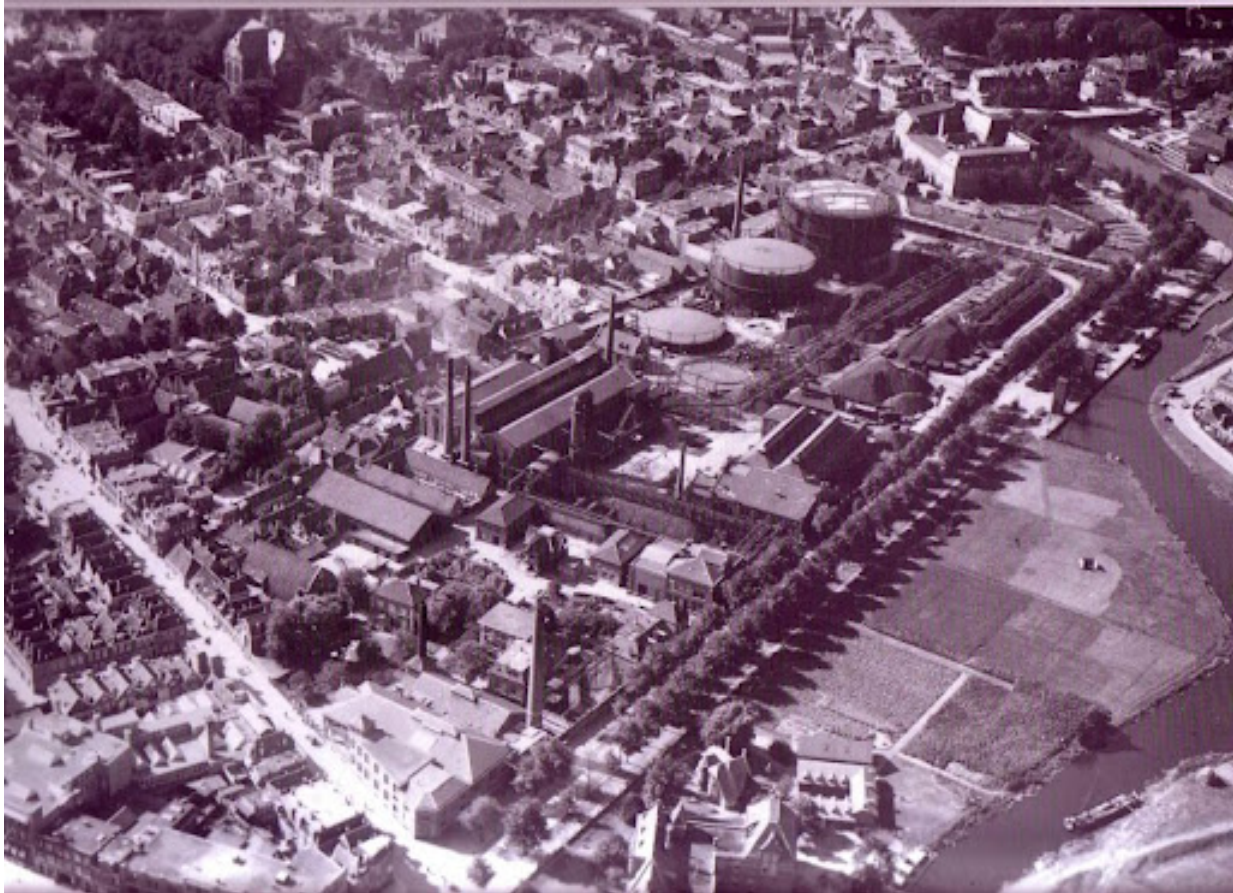


Community In Ebbingeekwartier: The impacts of 'Broedplaatsen'



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Summary

In this research the central question of 'How do artists in Ebbingekwartier in Groningen experience Broedplaatsen and do these policies contribute to local empowerment of artist communities?' is researched through walking interviews. In the past 20 years, European and North American local councils have turned to creative city policies to redevelop neglected neighbourhoods, after the publication of 'The Creative City' by Richard Florida. Whilst Broedplaatsen fall under the category of creative policies, this research has shown evidence that the Gemeente does not seek economic benefits through the policy but rather social benefits and creating spaces for new artists and entrepreneurs. Suggestions for further research would include surveying the same impacts and community empowerment of Broedplaats across the whole of Groningen, or other Northern Dutch cities such as Leeuwarden, using the walking interview method.

Introduction

Creative economy initiatives are often seen by city councils as a rapid and uncomplicated solution to deprived neighbourhoods, as they are perceived to bring economic prosperity to the area. By doing so, city councils continue to adhere to the current status quo of neoliberal urbanism rather than addressing the root issue head on (Borén and Young, 2012). The New Urban frontier theory has proposed that there has been a recent increase in state led gentrification, especially in neighbourhoods with marginalised communities (Thörn and Holgersson, 2016). State led gentrification is known to cause displacement and loss of affordable housing for long-time residents and communities.

Broader trends of neoliberal urbanism can also be observed, where economic profit and market forces take priority over social equity and community wellbeing. This opens up further discussion of how neoliberal urban policy affects the arts. The creative economy initiative that will be of focus in this study is the 'Broedplaats' (Broedplaatsen in the plural) that was first introduced formally in the Northern Dutch city of Groningen in 2020. The policy is now being revisited 4 years later, with the new policy due to be published in the autumn of 2024. This review of the impacts of Broedplaatsen in Ebbingekwartier may prove to be a vital piece of research in the redevelopment of the Broedplaatsen policy. Groningen's Cultural Policy is ultimately aimed at promoting accessibility to the Arts for its population, whilst neo-liberalism is typically seen as an 'enemy' to the Arts. Localising broader theoretical standpoints such as 'The Anatomy of the Creative City' within the city of Groningen acknowledges the intersectionality of local dynamics with global trends in urban development and gentrification.

The central purpose of my research is to explore whether the Broedplaatsen present in the Ebbingekwartier neighbourhood produced by the Gemeente (municipality) of Groningen has empowered the artists of the neighbourhood. It is clear these policies are primarily targeted at the creative class, however whether these policies positively impact communities that are not part of the creative class has not yet been fully explored. Whilst the ideas promoted in the cultural policy could imply gentrification in the neighbourhood, they also hold the potential for other communities to benefit from the developments.

This has led to the following research question and sub-questions:

Research question

How do artists in Ebbingekwartier in Groningen experience Broedplaatsen and do these policies contribute to local empowerment of artist communities?

Sub questions

What are key goals and strategies of the Broedplaatsen policy for the city of Groningen?

How do artists within Ebbingekwartier experience the impacts of Broedplaatsen policy on their community wellbeing?

How do urban planners experience the impacts of Broedplaatsen policies on Ebbingekwartier?

Theoretical framework

Creative economy initiatives are often seen by city councils as a rapid and uncomplicated solution to deprived neighbourhoods, as they are seen to bring economic prosperity to the area. By doing so, city councils continue to adhere to the current status quo of neoliberal urbanism rather than addressing the issue head on (Borén and Young, 2012). Creative economy initiatives are policies produced by municipalities with the aim of attracting the 'creative class' and cultural industries. Florida's definition of the creative class can be summarised as those who have received higher education and work as artists or in technology start-ups (Markusen et al., 2008). This definition has however been widely rejected within the human geography field due to exclusionary nature, therefore this thesis will focus on individuals within cultural industries. Cultural industries produce cultural goods and services and can be defined as a 'Signifying System', in which social order is communicated, reproduced, and explored (Markusen et al., 2008). The Ebbingekwartier neighbourhood, in the city of Groningen, has been subject to a collection of creative economy initiatives since the area was revitalised from its industrial background. The creative economy initiative of focus in this research is the 'Broedplaats' programme, which can be translated to Breeding Grounds in English. The effect creative economy initiatives have on the neighbourhood of Ebbingekwartier in Groningen will be analysed through two of the three layers presented by Cohendet, et al. (2010). These layers

are constituted of 'The Upperground', 'The Middleground', with 'The Underground' being the third layer that will not be used due to constraints detailed below.

The anatomy of the Creative City

The Upperground is presented as the institutional level. Within this level, creative ideas and policies are brought to market, controlled primarily by local institutions, the Gemeente in the case of Groningen, and creative firms. The Upperground is seen as the main level in which creative city policies are introduced (Cohendet et al., 2010). Creative policy movements adherent to the creative city concept are often labelled as 'meta-policies'. Florida's model provided an elasticity that allowed policy-makers to achieve goals by repackaging local policies under the guise of creative urban development. Existing commitments were able to be renamed and legitimised through "soft" economic development (Peck, 2011). Broedplaatsen are an example of this within the Dutch context. The Netherlands has adopted in the past two decades a corporatist style of neo-liberal governance, which has resulted in the commodification of culture and creativity. Broedplaatsen had origins in the squatting movement in Amsterdam in the 1990s, but has quickly become a package policy applied across the country (Peck, 2011). They consist of affordable spaces for artists, tech start-ups, and small-scale-manufacturing, subsidised by the government (Gemeente Groningen, 2024).

After Florida published 'The Rise of the Creative Class', Amsterdam and other municipalities were able to label Broedplaatsen as part of creative city policies. However this did not come without criticism. Economically, there has been little proof that Broedplaatsen do in fact contribute to the success of a neighbourhood. As a low-cost accommodation strategy, it functions well, but there are high levels of investment for an industry that is not necessarily economically productive (Peck, 2011). Moral criticisms are also common. Gemeenten are funding Broedplaatsen to create attractive neighbourhoods for the creative class. Policies in this case are not adopted to support artists for the sake of art, but rather to conform to the consumption preferences of the creative class (Gainza, 2018).

The Middleground is designated as the level of communities. Communities are able to structure and design the vernacular used surrounding the creative movement within their neighbourhood. The Middleground consistently navigates through the formal of the Upperground and the informal of the Underground, promoting both exploration and exploitation of the arts (Cohendet et al., 2010). Community initiatives can be identified as a way for communities to instrumentalise the structures and vernaculars created in the Middleground. The most

successful initiatives surface from empowered communities that participate in all phases of policy implementation (Eisen, 2016).

The Underground is presented by Cohendet et al. (2010) as the level of the individuals. It is determined as a level in which “creative activities take place outside any formal organisation or institution based on production, exploitation, or diffusion”. Whilst artists in Broedplaatsen are members of the Underground level, the research is concentrated on communities in relation to a formal institution based on production and exploitation; Broedplaatsen. Including the Underground would therefore not be an effective way of researching how Broedplaatsen affected communities in Ebbingekwartier.

Creative City Policies: a double-edged sword?

There are two sides of the coin concerning Broedplaatsen. A discussion may be opened on how neoliberal urban policy affects artists. Broedplaatsen are initially seen to promote artists' interaction and community, whilst neo-liberalism is typically seen as an enemy to the arts. And yet adhering to a neoliberal agenda does not always imply negative connotations. Broedplaatsen represent a space in which actors within the Middleground are able to congregate, and so by extension, the area in which the Middleground and Upperground interact. Research has shown that communal spaces for artists, and more specifically artist residencies, can be used as a key instrument for social cohesion and community construction. Artists are often attributed the ability to promote participation and integration between places and people, therefore fostering a level of community empowerment (Grodach, 2009). Broedplaatsen therefore represent a space in which artistic communities are empowered, as well as their surrounding neighbourhood. It is often noted that a bottom-up structure leads to the highest levels of community empowerment in an initiative. Community empowerment is both a process and outcome, and therefore the way in which it is structured is vital for its triumph (Eisen, 2016).

Criticisms of neoliberal urban policies are however widespread. According to Harvey (2006) the fundamental goal of neoliberalism is to create a 'good business climate', instrumentalized through the government playing a smaller role in social welfare. Upon further inspection Gemeente Groningen (2021) presents Broedplaatsen as a stepping stone for artists and startups to become profitable, therefore still prioritising the prospect of economic growth over artistic value. Creative city policies are known to cause adverse effects on neighbourhoods that are targeted by the policies (Beaumont and Yildiz, 2016). The policies focus on promoting and supporting the creative class within the neighbourhood, whilst its intentions for the non-creative

class remain nebulous. The elderly and lower educated look on from the sidelines as their neighbourhoods get gentrified under the guise of redevelopment (Beaumont and Yildiz, 2016).

