comfortable and be you.

0) What were other options that went through your mind?

6) yeah, it's really weird, for example my room isn't really. I really only go home when I need to sleep, so that's not really my home-home. I was thinking maybe about the Noorderplantsoen, cause something about it just screams Groningen. But even though it screams Groningen, it doesn't scream home. And then I looked at a lot of pictures of me and my friends, and it was often in groups, and I realized that even though the groups were really close, I think she was there for me longest. And she was there since the beginning, and she really knows everything about me, and she was also willing to share a lot about herself. So it was almost at the point where it was very close, and very familiar, but also very mutual.

0) Okay, so this stood really out, but also what I hear is that other options are more like: 'Does this actually give me a feeling of home?'

6) Yeah, I really had to keep asking myself about that. So, I take a lot of pictures, of the Noorderplantsoen, the city, my friends, but I had to keep asking, what were I feeling at the time when I took the picture, and what does the photo make me feel? And every time it didn't really have

that feeling. But I remember that when we took this picture, and she was so excited, and again, that was also the first rave we went to together. And even though she wasn't feeling well, we really wanted to go. And also before we went to the rave we had this really nice diner, and it was really meaningful to me, we had really nice conversations. So that's why it ended at this picture.

0) Is there a difference of home before and home with this picture?

6) Yeah, if I'm completely honest, the first 2 years my home, I would say, was the UB. I would joke about it, but if I'm completely honest, I think the UB really felt like home to me, because I could effortlessly meet people, I could effortlessly do things there. I could easily go there, I could easily study, and when I studied there, I felt up to date with everything. And when I was there, I didn't feel bad about anything, and I could feel productive, but when I wanted a break I could go to the coffee room and always meet friends. So something about the UB made it actually my home, because I spend more time in the UB than my actual home it almost felt. And also with the UB I could go out, takes walk through the city. But of course, beyond that, especially after Covid, it was no longer the same. Sorry what was your question again?

0) If there was a difference between how you defined home before and what you show with the picture. But I think you really answered it, so the UB was a very location specific place where you felt at home, but what were the most important parts? You talked about studying there, how you could meet friends there, and how you could leave it

6) For me, I asked myself a lot about this, and I feel like the library is such a nice place. It was such a nice public space of no judgement. I think you could go to the UB and everybody would be like doing their own stuff, and everyone would be worried about their own things, and everyone was stressed, and everyone was going through their own hardships, but that's okay. You don't go there to party, or be fake. You go there to face reality you know. You're not there to escape, and I think sometimes home is that to me, when you are not escaping reality, but when you're facing it. And I think that's why [best friend], someone where I could be real, not fake. Somewhere, something where you can be real, not escaping reality. I think the UB is also space for that. I think people will be surprised the amount of time I will see people break down, or having massive breakdowns in the UB.

0) And how is that important, like, the facing reality part, how is that important for your feeling of home?

6) Yeah, cause I feel like, if you can't face reality, or if you can't come to terms with, you know, your hard truths at home, like, where would you say you face it, you know. I feel like home is meant to be the space where you can be introspective, be self-reflective. Really have the time and room to think things through, because, if I'm completely honest, where would you do that. Haha

0) And you felt you could do that in the UB?

6) Yeah, especially when you're there in the silence, or when you're in the coffee-room by yourself, or if that's too much you could go outside to the park nearby, or sit outside on the benches at UB, I think, that in itself is enough for you to be like, right, really self-reflect. So I think, it's weird to say, but I feel like, again, UB is where people can just kind of, I think that's when you realize you cannot be always escaping reality.

0) Okay, and you also talked about Judgement in the UB. How is that important for your feeling of home, that that's not there?

6) I think, cause, for example if you hang out with friends, or if you're with other people, or you go to party, I think it's different aims, you have different goals. But when you go to UB, it's kind of the place you go to really study, or take care of some admin-stuff. So I feel less pressure, or less anxiety, like: 'What are people thinking about me', cause people really have their own stuff to do. And even if they need a break, they go to the coffee room, take some coffee, text to their friends. But in the end, they go to the study-room, go study, and you feel less judgement, because really, people don't really care about other things. They are probably so focused on university, or their own goals and aims in

the UB, that they don't really have time, or feel the need to judge others.

0) Okay, and the fact that people don't judge each other, makes you feel more at home.

6) Yeah, yeah

0) And how does that work?

6) Yeah, I feel like, again, home is meant to be the place where you can be yourself. Where you can be most comfortable. Home is the place where you can face reality, and not escape. And in the UB that's the place where you can really do that. So not having to face a lot of judgement, and facing reality. I feel like if you're in a place where you feel a lot of judgement, you're probably trying to escape something. But the fact that you feel no judgement, you can kind of face reality with more ease. And you can be yourself, and I think that's part of that.

