

A large crowd of people is marching on a grassy hill in Nijmegen. In the background, the Nijmegen Arch Bridge is visible. The title text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

The *Vierdaagse* Nijmegen: Marching towards Spatial Change?

*How does the Vierdaagse act as a driver for
permanent spatial change in Nijmegen?*

Bachelor Thesis Spatial Planning & Design

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Colophon

Title: The Vierdaagse Nijmegen: Marching towards Spatial Change?

How does the Vierdaagse act as a driver for permanent spatial change in Nijmegen?

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Abstract

This research explores the influence of the *Vierdaagse* on public space in the city of Nijmegen. Through a document review combined with semi-structured interviews with the major stakeholders, this thesis poses the ways in which this mega event affects public space and spatial policy. The organisation of the event and the Municipality have similar interests, resulting in specific legal constructions that are first and foremost in place to make the organisation of the event as smooth as possible. This has effects in the spatial domain of the city of Nijmegen, not affecting *sec* policy, but being more interwoven. Concrete examples are the influence on the Waalkade development, and consideration of the event in interventions in public space by the Municipality of Nijmegen. At the end recommendations are made to further elaborate on the findings and to possibly improve the event even more.

Key words

Vierdaagse, Nijmegen, Policy Exceptions, mega-events, public space

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1. Introduction

1.1 Key Distinctions

As this thesis is written on a Dutch subject, reviewed documents are in Dutch and the respondents to the interviews are Dutch, it is important to start with some clarifications. An English translation of the Dutch names regarding the event does often not allow a clear distinction between the different elements and the collective name; therefore, the following terminology will be used throughout this thesis:

- the *Internationale Vierdaagse Afstandsmarsen Nijmegen* (En.: International Four Days Marches Nijmegen) will be referred to as ‘*the Marches*’;
- the *Vierdaagsefeesten*-festival will be referred to as ‘*the Parties*’
- the collective of events, and everything surrounding them, will be referred to as the ‘*Vierdaagse*’

These distinctions have been further clarified in Appendix 1. For clarity, it is recommended to keep this Appendix at hand while reading this thesis.

1.2 Introducing the *Vierdaagse*

The *Vierdaagse* is the largest marching event in the world (4daagse.nl, 2021). Its two main features are the *Internationale Vierdaagse Afstandsmarsen* (the Marches), and the *Vierdaagsefeesten*-festival (the Parties). The *Vierdaagse* is organized every year, in the third week of July.

The first edition of the Marches was held in 1909, and from 1925 onwards the city of Nijmegen has hosted the Marches every year. It started out as a military practice march, but its orientation has shifted towards civilians halfway through the 20th century. During the Second World War the Marches were not organised, and in 2020 it has not taken place and will not take place in 2021 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic (4daagse.nl, 2021).

Over 40.000 people with over 80 different nationalities participate in the long-distance marches over either 30 km, 40 km, or 50 km per day. Figure 1 shows the 50 km marching routes of the four different days. Around 9.000 (inter)national army personnel also participate in the 40 km per day marches. Which is shown in Figure 1 with the dotted line. They are housed in the temporary barracks of *Kamp Heumensoord* (4daagse.nl, 2021).

The *Parties* start in the weekend before the Marches and last until the final day of the marches on Friday. The *Parties* were first organised in 1970, and since then have grown significantly. In 2019, over 1,5 million people visited the city of Nijmegen in this weekly period, generating large amounts of revenue for the city; especially for hospitality businesses and other entrepreneurs (Vierdaagsefeesten.nl, 2021). As is

shown in Figure 2, almost every major square and main street has either a temporary podium or some other form of entertainment known as ‘entertainmentcentres’ (Dutch: *Vermaakscentrum*) (Vierdaagsefeesten, 2019).

In 2016, the Municipality conducted a research among participants of the *Marches*, around 43.000 people, and estimated that these people contributed over €11 million to the city and the region (Gemeente Nijmegen, 2016a). In the same year, a research was conducted on the *Parties*. Revenue from visitors was calculated to be just over €33 million (Gemeente Nijmegen, 2016b). Both are estimates as precise numbers are difficult to count, given the openness of the event.

1.3.a Scientific Relevance

Research on festivals and mega events as a field of study has seen a strong increase in recent years (Wilson, et al., 2017; Cornellissen, et al., 2011). Scholarly literature on economic benefits festivals and sporting events on host cities is abundant, and as a field of study this has been around for a while (Wilson, et al., 2017; Getz, et al., 2010; Burgan & Mules, 1992). Economic impact for the city of Nijmegen is clear (Gemeente Nijmegen, 2016a; Gemeente Nijmegen, 2016b). This is in line with clear socio-economic influences of festivals and events on their host cities found by Wilson, et al. (2017) and Gursay, et al. (2004). Additionally, Whitford & Ruhanen (2013) found that festivals have major socio-cultural impact on their host cities and their communities. Less plentiful, however, is the research on spatial effects and benefits of festivals and sporting events on host cities (Wilson, et al., 2017).

