

Student housing on the Zernike Campus

Preferences, needs and feasibility

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Summary

The aim of this paper is to find out the need of and possibilities for student housing projects on the university campus in the Dutch university city of Groningen. Due to the difficulties some students, especially international students, have with finding accommodation, it looks as if there is a shortage of student housing. Through a questionnaire, students were asked their opinions on what makes for satisfactory housing, who they believe on-campus housing should be for and how they view the idea of student housing on the campus. Secondly, to see the institutional side of the question, an interview was conducted with a representative of a social housing corporation in the city, with additional information from policy plans from the municipality. While students did favour the idea of institutional housing, especially regarding first-year and international students, these do not necessarily need to be on-campus. Students living spread out over the city is a defining characteristic of Groningen, and the municipality wants to keep it like that, because it is beneficial to city life and local business, and there are no plans to allow the development of student housing projects on the campus. The housing corporation follows the municipality's plans and focuses on building in the city and renovating older existing accommodations. Government predictions for student numbers indicate that they are going to decline in the near future, so the housing corporations do not need to focus on more growth of student housing. Institutionally provided student housing on the university campus is not needed or desirable.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, there have been many articles and reports about students that came to Groningen having trouble to find a place to live (Dagblad van het Noorden, 2017; RTV Noord, 2016; Sikkom, 2015). The problem appears to be more focused on international students, who, contrary to many Dutch students, need to live in the city right from the start of their studies. The number of students (RuG and Hanze University combined) in Groningen is growing, with 58,345 students enrolled in the academic year 2016/2017, compared to 56,594 in 2015/2016 and 54,087 in 2014/2015 (Onderzoek en Statistiek Groningen, 2017). As is appears, the number of students enrolled in university keeps growing, and the pressure on the market for student housing will increase. However, local residents may not be too happy with the development of many new student houses, as studentification of a neighbourhood can have negative consequences on the perception of the liveability of that neighbourhood. Long-term residents fear noise, dilapidation of buildings and lower levels of security in the neighbourhood, leading to less social cohesion and decreasing property values. On the other hand, the presence of student housing can have positive effect on the local economy and the local cultural life; students visit bars and cultural events often, and have more time to do so during the week than the working population (Macintyre, 2003). Also, students can have a positive effect on the social climate and reputation of university cities: the informal and extroverted social climate is beneficial for cultural events and tourism in the city (Smith & Holt, 2007). The housing preferences of students are different from the housing preferences of the rest of the city's population, and cannot always be satisfied by the normal housing market, creating a need for dedicated buildings, usually containing low-price housing units close to university (Russo et al., 2003). A common way in Groningen to create student housing is the division of regular residences into multiple student rooms by private landlords. However, the municipality of Groningen restricts the number of houses that can be converted to student rooms, or 'Houses in Multiple Occupation', to 15% per street (Municipality of Groningen, 2017). Figure 1 shows that 65% of students living in Groningen live in an HMO, compared to 53% in the Netherlands as a whole. A way to provide student housing without