Conceptual model

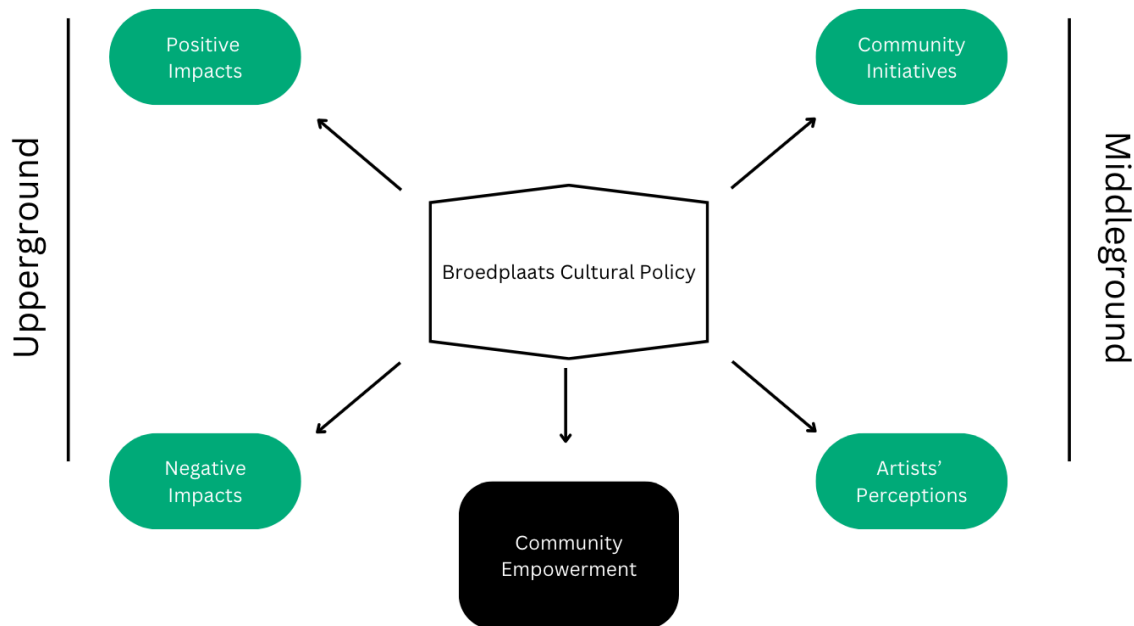


Figure 1: Conceptual model (Source: author)

This model illustrates the impacts of the Broedplaatsen Cultural Policy, highlighting its interactions with various community dynamics. At the centre, the policy acts both as a catalyst for community empowerment and gentrification, influencing both the Upperground and Middleground realms, as well as providing a space in which they can interact.

In the Upperground, the policy generates positive impacts, such as creating subsidized spaces in which artists can create and interact with one another to form a sense of community and knowledge transmission. Negative impacts are also possible from the Broedplaatsen, such as gentrification of the area and social stratification.

Concurrently, the Middleground encourages community initiatives. Community initiatives serve as a means for communities to utilise the structures and vernaculars developed in the Middleground, with the most successful initiatives emerging from empowered communities

actively participating in all phases of policy implementation (Eisen, 2016). Artists' perception of the Broedplaatsen also largely play into how they will interact and utilise the spaces provided by the policy, therefore affecting their ability to experience community empowerment.

These four factors presented by the Middleground and Upperground ultimately pose as key components for the Groningen Broedplaatsen policy to foster community empowerment in the artistic community of Ebbingekwartier.

Methodology

This research has been undertaken with a qualitative focus. This choice was made as questions of community and empowerment are often subjective, and therefore the nuances in perceptions and experiences would not be able to be recorded through quantitative data. The rejection of a singular truth means that the research may be undertaken in a way that reflects the complexity and tangled reality of phonemes in this world (von Benzon et al., 2021).

Primary data

The interviews took place as a walking interview. This means that interviewees chose the route, which involves landmarks that hold personal significance or a route of their choosing. This therefore takes a forefront in the topic of conversation, and questions surrounding it were not able to be planned in advance as each interview was independent. However there were some questions that were proposed in advance in order to ensure that the interviews do contribute toward answering the research question. These questions can be found in the appendix. Walking interviews have become increasingly common in qualitative research in recent years, especially when researching participants' relationship with place. Evan and Jones (2011) have noted that interviewees are less likely to try and give 'right' answers during the research process, instead the method facilitates the verbalisation of attitudes and feelings. However the method does not come without criticism. Ways of recording the data of walking interviews can counteract the initial empowerment provided by the method, such as GPS tracking and fixed routes (Jones et al., 2008). It was therefore decided that no GPS tracking would take place during the interviews, as well as the participants having the choice of picking three landmarks so that they were able to determine the route, or select an area of significance to them with no

predetermined route. Only one interviewee decided to select three landmarks, which provided much conversation about his experiences in the artistic community within Groningen. The other participants were equally able to speak at length about Ebbingekwartier, without the presence of landmarks.

Interviewees

Name	Broedplaats	Occupation	Further context
Gabriel (he/him)	N/a	Sound technician	Works at Simplon in Ebbingekwartier.
Selene (she/her)	Machinefabriek (Nite)	Actor/ director	Student in Leeuwarden. From Groningen
Joost (he/him)	Het Paleis	Photographer	Father. Has been part of the Groningen creative scene for 10 years.
Daan (he/him)	Machinefabriek (Nite)	Actor/ director	Does not live in Groningen, only comes to the city for rehearsals with Nite.
Hendrik (he/him)	N/a	Planner	Works at the Gemeente of Groningen

Figure 2: Interviewees summary table (source: author)

Secondary Data

To further understand the perspective of the Gemeente, the Broedplaatsen policy of Groningen has been analysed. The current policy is named 'Approach to Breeding Grounds' and was published in 2020. A new Broedplaatsen policy is currently being drafted, but will not be presented to the municipality until the end of 2024. This research may aid in the new policy creation and help the municipality to consider perspectives of artists in Broedplaatsen. The procedure of policy analysis involves selecting and synthesising the data presented by the policy, organising the data into major themes and analysing this data through the same parameters used for the interviews. The benefits of using a policy analysis is the ability to find data within the context in which the interviewees operate, as well as being available to the public (Bowen, 2009). Research within the context of Broedplaatsen cannot however solely hinge on policy analysis, as policies were not produced for research purposes, and therefore

provide insufficient detail about specific methods of implementation and the individuals involved in the programme (Bowen, 2009).

Recruitment

Qualitative research allows for more choice in terms of involving potential interviewees. I was able to select specific actors/ residents in order to gain necessary information for the research. In the case of the topics I am researching, I have two key actor groups that must be included. The first is the most evident, which is the artists of the Ebbingekwartier. These individuals are vital as they are the ones who hold the experiences of the Groningen cultural policy, whether they be positive or negative. They are able to provide criticisms through lived experience, and by putting their voices at the forefront in the data analysis, a more ethical approach can be taken.

These interviewees were recruited via snowball sampling and social media. Snowball sampling consists of the researcher having some initial contacts who are suitable for providing their insight on the topic of research. The participants are then asked whether they know anyone else who would be suitable as a participant, with the cycle continuing until the desired number of interviews have been reached (Parker et al, 2019). I had already identified two individuals in the Ebbingekwartier who were available for an interview and well connected within the community in the neighbourhood. They were then asked whether they knew anyone else willing to take part in the research. The second group of actors that must be taken into account are those who planned the Groningen Cultural Policy. If I am to analyse policy, I must also provide space for those who conceived of it to explain their goals and ambitions, as well as the factors they took into account. This recruitment method directly contacted those who created the policy/ those currently working on it with no snowball sampling needed. This interview was unable to be done walking, as the planner in question had a demanding schedule. The interview therefore took place in the Gemeente over a cup of coffee.

There is no one set location for the interviews due to their ambulant nature, however they will primarily take place in the Ebbingekwartier of the city. The interviewees will be required to pick out minimum 3 landmarks of significance to them or a walking route, and will therefore determine the route we will be walking.

Research Ethics/ Data Management

Research can be a dirty word for many communities, with previous experience proving to be extractionary and stereotyping of individuals (Hui, 2023). I was therefore very aware of the connotations and role I have as a researcher, and took great care to use research methods that aim to reduce, and ideally eliminate, a potential power imbalance between researcher and interviewee.

As is the case for all research, ethical considerations must remain at the forefront, with privacy as a fundamental aspect. To ensure the confidentiality of interviewees, their identities will not be disclosed in the discussion of the interview results. Descriptions that are included are sufficiently vague that participants will not be able to be identified. All interview recordings and raw transcriptions are stored exclusively on my personal devices, avoiding cloud uploads to ensure data security. The University of Groningen's two-factor authentication network will be the sole online 'cloud' used for assignment uploads. These precautions are crucial for safeguarding interviewees, and failure to take necessary measures could lead to adverse consequences for the individuals taking place in the research.

Data Analysis

The data analysis scheme that is used is Narrative Analysis. Narrative research aims to understand human experiences as they are shown, with in my case being through a walking-interview (van Breukelen, 2010).

Data analysis typically takes place within a methodological realist paradigm, in which data is prioritised for the information that may be extracted and used, with the context of the data ignored. Narrative analysis challenges this, as the stories provided by the interviewees are considered more as a package, with the creation and experiences of the data being as important as the data itself. By using this technique, I was able to analyse the data provided whilst keeping the felt experiences of the interviewees as an omnipresent factor (Earthy and Cronin, 2008). The focus is on examining how narratives are created and how they shape our understandings of who we are, forcing the researcher to abandon the comfort of gathering facts and focus more so on interpretations (Earthy and Cronin, 2008).

The analysis is primarily focused on understanding the meanings of the answers provided by the participant and relate them back to conceptual theories proposed in the Theoretical

Framework. This involves reading through the transcribed interview and coding them into particular themes or recognising important passages that should be discussed. Patterns were identified, which in some cases will reflect the theories surrounding creative city economies and community empowerment (van Breukelen, 2010).

Discussion

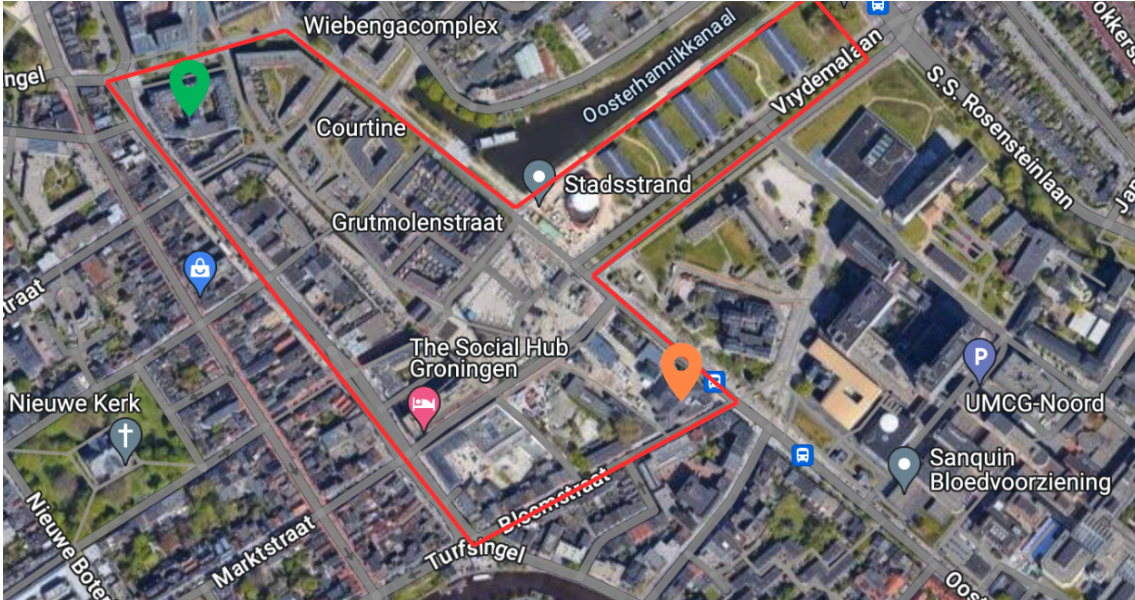
The perception of Broedplaatsen, creative community spaces, by local artists reveals significant social dynamics and challenges. There are varying efforts by the Broedplaatsen to include members of the community, with only a few proving to be successes. Notions such as community intimidation and youth engagement have been noted as some of the most pressing issues for the artists. The results show differing perceptions of community empowerment among artists. While some, like Gabriel, emphasise participatory policy-making, others focus on creative freedom and access to affordable spaces. The findings suggest that while Broedplaatsen have potential for empowerment, achieving inclusivity remains a challenge.

Ebbingekwartier, located on the northeastern border of Groningen city centre, has for the past 20 years become the focus of various creative economy policies, Broedplaatsen included. The neighbourhood had previously been unused due to its persistent soil contamination from the Gas Works previously located there. The development of Broedplaatsen in this area is typical, as Gemeente often look for areas with cheap real estate in need of development. In 2015, Gemeente Groningen revealed a plan to develop the deprived urban area into a creative zone, named 'Creatievestadwijk'. From this development, divides between the social groups resident of the neighbourhood have begun to emerge. The demarcation between creative individuals and non-creative individuals has emerged as a form of social stratification. The Gemeente has shown a clear emphasis on enabling creative individuals, and as described by Beaumont and Yildiz (2016), expects a highly unrealistic trickle-down. Relating clearly to negative impacts mentioned above in the Upperground, the creative policies introduced in Ebbingekwartier have shown little consideration for low-income residents.

There are currently two Broedplaatsen that can be found in Ebbingekwartier. Their specialisations as well as overall contexts can be found in the table below.