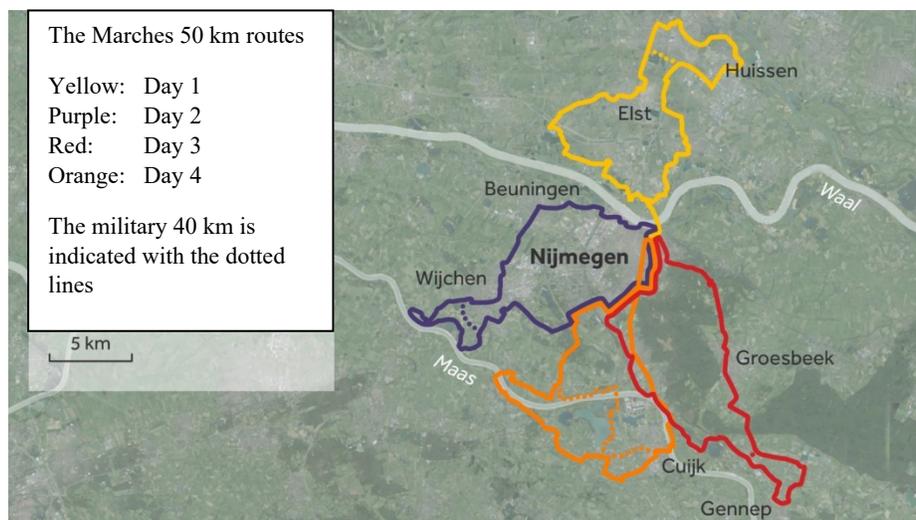


Figure 1: Map of the 50 KM routes of the Marches (NOS.nl, 2015)

immense, with over 40 stages built on streets and squares, represented in Figure 2. However, this research focusses on the permanent infrastructure that is needed to facilitate this temporary infrastructure, and to explore the possibilities of permanent infrastructure to act as a replacement for temporary infrastructure. This research therefore is based around the following main question:

How does the Vierdaagse act as a driver for permanent spatial change in Nijmegen?

To answer this main question, this research is structured along the following sub-questions:

1. *How does the week of the Vierdaagse differ spatially and legally from a 'normal' week?*
2. *Who are the main stakeholders and how do they influence current and future spatial policy on the Vierdaagse in Nijmegen?*
3. *How do the main stakeholders view strengths, weaknesses, opportunity, and threats regarding space during the Vierdaagse?*

1.5 Reading Guide

Chapter 1 has already introduced the *Vierdaagse* and the aim of this research. Chapter 2 describes the Theoretical Framework surrounding this thesis. In chapter 3, the methodology to this research is discussed. The results of the research follow in chapter 4, after which chapter 5 draws conclusions. Lastly, chapter 6 will briefly touch upon some reflections regarding this research.

As mentioned in chapter 1.1, Appendix 1 provides a clear overview of certain distinctions and definitions used in this thesis. For clarity, it is advised to refer to Appendix 1 while reading this thesis.



Figure 3: *The Parties at the Grote Markt in Nijmegen, just cut off the bottom of the picture is a music stage (Bosch, 2015)*

2. Theoretical Framework

Chapter 2 discusses the relevant theories and concepts for this research. First the concepts and theories are laid out and presented in a conceptual model, then hypotheses are presented.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Recurring event, mega vs. major

First, it is important to establish the definition of a mega-event. Müller (2015) describes that a mega-event should be discussed along four dimensions:

1. a large number of visitors (over 1 million visitors),
2. a large mediated reach (over \$1 billion in broadcasting rights revenues),
3. large costs (over \$5 billion in total costs),
4. large impact on public space, built environment and population.

There is a challenge in defining the *Vierdaagse*, as for example the numerator for 1 is the number of sold tickets, which cannot be directly counted for an event without ticket sale. However, in 2019 1.6 million people visited the *Vierdaagse*, indicating it as large. On points 2 through 4, the *Vierdaagse* scores . Though the event is one the most popular in the Netherlands, there is no broadcasting revenue. Total added revenue to the city is around €44 million, which is not enough to pass point 3. Regarding point 4, opposed to events such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup of Football, the *Vierdaagse* is a recurring event, an event that is held every year in the same way and at the same location (McCartney, 2005). McCartney (2005) poses a few key characteristics, such as: the ability of an event to grow and adapt over time; a seasonal character, as it is usually held around the same time every year; local residents' 'ownership' of the event; flow-on benefits; and it has usually sustained because of its own success. Next to that: '[Mega-events are] *usually viewed as a highly significant tourist asset for a host area, with the event directly attracting participants and the resulting raised profile of the area also indirectly encouraging increased general visitation*' (Bramwell, 1997; McCartney, 2005). Considering this as a large, long lasting impact (Müller, 2015, pp. 633-634), and looking at the studies done by the Municipality of Nijmegen (Gemeente Nijmegen, 2016a; Gemeente Nijmegen, 2016b), the impact in point 4 of Müller's (2015) framework can be considered large. The *Vierdaagse* is thus large in 2 dimensions, meaning it is classified as *major* in Müller's (2015) framework. However, considering this is built on observed numbers rather than set values (Müller, 2015, p. 639), the *Vierdaagse* can be considered a mega-event in its own context.