0) So if I have to summarize, the UB felt like home, because it's the place where you feel like you can be yourself, you can self-reflect, basically feel safe in a way, because the people there won't judge you, because they're busy with their own things. But there's still room to also communicate with friends and have a way to remove yourself from the situation if you want

6) Yeah, for sure. Cause even in the coffee-room when people are stressed, they're so stressed when they open up to you, and rant at you. And sometimes the topics we talk about are really relaxing, and open. And not small talk, but we really have time to get to know each other, and get to know people. So I think that's really interesting.

0) Okay, then my last question about home: Did our discussion about the picture inform your picture of home.

6) It definitely enhanced what I sort of already knew. Because I think people have always enhanced a place. Cause I think that either people you don't know, or friends, or even friends you consider family, I think, I couldn't imagine home without the people. I think that's everywhere I go and move. I feel like every time I move, that's why it hurts. It's always the people. I feel like I would miss the spaces, like the places. But I think the people have to be there, and it's always the people. And in this case I have grown close with several, and especially my best friend. But I really think it enhanced what I already know, yeah.

0) Okay, well, that's nice. I now go to the part about belonging. I'm interested in how feeling you belong in a place, can be important to feel at home in a place. And therefore I will ask some questions regarding your belonging in Groningen. Belonging can for example mean that you feel attachment to a place, or you identify with a place. Knowing this, would you say you feel you belong in Groningen?

6) I would definitely say that I grew an attachment to the place, but I wouldn't say I identify. So coming back to the attachment, I would say I really grew attached to the spaces and the people. And therefore the memories I make in certain places, so those kind of things. But I think something, I had a long conversation about, I have a difficulty to identify with places. Cause often, I know deep down, that I'm not a local. So, I think that's such an important aspect that you identify with a place. Cause, to say that you identify is really strong, so I feel it's something I never can say. So I think I can say I feel at home, but I can never say I think I identify as something. Or I feel like I feel I identify to the place. So for me place attachment is so different from place identity, cause I never feel I can identify with somewhere. I feel like another aspect why that's the case is I think a lot of, maybe it's just my perspective or biased, but I realize I can almost never relate to Dutch people. I think it's just such a different mindset. And I think my brain is such a mixed mindset of other ways of thinking, that sometimes when I talk to people from here that I think: Oh, that's really interested, or I never went through that. So also the thing that makes Groningen is kind of the people and I think it's hard to say you identify with somewhere, if you don't identify to people of the place. But again, place attachment wise, I think I explained that my friends... yeah

0) So, you feel attached to your friends, but not so much with, that you self-identify with being part



of Groningen or anything here. But, then I'm interested, would you then say that you belong or would you say you don't belong mostly.

6) I would say I don't really belong mostly. But I feel that's mostly the problem, because I can feel at home. So in my head home is so temporary, but I feel belong is so much more of an intense, ingrained, rooted term. Maybe that's for different people, but personally for me, belong is you've been somewhere your whole life. You feel like you identify with a place. I feel belonging has such a more, it's such a more intense feeling or correlation to identity, and that's not something I have.

0) So, would you say you belong somewhere in your feeling.

6) No, I don't say I belong somewhere, yeah. I can feel at home somewhere, but when people ask where you feel at home, the closest answer I can give is where my friends are, that's where I belong. But place-wise, yeah, I cannot say.

0) Would you then say you belong with your friends?

6) Yeah, I guess you could say that. But I think that's difficult, cause here your friends don't stay forever, and is that belong then, if your friends move all over the world soon. Where would you say you belong afterwards? I think that's a bit hard you know. I think therefore in my, and other people's heads belong is more geographical, so yeah.

0) So, what do you think that contributes to you not feeling you belong in Groningen?

6) I think mostly the people. Yeah. Of course the language plays a role. But I realize that I sometimes just realize I can't relate to the culture. I think I somewhat I already knew by the end of the first or second year, but I understand even more now that, again I can be wrong, but what I feel, a lot of the gatherings, or things they do, I personally feel it's somewhat, it's such a superficial level. Not that's it a bad thing. I think for me, because I move a lot, I would prefer things that are not superficial, but things that feel more real, and more of an emotional and deeper level. And I feel like, at least the culture I feel, is more of getting wasted in bars, or going to festivals, and people on drugs or something. Which I'm okay with from time to times. But I'm honestly surprised that some of my Dutch friends can go out every day, and I'm like, even [study abroad] they would have pints of beer for breakfast. And something like that seems of to me, and I cannot relate. And also when I talk to them, or try and communicate, I feel like language is a problem, but also it's so much harder for you to go through their walls. I feel like it's so much harder for you to talk about more intimate and personal topics. Yeah, I don't know, at least that's what I find the case.

0) What are for example barriers you run into?

6) I don't know, I always keep on talking about more superficial topics. Like how are you doing?, but then we keep on talking about some party or other superficial stuff.