Broedplaats	Context
Machine Fabriek	This is one of the two Broedplaatsen present in Ebbingekwartier. It can be found opposite the UMCG Noord bus stops. It is home to multiple different creative companies, such as Nite, but also Noorderlingen and Het Houten Huis. The majority of these companies focus on theatre, dance, and performance arts. There are no individual artists in this Broedplaats.
Nite	Nite is the most prominent company in Machine Fabriek. Its main focus is dance and theatre, but it also includes the organisations of Club Guy and Roni and Bab Ad Daar. The building consists of a theatre space and offices. Nite is considered as one of the largest interdisciplinary theatre houses in the Netherlands.
Het Paleis	Het Paleis is found in the North of Ebbingekwartier. Located on the former chemical laboratory of Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, the building has been squatted for many years, and therefore the story of Het Paleis closely follows those of the original Broedplaatsen in Amsterdam. The building has over 60 studios, with spaces for individual artists and start-ups.

Figure 3: Table of Context Ebbingekwartier Broedplaatsen (source: Author)



- Ebbingekwartier boundaries
- 📍 Het Paleis
- 📍 Machinefabriek

Figure 4: Ebbingekwartier (Source: Google Maps)

Perception artists Broedplaatsen

Selene, brought up the notion of community intimidation. Within her context, this meant the members of the community outside the Broedplaats did not feel qualified or welcomed enough to partake in activities and events. As shown by previous research conducted in Ebbingekwartier, creative city economy initiatives have created a social stratification between creative individuals and non-creative individuals. Non-creative individuals of the neighbourhood can feel undervalued due to the lack of consideration of them in policy (Beaumont and Yildiz, 2016). These pre-existing structures may then affect certain communities' willingness to partake in activities and events held by Broedplaatsen (Beaumont and Yildiz, 2016). Despite continuous efforts from both Nite, the company she worked at, and her own theatre collective to engage and invite audiences out of the norm, it seemed to be in vain. The typical theatre goer was described as a liberal retiree, and whilst there was no objection to this crowd, there was a strong desire for theatre to be for everyone shown by both Selene and Daan. Selene describes this whilst walking around her neighbourhood park, Noorderplantsoen. Having struggled to find specific landmarks of her community, she ended up deciding on this location instead. The park holds significant personal relevance to Selene, as having housing closer to it was the determining factor between living in Groningen or Leeuwarden, where she studies.

By walking with Selene through Noorderplantsoen, we were able to co-create a new meaning of space in a location that was deeply personal to the both of us, and subsequently sharing our experiences. This allowed Selene to further divulge her own personal experiences of community intimidation with regards to her time in Nite.

“What I noticed before with the community that we created at Nite, is that people are actually really scared to come, because they think that it's not for me, or am I the right target group? And what I'm really struggling with is how are you communicating, to the whole world, that they are the target group?”

Selene



Figure 5: Nite advertising their newest show.

But this intimidation was not just felt by those watching the theatre, it also included those wanting to join in the creation of theatre and collaborate with surrounding companies in the Broedplaats. Selene tells me how knowing people in the surrounding companies in Machinefabriek means that she enjoys eating her lunches and collaborating with them. But Selene highlights that this is a very much individual experience, and how for the majority of people there is a hostile undercurrent.

“If you’re not doing theatre, its very much ‘what the fuck are you doing here?’. They say everyone is welcome, but I don’t think it is”.

Selene

Whilst this environment is concerning, it does not seem to be concentrated solely within the Machinefabriek. Both Selene and Daan describe how audience elitism and apathy towards supporting other organisations is something inherent to the Groninger theatre scene. Selene mentions how she and her theatre organisation have to travel to Leeuwarden in order to perform, as no one in Groningen would open their doors. She repeats the sense of having to prove herself in order to have access to theatre cultural infrastructure, despite having multiple years of experience as an actor, and is therefore not surprised by the fact that others who are not involved in the theatre scene do not feel encouraged to partake. The perception of Selene and Daan is that this community intimidation is not so much a result of the Broedplaats, but part of a wider pattern in the industry.

Creative city policies

When reviewing the criticisms of creative economy initiatives, much of the literature has displayed that many of them are in fact not economically advantageous for the surrounding neighbourhood, as well as only providing benefits to the specific social strata of the creative class (Beaumont and Yildiz, 2016). When questioned about the economic output of Broedplaatsen, Hendrik presented 7000 creative jobs in Groningen, a majority of which are located in Broedplaatsen. But Hendrik was well aware of how some of these Broedplaatsen could be presented as a financial burden rather than asset. This does not pose a particular issue in the eyes of the Gemeente.

“Even if it's not necessarily economically productive, we will carry on to facilitate those places because it's important...”

...We want that this place is also open for people who are not in it, that it's for everyone. So, when we are setting these goals, we can set certain rules.”

Hendrik

This perspective presented by Hendrik, and by extension the Gemeente, directly contrasts the attitudes of local municipalities presented in literature. Broedplaatsen, as a creative economy initiative, has the connotations of a Floridean neo-liberal style policy, with the aims subsequently of creating an economically productive and competitive neighbourhood centred around the creative class (Beaumont and Yildiz, 2016). However, Gemeente also considers the social benefits of Broedplaatsen, and produces certain rules in order to ensure that all members are able to partake in a Broedplaats, creative or not. Whilst this emphasis is not clearly presented in the policy document, there is evidence of these sentiments.

“Cultural: Broedplaatsen form an important link in the cultural infrastructure. Graduated or starting artists find inspiration from colleagues and a network to give their work visibility through Broedplaatsen.

Social-moral: Broedplaatsen contribute to an inclusive municipality by connecting people with different backgrounds and providing a meeting place for talent and unconventional solutions to societal challenges”

Gemeente Groningen, 2021

As noted in the quote, Broedplaatsen are a form of cultural infrastructure, this is primarily to be accessed by a creative individual, but this infrastructure also has the aim of encouraging an inclusive community that can determine unique solutions. Here, Broedplaatsen representing a link to the cultural infrastructure closely mirrors the structure of the Anatomy of the Creative City. Broedplaatsen, constructed by the Upperground (the Gemeente) taps into the cultural infrastructure created by the Middleground, which is in turn influenced by the movements of the Underground (Cohendet et al., 2010).

Cultural infrastructures in the Middleground

When shifting the focus to the Middleground, Broedplaatsen have shown strong evidence of creating an environment that is encouraging of community initiatives. Nite seems to house the

most successful of these community initiatives, named Bab Ad Daar. Bab Ad Daar is described as a smaller theatre group that is part of Nite and is composed of local refugees. The group travels ahead of Nite and performs as a 'warm-up' to the main Nite act. Here Daan describes its creation.

"It was just one guy that rang the doorbell of Nite, he was a refugee from Syria, that did a lot of dancing in Syria, but just in private, as in not professional. He just rang the door and said 'I'm a dancer, can I work here?'. And then they invited him to do training with the dancers, and he was a very bad dancer. But then he was invited to create this network, they call it, where people from abroad have a place to go create."

Daan

From this narrative presented by Daan, it is evident that Nite has initiated a community theatre group that empowers an often-marginalised group. However, this empowerment does not strictly adhere to the most successful factors of a community initiative. As noted in the theoretical framework, empowerment is most triumphant when there is a bottom-up structure and the relationships are not formalised (Eisen, 2016). Both of these are not present in the organisation of Bab Ad Daar, as the themes of the performances are determined by Nite, as well as the director being provided by the company.



Figure 6: Entrance to Bab Ad Daar

And yet, community empowerment is still evident. Perhaps as Bab Ad Daar serves not only the purpose of providing a creative free space for refugees, but also as a community outreach through their performances to people of similar backgrounds, stricter rules must be placed in order to achieve their goals. This sharing of tacit knowledge and resources closely reflects the notion of ‘Serendipity’ presented in the Broedplaats policy document, in which it is highlighted as one of the symptoms of Broedplaats. The Gemeente defines ‘Serendipity’ as:

Serendipity is finding something unexpected and useful while looking for something completely different. In Broedplaatsen, serendipity is ‘given a hand’ because [creative] people from different disciplines and backgrounds meet here. The organised convergence of circumstances in a Broedplaats facilitates this form of cross-fertilization.

Gemeente Groningen, 2021

Within the context of cultural infrastructures, ‘Serendipity’ implies the creation of tacit knowledge through the community present in Broedplaats. Evidence of this is clear in the presence of Bab Ad Daar, but can also be found in a range of experiences. Joost spoke of the knowledge that was shared in ‘The Big Building’ and how it took place through networking, partying and shared spaces.

Whilst walking around the Machinefabriek, Daan tells me how this community is confined to the buildings. He points out a bar, De Toeter, that he enjoys visiting after rehearsals with his colleagues, and an old jazz club that is now closed that used to be their go to.



Figure 6: The old Jazz club

But other than the few buildings, Daan has little connection to the neighbourhood. He lives in Amsterdam, and chooses to work with Nite for the sole reason of the creative liberty they offer

him. For Daan, the benefits of the Broedplaats are only reflected on the creative space, and not the greater neighbourhood. But upon the questioning of what he perceives as a Broedplaats, Daan reveals he was unaware he was part of one. His perception of the policy was of a far less formalised relationship between local government and squatters.

Youth engagement

Community initiatives were however not the only focuses of the walking interviews. Joost also chose to walk around Noorderplantsoen. He both lives and works in Ebbingekwartier, and listed the park as being one of the many benefits of living in the neighbourhood. Joost works as a photographer in Het Paleis, but worked previously in another Broedplaats named 'The Big Building', which was taken down due to its proximity to the current construction works in the Hoofdstation. The contrast between his experiences in the two Broedplaatsen is vast. Joost recalls fond memories of The Big Building, with a strong sense of community and regular parties, meet ups and collaboration. He does not have access to the same kind of community in Het Paleis, with individuals being far more reserved. The difference is so drastic, that Joost struggles to even consider Het Paleis as a Broedplaats. For him, networking and community is the most crucial factor of a Broedplaats. But how do you encourage community in a space already financed by the Gemeente with a main goal being knowledge sharing? For Joost, the answer is encouraging more young artists in.

"I think in general Het Paleis needs to be a space for young creatives. I don't know how to push this, but there must be a way..."

... I would like more collaboration and hangouts. There are some drinks, but they're not exciting. They're quite boring actually. Sorry to say but a lot of boomers. Nothing bad about boomers, but they leave at 5 o'clock, compared to The Big Building where there was a club."

Joost

Whilst Joost presents a distinct lack of youth engagement in Het Paleis, and by extension the current Groningen cultural scene, this sentiment is not shared by all. Gabriel, whilst walking past his university building, Oude Boteringstraat 38, remarks how Groningen has a strong environment of creativity and collaboration.

"I think due to the city's size and that there's two universities, it feels like you're never more than two degrees of separation from someone. So if you have a compelling idea for a festival or an event, it's usually pretty easy to get it started and off the ground. People here are pretty enthusiastic and stimulate the arts."

Gabriel

He uses the front facing window of Oude Boteringstraat 38 as an example, remarking how many different forms of events were displayed via posters. Student-led, organised by well-established institutions such as Vera, and panels with university professor's events: the window displayed an impressive variety in both organisational structure and topic.



Figure 7: Oude Boteringstraat 38

The two interviewees' positionality may very well play into their differing experiences of youth engagement within the arts, as well as Joost clearly enjoying his time in his previous Broedplaats. The lack of youth engagement is deemed to be an issue that is only pervasive in Het Paleis, and not inherent to the Broedplaats structure.

Community empowerment

To determine whether all these previous experiences, community initiatives, and Broedplaats impacts have ultimately led to community empowerment, it first had to be established what the interviewees determined as community empowerment .

“If you want to write a creative policy, you first need to know what creatives think of the current policy, and how it needs to be changed. But also what audiences think of the art that is facilitated by current creative policy...

...I think asking questions, and listening, is how you empower communities. And asking people that are most affected by the policies that you're making.”

Gabriel

There is a clear separation between the perceptions of community empowerment. Gabriel's definition aligns itself far more with the definition presented in the literature. In the planning context, community empowerment is strongly linked with a bottom up structure, in which individuals have to a certain extent control of the policies that concern them (Eisen, 2016). This definition also lends itself to more inclusive ideals of community empowerment for creative individuals and non creative individuals.

For the other interviewees, empowerment lends itself far more to concepts of freedom, both in expression and access to space. But when questioned on whether their different forms of empowerment had been achieved, the answers also varied greatly.