2.1.2 Festivals

Mega-events can be of different types, such as sporting events or festivals (Müller, 2015; Getz, et al., 2010). As mentioned in the introduction, the *Vierdaagse* consists of the *Marches* (sporting event) and the *Parties* (a festival). Müller (2015) has provided a framework for sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, where Getz, et al. (2010), Carlsen & Andersson (2011) and Wilson, et al. (2017) have looked into festivals. They define a festival as “themed, public celebrations”, that can be either publicly, not-for-profit or privately organized, or as a combination of the three. Their roles are further specified by Getz, et al. (2006), into organizers, regulators, facilitators, coproducers, suppliers, collaborators, audiences and the impacted. These different roles can be assumed by multiple stakeholders, resulting in possible vague lines between who does what. Suppliers for example, which usually carry cost in the form of renting equipment, can become facilitators by discounting rent (Getz, et al., 2006). To show these relations, their interactions and details to the different roles, (Getz, et al., 2006) provide the framework in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Stakeholder roles for festivals (Getz, et al., 2006).

2.1.3 Events driving spatial change

Burbank, et al. (2002) have found an interesting trend between hosting a mega-event, using it to change urban policy focus in cities. Burbank, et al. (2002) and Gogishvili & Harris-Brandts (2020) note that mega-events create opportunities for direct urban change, for example by stimulating branding strategies and by linking events to urban regeneration schemes. Mega-events have often been ‘used’ as a driver to change a city’s economic model towards a more consumer-focussed model, where experiences and *tourism*, like festivals, are more important (Burbank, et al., 2002).

2.1.4 Public Private Partnerships & Actors

Public Private Partnerships are a useful means for a government body to outsource work or to gain knowledge to and from the private sector (Reynaers & de Graaf, 2014). Through this, gains can be made in productivity, innovation, efficiency, and cost reduction. These advantages are mostly relevant for infrastructure projects. Partnership and collaboration are currently also commonplace in the events sector (Andersson & Getz, 2009). Andersson & Getz (2009) describe the following actors that can collaborate or compete when organizing a festival; public organizations, private organizations and not-for-profit organizations. Reasons for collaboration are that optimal advantage is taken of the different capabilities the different types of actors have, such as financial capabilities of the private sector, and that certain drawbacks can be worked around, such as the slow processes of public entities such as local governments (Andersson & Getz, 2009; Reynaers & de Graaf, 2014).

2.1.5 Exceptional Legislation

Mega-events have a growing influence on urban development, this influence can translate into exceptions in legislation. Gogishvili & Harris-Brandts (2020) describe that for some mega-events, legislation is bypassed or even altered to cater to the process of organising the event. They also state that this practice can have long lasting impact on urban planning processes. A drawback here is that it could create opacity in how things are decided (Gogishvili & Harris-Brandts, 2020).

Smith (2014) comments that to organise mega-events, practices of exception are commonplace. Events can often be organised by not adhering to normal planning rules, and even by creating agencies with special powers (Swyngedouw, et al., 2002). A way through which these exceptions are, to an extent, justified, is because of the narrative around the event. If an event employs a powerful story, this can create support for practices of exception (Smith, 2014).

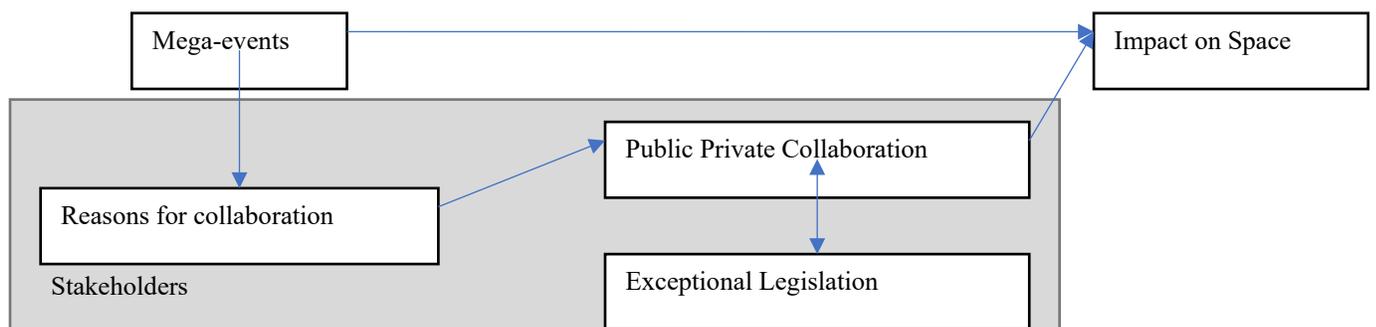


Figure 5: Conceptual Framework (Author, 2021)

Figure 5 shows the conceptual framework and the relations between the different concepts discussed in this chapter.

2.2 Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, there are several possible outcomes to this research. Expected is that the main stakeholders are the organizations that host the two main events, the *Parties* and the *Marches*, and the Municipality of Nijmegen. Expected is that the Municipality holds all the power regarding spatial policy on the *Vierdaagse* and that they are the driving force behind spatial change. Regarding the research of Gogishvili & Harris-Brandts (2020), the possibility exists that the event organizers hold some form of power as well.