0) Like the weather, haha

6) Oh, haha, the weather, yeah, oh god, it's such a common thing where it's like: 'The weather is so bad lately, when will we get the sun', and we say like 'I think it's going to be there in like may'. But I think it's just, language has a big role, because something about language is just so intense, that once you can speak in a native language, you unlock something. And I accepted that fact, and I know that's a fact because I've lived in so many places and experienced it. But also like this, going out culture, something they've been so used to since high school, and yet I only started going out then. I think that's a different perspective then as well.

0) So you talk about the topics being superficial, and the actions, the activities you do are also superficial in a way. What activities, which topics of discussion would make you feel you belong more?

6) I really love, like, having discussion with friends in a park. And having like, real, like having deep conversations. Or hanging around, or having dinner with friends. Again, doing the same thing, having conversations. I feel like communications, and like sober communication, haha. Having sober communication that you can really connect on a deeper level with. I think those are the memories I

cherish way more. Like sure, I'm having real fun going out, and I really enjoy the conversations and stuff. But deep down, you know, I was drunk, so would I have said those things if I was sober. And I think talking to people when you're sober, it means something, cause you're able to connect with people when you're not under any other influence, when you're just around these people. And maybe the Dutch friends I know, are so used to getting drunk and defining fun or a great time with partying since a young age, that we have different definitions and perspectives of what we describe as a great time.

0) What are things you talk about when you have those conversations that make you belong more?

6) We get very personal. We talk about stuff that we would talk about in the interview now. About family, about home, about why aren't we feeling well, or why aren't we doing better. Basically things that make us, things that make you feel, comfortable, or topics that make you feel, even more reflective. Basically conversations that kind of bloom, or initiate this feeling of the opposite of introspective. So conversations that are really mutual, really symbiotic, so I would tell my part of the story, but they would also tell their part of the story. So stories about our lives, and our perspective of stuff, or debates about stuff. So very subjective as well, and I also feel that's important, and I feel you can imagine that's so different from discussions you have when you're drunk, which are like: (drunk voice) 'Heyyyy, how have you beeeen', and I think that's really so different.

0) ehm, then I get to my 6<sup>th</sup> question. The topic of belonging constitutes different things for different people, and I'm interested in students in Groningen. So I will ask about what other students find important. The first one we can skip, because that's about people, and I think we discussed a lot about that being very important to you. But, are there places that are important for you to feel you belong in Groningen.

6) I think the Noorderplantsoen. I think, if anything, I'm very biased to green spaces. I think, if the city could be green, I would make it all green. Sometimes, I would say, I think it's the heart, but also the lungs of the city. It's kind of this place where almost anyone passes through. Whether intentionally, or unintentionally. If people were red blood cells, it's like an inevitable, you just pass through, but something like, once you pass that park, just like how a heart pumps blood through, it motivates you. I pass the park, and I'm like, life can be so beautiful, something about us. And also the memories and the things I experienced there. I think so many things about it, is so ingrained now. So of course not the space itself, but of course how it makes me feel, but also the memories I made with people. I would have to say the Noorderplantsoen, over anything, is the place I feel.

0) I feel the place Noorderplantsoen is the place where you have the most important thing of belonging for you, those deep conversations with people

6) yeah, yeah.

0) Then, the next one is, are there any objects for you to feel you belong or not belong in Groningen.

6) Objects... do you have any example?

0) I won't give an example, if you don't immediately have something like 'this is it', then maybe the answer is no.

6) I really don't, I don't consider myself very materialistic, I think it's people, but object-wise, no clue.

0) And then the last one, are there any daily or weekly activities that are important for you to feel you belong or not belong in Groningen?

6) I feel like I have to at least once a week go to a café. I think something about going to the café, especially the ones my friends work in. Suddenly, like, wholesome, 'you're working in there, I hope your shift is going well', so being in the café with your friends working. But also the effortless people-watching. I think, like, you don't have to even talk to them, but the capability of just seeing people walk by and live their lives. Like these Groningen people. I think that's something I have to do. But also the walks I do, I just think that's so important cause not only could I people watch. But of course, just taking walks is so good for your mental health when you're taking breaks.

0) So walks, going to cafés, and watching people mostly.

6) Yeah, yeah. I think sometimes, especially when you're really tired, it's always the effortless things that give you real energy. Also when you go in the Noorderplantsoen, you hear birds chirping, people talking. I think the effortless thing of seeing alive beings, is really nice, yeah.

0) 7<sup>th</sup> question, feelings of interactions of others and how they treat you, do they influence your feeling of belonging in Groningen?

6) Yeah for sure, I feel from all the things I talked about. The intimate conversations, and like these conversations in groups and pairs, which is very in contrast to these things of going out and everything. I think it really enhances my sense of belonging. Because I feel like after these deep conversations, alright, I feel like I belong, because they want to know me, they want to have these conversations. And it really enhances these feelings.