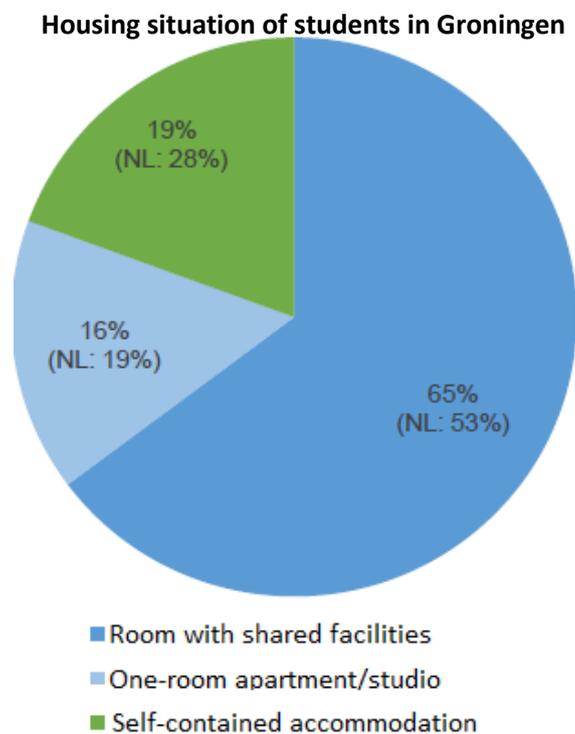


Figure 1
Source: Kences, 2017b

disrupting existing neighbourhoods and allow students to live close to their university is to build student accommodations on the university campus, something that is common in many countries, and has also been done in the last decades in the Dutch student cities of Utrecht and Nijmegen. Groningen seems to be behind in this, and I would like to explore the possibilities of building student accommodation on the Zernike Campus in this thesis. Research has been done before on the opinions of students on dormitories and institutionally provided housing in other countries, like Norway, the UK and the US, where it is common to live in such housing (Kriebel, 1980; La Roche et al., 2010; Oppewal et al., 2005; Thomsen, 2007). However, the amount of scientific research about student housing satisfaction in The Netherlands appears to be small. Every year, the ' Kenniscentrum Studentenhuisvesting' (English: Knowledge centre for Student Housing), also known as Kences, collects data about the current student housing situation in The Netherlands. It gives a general overview of the student population and the students' wishes concerning housing, showing that there is still a mismatch between the actual and preferred housing situation of students, and that the number of students moving out from their parents has decreased in the last two years, but it does not go into details (Kences, 2017a). One of the first papers to discuss the housing satisfaction of students living in institutionally provided housing in The Netherlands was Cohen (1967), where he criticises the ideological and philosophical motives behind student flats at the time. Since then, not much has been written about students' housing satisfaction in The Netherlands. In the UK, research has been done that compares housing satisfaction between institutional housing and Houses in Multiple occupation (abbreviated to HMO), like Rugg et al. (2002) and Christie et al. (2002). Housing provided by university used to be the norm in the UK, but it is experiencing a transition to more students living in HMOs, owned by private landlords, because the number of students enrolled in Higher Education has increased a lot and universities can't provide for all of them. The Netherlands have also seen an increase of the student population, but here the situation is almost the reverse of that in the UK, that HMOs owned by landlords used to be the norm, but big student accommodations provided by developers in cooperation with the university are becoming more common.

Therefore, this research about housing satisfaction and expectations could fill a gap in the existing literature regarding student housing in the Netherlands.

The aim of this paper is to explore the needs and possibilities for building student housing on the university campus of Groningen, a city of 200,000 people in the Netherlands. In recent years, mainly social housing corporations have filled the gap between supply and demand for quality student housing by building new housing projects throughout the city. In other cities, domestic and abroad, student housing on the university campus is a normal sight, but would it be possible or desirable in Groningen? To find out more about the demand-side of the problem, it must be known which aspects are important for general student housing satisfaction in Groningen, what part of the student demographic should live on-campus and what students' opinions on living on-campus are. Examining the plans and policies of local housing corporations and the municipality regarding student housing and the use of the campus will give more information on the supply-side.

This paper will be structured as following: Then next chapter will consist of the theoretical framework, elaborating on how demand for student housing is created, what kind of housing characteristics make for satisfactory housing and how student housing fits in the city. This is followed by the methodology, the results and finally the conclusion.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Demand for student housing.

For young people in the Netherlands, enrolment in higher education is the biggest reason they leave their parental home and start living on their own. The need for independence from their parents is a major driving factor for young people to leave the parental home, and is a typical characteristic of demographical patterns in northern European countries. Enrolment in higher education usually coincides with young adulthood and this need for independence, meaning there will be a high demand for student housing. When it's affordable and there's housing available, many students will choose for this independence and move out, marking the start of their housing career (Mulder & Hooimeijer, 2002). Enrolment in higher education and leaving home are available to most Dutch students, as universities across the country charge the same tuition fee and all Dutch students have the possibility to take out a student loan. Students from families with low income can get additional grants to help them pay for their education and living (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs, 2017). For Dutch students, the urban and regional possibilities for entertainment and socialising (living the student life) are more important than the quality of the education programme when choosing which university to go to (Sá et al., 2004). Sá et al. (2004) suggest this is because most Dutch universities offer a similarly high standard of education, so prospective students make their choice based on consumption rather than investment in education.

Types of student accommodation can traditionally be divided in two groups: institutionally provided housing and housing in the private rental sector. Institutionally provided housing can either be provided by institutes of higher education and universities themselves, like in the United States (Kriebel, 1980; La Roche et al., 2010) and the United Kingdom (Rugg et al., 2000; Hubbard, 2009), or by a separate country-wide government supported organisation, as is the case in Norway (Thomsen, 2007). Institutionally provided housing like this generally consists of halls or dormitories, where multiple bedrooms share facilities. The private rental sector is a diverse sector, but consists mostly of landlords letting rooms in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). HMOs are traditionally associated with substandard living conditions, unhealthy situations and stingy landlords (Christie et al., 2002; Thomsen & Eikemo, 2010), as well as dilapidations of buildings and gardens by students themselves (Sage et al., 2012). However, HMOs are also associated with bringing more cultural life and local business to the part of the city where they are located (Smith & Holt, 2007). In the UK, a newer form of student housing provided by the private rental sector is purpose-built development. This is when private investors build new, or convert empty buildings into, large halls of residence for students. These accommodations are similar to the halls provided by the university, but are not regulated by it and may have different rules. They are also usually not located on campus, but closer to the town centre (Hubbard, 2009; Smith & Hubbard, 2014).

In the Netherlands in 2017, the majority (53%) of students who don't live with their parents anymore, live in rooms in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), where they share facilities such as kitchen, toilet and shower with other housemates (Kences, 2017a). In the Netherlands, the universities traditionally did not provide housing for their students. However, universities providing housing is common in other countries, like the United Kingdom and the United States (Christie et al., 2002; La Roche et al., 2010). In the United States, living on-campus is the norm for most students, with many universities even requiring all or at least their first-year students to live in university provided housing on the campus (Ong et al., 2013).