“Pushing in young people. And facilitate young people with good ideas. Just give them cheap spaces. Just a space where they have full control of what they do with the space. Having freedom with your space. What is creativity? Doing whatever you want”

Joost

Whilst Gabriel noted that he did not feel sufficiently part of the community to determine whether they had been empowered, his experiences within the creative community of Ebbingekwartier appeared to display a high level of control and freedom of expression. According to his own definition, Joost had experienced community empowerment in The Big Building, but in Het Paleis, there was not a sufficient level of community for them to be empowered. His emphasis on having affordable spaces available for young individuals is very much in line with the fundamental principles of Broedplaatsen, and would therefore point towards Broedplaatsen being a crucial tool for empowerment in creative communities. Both Selene and Daan were unsure whether community empowerment was something attained through Broedplaatsen, but had varying attitudes regarding the next steps. Daan displayed little interest in becoming more involved with the community and policy, saying that whilst he had certain dreams of complete artistic freedom, he thought it was not possible in Holland and was content with the current status quo. Selene showed more motivation, speaking of her dreams of creating an open house in which members of the community could explore their creativity, and ideas of different community organisational structures to tackle the task of policy development with the Gemeente. This desire for open space contrasts her experiences in Broedplaatsen in which communities are far more shut off towards newcomers.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the impact of the Broedplaatsen policy produced by the Gemeente of Groningen on the Ebbingekwartier neighbourhood. This was done by examining the layers of the 'Upperground' and 'Middleground' conceptualised by Cohendent et al, (2010). At the Upperground level, Broedplaatsen have proven to be a double edged sword. Within the literature, Broedplaatsen showed little evidence of being economically beneficial, a fact that was reinforced by the interview with the planner. Despite this, the Gemeente has shown continued support for the programme, signalling that the motivations may not in fact be in line with Floridean neo-liberal stylee creative policies (Peck, 2011). The Gemeente would therefore be financing the Broedplaatsen due to their social benefits.

The Middleground analysis highlights the potential for Broedplaatsen to foster community empowerment through initiatives such as Bab Ad Daar. The narratives from interviewees underscore the importance of freedom and autonomy in creative spaces, suggesting that while Broedplaatsen facilitate community creation, it is imperative that they be more inclusive and less

formalised for genuine community empowerment. The dichotomy in the effectiveness of Broedplaatsen was also revealed through the interview with Joost, and contrasted by Gabriel's experience.

To enhance the effectiveness of Broedplaatsen, it is essential to consider the limitations identified in this research. Encouraging more youth engagement and ensuring that creative spaces remain affordable are crucial steps towards achieving this goal. The Gemeente must continue to regularly consult both artists and residents in the neighbourhoods of Groningen to ensure their needs are recognised in the new policy document.

This research may be taken as an initial stepping stone for further research of Broedplaatsen using the walking interview method. Broedplaatsen are present in every neighbourhood in Groningen, and therefore research of the wider area of Groningen will be deeply beneficial for the development of the new policy, as well as providing a space in which artists can provide feedback. A key limitation of this research is the failure to include residents of the neighbourhood. The impact of a Broedplaats could be highly beneficial or detrimental to their community, and therefore it is imperative that this group be included in further research.

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Appendix

Questions for walking interview with Artists

Opening Questions:

1. Can you describe your neighbourhood here in Ebbingekwartier? What makes it unique or special to you?
2. How would you define a broedplaats?
3. How long is your residency in the Broedplaats? Does this time feel sufficient for you?
4. Have you previously lived in another Broedplaats? How do your experiences differ?

Experiences in Broedplaatsen (tailored towards community type)

4. In what environments do you find yourself interacting with your community? Is it something that is formally organised?
5. Do you find the Broedplaatsen helps you to connect with other people in the creative community? How? (If no, in which other ways do you connect with people?)

Positive and negative experiences of Broedplaatsen (tailored towards effects of creative city policies)

7. How have Broedplaatsen personally affected you?
8. Do Broedplaatsen support artists?
9. Have you noticed any changes in the neighbourhood over the past few years? If so, what kind of changes? What do you think prompted these changes? Built environment, community
10. How is there a separation between this neighbourhood and the rest of the city? In what ways is it separate?
11. How have the new buildings around Ebbingekwartier affected you?
12. Do you think the artists in the neighbourhood impact the overall community in Ebbingekwartier? In what way?

Artists and empowerment (towards community empowerment)

13. What do you feel helps to empower artistic communities? Do you feel this is being done in Ebbingekwartier?

14. Would you like more control over cultural policies that concern you? What aspects would you like more control over?

15. Have you noticed any positive effects on community engagement or empowerment due to the presence of Broedplaatsen here in Ebbingekwartier?

Interview guide

Themes	Subjects	questions	Reasoning
Introduction	Introduction into the topic of broedplaats and Ebbingekwartier	1-3	These opening questions are meant to help interviewees to start considering their own personal experience in the neighbourhood in the context of Broedplaatsen and creativity. They place the interviewees' perception at the centre of importance.
Artist experiences	Focus of community types	4-6	These questions are meant to help determine what kind of community interviewees feel they are part of in the context of Broedplaatsen. They also allow for the artists to explore their experiences in this community type, and how it might differ to previous experiences. The questions provide a framework for further discussion depending on the interviewees experiences.
Artist experiences	Effects of creative city policies	7-12	These questions directly address the artist's experience of Broedplaatsen. Most questions link to outcomes of implementing creative city policies both negative and positive. Positive outcomes have been highlighted as supporting artists with affordable accommodation and promoting art production. Negative impacts have been highlighted as state-led gentrification, social stratification of creatives and non creatives and increase in rental pricing.
Artist empowerment	Community empowerment/ bottom up planning	13-15	These questions reflect on concepts in relation to community empowerment, which in a planning context is instrumentalised through bottom-up planning. These questions determine whether the residents are already content with the role they play in planning or whether they want more power, as well as

			linking whether they find there is a link between this topic and Broedplaatsen.
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Questions for the interview with the Planner

Introduction to Broedplaats

1. How would you define a Broedplaats?
2. What is your role in relation to Broedplaats?

Goals and strategies of Broedplaats

3. Can you provide an overview of the current objectives of the Broedplaatsen policy in Groningen?
4. What was the original motivation for the implementation of Broedplaatsen?
5. Who are Broedplaatsen tailored to?

Effects of creative city policies

6. How do Broedplaatsen help the local economy?
7. What are the intended effects of using the label of 'Groningen as a Creative and Resilient City'?
8. How are the successes and challenges of Broedplaatsen measured? Can you name some?

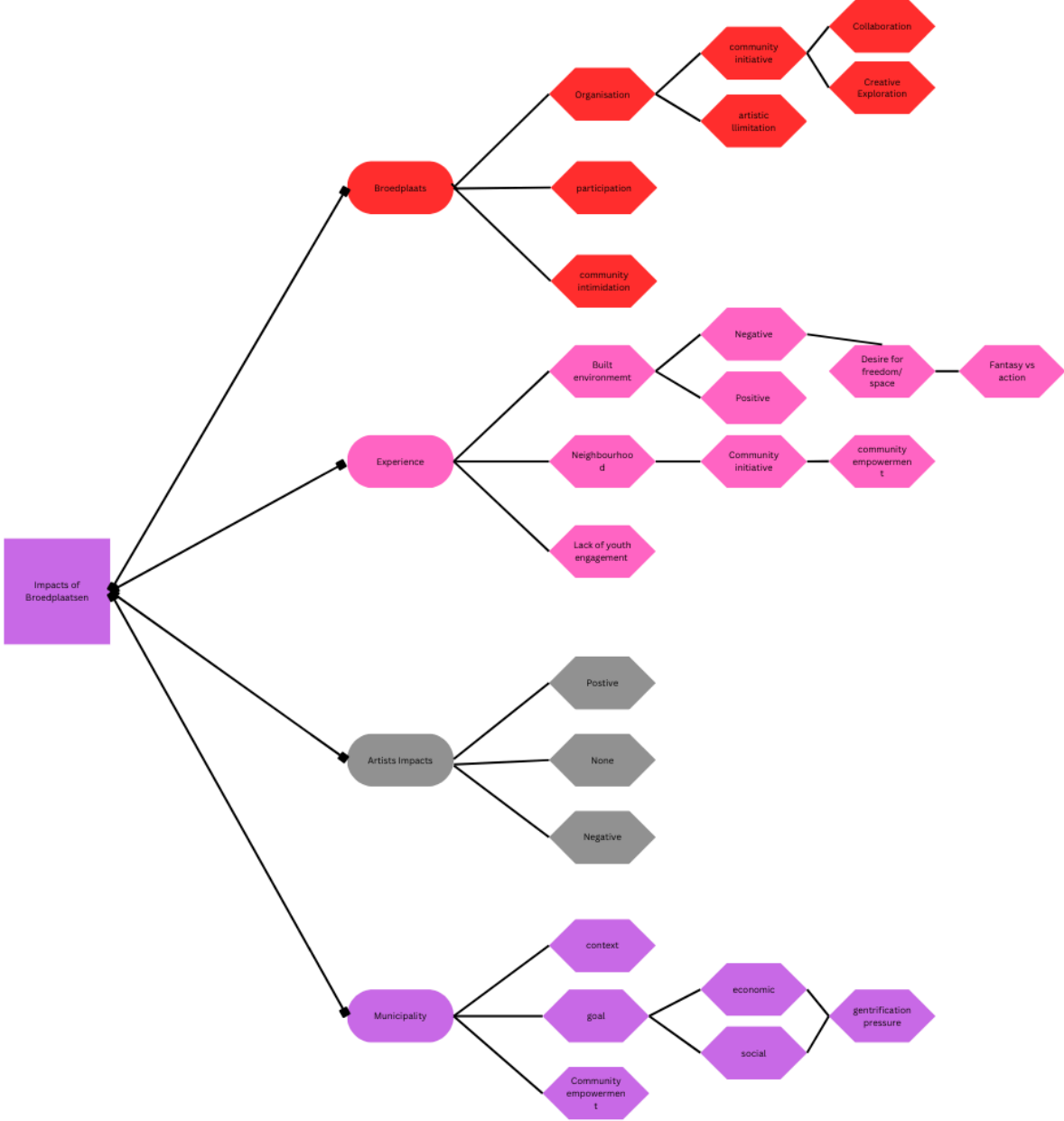
Community empowerment

9. How were the stakeholders, such as the local residents, artists, entrepreneurs and community organisations involved in the implementation of Broedplaatsen in Ebbingekwartier?
10. How often is the communication between the Gemeente and the Broedplaats residents?
11. How does it help the community in the neighbourhood?
12. How does it help the community amongst creative professionals?

Potential questions:

What strategies or measures does the municipality have in place to ensure that creative initiatives do not inadvertently promote social inequalities or displace existing communities?

Coding tree



Consent Form

Dear ...

Thank you for replying to my interview request.

I am a Human Geography and Planning student at RUG and I am currently conducting research on the impacts Broedplaatsen have on the artist community in Ebbingekwartier.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to take part in an hour long walking interview that will be recorded. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time, and are allowed to read over the transcripts to ensure what you wanted to say is conveyed properly. All sensitive personal data will not be used in the research, unless previously requested with consent given. All information will be deleted at the end of the research.

Please sign here if you consent:

Signature:

Date:

Contact:

Emilou Elmitt

Email: e.elmitt@student.rug.nl

Transcripts

Gabriel

Introductions

E: So, tell me why you chose the forum as your first landmark

G: So it's one of the first places I heard about here. I remember it was when I first moved here and in an instagram group chat with a bunch of first years and they were talking about meeting up somewhere, and this guy mentioned the forum, and I was like "sounds cool!"

E: So it's one of your first meeting places for you then?

G: Well we didn't actually meet there, but it was one of the first buildings that I heard of, that's in Groningen.

E: So it holds a significant relevance with your relationship to Groningen?

G: Yeah, I've always known about it. It also sticks out like a sore thumb, it's very noticeable, and now I have a view of it every night when I lay down in bed, so I associate the forum with home. Whenever I see the forum I know I'm next to home. But also we had some film screenings in the forum in my first year, and it's cool that they show movies that are artsy or old. I find that cool. It's also cheaper than other cinemas in the city.

E: Okay, so it's also a space for you to explore your creativity?

G: yeah so it's a cultural space and it's accessible, you don't have to pay to enter. There's a lot to do for free.

E: Okay, amazing! Can you tell me a little bit about your neighbourhood here in Ebbingekwartier?

G: What do you want me to describe?

E: the sense of community, are you close you close with your neighbours? Do you enjoy living here?

G: I would say I don't feel a sense of community with the locals, no. Especially as an international (student) living in a neighbourhood that's majority Dutch as far as I know...

E: Okay, So locals are the dutch you would say

G: Yes, and it's just, the neighbourhood itself doesn't necessarily feel like people need to try to connect. It kind of has that city vibe. People don't connect with their neighbours as much, because your friends are always around town so you don't really feel the need to create a sense of community with your neighbours.

E: Would you say you have a sense of community here (in Groningen) that's not necessarily to do with your neighbourhood?

G: Uhhh, yeah. Since it is so close to the city centre, the places I meet up with friends, and the general daily activities I do takes part in a pretty small radius. I walk everywhere, so I guess in that sense there is a sense of community. If I describe to people where I live, they all know where it is.

E: Okay so there is a sense of community, just not confined to your neighbourhood.

G: Exactly, it's more like where I live stimulates the community around me. I'm not experiencing new forms of community because of where I live necessarily

E: Have you ever heard of the term broedplaats or breeding place?

G: No I haven't

E: And just to be clear, you work in Simplon, which is in Ebbingekwartier

G: Yeah, it's unpaid, and I get two shifts a month maximum

E: And do you have a vague understanding of the Groningen cultural policy?

G: I can make some educated guesses, but not specifically what it says.

E: Okay no that's fine

G: especially because they're all in Dutch anyways

E: Haha Yes of course!