0) And these others are your friends.

Last question: We've now discussed the definition of home, feelings of home, and feelings of belonging in Groningen. How does the fact you mostly said you did not feel you belong in Groningen, have an impact on the fact you do feel you're at home in Groningen?

6) Yeah, well, I think those different perspectives on what belonging and feeling at home means. I think that again, this sense of belonging is so much more intense, I feel. And something I feel you identify more with if you've been there so long. But I can still feel at home, because even though I don't feel I belong and identify, and belong in Groningen as a city, I still feel like I can be at home, because I have people that are somehow family to me that make me feel at home. So even though I don't feel I belong here, I still feel at home, because of my friends, and all my friends that feel like family are here for me, that make me feel like I have this home, or feeling of home I have.

0) So if I have to summarize, and correct me if wrong cause this is almost the conclusion of this interview. You do not feel you belong here, cause you do not feel you belong to the place, but you have a feeling of home here because of the people you have relations with. So the people you see as friends, as family, as the part of attachment. So talked about how you feel attached, but that's because of the people.

6) If I can rephrase it, I feel I don't belong, because I think a sense of belonging is when you can straight away say, right, 'I feel I belong as much as everyone else here, so the people of Groningen, so the Groningers you know. I feel like I belong as much as they do.', but I feel like that's not the case, and I think I told you why, but then again I still feel at home, because I have this more micro-scale of attachment, so not belonging, but a more micro-scale attachment of feeling of home that's more intimate, with these people I have.

0) So, belonging is a bit comparative for you?

6) Yeah, yeah, it's very different I feel

0) Okay, so, that's my interview, thank you for participating and I will now end the recording.

define home on, I think, what's available to you. And, I think, a sense of comfort is I think what you're looking for. So, a place where you can recover from you know, the outside world, and you know, the unpredictability from the outside world.

0) Are there examples where you were in different places and you defined home differently

7) Yeah, so, for example in [Origin country], my home, is my home, and it has been for my whole live until I left [origin country], but for example, here in Groningen, I don't have that home, and my place of residence doesn't feel the same as my home. Which means I find my sense of home more in the people that remind me of the familiar sense of atmosphere that I have in my home, in my home in [origin country].

0) So, it's very context specific for you, and when you find home less somewhere, you will seek in other aspects to find that feeling of home you had in [origin country]

7) Yeah.

0) Okay, are there any specific components to a house, that turn it into a home?

7) That's a good question, components of the house... I mean, when you, if I'm imagining in my mind, things like the front door, like the façade. But I think that's symbolic, I think more, it has to do with the feeling of comfort you have to experience, I think it's more of that feeling.

0) When do you experience that feeling of comfort?

7) Well, like I say, for example, if I return to [Origin country], when I see my mother and father, I suppose I'm not that in tune with my feelings that I'm like: 'Oh, I'm at home now', but I think it's something that you know if someone was to ask you. And then, if I'm in Groningen, the feeling is more foreign, so it's less familiar. So it's more like, you asked me, what is a photo of home, and, I had to think about it. I had to take a photo that was taken recently. And I thought, this makes sense, this feels like home because of the familiar atmosphere.

0) Okay, and familiarity is more about people?

7) Yeah, because I think people have traits that I think you can connect to traits you find in other people. So there's this longevity of these characteristics of home that you can attach to. Whereas, my place of residence is completely new, I haven't lived there for more than a year. Whereas, like, for example [Other Western European country]ishness, or you know, certain types of humor, certain types of talking, of being, that's almost like a room in a house in itself you know. In kind of like a personal sense.

0) So, a room in a house, what do you mean by that?

7) So, I mean, for example, if you say, can you repeat the original question?

0) So what are specific components to a house that turn it into a home?, then I went for, you talked a lot about familiarity, so then I asked about, that's about people, and that was my question?

7) Yeah, yeah, so what I'm saying is that what's in a person, so cultural identity, you could describe that as a house. And if I only know people for 1 year, I can recognize rooms in that house that I had for my entire life. I find home in you know, for example, ways of being like [from other Western European country], or like the type of [combined Western European country] humor that I find that's like symbolically, a room in a house that I've known my entire life.

0) Okay, so you recognize aspects in people that are way older in your life, that you had way longer and earlier before, and that makes you able to connect

7) It's easier to find a home that way.

0) Yeah, because a sense of home in your experience is very important to relate back to where you lived for longer times?

7) Yeah, the longer you live somewhere, the better you know, you know what to expect, you know what the parts are that can change.

0) Okay, then my last question here would be, are there any other things that make you feel at home in a house?

7) In a house... Yeah, again, I think there's activities that you can engage in, in a house, that make you feel at home in a house. Or like doing things where, like you know, if the people in the house are centered around a single activity. Something like watching a film, or watching tv. Eating, or playing a boardgame or something, this very much rings home.