As mentioned before, students don't solely move out to live closer to university, but also because they seek independence. Moving out to attend university provides students with 'opportunities for making

new friends, enjoying a less restricted social life and taking part in non-academic activities' (Holdsworth, 2006). In the UK, living in institutionally provided dormitories is perceived as a good start for first year students to experience living on their own in a safe environment. First year students who live in institutional dormitories also see this as a first step of their housing careers, often choosing to move into a HMO with people they met in the dormitory after their first year (Christie et al., 2002). For these reasons, new students generally prefer to live together with others rather than start off completely autonomous, whether that is in an institutionally provided dormitory or a House in Multiple Occupation (Lahelma & Gordon, 2008).

Being a student is usually associated with something called 'the student life'. Although there is not one definition of this, it can be described as a mix between the actual university study and a young adult's social life. This young adult's life is characterised by a pursuit of ideals, new friendships and new experience, and not being tied to a family (Thomsen & Eikemo, 2010). Because of this balance between study and social life, many students want to live somewhere between university and the city centre in cities in where most of the entertainment and recreation for students is in the city centre (Christie et al., 2002; Hubbard, 2009). On the other hand, in cities where most of the recreation and entertainment for students is also located on-campus, living further away from the campus is seen as detrimental to student life (Oppewal et al., 2005).

2.2 Housing Satisfaction.

Housing satisfaction is something that is determined by many different factors, such as the life-phase, social background, financial situation and expectations, and also on the physical characteristics of the building. Throughout life, people will follow housing pathways influenced by these factors, described by Clapham (2005, p.35) as "the social practices of a household related to housing over time and space". Although these pathways are unique to individuals, people from similar demographic groups, like students, will follow similar routes and require similar, suitable housing. Satisfaction with housing is not the same for everyone, but differs between social groups. Students will compare their housing situation to that of other students, rather than to the national average housing standards, so providing adequate housing for students is different from providing housing to the general housing market (Thomsen & Eikemo, 2010). Housing is not only seen as the simple necessity of needing accommodation, but is also a part of expressing identity and lifestyle choices (Clapham, 2005). This is further explained by Holton and Riley (2016), who have shown that many students use personal objects and decorations to express their identity through their rooms. Therefore, being able to customise and change the configuration of a room is important for students' housing satisfaction.

The physical characteristics of housing include room size, natural light, age of the building and the amount of facilities that have to be shared. Also, based on the lay-out of the whole building, these characteristics may influence the perceived institutional character of a student dormitory. Students' satisfaction with living in dormitories is influenced by physical characteristics like the shape of the rooms, the lay-out of the corridors and the ability to move furniture around and give a personal touch to the room, lessening the feeling of it being institutional (Kriebel, 1980). Sharing facilities decreases students' satisfaction with their housing, with the exception of sharing a living room or lounge (Kenyon, 1999). Compared to the generation of their parents, students in western countries today have higher demands regarding their housing situation. In most cases it is no longer acceptable to share a room with someone else, and students expect more facilities, like a gym and included internet access. Universities spend more time and resources on attracting new students in a competitive market environment, and in countries where universities provide housing, providing high quality housing for students is a way to attract them (Macintyre, 2003).

2.3 Studentification

Students living in a city are not a self-contained community, there is interaction with the rest of the city's population, both positive and negative. In the UK, student HMOs tend to be in older, terraced town houses located in or near the city centre (Rugg et al., 2002). Areas like this are popular with students for their location close to the entertainment in the city centre, and popular with landlords for their easy conversion to student rooms. Landlords who buy these kinds of properties are able to outcompete the local residents, who are usually working-class people. Also, older terraced houses have steeper, narrow stairs and small or no gardens, this makes them less attractive to families with children and the elderly (Sage et al., 2012). This pattern fits the concept of gentrification as well, where young, middle class people take over older residential neighbourhoods (Smith & Holt, 2007). As student numbers grow, however, studentification will spread to other neighbourhoods. Often, these are poorer neighbourhoods located close to a university campus that is at the edge of a city where, again, private landlords have the purchasing power to outcompete the locals and convert homes to student HMOs. In situations like this, tension can grow between students and other residents.

Because many students see their student home as only temporary, they may not take good care of the house and the street it is facing. Unkempt gardens, rubbish on the streets and ugly building extensions built by landlords are common in studentified neighbourhoods in the UK (Hubbard, 2008). Difference in lifestyles is also a source of conflict between students and other residents, who are living by the timetable of the working day. Late night noise and drunkenness, which would otherwise be minor annoyances, become dominant features of the neighbourhood (Munro et al., 2009). With increasing numbers of students living in a neighbourhood, services and commercial activity will shift accordingly. Services like schools will move away, making a neighbourhood less attractive to families (Smith and Holt, 2007).

There are also positive aspects related to studentification. The presence of student housing can have positive effect on the local economy and the local cultural life; students visit bars and cultural events often, and have more time to do so during the week than the working population (Macintyre, 2003). Also, students can have a positive effect on the social climate and reputation of university cities: the informal and extroverted social climate is beneficial for cultural events and tourism in the city (Smith & Holt, 2007). Cities that manage to retain a large share of graduates will experience the positive spin-off effect of a highly educated workforce (Russo et al., 2003).