E: So we've arrived at your second location, tell me a bit about it!

G: So this was the bar (Souffleur) that I would always go to in first year because a Dutch friend of mine's parents told him about it. It's central, but not many people know about it so it's usually not very busy. It's mostly older folks, but nice older folks. If you go to the Zolder (another bar) on a Tuesday (quiet night) it's not very wholesome, it can sometimes be a bit bleak.

E: What makes you feel this way? Do you feel out of place?

G: Yeah. My friend told me that a Dutch lady at Zolder kept on coming up on him and trying to, being weird, making sexual advances, and stuff like that. This was two years ago so maybe it's changed, but in general Zolder has a bit of a grimier vibe if it's not a busy evening. But the Souffleur is usually quite wholesome. I mean you get your fair share of drunk old people, but they all know each other so it's usually wholesome and nice. So I associate the bar with going with friends in my first year (of university). I don't go so much nowadays, but it's close to where I live now so it has a physical and emotional closeness.

E: Have you ever heard of the the companies Nite or Club Guy and Roni (Companies in the Broedplaatsen)

G: Yes I have

E: Okay and do you have any relationship with them, in terms of Simplon and them collaborating? Have you heard of that before?

G: No I haven't

E: Okay

G: What I know about them is that they were mentioned in a course I was taking this past block about organising and communicating in the arts, and there's also a girl in my course who did her internship there and I think still sort of works there? I'm not so sure that they collaborate with Simplon. As far as what I understand, Nite specialises in diversifying types of experiences, so they have different components to it as well. Nite itself is a stage and venue area, so I don't think they would feel the need to collaborate with Simplon. But it could be a good move.

E: I guess that's up to them! So do you feel Nite connects to the creative community, as you said they were offering internships there?

G: I think with Nite, they do mostly performance and theatre stuff so it tends to be one of the less popular mediums and forms of art. People don't attend plays as much as they attend music concerts, so I think that might have to do with it. But some people in my class had already heard of Nite. I'm pretty sure recently they went through a rebrand, so that might have to do with it as well. But I do know I had noticed their building in the Ebbingekwartier, and I remember always passing by it and being curious. I knew it was art related and thought it looked cool. Their website is really good. I wouldn't say they are super ingrained. Most of my circle is internationals, and if I were to guess I would say that a good amount of them are in Dutch,

especially because usually to get subsidies you have to forefront Dutch art here, so that might play into why Nite isn't super ingrained with everybody, but I would definitely say that people know that they're there.

E: So something that keeps on coming up is that there is a different experience between a Dutch individual and an International individual. Do you think this affects the way that people create art and the way they have access to create art?

G: Yes, to a certain extent. When it comes to collaborative art practices, most people here are Dutch. For artistic collaboration to happen, it's usually with people in similar circles. Friends of friends. You don't really cold email or cold call people to make art with them. It's usually people who you already know. Since circles tend to form here largely around nationality, as in dutchies are usually friends with dutchies and internationals are usually friends with internationals, I would say there's still intermingling and exceptions, which is important, but mostly circles stay the same. So it does limit it. But also if an international wants to participate and consume in terms of art, they can. It's not a barrier, per se, but it is a factor. It affects the people you meet. And you can tell with some places, like in Simplon. The Simplon people always make an effort to be inclusive. There's a good amount of Dutch acts that play in Simplon when I'm working there. As a sound tech, I'm never working alone, there is always another sound tech there that's more experienced than me who's also working there. So far they have all been dutch, and they've been great and they all speak really good english and they speak english with me. From the get go, even when I applied, the head technician made it very clear that there were already a bunch of internationals who worked there and that it was an international friendly place. But, then you have to add the factor of the acts, so if I'm working a shift and the band is dutch and my technician boss who is also there is dutch, my boss will usually make an effort to speak english. When he introduces me he'll be sure to mention that I don't speak dutch, so the artists will usually speak english. But usually, not always, but usually what ends up happening is when they need more clear communication, speedy communication, they'll start speaking in Dutch. Which I understand, it makes sense, but from then on there is a form of exclusion where I don't know what they're talking about. I can make guesses, I have a limited understanding of Dutch so it's not like I'm completely in the dark, but there is a form of exclusion.

E: What environments would you say you meet up with your community?

G: So how's it organised? I mean with simplon it's just the shifts you're working. Because when I'm working a shift, I'm working there for like 9 hours. It's not all work, there's a concert that you have to sit through as well, so usually there's plenty of time to talk about things there. And there's little rituals we have, like at the end of the show, this is my favourite part, we're allowed to get free beers from the bar and play our music through the PA system whilst slowly cleaning up the stage. And then it's nice because you can bond over music and which music you like and you get to hear the music you like on a really good sound system. Simplon also holds two or three times a year they have a tech meeting where all the light and sound techs are invited to a meeting. In the books it's a one hour meeting, where we talk about stuff, but there's also snacks and we get to talk about stuff we're into. It's done in a few ways as well to be fair. In Simplon you can go to as many shows as you want for free, well I mean not all shows, but most of the shows. And then oftentimes when I'm working a shift, there'll be sound techs who come to see the show even though they aren't working a shift. They'll come and talk, they'll ask me how the shift went. But that's just Simplon, do you want to talk about my other communities?

E: Go for it!

G: So the next one would be with class, because in my uni course we have to organise a music festival. So that in itself is a collective act of artistic creation. Literally from the ground up, zero budget, we're creating a music festival. That I would say is a lot more autonomous. I mean with Simplon it's sort of autonomous, you put down your availability to volunteer, but you are a bit more supervised. Whereas with the music festival, we have two teachers for the course and their whole schtick is that they don't help us. We're meant to do this on our own, that's the whole point. It's much more autonomous, we're split into groups and we have to delegate tasks which don't have a clear team assigned to them, so it's much more work based. There's much less discourse around things that we enjoy, like we all have to have the same picture in mind. I guess it's less fun, but more fulfilling.

And then for the last one I would say most of my good friends I met in my university programme, and we all study arts so we're all artistically inclined and enjoy the arts. A good amount of what we talk about is movies and music. We go see movies together and we go to concerts and raves together. So I guess with my friends it's more of a consumption relationship with arts and discussion. It's very free, there's no structure. We put each other onto new movies and music and stuff. It's more what regular people do.

E: So we're at our third location here, at simplon. I mean we've already talked about what you do here at simplon, but can you tell me why you chose this location?

G: Well because yeah, I volunteer here pretty often. I would say it's my favourite thing to do that's productive. I get to do really cool stuff, I help put on the show. I learn a lot. It's often pretty stressful, the good shifts are usually pretty stressful, and the bad shifts are horrible but at least I learn something from them. Simplon was really easy to get into and started working there. There's actually a lot more perks than I realised. I was in it for the experience, because getting experience in event production and sound production is really tough, let alone getting paid experience. It's nice I get to drink as much as I want (non-alcoholic) during the shift, I get a free meal every shift as well. So I'm well tended to. It's stressful because there's people coming to watch the show and you're the one in charge of making it a good show. It's a lot of responsibility. Event production is usually quite a tight schedule, and working with artists is awful because they're always late. Not always. But a lot of them act on their own whims and impulses. It's always a fulfilling day in Simplon, because I know I did a lot.

E: So now we're going to move a little bit more onto the topic of Ebbingekwartier. First of all, how long have you lived here?

G: So I moved in since July of 2023

E: And have you noticed any changes in the neighbourhood recently? It can be in the built environment, or any social changes?

G: Funny you mention that. So it all started a few months back with the dumpster on the street. So they moved the dumpsters, in front of where I live. They put in these two huge recycling dumpsters. They were right in front of the shop that I live on top of. And then after two weeks, the dumpsters were gone, which was weird because there had been construction work on the street. But then after two weeks, the dumpsters were back. We didn't know why they moved. And then the second thing that happened, the streets running next to the forum got completely blocked off. We knew something was going to happen. So now for the past two months I've been woken up every morning by construction work. The construction is affecting accessibility,

there's only one sidewalk open. It's quite a hassle. And who know's why they're doing it? When do you ever know why they're doing it?. Vrijdag (artistic organisation) used to be there, and so now they're gone and it's a bummer. The street used to be nice and simple and accessible and now it is loud and unpleasant.

E;How would you say the presence of artists impact the community in the neighbourhood, if at all?

G:Let me think about it for the sec. There's one funny thing I can say. One of my neighbours is a drummer. Usually not loud enough to bother me. It makes me happy because it's nice to know I have a neighbour who drums. It sounds like they play pretty decently so it's totally enjoyable. Other than that, not much. You could tell me there was no artists in the neighbourhood and I would say, "well there's one drummer!", but otherwise no.

E: Right, we've arrived at your fourth location, Nieuwkerk, so tell me why you chose this landmark?

G; So Nieuwkerk is a very pretty church that I noticed when I first moved here when I was wandering around. And I always wanted to go inside. I have yet to go inside but one day before I move away. I remember during my first year I was dating someone at the social hub (Building close by) , and from the window in her kitchen, you could see the top of the church. I also picked it because the surrounding grass with a park area is a place where I spent a bit of time with friends. Whether it was last year with a friend after class just drinking some beers and chatting, and last summer to play frisbee with my friends. Nothing to do with the inside space. It's always way less busy than Noorderplantsoen (local park) and it has a cool graffiti of the zaza wizard that we can see from the park. So the street art of the surrounding has shaped my experience of this landmark.

E; So this is more of a theoretical question. What do you feel empowers communities?

G; What do you mean by empower?

E: Good question, so in the case of planning, it's got a lot to do with bottom up planning. The citizens are able to control certain policies to a certain extent

G; So giving people agency over the policies that affect them? So from my perspective it is a bit tough because I've only been living here, I mean I guess it doesn't have to be specific to here? Okay so in general there is a connection between private cultural institutions, subsidised cultural institutions and policy makers. If you want to write a creative policy, you first need to know what creatives think of the current policy, and how it needs to be changed. But also what audiences think of the art that is facilitated by current creative policy. I think to know that is to go to the source of where they experience art. So venues and creative hubs and collectives and things like that.I think asking questions, and listening, is how you empower communities. And asking people that are most affected by the policies that you're making.

E; And would you say that's something that is done in Groningen?

G: So I've only been living here for two and half years, and in my neighbourhood for less than a year, so I'm not very ingrained in the local community. And because I don't speak Dutch I don't have access to local information as much as a Dutch person. So it's hard for me to say. What I will say is that Groningen is a small town, so people know people. I know that in the university some of my lecturers know people or are spouses of people that are in policy making and politics. So I do think there's already connections and bridges between cultural organisers and

policy makers. Now if that connection extends down to actual audience members, I'm not so sure. I don't know. My pessimistic side might say not as much as it should be.

E: Lets talk about our final location

G: it's going to be OBS 32? I think 32? It is the arts faculty. So it's a place that I picked because it was my first music lecture that took place in the big room there. It is a cool building. It has a book sharing space. It's a cool space, the lecture hall is nice and it has a good sound system. Some of my favourite courses have been here. It has all the offices for my lecturers.

On the windows of the lecture halls (giving out onto the street) you can see they have posters for Simplon, Vera, and for smaller student-led events and academic events, and USVA.

E: So you've been talking about the community within the university. Do you feel the university helps you with creating connections with private cultural organisations?

G: So the university can help, but you have to go out of your way to get that help, which I have not done. It helps that you can pick the career minor, which is a good minor to gain connections. I've heard things about it that would suggest that it's not a good minor in other aspects. You can just ask lecturers for help and connections, but otherwise, no.

I was able to get a tour of Vera, but that was purely because one of my lecturers was really well connected in the local music scene, and he thought it would be helpful for us, but it wasn't something overseen by the university. He doesn't represent the university.

E; is there anything else you want to add?

G; hmm let me think. One thing I will say that is nice about Groningen, and I have no idea if policy is at play for this, it might just be the geography. I think due to the city's size and that there's two universities, it feels like you're never more than two degrees of separation from someone. So if you have a compelling idea for a festival or an event, it's usually pretty easy to get it started and off the ground. People here are pretty enthusiastic and stimulate the arts, people are open to the arts and accepting. There's a prominent squatting scene here, which is really accepting and really important for the local cultural scene. Those places create a lot of resources for people to tap into if they want to put on an artistic event, so yeah. That's all I have to say.

Selene

Introductions

E; Just to clarify, do you live in the Ebbingekwartier? Are you aware of what it is?

S: I do not live exactly there, I live in hortusbuurt, and we share the same book about the neighbourhoods. It's called, koop de furn. It's Groningse which means 'come on'. It's like a Dutch thing to say, 'you can do it'. And they share the same book, so all the information about the neighbourhood I can also read. So I am familiar with it.

E: So could you describe to me a little bit the neighbourhood?

S: It's actually the Oostersingel part of the neighbourhood as well? Like the UMCG part?

E: Yes, so Oostersingel to Boterdiep and everything in between

S: Oh okay well my partner lives there, and I work there of course, so describe my neighbourhood or the Ebbingekwartier?

E: You can do both!