Looking at the framework for stakeholder roles presented by Getz, et al. (2006), it is likely that involved stakeholders have different roles.

3. Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology behind this research.

3.1 Case Study

Research on festivals and mega-events is an area of study where the case study method is often adopted (Whitford & Ruhanen, 2013; Cornellissen, et al., 2011; McCartney, 2005). Reason for this is the possibility to go in-depth and to gain integral insights into the processes that drive the event (Clifford, et al., 2016). As this thesis is on a mega-event, the case study method is adopted.

3.1.1 Subject case

The case around which this research is centered is the Nijmegen *Vierdaagse*. The main characteristics of the event have been introduced in chapter 1. The *Vierdaagse* uses a lot of space in the inner city of Nijmegen every year and has a long history in doing so. Looking at this event can therefore gain an insight into mechanisms and influences on public space that have arisen or have been created in Nijmegen over the past years.

3.2 Data Collection

The two main pillars are a literature review and semi-structured interviews combined with a document review. Looking at the case from two angles strengthens the validity of the results (Clifford, et al., 2016). To lay theoretical foundations for this research, first a literature review was conducted. The theories and concepts found have been used to help in answering research questions 2 & 3, they are the basis for the interview questions and the coding tree of the interviews, and they have provided a theoretical mirror for results found in the interviews (Clifford, et al., 2016).

cThe document review provides insight into legal backgrounds, and the interviews provide a detailed insight into the organization of the event, from the perspective of the involved stakeholders (Clifford, et al., 2016). This in-depth knowledge is key to answer the research questions, and this cannot be achieved through a survey or through a quantitatively oriented research. Therefore, this research is of a qualitative and explorative nature. The relationships between the two pillars are visualized in Figure 6.

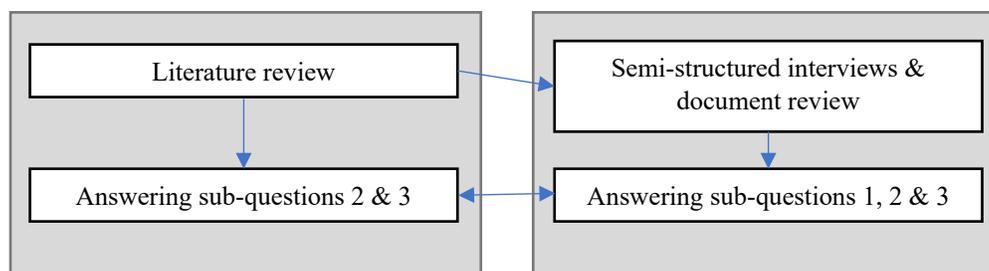


Figure 6: Relationships between pillars of data collection (Author, 2021)

Most of the scholarly literature in this research was found using search engines such as *Scopus* and *Web of Knowledge*. All scholarly literature used is in English, and the policy and legal documents and news articles concerning the *Vierdaagse* are in Dutch.

3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

To collect the primary data for this research a total of 5 semi-structured interviews have been conducted. This method of interviewing provides a key structure to the interview, as well as leave room for respondents to answer freely from their respective perspectives due to the open-ended nature of the questions. This also minimizes possible influence of the posed questions on the given answers (Clifford, et al., 2016; Longhurst, 2016). To increase depth in the interviews, author has actively engaged during the interviews, asking further unscripted and ad rem questions. The interviews have been conducted in Dutch, the interview guide, as well as an English translation, has been added to this thesis as Appendix 2.

With regards to the validity of the responses given in the interviews, and the respondents in general, it is key that respondents have adequate knowledge about the subject at hand. To maximize this, sampling of the respondents was done via the snowball principle (Valentine, 2005). This started with an orientational interview with the chairman of Foundation DE4DAAGSE. To achieve the desired spread in respondents, interviews were conducted with at least one respondent of each of the four main parties. Table 1 presents the respondents. All interviews have been conducted via Microsoft Teams, as per the Covid-19 measures in place at the time of the research. Each respondent has given their explicit approval for their first name to be used in this thesis.

3.4 Document review

Next to the semi-structured interviews, this research has reviewed three relevant documents. These documents are shown in Table 2. The two agreement documents have been brought to the attention of the author during the interviews. As chapter 2 has shown, collaborations between actors are key to hosting a mega-event or festival. Therefore, it is interesting to review the documents on which these collaborations are built. The Framework Agreement and the Cooperation Agreement discussed are not directly publicly accessible, but as they concern agreements by a government entity (the Municipality of Nijmegen), they can be requested through a so-called WOB¹ procedure. Going through such a procedure was not necessary, however, as respondents were willing to share the documents with the author.

¹ A WOB-procedure is named after the Dutch law *Wet Openbaarheid van Bestuur* (En.: Open Government Act). This means that these documents are not publicly accessible but can be requested.