3. Methodology

In this research, a mixed method approach is used. Data is collected by using a questionnaire, by an interview and from a secondary source: policy documents regarding housing in the Municipality of Groningen. In this chapter. each part of the data collection will be briefly explained.

3.1 The questionnaire.

The first method for data collection used is a questionnaire survey. The survey was targeted at all students studying in Groningen. The number of students enrolled in higher education (either 'HBO' or University) in Groningen is 54,060 (Kences, 2017a). A survey is a useful method for collecting data about people's opinions and preferences, and the data that is collected is suitable for statistical analysis (McLafferty, 2010). The survey also included some open questions where respondents could elaborate their answers, this way the survey also collect qualitative data. The survey was hosted online, which

allows for easier distribution, and the possibility to adjust the questions presented to the respondent based on previous answers. The survey was spread mostly via social media, as there was no access to a more formal way, for example through a university mailing list, to distribute it. This has led to a low response rate of n=59 out of a population of 54,060, so the data may not be very reliable. Because there are also international students studying in Groningen, there were both a Dutch and an English version of the survey available. Before the survey was distributed, it was tested on a group of 7 students. Their feedback helped to iron out mistakes and make some of the questions more understandable.

The questionnaire starts with basic demographic questions, such as gender, year of birth and nationality, followed by questions to determine in which year of study respondents are and at which institute of higher education respondents are studying, and whether or not respondents live in the city of Groningen. Respondents who live in the city were then asked about their current housing situation and how they would rate it. Here, respondents are asked about the characteristics of housing mentioned earlier, such as room size, sharing of facilities and personalisation allowed. After that, all respondents were asked about their general housing requirements and needs, and their opinions on the possibility of living on campus. The survey ends with the possibility for respondents to add comments and asks them if they would like to receive the results. The respondents' answers are handled anonymously.

3.2 The Interviews.

While the survey covered the demand side of the question, the interviews were meant to give information about the supply side. Interviews are useful to gain insight in the working and thinking processes of the subject, and because of its interactive nature, allow new points to be discussed that the researcher did not think of before (Longhurst, 2010). When it comes to student housing, there are different stakeholders: the municipality, the university and the housing corporations. The university does not own any student accommodation, and refers for all questions about it to the 'Stichting Studentenhuisvesting' (Student housing foundation), a foundation that provides student accommodations in the whole country (SSH, 2017). Two other big housing corporations in the city of Groningen are Lefier and Nijestee. Nijestee is the biggest provider of social housing in the city, with 13,000 houses (Nijestee, 2017), and Lefier is a corporation that focuses especially on student housing, with 6,500 houses and 3,100 student rooms (Lefier, 2017). The final important stakeholder is the Municipality of Groningen itself, as they provide the local zoning laws and building permits.

The amount of data, again, is small, as only Lefier wished to be interviewed. The results therefore only show the views of one housing corporation instead of 3. While the municipality was not available for an interview, they do provide zoning plans (see Appendix C) and a policy paper about the housing situation in the city, including their plans for student housing, that will be used as an additional data source. The paper is called 'Woonvisie: Wonen in Stad', which roughly translates to 'Housing vision: Living in the City' (Municipality of Groningen, 2015).

4. Results

4.1 Questionnaire results

Here, the data from the questionnaire will be presented and analysed. The total number of questionnaires filled out properly is n=59. Of these respondents, 31 are male and 28 are female, 49 were studying at the University of Groningen, 8 at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences and 2

answered 'other'. Table 1 provides a general overview of these demographics. This chapter is structured by the research sub-questions, which will be answered one by one.

At which institution are you currently studying?			
	Men	Women	Total
University of Groningen	26	23	49
Hanze University of Applied Sciences	3	5	8
Other	2		2
Total	31	28	59

Table 1

4.1.1: Aspects important for student housing.

Student housing has certain characteristics that influence the students' satisfaction with their accommodation. Based on the literature by Kriebel (1980), Kenyon (1999), Clapham (2005), Thomsen & Eikemo (2010) and Holton & Riley (2016) described in chapter 2.2, different characteristics of student housing have been identified and featured in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of these aspects on a Likert-scale ranging from 1 for Not important, through 3 for Neutral to 5 for Very important. The characteristics and their medians are listed in figure 2.