0) So, if I summarize, how a house turns into a home, it very much comes down to certain experiences that mostly are with other people, that are either experience that are certain activities, or experiences that bring back memories from before like certain humor that you experienced during your life already.

7) Yeah, I wouldn't say memories, but I would say like a place to be where you feel comfortable. So it's not that I'm experiencing those things and remembering, but I'm inhabiting those moments and feel comfortable

0) Familiarity, that's the main word, not experiences, but familiarity with certain experiences that you have in the now, based on experiences you did have before. Okay, then my second question is, do you feel at home in Groningen?

7) Sometimes, if I were to say that in [origin country] I would see my house, and I would go in, there are weird times where I did not feel at home there, when I went through some emotional turmoil, whereas in Groningen I would say it's the opposite. Where the default is not I'm at home, I feel like I'm at home. But then there's times where you can feel at home.

0) What times are that for example, where you can feel at home?

7) I don't know, they kind of sneak up on you, like, so the photo I showed you, I gave you, is a picture of me and my friends and taken on my birthday just recently. And then in the days after, I was walking somewhere, and I remember looking around the streets of Groningen realizing I am comfortable here, and I have people that love me here, and this is where I live, so I am at home. But it was this realization, and not this constant knowledge I have.

0) And how does it feel when you don't feel at home here, which is the more prevalent feeling?

7) It's hard to say how it feels like from moment to moment, but then you're at some point realizing what you've been missing, and end up feeling quite exhausted after a long period of not having felt you're at home. You feel tired, because I do feel this sense of home is a place to feel comfort, where you can restore yourself spiritually. So, without that, it's a bit like your running low on fumes, you know.

0) Having a bit less energy.

7) It's kinda like a burn out, a bit like a burn out.

0) So when you're feeling not at home, which is a bit more prevalent, then overtime, you feel a bit burned out, a bit less energy, a bit less fumes.

7) Less energy, yeah, I think what I really want to say is: It's hard to identify as a feeling, it's the thing you really realize what was missing at some point. So, for example, if you go home, or if you really reflect, you realize: 'I just haven't felt at home', and maybe I can't give you a straight answer. But it doesn't feel good, maybe just tiredness. So for example, if I get you to stare at a spot for 24 hours, you would be craving a sense of relieve from that light intensity exertion. To continuously operate your life without feeling you're at home for many days, it's not like climbing a mountain, but eventually you realize you've been missing these moments of restoration.

0) It's a small amount of pressure on you.

7) Yeah

0) Okay, so you have explained why you mostly do not feel at home in Groningen, but at times you do. Have your feelings of home in Groningen changed over time?

7) Yeah, I have, they have, they have. Of course, there was a lot of confusion with corona virus etc. But I was living in student halls when I first moved to Groningen, and that doesn't feel like home, because it's student halls, and I don't know what to say about it, but you know it does not feel like

home. And then, since then, I now moved into a place where I have the freedom to renew the contract every year, which means at least the house doesn't change. And then I have friends that at least for the time-being are here for the foreseeable future. Which means I have allowed myself to feel that sense of home.

0) Is that important for your feeling of home that you have certainty that you can keep on living there.

7) Yeah, well for me, when I define home, it is very important that it's a place where you know what to expect, so you can relax. Because, nothing's going to change so you suddenly have to be alert. So you trust everyone completely etc. etc. So when I have a group of people that's fixed, and there's not new people coming in, then everything is kinda consistent, expectable. And the same with the living situation you know.

0) So when people, and your living situation are a bit more consistent, it's easier to have this feeling of home?

7) Yeah.

0) Okay, I now arrive at the photo elicitation part, so I made you bring a photo of what/who/where is most important for your feeling of home in Groningen. What can I see in the picture?

7) So, this is a picture from the [celebration day in Netherlands], which happens to be my birthday. And so, that must have been about 6 or 7 pm, it's a beautiful day, you can see the colors of the trees are amazing. Although not all of it is captured, because it's polaroid. And these are almost all my friend, 1 or 2 are missing, but I was really surprised how many people came together. Because I was trying to organize a barbecue, and all the stress of getting the coals, drinks and meat and everything. And then everybody came together and they bought me a Frisbee and we just had a great time in the park. And what are we looking at? It's just a picture of me and my friends in the park celebrating my birthday, just celebrating togetherness in good weather.

0) How does the picture you brought to the interview show what home means to you.

7) As I was describing, these people are the group where if anyone tells us that something is happening at their house, then I can expect that at least 50% of the rest of them would be there. So when I talk to you about this sense of familiarity, and I don't know what the word is, when things are expected you find some comfort, yeah, that's what I mean, these people are individuals, but they come as a home. Where I know each of them, I know what they're like, I know I can trust them. And that's why I can feel at home with them.