Name	Organisation	Occupation (in Dutch)	Date of interview	Duration
Henny	Stichting DE4DAAGSE (the Marches)	Voorzitter/Marsleider (En.: <i>Chairman</i>)	25-02-2021 (orientational interview)	+/- 30 minutes
Arjen	Gemeente Nijmegen	Projectleider Vierdaagse/ Manager Stadsontwikkeling (En.: <i>Manager City Development/Project Manager Vierdaagse</i>)	23-04-2021	55 minutes
Martien	Ministerie van Defensie	Adjutant, Centrale Verzorging Militairen	29-04-2021	29 minutes
Leo	Stichting Vierdaagsefeesten (the Parties)	Directeur Vierdaagsefeesten (En.: <i>Director Vierdaagsefeesten</i>)	30-04-2021	51 minutes
Rowin	Stichting Vierdaagsefeesten (the Parties)	Manager Vergunningen & Veiligheid (En.: <i>Manager Permits and Safety</i>)	12-05-2021	53 minutes
Henny	Stichting DE4DAAGSE (the Marches)	Voorzitter/Marsleider (En.: <i>Chairman</i>)	11-05-2021	81 minutes

Table 1: Conducted interviews (Author, 2021)

Document	Contents	In English; in thesis referred to as:
Raamovereenkomst (Gemeente Nijmegen, et al., 2017)	Agreement between the Municipality of Nijmegen, Foundation DE4DAAGSE and the Ministry of Defense	Framework Agreement
Samenwerkingsovereenkomst (Gemeente Nijmegen & Stichting Vierdaagsefeesten, 2018)	Agreement between the Municipality of Nijmegen and the Foundation Vierdaagsefeesten	Cooperation Agreement
Omgevingsvisie 2020-2040 (Gemeente Nijmegen, 2020)	Environmental Vision for the city of Nijmegen regarding the next 20 years	Environmental Vision

Table 2: Reviewed documents (Author, 2021)

3.5 Data Analysis

The interviews have been recorded in Microsoft Teams, with a Sound Recorder App on a phone next to the computer's speakers as a back-up. The interviews have been transcribed using AmberScript. The software Atlas.Ti was used to code the raw transcriptions into useable data, and to analyse interviews and the documents. In doing so, a combination of inductive and deductive codes was used (Thomas, 2003).

Code groups, or branches, were created along literature discussed in chapter 2, forming a deductive basis for the code tree. The ‘leafs’ of the code tree have been created inductively. The code tree has been added to this thesis as Appendix 3. The interviews have been conducted in Dutch, and the codes are in English.

The final part of the interview exists of questions building up to a SWOT analysis. The framework for this analysis is taken from Carlsen & Andersson (2011), shown in Figure 7. Respondents have been asked to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. These will in the analysis be combined into a comprehensive SWOT for the *Vierdaagse*.

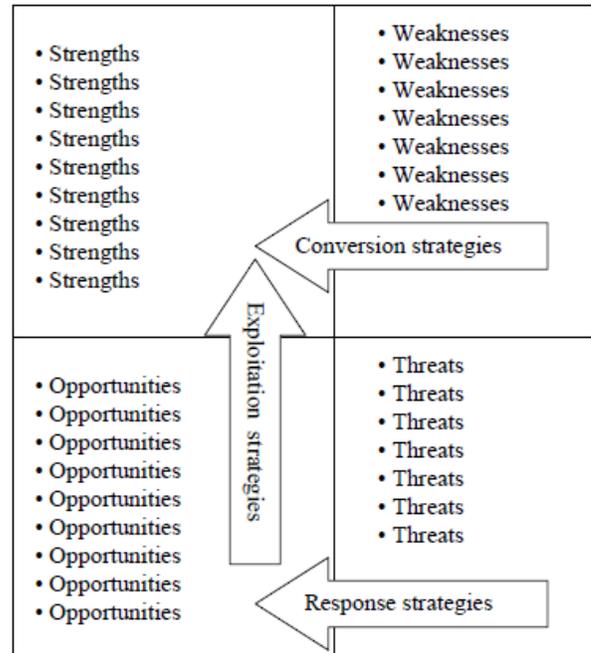


Figure 7: The SWOT analysis framework (Carlsen & Andersson, 2011)

3.6 Ethical Considerations

As this research makes use of interviews, and therefore draws conclusions following respondent’s answers, it is key that the process of data collection and analysis is transparent and clear. All interviews were transcribed and sent back to the respondents. Prior to the interviews, respondents were sent a consent form, in which their rights as a respondent were explained. All participants agreed to the use of their first names in this thesis, as well as the recording of the interviews and the possibility to amend factual errors in the transcript. The consent form used was based on the form also used by Berkedam (2020). The consent form is added to this thesis as Appendix 4.

4. Results

In this chapter, the findings from the semi-structured interviews and document review will be discussed. This is done through the following categorization: 4.1 discusses the main stakeholders of the *Vierdaagse*, 4.2 discusses the *Vierdaagse* as an exception to ‘normal’ practice, 4.3 discusses infrastructure and 4.4 shows a SWOT analysis according to the respondents.

In this chapter, respondents are named by their first names. For clarity on their specific roles and which stakeholder they represent, refer to Appendix 1. Important to note is that the respondents have been interviewed in Dutch and have thus answered in Dutch. Author has translated these answers when necessary for the use as quotes.