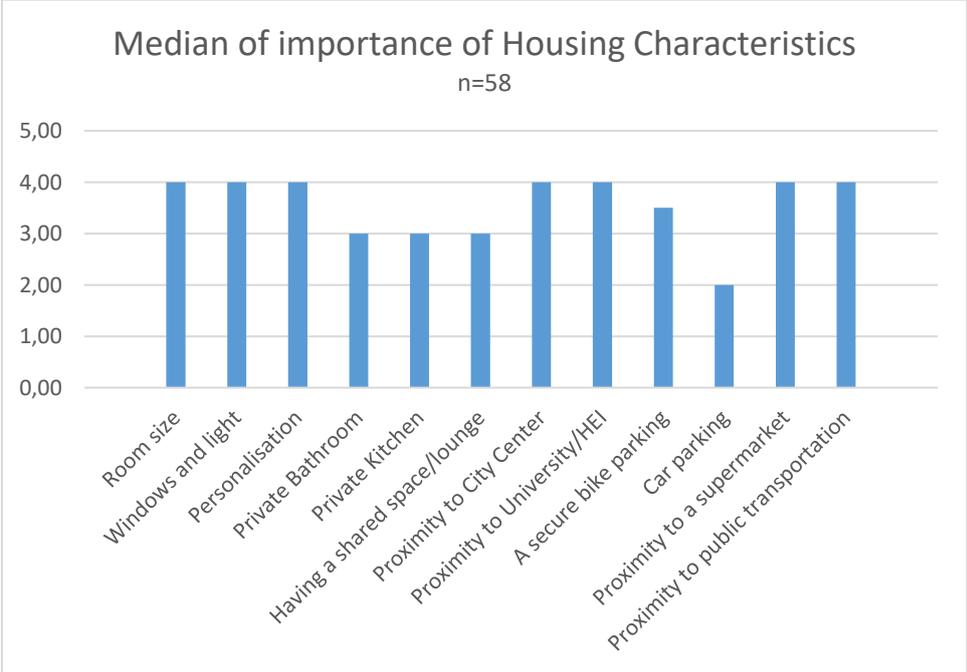


Figure 2

It can be seen that the only characteristic that is rated as not important is the availability of parking spaces for cars. Respondents are neutral about sharing facilities, the rest of the characteristics are important.

Respondents were also asked about how they rate their current housing situation. This was only asked of students who did not live with their parents, excluding 14 cases, bringing the number of

cases down to 45. Before rating their overall satisfaction, their opinions on other housing characteristics was asked. These characteristics are:

- Perceived proximity to the city centre
- Perceived proximity to the University/HEI
- Room size
- Sharing facilities
- Level of privacy
- Possibilities of personalization
- Difficulty finding accommodation
- If they ever had problems with a landlord

These characteristics were tested for their influence on the overall rating of the respondents' current housing situation using the Pearson Chi-square test. To do this, the variables that had their data come from a Likert scale and the data for room size were recoded to have two values. The frequencies of the answers to these questions can be found in table 2. The null hypothesis in the chi-square tests is that there is no correlation between a housing characteristic and the overall housing satisfaction. The results of the Chi-square tests can be found in table 3. The only two variables that have a significant result ($p < 0,05$) are the level of privacy and the difficulty of finding accommodation. The reason for the difficulty of finding accommodation having a negative effect on satisfaction may be because, as it gets more difficult to find accommodation, students have to lower their standards to find something and end up in substandard housing.

While respondents are neutral about having to share facilities when asked about what housing characteristics are important to them, the perceived level of privacy has a significant influence on the satisfaction with their current housing situation.

Besides the accommodations themselves, the campus as a whole also needs to meet some criteria. For students to comfortably live there, basic amenities need to be present. Respondents indicated amenities they find important to have on a liveable campus, and they could give multiple answers. The most important amenity is a supermarket, which was mentioned by 55 out of 59 respondents, followed by secure bicycle parking, mentioned by 33 out of 59. The need for a social student life is indicated by 28 out of 59 respondents wanting a bar on the campus.

Housing characteristics

Question:	n=45	
How satisfied are you with your current housing situation in general?	Happy	Not happy or neutral
	36	9
Do you live close to the city centre?	Close	Not close
	38	7
Do you live close to your university/HEI	Close	Not close
	23	22
What is the size of your room/accommodation?	25m ² or smaller	Larger than 25m ²
	30	15
Do you have to share facilities such as kitchen and bathroom?	Yes	No
	24	21
Do you feel that you have enough privacy in your home?	Yes	No
	35	10
Are you able to personalise your accommodation to your own taste?	Yes	No
	36	9
Did you have difficulty finding a room?	Yes	No
	24	21
Did you ever have problems with a landlord?	Yes	No
	11	34

Table 2

Influences on housing satisfaction

Characteristic:	Pearson Chi-square value	Significance
Do you live close to the city centre?	0,381	0,537
Do you live close to your university/HEI	0,089	0,766
What is the size of your room/accommodation?	2,5	0,114
Do you have to share facilities such as kitchen and bathroom?	0,022	0,881
Do you feel that you have enough privacy in your home?	7,237	0,007
Are you able to personalise your accommodation to your own taste?	0,556	0,456
Did you have difficulty finding a room?	4,375	0,036
Did you ever have problems with a landlord?	2,436	0,119

Table 3

4.1.2: The students that would live on-campus.

Respondents were asked whether they would like to live on-campus themselves, and which demographic they believed living on-campus should primarily be aimed at. In other countries, like the UK, institutionally provided housing is often aimed at first-year students. In Groningen itself, institutionally provided housing by the SSH for exchange students already exists throughout the city.

When asked if they would like to live on the Zernike campus, 34 out of 59 respondents (57.6%) answered 'no' and 15 (25.4%) answered 'yes'. When asked if they would have liked to live on the Zernike campus in their first year, 29 (49.2%) answered 'yes' and 22 (37.3%) answered 'no'. There is not a majority that wants to live on-campus, but the number is higher for people having liked to be provided with on-campus accommodation in their first year. This finding is in accordance with the findings by Christie et al. (2002) and La Roche et al. (2010), where students who live in institutional accommodation in their first year want to move to different types of student housing after that. No significant differences regarding their willingness to live on-campus were found between men and women and higher or lower year students.