S: Wow, describe my own neighbourhood. So this is Noorderplantsoen, this is actually part of the neighbourhood. It's amazing having the park here. I always said, because I study in Leeuwarden, that I will move to Leeuwarden, except if I somehow get a studio close to Noorderplantsoen. So I got it, for some reason, during covid. I was 23rd on the list and I thought I would never get it, but everyone else rejected the room for some reason, so I did get it.

E: That's a success story

S: It's a bit of a rich neighbourhood, the houses do not necessarily look rich but because of the (housing) crisis and everything. But also it's a very popular neighbourhood. I know my parents wanted to move to the area, but they couldn't find a place. And they're quite okay with their money. So that was quite a surprise.

E: Do you find that contrasts to Ebbingekwartier? Because the houses are a lot newer there?

S: Yeah I think visually, I do think this (Hortusbuurt) is a lot older houses, but I think it's still for rich people. But I think the whole city is sometimes. I do particularly think of these neighbourhoods as well.

E: So it's older here, visually nice to see.

S: yeah it's especially nice to see, I love the architecture in my neighbourhood, not necessarily as much as the Ebbingekwartier, but that's because I'm picky (laughs). But objectively it's beautiful, I think.

E: And would you say there's a sense of community in your neighbourhood?

S: I'd think so. There's some kind of sense of community in a way, that, for example I get this booklet thing, that people work on really well. And there these restaurantish bars in the neighbourhood that are very much local. Especially De Minaar, a lot of local people come. I also think Lambeek, a lot of people from the neighbourhood come there. But it's not necessarily a community in that I would have a chat with someone on the streets.

E: How about your neighbours, do you know them?

S: I don't really know them. I live in this studio apartment building where there are loads of studios, and there's no group chat or facebook page where you can connect with each other. I do have this one amazing neighbour that's always open for a chat, which is nice. He's a bit older as well. I remember when I first came to live there, he was always like "Welcome, are you new here?" and I was just kind of like woah, what is this introduction? "And you're only like 2 mins by bike to the city", and I was like I know the city but thank you! It was actually very nice.

E: And just to confirm Broedplaats is not something you've heard of?

S: No, not at all actually.

E: Okay, no worries!

S: Is this like an actual thing?

E: It is! (explaining what a Broedplaats is)

E: So you've worked in Nite, have you worked in any other sort of creative companies?

S: I don't think so, no

E: I mean, for context, you are a student, so that probably takes up a lot of your time

S: I mean I did work at the Theatre student group in Groningen as a teacher. It is quite community based as well because it's a student organisation.

E: What environments do you find yourself interacting with your community?

S: So what I'm drawn to is something with actual space for the community. So that you can actually go there and sit and have a chat, and it's not something like "We open our doors only

on a wednesday between 6 and 8" and what you can create there is restricted. It's a space where I can just go whenever I want to. In an artistic point of view where I can paint, or chat, or create a performance or I can just sit and have a coffee. So an actual open space I think.

E: Would it be a space where it is focused on predominantly people from theatre? Or would it be a more general creative collective?

S: I think generally the creative collective? My dream is to eventually open a house myself one day, with a big space where you can do performances or you can invite bands or do an installation. So I would love to break the boundaries of the disciplines that you work in. But that is my vision of life, but I would love that for a community actually. But it doesn't necessarily have to be only creative people, everyone should be welcome and open.

E: So a creative person for you isn't necessarily someone who produces a lot of art?

S: No definitely not. And you should definitely avoid that. What I noticed before with the community that we created at Nite, is that people are actually really scared to come, because they think that it's not for me, or am I the right target group? And what i'm really struggling with is how are you communicating, to the whole world, that they are the target group? But I think it's also important with the community that you stay away from the idea that ' you need to have a certain background".

E: Would you say that working at Nite has helped you to connect with other people in your field, more so than in other spaces?

S: Yes. I do think so, because it's the centre of theatre in Groningen I think. Maybe not the centre, but it's just super big, so everyone who works in the theatre field in Groningen wants to collaborate. I mean that would be my ideal world. But I do think some people are a bit intimidated, because it's funded by the government. So that's very different from being in a group that has to get their money themselves, but that's a different issue for them.

E: So the funding from the government almost makes it a bit more serious?

S: yeah, and there's just a lot of money, so they can create these big pieces as well. That is my opinion, I don't think everyone there would agree, but I just think that money gives you a lot of freedom. At the same time you can create amazing and beautiful art without, but I do think there's a power position. Even if they don't want it, it's just what it is.

E: So the money from the government gives you a certain amount of freedom, would you say it also puts some restraint on the creativity?

S: Yeah, definitely. You get this money because you have purposes to fulfil. So for example, this community we created around Nite, the community which is not really in the plan of the company, but we just believe that what we create there should be shared, with people from Groningen, or for people outside of Groningen who travel. We have a very big dance community, but we also have the theatre side, so that's where it comes from. I work at the education department, and it's 80% focused on youngsters, and schools and creating work for schools. And it has to be, because of the agreement that we get this money and we tackle the responsibility of bringing the art to the youth. It's really hard to enter the theatre when you're young. The buildings are fairly overwhelming. It's expensive, it's big, and I come from a background where there wasn't necessarily a lot of money, and you wouldnt go to these places, so you feel out of place a bit.

E: You were saying you lived in your house since Covid, so you've been here for a while, have you noticed any changes in the neighbourhood over this time?

S: There have been a lot of buildings that have popped up, or at least finished now. Especially at the Dot. I remember when I started living here and I went to cycle to go see my partner, there was always construction, so it was for the first time last week where I didn't have to get off my bike. The buildings look very new, and the streets, the bus stop (UMCG Noord), it all changed. The buildings I'm not super familiar with, and the people? Hmm. When they renovated that building and now only students are living there (Student Hotel) and my partner has been living in the neighbourhood for years and he said when he was 18 there and would throw a party, a lot of people would complain because they had kids that needed sleep. Now there's not really families there anymore. And now the houses are taken over by Vindicat (fraternity) or other students. Yeah there are a lot of students, more than back in the day. Maybe because I noticed this because I became a student myself during these years.

E: Would you say there's a separation between Ebbingekwartier and the rest of the city?

S: I think it's pretty in line actually. It feels like it's still part of the centre, even though I know it's not. I think because there's so many students living there, it's a completely different world from the neighbourhood I live in. Here (her neighbourhood) there's a lot more yuppies, you know the richer people, sorry people with money, downgrading everyone (laughs). Also a lot of older people. A few students, but not many, everyone else is always complaining about them.

And I live in a student flat, but it's very calm there, it's very different from my partner's place where there's always a party somewhere. We have a central courtyard, and for me it's almost always quiet, whereas at my partner's place there's often noise.

E: Would you say that the artists in Ebbingekwartier have an impact on the neighbourhood? You seem to say that students have more of an impact?

S: I don't know actually. Where you have Nite, that is really student focused, but the other side? I think it's also rich people again, more expensive houses. Some of them remind me of American houses. So I do think there are very different parts of the neighbourhood.

E: What do you feel helps to empower artistic communities?

S: I think actually the most important is open space

E: Would you say free space? Somewhere here you don't have to pay money to be there?

S: Definitely. A creative free space. You can go in there even if you don't want to be creative. Maybe you pay something monthly if it's impossible, but not too much money. Something like a gym. I think that would be cool.

E: What's your inspiration for this space?

S: It's mostly personal. I have been thinking about this before I went to Minerva (Art school) but the school is just open for students. Even when the teachers leave the students can stay, and sometimes it's open on a saturday, sometimes it's open late. In the arts, and performing arts, you cannot really go home and create a theatre piece, you need a theatre space.

E; Would you like more control over cultural policies that concern you?

S: I think that would be nice. I was thinking about the community at Nite. the people who are really involved in the community, they have a board who take a bit more responsibility, rather than just one person taking responsibility. People can work together to make important decisions, such as financial decisions. It could be a deep democracy, in that we wonder how we can give a voice to people who aren't able to speak, but have a say. The board can send updates or notify of discussions.

E; Have you noticed that the setting up of the Broedplaats has had a positive effect on the community?

S:I do think so, because I have worked in the theatre field in Groningen for a while, but mostly with students. I do notice there was always a lot of distance between everything, and it's more together now. For example, I work with the Noorderlingen on the community, and they're just around the corner. So sometimes I have a question and they say 'well just come over!' So for now, I've been eating there or chatting with people, so I can just walk in. I would normally never do this unless I was invited, so invitation is very important. But it's not optimal in a way, I feel like I'm the only one who does this. Of course some people in the company do it as well, but I think I'm the one who does it the most. My classmates work next door, so if I want to work on my essays, I can just walk over there and work in their space, which is nice. But what I did really notice is that for me working there, it is really convenient, but I still feel like if they do not invite me, I will definitely not invite myself. If you're not doing theatre, it's very much 'what the fuck are you doing here?'. They say everyone is welcome, but I don't think it is. They're working on it, but more focus on youngsters. I'm a creator myself, I have my own collective, and the hardest thing in Groningen is that no one opens their doors for you to work there. Which is so weird, because in Leeuwarden where I study, we have not as good connections but if people have space they will always invite us. But here it's super closed off.

E; would you say that's a culture difference? Or maybe because Leeuwarden is smaller?

S:It's good to think about, because I never really think about the problem, I just hate the problem. I do think people should open up their perspective more. We are now doing some work at the Grand theatre, so they opened up their spaces for us, but it was only after they saw one of our performances and thought it was good enough. I feel like you have to prove yourself, which is sad because we're very disciplined and luckily we have Leeuwarden to travel to, which is not sustainable, but we all live here and we have no open space here. A long time ago I had a meeting with the education makers to have a discussion about what needs to be done to create a welcoming feeling. I said people must open their doors, but everybody said no. The buildings just remain empty after 6pm instead of being used, and we wouldn't even create a noise nuisance whilst rehearsing.

E: I wanted to circle back to the fact you have your own collective, can you tell me about it?

S; I have my own collective called 'de dwaas', which translates to the fool (taro card). It stands for new beginnings, and creativity and beginning and end, whilst being open and foolish, and that's what we stand for. Because when we were studying we noticed there wasn't a lot of artistic freedom and possibilities to express ourselves. We're all students, and we're all graduating now. We're very motivated, we're creating a piece that is going to perform soon. There's three phases.

E: I also want to touch on the fact that you want to create connections with the audience?

S: I think it's already big for an audience, because our audiences usually are not very experimental theatre goers, they love traditional theatre. So we're starting the performance by having them join us on the dance floor and teach them some moves and dance together. We believe that is something comforting, by getting rid of the expectation as a viewer, and also letting go of shame and awkwardness. I think they are very much part of needing comfort or not asking for comfort, is because you feel ashamed or that your problem isn't good enough, or bad enough. We hope to find some elements in the performance that they connect with, related to

our stories. It's kind of autobiographic, it based on our own experiences. We don't zoom into specific things that we need comfort for, but more that we need comfort more in general, and how do you give and receive comfort?

E: Do you think this will help to encourage a wider audience to come and watch theatre?

S: I hope so! I do know that a lot of people don't go to the theatre because they think the story is not going to be about them or because it's boring, or they can't afford it or they're intimidated. I don't think this will help with the intimidation, because it's maybe even more intimidating? But I do think the story is about them, it could be a way to do theatre in the future. And it's also cheap, which helps. I've also learnt to accept that performance and theatre is not for everyone, which people in my study don't want to acknowledge. I mean yes you are welcome, it is for everyone, but it's okay if you don't enjoy it. We hope we manage to break the rules with these performances, but it is a bit scary. We have these very strict rules in theatre, which is nice because no one is going to scream at you, or throw a tomato, but I wish we could give a different role to the audience. Maybe through learning from other disciplines.

E; So I've asked all the questions I wanted to ask, is there anything you'd like to add?

S: There's something I'd like to share. We just started building a theatre community, and what I've noticed is that there are not a lot of people showing up, only people familiar with the building, so no inexperienced people, or people from the neighbourhood. I'm curious why it's like that. You can create something, but how do you communicate it to the target group?

Joost

Introductions

E: Could you describe Ebbingekwartier for me?

J: I live at Ebbingedwinger, it has a lot of retired people. So yeah it's really a quiet place close to the city centre. It's quite beautiful as well, not a lot of people know about it, but if you get in it's a beautiful garden and it's really quiet. And the people who live there want it to stay quiet so they are scared that there are big house parties in the apartments. Sometimes there are (some parties) because there are a few students, but they get told off very quickly. They have meetings where they talk about the rules and how they can enforce them.

E: Do you attend these meetings?

J: No, because I am a renter. My landlord does, but not me. I don't want to.

E: Can you define Broedplaats for me?