4.1 Stakeholders

In Table 3, the roles of the different stakeholders are described along the distinction made by Getz, et al. (2006). In the first column, the main roles have been identified. However, the stakeholder roles in the *Vierdaagse* are not very clear cut. As Getz, et al. (2006) pointed out, stakeholder roles often mix, meaning for example that a supplier can become a sponsor, etc. The Municipality for example is mainly a regulator, providing the approval needed for the Foundations to go through with organizing the event. However, Arjen has stated, the Municipality facilitates as well, and is a sponsor through subsidies. These stakeholders have been working together since the start of their respective parts of the events (Vierdaagsefeesten.nl, 2021; 4daagse.nl, 2021), however, the agreements as they exist now are a recent development (Henny, 2021). Because of this, all stakeholders are allies of each other.

Stakeholder	Main Role	Other key roles
Municipality of Nijmegen	Regulator	Facilitator, Sponsor, Ally
Foundation DE4DAAGSE	Festival Organization	Ally, Facilitator
Foundation Vierdaagsefeesten	Festival Organization	Regulator, Ally
Ministry of Defense	Facilitator	Ally

Table 3: Stakeholder roles in the framework of Getz, et al. (2006)(Author, 2021)

Leo, Rowin, Henny and Arjen (2021) identified Foundation Vierdaagsefeesten as the organization of the *Parties*, and the Foundation DE4DAAGSE as the organization of the *Marches*. As an organizer, they ask the Municipality to approve their *Vlekkenplan*. However, the Foundation Vierdaagsefeesten is a regulator

themselves as well, as they grant permits during that week. This division of roles is also created through the Cooperation agreement (Gemeente Nijmegen & Stichting Vierdaagsefeesten, 2018).

4.2 The *Vierdaagse* as a legislative exception

4.2.1 Who is in charge?

The two main documents discussed in chapter 4.1 show the approach ‘Nijmegen’ has to the *Vierdaagse*. They form the Public Private Partnerships necessary for the event,

In the week of the *Vierdaagse* the Foundation Vierdaagsefeesten almost completely controls the area of the city centre granted to them through the so-called *Vlekkenplan* (Van der Ven, 2019). The blue outline of the city centre in Figure 2 visualizes the area for which the Foundation Vierdaagsefeesten is responsible during the week of the *Vierdaagse*. The Municipality symbolically leases the inner city to Foundation Vierdaagsefeesten for €1,-. In this period, applications for permits must be done through the Foundation Vierdaagsefeesten, and not the Municipality (Rowin, 2021). Next to granting permits, the Foundation’s responsibilities also include safety, traffic and crowd management, and smaller responsibilities that are usually accounted for by the Municipality (Gemeente Nijmegen & Stichting Vierdaagsefeesten, 2018). The Foundation Vierdaagsefeesten fits the description of a special agency, as described by Swyngedouw, et al. (2002), and is also an example of a legislative bypass of normal practice (Gogishvili & Harris-Brandts, 2020). Though this influence is clear, The *Vierdaagse* as an event is named not once in the Nijmegen *Omgevingsvisie 2020-2040* (Gemeente Nijmegen, 2020).

4.2.2 Nijmegen as a host

Arjen (2021) has stated that apart from the documents and formal agreements, that ‘*it is in the DNA of an organization*’ when referring to how the Municipality of Nijmegen considers the *Vierdaagse* in decision-making. Recalling the hosting of the Giro d’Italia, Arjen (2021) mentions that closing off the streets in cities like Arnhem and Apeldoorn was challenging for those municipalities, but “*for the Vierdaagse we do that for a whole week.*” This strengthens their role as a facilitator as well (Getz, et al., 2006).

4.3 Infrastructure

Respondents Leo and Rowin (2021) have stated that there is a noticeable influence of the *Parties* on decision in the spatial domain of the Municipality. As an example, the remodelling of the *Waalgade* was named by Leo, Rowin and Arjen (2021), where the fact that a podium is built there every year, and the will of the Foundation Vierdaagsefeesten to keep it there, has influenced the amount, and the location of, new trees. Arjen added to this the example of the renovation of the Waal Bridge, for which the Municipality inquired Foundation DE4DAAGSE about their wishes, before starting the tender process. Rowin and Leo (2021) called for extra fundamental infrastructure, such as sewer connections for mobile

toilets, and high voltage power connections. Leo (2021) mentioned that to maintain freedom in how to use public space, it is not desirable to build much set infrastructure. Though actual infrastructure is kept to this minimum, the influence of the Foundation Vierdaagsefeesten is made clear: “*we do not pay for [water connections], and we also don’t pay for the power connections. But we have made sure that they would be built.*” (Rowin, 2021).

4.4 SWOT analysis by the respondents

In the last section of the interview, respondents were asked to state their perspectives on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats surrounding the *Vierdaagse* in the spatial domain. The approach is based on Carlsen & Andersson (2011). A summary of the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats can be found in figure 8.

4.4.1 Strengths

The respondents identified several strengths to the *Vierdaagse*. Firstly, the contact with the Municipality of Nijmegen was named numerous times by all the other respondents. Martien, Leo and Henny (2021) stated that making agreements with the Municipality in most cases has gone well, as there is a common goal. From the perspective of the Municipality, Arjen names collaboration with other stakeholders as a strength as well.