0) Maybe you mean predictability

7) Yeah, predictability! Yeah, but then also, I suppose what I haven't mentioned here is that I love them as well.

0) And that's what's very important. So the people you love are in this place, and that's what makes you feel at home. Why have you specifically chosen to bring this picture?

7) Firstly, because it was the most significant moment in my life that I've had in a while. But also because it was recent, so maybe I've had another moment that I've somehow forgot, but we haven't had a group photo in most of our gatherings when we're together. But because it's my birthday, we decided to do it. So, yeah, I think it's a picture of us, so we're in it, and that's a sense of home. If there were pictures of other times we were together, that would have been as good.

0) So was it then difficult to choose this picture?

7) No it wasn't

0) Then I go to my 4<sup>th</sup> question...

7) Hang on, I wanna go back to the second question.

0) For sure.

7) Why did I decide to bring it, it connects to everything else. Because it was my birthday, I really felt this sense of being cared for, which is really representative for being home. In your home you're

being cared for, especially because I'm the child of my parents, I don't have children. So home isn't this idea of caring for a child, it's actually of being cared for. So, that's another...

0) And that's why it's important that you have friends you love and that are there for each other, and this is just me interpreting, but when you have a problem they can take care of you.

7) Yeah, of course, yeah 100%, that's it.

0) Then my 4<sup>th</sup> question is, which relates to this, maybe you answered already. Is there a difference how you defined home before, or how you defined home with the picture?

7) Before as in before I came to Groningen

0) No, before defining with the picture

7) Ah, well, before I knew the picture already, so it's hard to separate. I think that when I was looking at the photo, I will say that really much more emotional aspects rather than practical aspects became much more relevant. So there's something about looking at the photo which brings up memories. It's less about a practical form of knowledge, and more an emotional form of knowledge that I'm connecting with.

0) Because you talked of course about comfort, and that's much more of a practical aspect of a home right?

7) Yeah

0) So, why do you think there's this difference between this very emotional picture, and your definition before which had more practical aspects to it?

7) Well, why is there a difference? Before the photo elicitation I had this rational answer. Maybe because we live in such a rational world, we're all so rational. And we're university students and we only care about getting the knowledge out. Getting the knowledge and putting it on paper, getting it on black and white. And we don't focus on looking at pictures and bringing up sense of meaning that exists outside our rationality. And so, when you get me to look at a picture and really talk about it, and feel it, then the way that I know what home is to me, becomes a lot more about the way I feel emotionally, rather than how I understand it practically.

0) So would you then think your definition before, or the picture and explanation then better shows home to you?

7) Probably the way I describe it after looking at the photo, huh. I'm not gonna answer the question, there are different ways of looking at the same thing, and neither one is more true than the other.

0) So, basically, you have a more rational and a more emotional attached definition of home, and both together show what home means to you.

7) Yeah

0) Then my last question is: Did our discussion about your picture, inform your definition of home, or even change how you want to define home?

7) Ehm, I could always get back to you about that, because right now it's hard to say. So if you want to do that, I will.

0) For sure, it's very nice, other participant did so as well.

7) Now, it's hard to say, but I think for sure, you've helped me connect with, you know, I'm feeling things in my body when I really have to talk about how I'm feeling about this photo. Which is not what I'm used to. So, if someone just says how you're feeling about home blab la bla, I don't usually have this emotional response.

0) What are you feeling mostly?

7) I don't know, it's hard to describe, it's really butterflies, and my legs feel a bit weak, and you know my chest feels a little bit warm and stuff. And I guess I'm just feeling, I don't know, it's hard to put a word to it, but just a sense of, maybe it's gratitude. But I don't know if I can put a word to it.

0) That's fair, so it was very important to you to reach out to your feeling of home in a way.

7) Absolutely yeah

0) Second part belonging: Explanation belonging: Question: Knowing this, would you say that you feel you belong in Groningen?

7) Would you not allow a sense of being accepted in a place?

0) For sure, these are some examples of what literature says, but belonging is very broad so, for sure!

7) Repetition?

0) The entire question is just the last question: So would you say you belong in Groningen?

7) I think, for me, it depends where. So, I belong here as a citizen under the law, and then I belong here according to some people on a personal level. And then I recognize that I belong here on a kind of practical level to other parts of the population. And, so it's a hard question, I think it really depends for me. A sense of belonging, I think it really depends on how other people see you and accept you.

0) Okay, so, you say you belong in a few practical ways and in those ways you belong to certain people here. But then how would you say you do not belong in Groningen?

7) Well, if I say that belonging is the sense that I'm part of someone else's life, I make up there life, then I feel like you know, there are large sections of the population of Groningen to whom me, and people like me are kind of just a blur. It's like, well yeah, we're international students, and it's fine that we're here, but it's not that if we were all wiped out, that would be a problem. I don't wanna seem like overly dramatic about it.

0) Yeah but if you for example all moved away to other places then...