J: Before I started at another Broedplaats, 'The Big Building', which was for me really a Broedplaats. It was beyond the station, now it's gone because they've been rebuilding the station. But that was really a broedplaats because it was an old building and there was really a gathering of start ups. There is a startup that is now really quite big now from there. It was really a meeting place where mostly creative people can meet up as creative entrepreneurs and really start. A place where you start your career. So I think that's really a good thing, but that's a big difference for me between The Big Building and Het Paleis. The Big Building was really free and there were parties and meet ups. People talked with each other and networked and collaborated. And now I'm here in Het Paleis. It's a really nice building, but it's not so active. There are a lot of older creative entrepreneurs. We are 4 photographers in the knock, and

there's illustrators, painters and others in the creative scene. And they collaborate a lot, but for the rest of the people and companies kind of live on their own island, it's not really collaborating. There are a lot of places where people don't come so much. There are so many creative people. There's a company in Het Paleis that started in Groningen but also now in Brussels and Rotterdam, so now they are not really in Het Paleis anymore because the company is so big. It's a pity because it's such a good environment for startups to share knowledge and everything. For me it's not really a broedplaats, there's not enough networking and community.

E; how long was your residency in The Big Building, and this one now?

J; The other one was 4 years, this one I've been at for 5 years.

E: And do you feel like you're given enough time in the broedplaats?

J: Yes, a lot of time. I work there 3 days a week

E; Is Het Paleis somewhere you can live as well as work?

J: Yes, and there's also a hostel. There's a coffee company. It's like the ideal working and living place. It's so beautiful. But as I said, people are in their own bubble. Maybe because of all the empty spaces. If you think about Groningen, everyone goes and gets drinks, and Het Paleis is a little bit boring.

E: Is there anything that can be done to encourage the community there?

J: Yeah for sure! Fill the empty places. Give it to younger creatives. You should be there at least 2 days a week, as a rule. Otherwise it's hard to arrange this with people. I think if you look at a broedplaats, Het Paleis ticks all the boxes. The people are interesting, entrepreneurs. You have a wide scale of kinds of creatives. Some entrepreneurs are there, but they stay in the office. Maybe there should be some meetups or more openness to each other. Sometimes I go for coffee with some other offices, but that's it, just a coffee and nothing else.

E; So The Big Building helped you to connect with other people than at Het Paleis?

J; Yes, definitely more. Het paleis really needs to push more. I think they are a little bit lazy or something. I think people who live there talk with each other more. They hang out more than the people who work there.

E: Have you noticed any changes in Ebbingekwartier recently?

J: yeah, there's the stadstrand, the city beach. That's a big change. A lot of neighbours, who live by the beach, are not really happy. In 30 40 degree weather, people hang there all night. A lot of vandalism, sometimes fights, people dealing drugs. So that's not a positive effect on the neighbourhood. But Het Paleis has an open day, but many retired people come. I think young people sometimes, but mostly retired people. Because the Ebbingekwartier has a lot of families, or retired people.

E; Are there ways to engage younger people?

J: Yeah for sure. I think what they did with the knock was a good thing. But I think in general Het Paleis needs to be a space for young creatives. I don't know how to push this, but there must be a way. But they are doing this with the old tobacco factory by the station, they want a new broedplaats there, but more expensive. But if there's no collaboration and hanging out together, is it really a broedplaats? I found my network in The Big Building. But if you look around in Copenhagen and Berlin you see a lot of really good broedplaats. They come together with nice restaurants and skateparks and bouldering halls. A new form of working and sporting and eating and coming together. But you have suiker terrein, but not really about working you know.

E: Would you say Het Paleis has a positive impact on Ebbingekwartier?

J: Yeah I don't know. It doesn't really affect the atmosphere. Maybe 5% or something. There's not much interaction between the community and the broedplaats. And that's really a pity actually, because my wife and daughter live in Helpman. And there's an ex squat building. And there you have open houses and a cinema and you can have a beer there, it's way more open there. The old hospital. Helpman is a bit snobby, but you see all the alternative people walking around and I think that's a good mix. It means you don't live only in your snobby bubble, but you see people with dreadlocks.

E: Would you say there's a separation between Ebbingekwartier and the rest of the city?

J: I think it's a bit of a bubble yeah. What I see around, a lot of people who want to rest. Because they are retired. They want their own space and they want to sit in their garden and read their newspaper. But that's just on my street. In Ebbingekwartier you have young families. And they work a lot, so then you don't have time to socialise with your neighbours. I think that's a wider problem in every big city. You see young urban professionals, they work, and then they spend time with their children, and then that's it, the day is over.

E; Do you talk with your neighbours?

J; Not really, only with my neighbour. I watch football with him, he's a professor in maths, he's also from England. So I hang out with him, and sometimes small talk with some other people.

E: What do you think is the best way to empower artistic communities?

J: Pushing in young people. And facilitate young people with good ideas. Just give them cheap spaces. But if you see our place, it's quite messy. It's a little bit of a student atmosphere, so maybe that's a negative thing. There is a lot of talent in de knock, so that's what you get back. You give a boost to young talent. The combination with food, sports and young creatives is a good combination.

E: Would you say Groningen in general is a good space for young creatives?

J: Yeah it is, not really through the broedplaatsen. More the nightlife, Suiker Terrein has a lot of nightlife and sports. I think that's a beautiful example for a broedplaats. A place for new ideas.

E: Would you say the built environment affects your creativity?

J: No it doesn't affect me. I would like more collaboration and hangouts. There are some drinks, but they're not exciting. They're quite boring actually. Sorry to say but a lot of boomers. Nothing bad about boomers, but they leave at 5 o'clock, compared to The Big Building where there was a club.

E: Would you like it if you had more control over the cultural policies that concern you?

J: Yeah for sure. To make it a better environment for young creatives. I think there are a lot of ideas, but not enough facilities, so cheap spaces. Cheap spaces sounds cheap. What the government does in Berlin, where they give society old industrial spaces, and society can decide what they do with it. So you have a club nightlife and a creative space culture. I don't know, you don't have to give them much, just a space where they have full control of what they do with the space. Having freedom with your space. What is creativity? Doing whatever you want.

Daan

E: So just to get things straight, you work at machinefabriek?

D: Yeah so I work at Nite, and their building is in the machinefabriek, which literally translates to machine factory.

E: Okay and what's your role there?

D: I'm an actor

E; And you say you also worked with Baab Ad Daar?

D: Yeah Bab Ad Daar! So I've been acting for 20 years now and I felt curious to do some directing. Part of Nite is Bab Ad Daar. And this is an initiative for refugees or former refugees that got their residency approved. With every performance we create with Nite, for the big venues, they have their own performance on the same theme as the big one . Their performance travels ahead to a few cities to where the big one comes after, to try to get a new audience. To invite them to come to the theatre since this isn't a group that finds their way easily to the theatre. So they get a free ticket to this Bab Ad Daar show and this is a small step because they are familiar with the people on stage. And then after they get a free ticket for the big performance which then comes two or three weeks after.

E: Okay, so it's kind of an introduction to the (performance) topic

D: Yes, but it's mainly an attempt to give these people... like the last group that I directed, they had just arrived in Holland, a lot of Syrian people, so they're full of trauma I must say. So it's more a way of having a good time and finding shape and form to talk about what happened and give it a positive spin. So this is in my opinion the main goal to get them outside these azc , which I must say are quite numbing places and have a good time.

E: What languages do you work in then if most of them are coming from Syria?

D: They mostly speak Arabic, and there's always one or two of them that speak English, so they interpret most of it. It's a lot of work though, it takes a lot of time because everything needs to be said twice. And there's a few that speak Dutch because they've been here for 5 or 6 years and did all the courses and stuff.

E: Could you describe the neighbourhood in Ebbingekwartier and the experience you've had there? Because I think I'm right in assuming you don't live in Groningen?

D: I live there when I work there. So normally I work project based. So we rehearse on a performance for like 2 months, and then I live in an apartment in Groningen, and then when we tour Holland I live in my house in Amsterdam, because it's more central. So it's more 50/50 that I live in Groningen. Yeah the Ebbingekwartier, yes I didn't even know it was called this. So it's this whole former factory area?

E: Yes exactly

D: With all the old beautiful buildings and the building with the white ummm

E: The big ball

D: yes exactly haha, this is part of it too?

E: correct

D: and the whole new place where people live is also part of it?

E: yeah exactly. So it's about from the dot (The big white ball) down to about the bottom of UMCG. It's in between UMCG and Boterdiep.

D: Yes, yes, yes I get it. And then your question is what were my experiences in the neighbourhood?

E; yes

D: What I like about the specific place that I work is the history of it. To create theatre it's always better to work in a building that has a history, and that has an atmosphere that's more inspiring than the new buildings I would say. Although they did a great job in creating these new universal spaces, so it's umm what is it called again? The steeg? And the noordelinger. These are all other theatre organisations that now share this new building. I think they did a great job in architecture and this is what I like about it too. It just looks nice, it's a friendly environment to work in, and I would say for theatre that just works. This is the main thing I would say. It's a pleasure to bike there and know that this is where you can create. Next to that it's a great location close to the centre. So when we're done we drink a beer in De Toeter, continue talking on the themes you work on outside of the work environment, so this is nice too.

E: So Nite is part of a Broedplaats, Have you heard of this term before?

D; I know the term broedplaats, but I wasn't aware that we work in a broedplaats. As I remember the broedplaats in Amsterdam, the broedplaats were like the former squatting spots where people can get cheap studios to create art, a bit more scruffy would you say?

E: Yeah, informal?

D: Yeah informal, more disorganised. So I never had the feeling that this was something like that.

E: No, you're completely right, it originated like that in Amsterdam and municipalities have taken the idea and run with it. It seems like you understand it perfectly.

D: And now the idea is that it is a conglomerate of creative groups.

E: Do you have much contact with the other groups that are there?

D: They are starting more, since the new buildings are there. So sometimes we have public rehearsals, so people from everywhere can join and see how we work. The noordelinger sometimes come and see, these are more youngsters that are more interested in theatre and come join. We had readings of new plays with student groups from the university that are doing theatre of their own. Now, more than before, they are trying to get this, make use of the fact all of these organisations share the same grounds.

E: And would you say the fact that you're all sharing the space together helps you connect to those companies more so than if you weren't sharing the space together?

D; Yes, yes.

E; How would you say the broedplaats personally affected you? So obviously, you have a different idea of what it is in your head, but how has this location personally affected you and your work?

D: That's hard to say, because what most affected me is the company itself. They decide what projects are initiated and which ones I'm in. This artistic director invites me to do this directing of Bab Ad Daar.

E: Okay so it's more the company than the broedplaats?

D: I would say so yeah. Once the noordelinger asked me to do this workshop on improvising theatre, since I did a lot of that before. So this would have been something but I was very busy so I didn't do it. But it's an example of would could happen. I wouldn't say that it affects me that much, it's just a practical thing that it's close. But I do know for instance that, houten house is (The wooden house) is there and one of our dancers did the choreography for the project of

theirs. I can imagine that it wouldn't have happened as easily if they weren't close together, you see? Physically.

E: So you say you've been an actor for the past 20 years, have you had any other experience with any other creative companies, either within Groningen or throughout the country?

D: it's only been two years with Nite, so the 18 years before were elsewhere. I have been in Groningen before also with the company, but it had different artistic leaders and different actors so it was a totally different situation. But I've been around the country with companies like this.

E: And would you say there's a big difference with your experience in this company and other companies?

D; yes, because this is both a dance company and a theatre company, so the ensemble consists of both dancers and actors. I haven't experienced this anywhere. Usually it's more conventional with only actors are together and they do more new material. So more new texts, other than the classic modern or old which is more common in the other companies. So this is what I like about it. I was prepared to go all the way to Groningen because the other companies are more like in the randstad, which is easier to get to from Amsterdam. So they do a good job in experimenting and finding new forms which is what I like.

E: What kind of environments do you meet up with your team? Because when I emailed you you said you didn't know if you were the right person to ask, because you mostly just talk to your colleagues. There must be formal rehearsals, but there must be other environments that you meet with your team.

D: Yeah, I mean it's all inside the building, the rehearsal but there's also spaces to have meetings, and like I said it's a mixture of work and leisure when we go to a bar. We travel together, right now we do a performance, and if people are from Groningen we travel by the same bus to the place. It's quite some hours you spend on the road. Other than that I wouldn't say there are other spots around the area. We used to go to this jazz bar that just closed in the old building that stands by itself, next to the machinefabriek. We went there a lot, but it was closed, it didn't make it financially. It's either empty or squatted I'm not sure.

E: would you say there's a difference between Ebbingekwartier and the rest of the city?

D: I guess it's a specific type of people that work there. These former factory areas that are part of the whole ebbingekwartier I would say are the creative people. These people are not representative of the whole of Groningen, so this is a difference, a nice difference I must say.

E; So there's been a lot of new building work around ebbingekwartier, has this personally affected you?

D: Yah I'm quite okay with it, it's more a given, since I've only been there for two years I only entered when it was changed. To me it didn't have any impact.

E: What would you say helps to empower artistic communities? What is something that municipalities can do to empower artistic communities?

D: The fewer rules there are, the more creativity there is I would say, this is a personal opinion. The rules get in the way of artistic processes

E: What kind of rules?

D: Like if I'm creating and I think oh shit we have to work all night and you use loud music, it would be nice if it is possible. I think it is possible right now to be honest, because we don't live next to houses, but a certain kind of freedom within the boundary of the area, could help I would say. And like I said, it's most inspiring to me to be in older buildings just because there's an

atmosphere in it that works better for the arts, but again this is just personal. If you do paintings it's maybe best to have a really clean cube go to work in.