Arjen, Henny, Leo and Rowin (2021) name the support by the local community as a strength of the *Vierdaagse*. Leo (2021) stated: *[A strength is that] the Parties have grown organically over the last decades, and that there is a tremendous support base in Nijmegen.*” In the frame of McCartney, et al. (2005), this ‘ownership’ and ‘existing due to its own success’ characterises a recurring mega-event. Illustrating this perceived ownership is a quote from Henny, about people revolting about a proposed change in the route: *“[that] the Vierdaagse has passed through the Van ‘t Santstraat since 1935, does the chairman (of the Foundation DE4DAAGSE) realise this?”* (2021).

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact with Municipality • Legal Framework • Common Goal • Support by locals/ownership 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality not engaging enough • Inner city not festival location • Land ownership at Heumensoord
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More permanent fundamental infrastructure (e.g.: power and sewage) • (Newly) developing areas • Sustainability 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manageability of the event, unbridled growth • Possible decline of public support • Increase in built up area

Figure 8: Summary of the SWOT analysis by the respondents (Author, 2021)

4.4.2 Weaknesses

Leo (2021) identifies the inner city as a weakness, as it is not the ideal place to host a festival: “*the inner city is not built to host a huge party, and that hosting one once every year is not often taken into account*”. Arjen (2021) adds the impact of the event on inhabitants on the city to this: “*Every [Vierdaagse] we receive around 200 angry phone calls.*”. He countered this weakness almost directly by adding “*but at the same time, more than 1,5 million people are happy.*”

A stand-alone weakness identified by Martien is the opaqueness surrounding the mandate over *Heumensoord*, foreseeing possible issues in the future.

4.4.3 Opportunities

The first opportunity defined by Leo and Rowin (2021) is that the city is growing, and that there are more spaces close to the inner city that can be integrated in the *Parties*. Examples are the former Honig factory area and the new island in the Waal. Exploiting this opportunity can add to the strength of the *Vierdaagse* (Carlsen & Andersson, 2011).

Rowin (2021) calls for even more permanent infrastructure. He names the archaeological sub-surface of some areas as a drawback, but the opportunity lies in finding solutions to still lay sewer and power connections close to those areas to replace the polluting power units running on fossil fuels. This adds to the sustainability of the event as well. Sustainability in itself was named as an opportunity by Arjen, Leo, Rowin and Henny (2021) as a major opportunity. Some examples are banning the use of plastic cups, and no longer offering burgers and fries cooked on gas.

Martien (2021) was the only respondent who did not identify opportunities, stating that everything is going great. Henny (2021) stated that Covid-19 has had an impact on opportunities he saw for the event, as there was no edition to look back on.

4.4.4 Threats

The threat that is identified most is the growth of the *Vierdaagse*, regarding number of visitors and size. The number of visitors was at a record high the last time when it was organized at, and expectations are that it will keep growing (Leo, Arjen, 2021). Both stated that this was something to reassess, “*what is manageable in the public space, and how can you make the best use of public space*” (Leo, 2021), “*then I am standing on a awkwardly busy square, and I ask to myself, why do people still want to be here?*” (Arjen, 2021).

This busyness can also be a trigger for a decline of public support. Arjen (2021) recalls the ongoing discussion with inhabitants of the city centre about the pressure the *Vierdaagse* has on the city, later focussing on “*the balance between liveliness and liveability.*” Another reason Arjen (2021) names is the trend that inner cities become “*areas of experience*”, which is also noted by Burbank, et al. (2002).

Responding to this is key (Carlsen & Andersson, 2011), to maintain public support.

Henny (2021) identified the increase in built up area as a threat. Stating “*you used to cross the river and be in nature [...]*” while mentioning that in the shortest (emergency) route now “*you no longer leave the built-up area, popularly put, you don’t leave Nijmegen*” (Henny, 2021).

5. Conclusions

Chapter 5 discusses the main conclusions that can be drawn from this research.

5.1 Exceptional practices

The permanent spatial impact of the *Vierdaagse* on Nijmegen regarding infrastructure is very small. The impact it does have is focussed on two things: the permanent invisible infrastructure, such as sewers and powerlines, and the considerations taken by the municipality regarding the development of the city. The latter is interesting, as this is a clear example of practices of exception (Gogishvili & Harris-Brandts, 2020). The frequency with which this was named as a strength by the respondents adds to the value it has for the *Vierdaagse*.

Exceptions like the legal framework surrounding the *Vierdaagse* are subject to local circumstances, such as the support base. Because of this influence, it is difficult to judge if the *Vierdaagse* case can be applied to other mega-events.

5.2 Infrastructure

The direct impact of the *Vierdaagse* on permanent infrastructure is little. However, the influence of the event on the Municipality of Nijmegen is large, because of a strong legal framework and the will of the Municipality to facilitate. The *Vierdaagse* is thus not a *driving* event as described by Burbank, et al. (2002), but because it is a recurring event there is certain influence on space in Nijmegen. The internalization of the common goal that is served is key for the cooperation from the Municipality of Nijmegen. As this can be ascribed to the history and yearly recurrence of the event, it is unclear if similar sentimental values exist, and if so, have an influence, on comparable events.