7) Yeah, they wouldn't miss us.

0) So you feel you belong to a specific part, a specific group of Groningen.

7) Yeah, so I think I belong to the international students of Groningen to a certain extent.

0) Would that make that you say you mostly do, or do not feel you belong in Groningen?

7) Man... Yeah, I think that because Groningen I such an international city, I would say I do, I do belong the international Groningen, which is Groningen.

0) So you talked about the international community, are there any other things that contribute to you feeling you belong in Groningen?

7) Well I think also the university, I think the university treats everyone the same, so that helps to feel. Well, I think the faculty is better to describe it, but yeah, I think the university, I think the [university program], they accept you for who you are, and they still want to see you grow. So, I think, yeah, yeah, I belong to the university.

0) So you talked about how you feel you do mostly belong in Groningen with the international community, and the university. Are there any other places you feel you belong to, and if so, which places?

7) Well, I would really stress that everywhere that I might feel a sense of belonging, is almost exclusively occupied by international people. So, for example, I'm now playing in a football club, they're all internationals and I feel I belong to that pitch, to that team. And we're all together there, everyone belongs to that team, but none of them are Dutch. And then, occasionally, I do shift to the place called [amenity in Groningen], and then the guy who runs it is Dutch, and then there's a half Dutch, half-[North American] guy also on staff. But other than that, it's just a completely international sphere. And Dutch people come in and out and get a coffee or something, but it's a completely international sphere.

0) And other than Groningen itself, so other places you say like, okay, because for example you're from [Country in Western Europe], and you lived in [Other country in Western Europe], do you for example say you're from there?

7) In fairness, this is where it can get quite complicated, because I'm from [Origin country], but by nationality I'm half-[Other Western European country] and half-[Another Western European country], and so, the experience I have here in Groningen as being an international student, is quite



similar to the way it was in [Origin country]. Because, through my mother working for European institutions, I was in European school, where the majority of my fellow students were Europeans whose parents were working for European institutions. So you can almost argue that within [Origin country] there's this nation of people which is the international community. And then there's some bleed between us, and the American international school, but yeah, it's an international community. I've forgotten the question, what's the question?

0) Are there other places you belong to?

7) And you're asking about [Origin country], so yeah, when we talk about places there, I belong to my home, and I belong to homes of friends in [Origin country]. And I belong, wherever we go. And like certain bars that are ours, ours in the sense of we regularly occupy them and they're also international environments.

0) So if I have to summarize what you say about belonging, it's very much about specific communities and specific places in those places where you lived, which are often international community oriented. And that's basically where you can find your belonging. But you do not per sé belong to one single place, or one single location.

7) Like, is there like a spot on the earth where I belong?

0) That could be a good question, you could answer it.

7) I mean, if I was gonna be all hippie-dippie about it, then at any moment in time, ideally, there is probably one spot where I always belong. So maybe right now, it's right here talking to you. Maybe it has all been written, my whole story.

0) So you say you are belonging where you are.

7) I suppose that's the goal, maybe that's the goal of belonging wherever you are.

0) But do you feel that sense of belonging wherever you are?

7) Yeah, I think to a degree yeah. To a degree, yeah yeah yeah. I think that's something that maybe is bit of a, you have to let yourself feel that. But yeah

0) Fair, then I will go on to the next question, which is, the topic of belonging constitutes different things for different people. And I'm interested in students in Groningen. So I will ask you about what other students may deem as important for their belonging and see what you think about it. So, I think we talked a lot how people are important, and the second one as well, about places. So, the third one, are there any objects that are important for you to feel you belong in Groningen.

7) An object, that makes me feel I belong to Groningen... It's a good question, but perhaps, objects, it would either be, there are either objects which I have which allow me to realize that I am part of Groningen. For example my bike, not the racer, but the Dutch bike. Cause I know that means that I'm a Groninger, not in the strictest sense, but in a sense. And definitely, that can be discounted, that I am a Groninger. And then there are other objects which allow me to feel like Groningen is made up of who I am. So things that I bring to Groningen which are meaningful to me, which feel like they're accepted about being part of me here. And I don't know they're just random objects and stuff. I have a cross that I got from my communion, from my granny. And things like that, things of my life that I bring into Groningen, and connect me to my sense of self. You know if I carry them around with me.

0) So there are certain objects that you bring with yourself to places, and make you feel you can connect to the place cause they're there?

7) Yeah, it's like the physical realm. Like, I don't know other things, like things I do. I got this bottle of Cretan oil, that my friend from [Origin country] gave me from their farm. And the fact that I can bring this bottle of Cretan oil with me that I can bring to Groningen and spread on my salad. Like, no one can do anything about it, because this is my city.

0) Okay, so very much, also objects from [Origin country], from a place you call more home, that you can bring here in a way like: 'This can be here, so my home can be here.