64.4% of respondents believe that housing on the campus should primarily be made available for first-year and international students, while 35.6% say it should be open for any student who is interested. Many respondents have a feeling that international students are especially disadvantaged on the student housing market, as illustrated by these comments:

“It would be a solution for the housing shortage for first-year students and internationals. Because they often lack a local network, they have the most trouble in the first months when looking for accommodation.”

“The shortage of student housing is most visible concerning international students, because they don't have a good overview of the local student housing market and because they are often rejected by landlords.”

Providing housing for these groups on-campus will allow them to have normal student life from the start.

4.1.3: Students opinions of housing on-campus.

Although the majority of respondents did not want to live on-campus, 39 out of 59 (66.1%) had a favourable opinion on building student housing on the Zernike Campus. This might be related to the perceived need of international students and first-year students for such housing. Many respondents believe student housing shortage to be a problem in Groningen, with 38 out of 59 respondents (64.4%) saying that there is a student housing shortage and that it will get worse in the future (see figure 3).

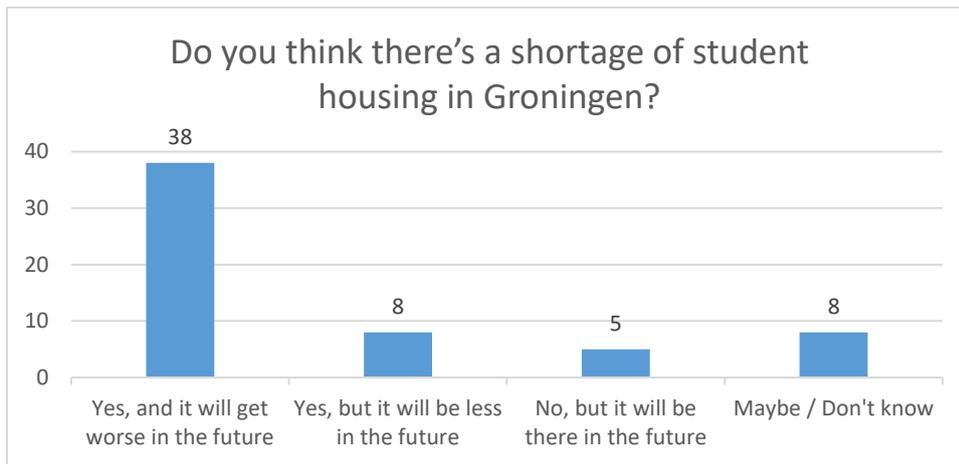


Figure 3

*No respondents picked the available option "No, and it will also not be there in the future".

This perceived pressure on the market may influence students' opinion on the idea of building on the campus. However, government prognoses indicate that the number of students is going to decrease (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2017). The decrease in students enrolled in universities of applied sciences has started in 2017, and from 2025 student numbers in research universities will start to drop (see figure 4). Housing shortages will most likely not get worse in the future.