E: Would you feel that fewer rules are being done in ebbingekwartier?

D: Good question. It's more of a general thought because in the daily experience that I have, with Nite, we can do what is needed to make our art so it's not something I miss right now. Then I get these fantasies like what if you could just build big sculptures outside your building just because you have freedom to do whatever you want to do in the outside area, but it's like a fantasy. In Holland it's not realistic. If you ask me what could the gemeente do? I would say give freedom to artists in the broadest sense to use the space whatever way they want it, also the outside space. Give them the freedom to go into the streets with whatever sculpture they want, on their terrain let them be free.

E: Would you like more control over the cultural policies that concern you?

D: No, this is the difference between the fantasy and the reality. In reality I start rehearsing at 10 and leave the building at 5 and within these hours, in my line of work this is fine, you know? So again, I don't miss anything. For me, and all the theatre makers, this area works, and everybody is quite happy there. So I couldn't say I can make it better by doing this or that.

E: You're happy with how it is

D: Yeah, theatre is an inside thing most of the time, and preparing and making of it happens in this building, so I can talk more about the building, which is fine, it's not so much about the direct environment around it.

E: I wanted to circle back to Bab Ad Daar. Are you aware of how it was set up and why?

D: Not really, I think about 6 or 7 years? It was just one guy that rang the doorbell of Nite, he was a refugee from Syria, that did a lot of dancing in Syria, but just private, as in not professional. He just rang the door and said I'm a dancer, can I work here. And then they invited him to do training with the dancers, and he was a very bad dancer. But then he was invited to create this network, they call it, where people from abroad have a place to go create. So it's under the roof of Nite, they don't get a lot of money, but they can use all the knowledge and offices. They do both theatre performances and dance performances, dance workshops, they teach dabke, which is an arab dance. So it's really about the people themselves creating and finding some joy in this and also inviting a dutch audience who get to meet mostly arab people on stage. They have this whole programme around performances where they try to get it to be a more interactive situation in which experiences for all cultures and nationalities are exchanged.

E: It sounds like a great project

D: Yeah it is, it also has difficulties because of the language and cultural differences, but I learn a lot from it.

E: Can you Dabke?

D: I've tried a few times, but I tend to forget how it works.

E: Is there anything else you would like to add about your work?

D: If we talk community, before when I was an actor or theatre creator, when initiated my project, so most of the time I work for a director as an actor who comes up with an idea, but if I initiate my own project I always like to talk with real people and make material out of interviews or questionnaires. There's theatre in each story, each person, sort of. Now that we talk about

community, Nite might be. They are a Groningen based company, but I doubt if the performances, and they don't need to be, but I doubt if they are in sense Groningen related. So when we play in a theatre, and it's always full, people from Groningen find us, but the reality is that theatre has quite an elite audience nowadays. So we do everything we can to get a mixture of audiences, but the wealthy left wing boomers, which is okay, I don't hate them, but it would be nice if it's more diverse. It's always a thing in theatre to get everyone to this building, because it's not that easy. So if you talk community, and how this is going, it can always be better, you see what I mean?

E: So you were saying your technique is interviewing people to gain inspiration from your surroundings, would you say that's a better way of engaging people?

D: it's a different way, not necessarily a better way. When I worked in Arnhem for a similar company, they celebrated their 50th anniversary and asked me to do something with the city as a celebration of these 50 years. We decided to get some apple pie and we randomly rang doorbells to get in with this pie and try to get it to a nice conversation, and these conversations we used to make a musical programme in which we celebrated all the people we spoke to in one song. And we toured this theatre concert in a big tent in the same neighbourhoods as where we had the conversations and we were in these neighbourhoods for like a week, it's a long story. But it was so hard, and the performance was free, and we had a bar with 1 euro beer, it was so easy to get there. There were as little boarders as possible, but still it took like 2 or 3 days to get people really moving to get them in. So it's easier said than done to get theatre to all parts of a community, to get everyone in. It's weird times for theatre, there's a lot of competition in Netflix and easier amusement stuff, where you don't have to leave your coach. It's scary.

So as much as I would like it, it's quite a quest. You start by trying, now I know. I had the idea, a friend of mine has a pop up stores where he sells local art and second hand clothes and he had a deal where he gets 20% and you get 80%, and it's a great way of creating a spot in the neighbourhood where everybody comes, I had the idea of doing this in Groningen, and maybe this getting to know the people around this shop and getting to know them and seeing if this could lead to a performance, maybe in the same space. But then again, I didn't think for a long time now we talk about community and it pops up again.

Hendrik

E; So you could just introduce yourself and what you do?

H: YYeah sure, so I'm a policy advisor at the municipality of groningen. I am working at the city development. And within that I am working at a programme called spatial economics. We have a housing programme, energy programme, mobility programme, and economics is one of these. Within that program I am working on several developing areas in the city. I don't know if you know stadhavens? In those kind of areas. So I'm advising on which economic programme needs to come in that area. Within my work I work on what you call in English breeding places. So we have a policy document that was made in 2020, we are now 4 years further and we noticed that the 2020 policy does not fit the current situation. Both because of the housing and office market. We see that there's a lot of pressure on the market and that the prices are going up. And we see broedplaatsen most of the time at the edge of the city where the rent is cheaper,

but also in places that have other plans for the future. Most of the time it's the place that in 5 or 10 years will become a housing project. But because of this pressure, it's getting harder to realise broedplaatsen. People active in the real estate market are buying these plots and increasing the commercial renting prices to a point where people can't afford it. With that in mind, we thought we should create a new policy document that fits the current situation better and the future

E: Are you currently working on it?

H: Yes, we think we can bring it to the city council after the summer. We have been working on it for a long time, but it's very difficult for the reasons I mentioned above. These people need these places, and the city council thinks it's important to have these places, but it costs a lot of money. These people can't pay the commercial price, so what can they handle? That is the main question. We have a work group in the municipality with different departments, with social contexts. We have 4 people in the work group, because it has to be viewed from different perspectives. So that's what I'm busy with.

E: How would you define a broedplaatsen

H: That's a big question, I think you saw the policy document? In groningen we separate 4 kinds of broedplaatsen, but in general it's all kinds of people working on all different subjects. There is a certain type of community feeling or building where they organise events for themselves or the area in which they are located. Knowledge spillovers are there, where they can learn from each other. These are symptoms from a broedplaats I would say. And sometimes it's also housing, but most of the time it's just working. Biotoop is in Haren, it's a very big broedplaats. We want to give spaces to artists and start ups to have a space to learn, to work out how the company functions, how you make it profitable. We want to give them space to learn so that afterwards they can move on to being profitable. That's our goal from the new policy.

E; What are your main goals of the new policy?

H: We have already written a document that is public in which we wrote to the city council what our thoughts are about the new policy and what we need to learn more about. But in this letter we showed our goals. I can say the main goal is that: We have 46 broedplaatsen, and a lot of them are temporary. We want to get more permanent broedplaatsen. Some of them are always temporary, because we are always developing the city and we always need places where we can buy certain spots for housing development, but we also want a certain basis of permanent space so that we always have spaces for people. That's our main goal I guess and something we are studying right now to work out how we can get these permanent spaces. But like I said, with permanent spaces we want to realise a situation in which you facilitate these artists and entrepreneurs in the start of their careers, so that in 5 or 10 years, they will stay in the same location and pay higher rent, or they leave and make space for new entrepreneurs. It had to be about learning and then creating spots for upcoming artists and entrepreneurs.

The community is really interested in what we are coming up with, but it's a really difficult financial question. Then the city council has to give us a lot more money to realise it. In the current situation we have 250,000 euros to spend on this subject, but we need a lot more to realise this. We've set a goal to realise 50,000 square metres extra in 2030, if we want to do that it will be a lot more money. It's a question for the city council. Is it worth it or do we need to take a step back and say for example 30,000 square metres is the goal.

E: What would you say was the original motivation to introduce broedplaatsen to groningen?

H: Well, I wasn't part of the last policy document, so I don't know about that. We want the world to show to the world that Groningen is a city of talent, it's a student city, so there are these young people that want to develop these ideas, and go through the first steps in their career. With that in mind, we want to facilitate the period after they are done studying. That's what we hear a lot about Groningen " Oh we are going to study there and then we leave again". We don't want that, we want to hold people here to develop in this area. Those breeding places can help with that. When you talk about artists, there are waiting lists for 15 years, so when you're done studying, you aren't getting a place, unless you are willing to pay a lot of money. We have to fix that. We have to guarantee to these people that they can stay here and develop here rather than move to the randstad. When looking at our economic development, it can be worth to hold these people here. I think that's one of the reasons we started with breeding places.

E: how do broedplaatsen help the local economy?

H: there is certain evidence, and economically, we see that in those places 75% of the people who work there are in the creative sector, so artists and start ups. So when you look at the whole economy of Groningen (shows chart). What we see for the past 5 years is that the creative sector is still growing, so 7000 jobs are in the creative sector, and a lot of these jobs are in breeding places. So that's the economic output. But there also a big question is how you can measure the other values of the breeding place for the area around it. For those who live around it. As i said they organise events, and that benefit is not really something you can measure with these numbers, but its a value that breeding places have. So it is about people coming together. We are looking at how you can measure values that are not purely economical. If we talk about this with people in real estate, they will just see if it is green or red in an excel sheet, and if it's red then they will say it's not possible. But when you see the bigger picture, the real value. How to measure that? And that's what the community is asking us about. Even if it's not necessarily economically productive, we will carry on to facilitate those places because it's important.

E: Is there a way the gemeente measures the impacts?

H: Not really. That's a question for the new policy. Can we find a new way to measure it? Because if we are going to facilitate these places we also want to reach certain goals. We want that this place is also open for people who are not in it, that it's for everyone. So when we are setting these goals , we can set certain rules. But in some places you can see certain success. You talked about the Ebbingekwartier, we saw it there, but we also saw it on the Suiker Terrein, with paradigm. That area was nothing. And if you see it now its a cool place to go with your friends. It will be part of a new developing area where there will be housing. But it has already got value within the development. Yeah place making, that's one of the things breeding places are getting used for. But most of the time, the question comes that place making is nice, but the housing project has to come. Can we find a place for the breeding place?

E; So something I read in the current policy is how local stakeholders are very much collaborating in the breeding places process. How did this take pace?

H: As part of this new policy, we organised a big event last year for all those communities to walk with us about these policies. We already had our thoughts on which way we have to go, and we would like to talk with the community about how they saw it before implementing it. I think there were about 70 people at that meeting, so that was really good. We are also in talk with different kinds of communities, so we are working on the biotoop and the future of the

place. The users of this place have organised themselves and wanted to talk about the future. Okay what does the municipality see as the future of this place and how can we deliver. surely you have to have in the back of your mind that they want to keep this place. Of course they have their own interests, and as a municipality we have way more interests, so in talks we have to think about both them and the bigger picture. But the talks with them have been really good, we have other partners in the field lhasa on how they see it.

E: Okay so it's as much you coming to the communities as the communities coming to you?

H; currently that's the situation. We would like them to also find each other more. The different types of places really operate in themselves, and in the large meeting we said it would be important to search for each other as well. Every location is different but you can learn from each other on how to organise yourself. That's for the community to take up on.

E; How often are these meetings?

H: I said in the letter at least once a year we would like to talk with the community to hear what's going on and to tell them what we're busy with, and if it's necessary we can organise more meetings, but it's not strict. We have a website, and if they have questions they can email us about it and we can help them or plan a meeting.

E: Do breeding places benefit their surrounding community?

H: Well, the neighbourhood doesn't particularly benefit from the economic output of the companies, but they can benefit in a way that things happen, it's a lively spot. Most of the time it's a free space to come by and get a cup of coffee or tea. It's for the neighbourhood; it's particularly the social impact that's important. For example the elderly but also young people. People are curious what's going on. Maybe at first they think it's weird, but when they meet each other, they begin to love it. The unknown is unloved.

E: Have you heard of the creative city?

H: Yes, a long time ago. It's about the human capital isn't it?

E: As a municipality have you noticed any negative effects of broedplaatsen? Such as social inequalities or displacement of communities?

H: Well, we have had certain experiences in certain places where we got the situation that the people that were staying there couldn't pay the rent anymore, even though it was lower rent. Then what do you do about it? Do we go there everyday and ask if they're going to pay or try to find a solution? We've experienced those situations, but not often. You could label them as negative. But for the surrounding and the neighbourhood we haven't experienced any negative reactions. The neighbourhoods don't get the negative consequences, but the breeding places themselves do get gentrified because most of the time they have to leave because of new housing development.

E: But then that is the nature of broedplaats is that it's temporary

H: Yes, most of the time. So I think it's more gentrification that is negative for broedplaatsen rather than for the neighbourhood. But that's something we see, for example with suiker terrein, that the years it's developing there it becomes valuable for that place. So when the housing development comes, we want to keep it, and we are getting more and more of those places. So what do we do? Can they stay a bit longer, or can we find another space for them. And that's a question that's inherent to the gentrification process.

E: So these are all the questions, is there anything else you would like to add?

H: No