7) Exactly, yeah yeah, Exactly

0) And the last one, are there any daily or weekly activities that important for you to belong or not belong in Groningen.

7) Yeah, so since I've been in this football team, I've got this greater sense of belonging. And of course, group work isn't the same, because it comes and goes, and you don't got time, and it's not that enjoyable to keep that sense of belonging within a group of a group assignment haha. But within a football club that sense of belonging remains. And also within social gatherings I showed to you with the photos helps the sense of belonging. But then also being on my own in the streets of Groningen, knowing the streets, knowing where I'm going, and knowing what I'm doing, and knowing who I am, also helps me feel at home.

0) So a combination of social gatherings that keep on happening, of which you are sure that they also will be there. And activities that are way more just being in the city itself.

7) Yeah, exactly, either social activities or individual activities, which helps you connect to, you know, the geography.

0) Yeah, how does that work, how do these activities make you feel you belong?

7) Okay, right, so, in the social ones, it's being part of something greater than yourself, where you feel like whatever the goal of the activity is, being part of a team or chilling out, your contribution is valued whether or not you do something. So it's a bit of unconditional love or something, well I suppose in the football team you gotta put the work in. And then on the individual things, I think that's it that if I just take everything out of my mind for a moment, when I'm out and about in Groningen. And I have nowhere to go, and nowhere to be. I'm just in between nowhere and nowhere, then I can feel at ease. You know, I can feel a sense of comfort, and then there's belonging there, because it's not that if I'm just stood somewhere, I don't have to earn me standing there. I can just be there, because that's where I belong.

0) So the fact that you can be just out and about, and it does not matter if you have something to do or go somewhere. You can just be in the location, be comfortable in that location, and therefore you belong in that location.

7) Yeah.

0) That also comes back to your definition before, if I'm just in this location, then I belong here, and therefore I should feel I belong.

7) Yeah, and maybe that's an exercise I don't practice enough. In just connecting to the sense of belonging actively, because the sense of belonging does not come up spontaneously, not always.

0) So then, do you belong in this place right now?

7) Yeah, I think I do, because obviously, you need me. I'm enjoying this interview, and you want to me to the interview with you, where, well it's not my faculty building but they use it. I'm supposed to be in this building, so yeah, I belong.

0) Okay, then I will go to the next question, something you also mentioned before. Do you feel that interactions with others, and how others treat you influence your feelings of belonging in Groningen.

7) Yeah, of course, of course, because if you aren't recognized for who you are, if you are rejected. Then that influences your sense of belonging. And that's why I think I had difficulty describing my sense of belonging earlier in the interview when we were talking about places and stuff. Because it really is the case where for example, just random Dutch people out and about. It's like you don't feel recognized, if there's something they can see about you or hear you're not Dutch, you don't feel recognized.

0) Does that feel as rejection?

7) Maybe it can feel that you're being rejected, but I know it's not that you're being rejected. But they don't have the time for you, and maybe that's okay, and maybe that should be okay. But you know implicitly that certain people just don't have time for you, and that makes you question your sense of belonging. So if that was all you had, and you didn't have friends who could reaffirm your

sense of home and belonging, then you can definitely end up feeling reject through a continuous sense of rejection by other people.

0) Okay, so it's important that other people recognize you, and other people have time for you, and that's a way in which you would feel more like you belong

7) [affirming noise]

0) Then my last question, a bit more difficult. But, we have both discussed your definitions of home, feelings of home, and feelings of belonging in Groningen. How does the fact that you mostly said you did feel you belong in Groningen, have an impact on that you mostly said you did not feel at home I Groningen?

7) So, I, have I, I did say that I mostly do not feel at home in Groningen, but I did say that I do belong in Groningen. And maybe... Perhaps, it's because a sense of home, is a sense of home arises out of a consistent regular reliable series of experiences of feelings of belonging. So, they compound over time, and you know maybe, it's this thing where belonging versus rejection over time you know, you will eventually take in your experiences of rejection and belonging, and it will start to make up your sense of homeness or not.

0) So the fact that you do have a combined feeling of most of the time belonging, with not always because you feel a bit rejected by people, that makes this un-reliance that makes that you have a more difficult time to even form a home.

7) Yeah, but what I would say is that it's a matter of time, that if I would continue feeling the way that I feel about my belonging, for more years, you know I'd say another year, a year after that. I would definitely say, I think I would probably say I would feel at home.

0) So, you would say in the future, I don't know your future plans of course, but if you lived here for 2 more years, that you would feel more at home probably.

7) Yeah, probably, however, the population of Groningen is transient, so that is also unlikely. So maybe my knowledge of that also is part of it. I don't want to allow myself to...

0) The fact you know that people will go away makes you not allow yourself to feel at home?

7) Maybe, yeah, maybe, possibly.

0) Okay, I think that was the interview, I will now end the recording. Thank you for participating!

7) No worries