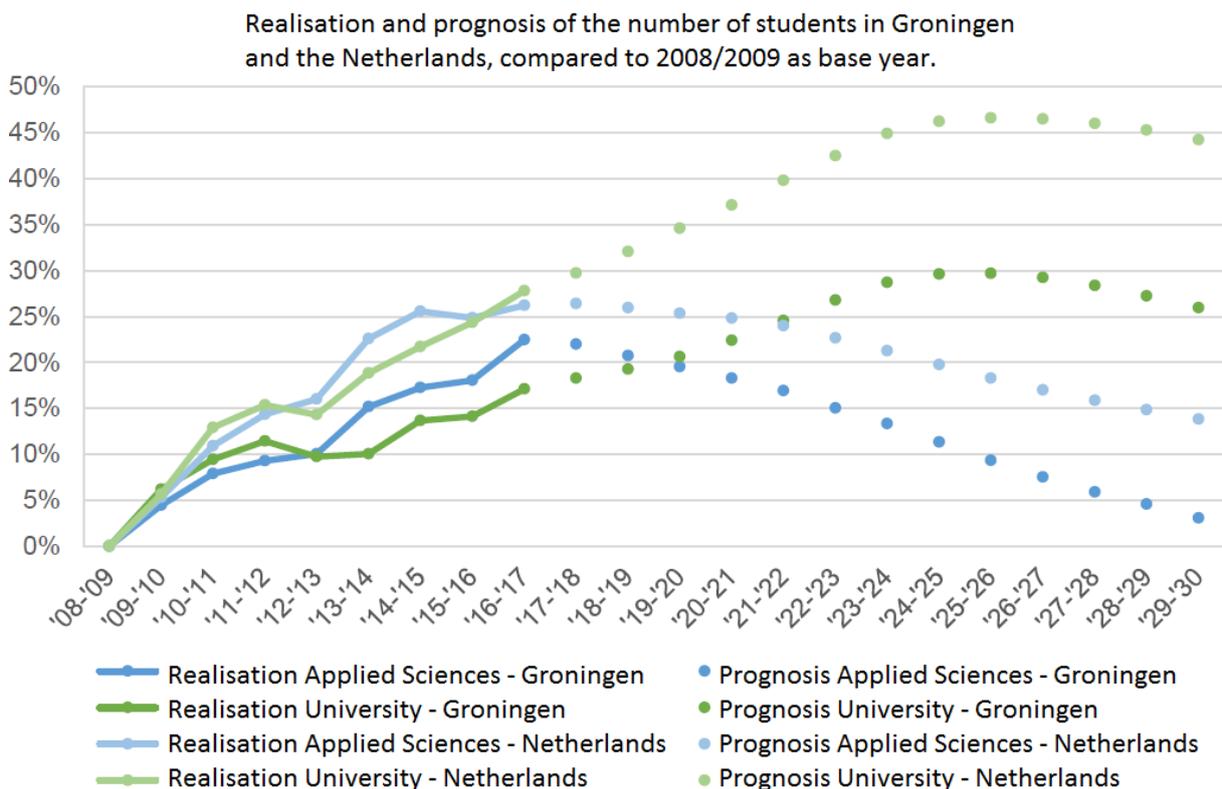


Figure 4

Source: Kences, 2017b;

A majority of respondents believe living on-campus in a student housing complex is beneficial to student life. When asked to rate how beneficial it would be on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 'not at all' to 'very', 29 out of 59 picked 4, and 3 respondents picked 5. Again, respondents could

elaborate their answer, and a recurring theme was that if it was beneficial, it would be because the situation doesn't differ too much from a regular student house in the city:

"I don't think it matters that much. It is probably easier to make friend when you don't have those, but that does not differ from a regular student house."

"It's good, but I think it's just as good as a student house that is not on the campus. If you want to experience the student life, you have to go live in a room, but it doesn't matter if it's on the campus."

Students value the experience of the student life and student housing, and it makes no difference whether that's on-campus or somewhere else in the city. However, some respondents say that the traditional spreading of students over the city is an essential part of the student life in Groningen and argue that moving students away from the city and to the campus takes away the atmosphere of the city. If many facilities for students leave the city centre for the campus, the centre will be emptier and less attractive.

"Living on the campus will detract from the typical Dutch way of student life, with associations and traditional student houses. Living on the campus will, however, help with good study planning and motivation."

"Students are also inhabitants of the city, therefore it's better to spread them to promote integration. Besides, students will learn to live with other residents and to behave."

"Student life happens in the city, not on the campus. The university should only have a limited influence on the lives of students."

While housing on-campus is seen as a good solution for international and first-year students, many students still value the traditional way of student housing. This corresponds to findings in the Kences (2017b) report, that found that the most popular accommodations are rooms sharing facilities in a house in the city centre. Rooms furthest away from the centre were the least popular, because there are fewer facilities for students in those areas, but these ratings may differ if the campus, which is at the edge of the city, has facilities for students. The location of the campus in relation to the rest of the city can be seen in Appendix D.

4.2 Interview and Policy Paper results

The plans and policies of the social housing corporations and the municipality regarding student housing in Groningen.

Besides the demands of students, other actors involved are housing corporations and the municipality of Groningen. The municipality decides what kind of functions can be realised and where. This is formalised in zoning plans and policy papers. Housing corporations have to work within the limits set by the municipality when planning for new housing projects.

"As a basis: we make performance agreements with the municipality. The municipality has a housing vision, which is a vision on living in the city and different parts of the city. We build houses for the city, participate in the sustainability policy, that's what our cooperation with the municipality consists of." (Sandra, Lefier)

Both the municipality and the housing corporation Lefier recognise there is a demand for quality improvement in student housing. The municipality intends to improve the quality of the existing student housing and housing by private landlords. It does that by, for example, testing for the effects

on the liveability of the neighbourhood and looking at the level of maintenance of a building when a permit for conversion of a house to student rooms is requested. Because the municipality does not develop housing itself, it also aims to work together with corporations to improve the existing student housing stock (Municipality of Groningen, 2015). Some of the existing stock is outdated and face vacancy of rooms, an example are the student flats in the neighbourhood of Selwerd, built between 1969 and 1970. This is also confirmed by the housing corporation, who say:

“We’re working on renovating the ‘Duindoornflat’, actually all the three Selwerd-flats, where we will move from dependent to semi-independent student housing. We will reduce the number of rooms using the same kitchen from 15 to 6 and all rooms get a private shower and toilet.” (Sandra, Lefier)

This indicates that students have become more demanding regarding their housing situation, many will not accept the housing conditions that were common in the past. To meet the quality demands of students, housing corporations are cooperating with Kences to learn more about students’ demands and wishes. The activities of the housing corporation and the municipality are not extensively coordinated with the universities themselves:

“No, we do not work together with them (*the universities, author*), but there is a working group for youth and student housing organised by the municipality, the universities are also in it. There we try to reach agreements like ‘what will the housing demand look like over time’. Will we see the number of students increase or decrease, what are their demands? Or when you look at the group of international students, what demands do they have? Are they similar to those of Dutch students or different? For those reasons we talk with the University and the University of Applied Sciences.” (Sandra, Lefier)

According to the housing corporation, there is no student housing shortage, but supply and demand do not meet at the peak moment at the start of a new academic year. Again, it is mentioned that international students have more difficulties finding rooms in the private rental sector, because they do not know the local housing market very well and because some private landlords and their tenants do not want non-Dutch speaking students in their houses. Housing provided by corporations could function as a safety net for students who otherwise have difficulties finding accommodation.

At the moment, the municipality does not have plans to allow for the building of housing on the Zernike Campus, as seen in the most recent zoning plan from 2006 (See Appendix C). The reason for this is that students and other adolescents create a bustling city, and the spread of students throughout the city is a characteristic feature of the city of Groningen. A large student population in the city itself keeps services and local businesses at a high level, which is a benefit for the whole city (Municipality of Groningen, 2015). Combined with the finding that the majority of students wants to live in or close to the city centre, makes student housing on the Zernike Campus not an attractive option for the municipality and the housing corporations. Furthermore, the student population is not expected to grow in the near future, making large-scale student housing projects less necessary.

5. Conclusions

Students are generally positive about institutional housing on-campus, although they do not want to live there themselves. It is seen as a place for international and first year students, who don’t have

the know-how to find their way around the student housing market in Groningen, to start their housing careers and then move on.

The housing characteristics that are important for student housing satisfaction in general are room size, natural light, being able to personalise it, proximity to the city centre, university and public transport and a supermarket, and the availability of bike parking spaces. Additionally, the level of privacy and how difficult it was to find accommodation influence the current housing satisfaction. Besides the housing characteristics themselves, the campus needs amenities to be liveable, with a supermarket, secure bicycle parking and a bar being most important.

Because many believe there to be a student housing shortage now and in the future, they see a need for more institutional housing in the city. In reality, student numbers are expected to decrease in the near future, diminishing the need for student housing projects. Students value the student life, and housing on-campus should be set up similarly to regular student houses. However, many see living in the city itself as part of this student life, and rooms in the centre are still the most popular. Moving too many students to the campus is detrimental to the city as a whole, as cultural life and local businesses also depend on an active young population. Therefore, the municipality has no plans for housing on the Zernike campus, and wants students to be spread throughout the city.

The housing corporations follow the municipality's plans and focus on building in the city and upgrade existing accommodation to the higher demands of students. Because the student population is not expected to grow, there is no need for student housing projects on the campus. Because the universities themselves are not involved in student housing, the municipality and the housing corporations can develop student housing elsewhere, on more desirable locations with already existing services and amenities.

Institutionally provided student housing on the Zernike Campus is not needed or desirable. There will not be a larger demand for student housing in the near future, because student numbers are not expected to grow. The functions it could have students were positive about, such as providing housing for international students and first year students, could be realised elsewhere in the city in a better way. The municipality's zoning laws do currently not allow for residential use of the campus, because the municipality wants students to be an integral part of the city.

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6.1: News and websites:

Dagblad van het Noorden:

Krommenacker, L. van den (2017). Internationale studenten: Groningen is te klein. *Dagblad van het Noorden*, 08-09-2017.

Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs (2017). *Studiefinanciering. Hoe werkt het*. Consulted on 06-12-2017 via <https://duo.nl/particulier/studiefinanciering/index.jsp>. Groningen: DUO

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RTV Noord:

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

The interview was held with S. Vos, public relations manager at the housing corporation Lefier on Tuesday, December the 5th at 15:00. The interview was in Dutch. The length of the interview was 12 minutes.

Interview Guide Lefier

- Introduction
- Reason for interview
- Permission to record and use information

- What is your function?
- What does Lefier do?
- What's Lefier's role on the market for student housing
- What kind of buildings do you offer?
- Cooperation with investors
- Cooperation with municipality
- Cooperation with university
- At which locations are you active
- How do you meet the demands students have for their accommodation?
- Is there are shortage of student housing in Groningen?
- Do you think there are problems in the current market?
- Do you think it's possible to build student housing on the Zernike Campus?
- What needs does your housing need to meet?
- How do you see the future of student housing in Groningen (e.g. Landlords vs. Corporations)?
- What are Lefier's plans for the future?
- Do you have any other questions or remarks?
- (Closing and thanking)
- Would you like to receive the results of this research?

Appendix B: Questionnaire

The questionnaire was hosted online, and a full version can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dlz5rt0w99aj7KMbRe4x3giCpmyn6FTNjeyRJ9J2U1Y/edit?usp=sharing>

Respondents were presented with this version:

<https://sites.google.com/rug.nl/zernike-housing-questionnaire>

Appendix C: Zoning of the Zernike Campus area.

Full resolution:

[http://maps.groningen.nl/docs/bp/NL.IMRO.00140000452PCPZernike06-
/p_NL.IMRO.00140000452PCPZernike06-.pdf](http://maps.groningen.nl/docs/bp/NL.IMRO.00140000452PCPZernike06-/p_NL.IMRO.00140000452PCPZernike06-.pdf)