5.3 SWOT

To draw conclusions from the SWOT analysis, it is important to look at ways to maintain the strengths, to convert weaknesses to strengths, to exploit opportunities, and to respond to threats (Carlsen & Andersson, 2011).

5.3.1 Maintain Strengths

Several strengths, such as the local support and the contact between actors, have been named when discussing threats. It is key to maintain these strengths.

5.3.2 Converting Weaknesses

Conversation between the main stakeholders can convert the current weaknesses into strengths. Contact between stakeholders has been named both a strength and weakness, indicating fragility.

5.3.3 Exploiting opportunities

To exploit the opportunities it is key that the Municipality engages actively, as this is currently not the case (Leo & Rowin, 2021), especially regarding an expansion to new areas.

5.3.4 Responding to threats

When responding to the threat of unbridled growth of the *Vierdaagse* communication between stakeholders is key. Currently, the Municipality and both Foundation have different opinions on how to deal with this. To anticipate this, a discussion among the stakeholders must take place to come to an agreement on the best strategy.

5.4 Final remarks

The *Vierdaagse* is a unique case for looking into the influence mega-events have on public space of host cities. The *Vierdaagse* is a yearly recurring event, increasing influence of the event on Nijmegen. To conclude, the *Vierdaagse* does not purely march towards spatial change, but walks by regularly.

6. Reflections and Recommendations

In the final chapter of this thesis, I reflect on the research, looking at elements that could have impacted the results, and things I could have done differently. Building on this, the final paragraph indicates some recommendations for further research.

6.1 Reflecting on the research

Firstly, the number of interviews provides a clear image of the *Vierdaagse* for this research, but more are recommended for a more in-depth view of the event. Something that can also have had an influence on this research is that the first conducted interview was with Arjen, from the Municipality of Nijmegen. At this stage, I was still finding my way as an interviewer, and I had not yet heard things from other respondents that I in hindsight could have asked him about. An interview with either him or another person at the Municipality of Nijmegen at a later stage, or at least not as the first interview, would have added more insights from the viewpoint of the Municipality. Next to this, some interviews have been more useful than others.

A part that might have added to this thesis is an integral GIS map instead of Figure 2, showing the *Vlekkenplan* and the entertainment areas in the inner city. However, due to time constraints, I have chosen to use the map shared by my respondents, as this map also clearly shows what I wanted it to show.

6.2 Recommendations

This research can be carried further along the lines of a policy review of the Municipality of Nijmegen. Arjen mentioned that there is little spatial policy on events, he did mention however, that in certain *bestemmingsplannen* (En.: Zoning Plans) things were written on events, and in the future new *omgevingsplannen* (En.: Environmental Plans) will be made within the framework of the new *Omgevingswet* (En.: Environment and Planning Act) (Gemeente Nijmegen, 2020). These plans have not been taken into consideration in this thesis, and they could add new insights to this research.

As this study revolves around the *Vierdaagse*, it is interesting to look into how other, comparable, mega-events are organized through a comparative case study.

6.3 Covid-19

On a more personal note, I feel that the Covid-19 pandemic and the off-campus style of teaching and working has greatly impacted my thesis. For example, instead of a moment where you have a first group meeting and meet everyone in person, the first meeting was online, just like a course lecture before it. For me, this had a great effect on lacking the sense of “I’m writing my thesis now” throughout the process.

Nevertheless, I have been able to push through and I am happy with, and proud of, the result.

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Appendix 1: Key Distinctions

In this table the most important Dutch terms are explained. The parties marked with an asterisk are the main stakeholders of the *Vierdaagse*.

Word in Dutch	Meaning	Translation in English	Referred to in thesis as
Vierdaagse	General name of the event as a whole, comprising of the Marches and the Parties	The Fourdays	<i>The Vierdaagse</i>
Internationale Vierdaagse Afstandsmarsen Nijmegen	The name of the Marching event that is the centre of the whole event.	The International Four Days Marches Nijmegen	The Marches
Vierdaagsefeesten	The festival that is hosted in the inner city of Nijmegen.	The Four Days Parties	The Parties
Gemeente Nijmegen*	The Municipality that this thesis focusses on. The host of the Marches and the Parties	Municipality of Nijmegen	Municipality of Nijmegen
Stichting DE4DAAGSE*	The organising party of the Marches.	Foundation DE4DAAGSE	Foundation DE4DAAGSE
Stichting Vierdaagsefeesten*	The ‘organising’ party of the Parties.	Foundation Four Days Parties	Foundation Vierdaagsefeesten
Nederlands Ministerie van Defensie*	Builds army personnel accommodation and other temporary infrastructure	Dutch Ministry of Defense	Ministry of Defense

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Interview Guide in Dutch, as used in the interviews

Blok 1: Introductie

- Wie bent u en waar ben u op dit moment werkzaam?
- Kunt u wat vertellen over uw achtergrond bij deze organisatie?
- Hoe bent u bij de Nijmeegse Vierdaagse betrokken geraakt?

Blok 2: Ruimtelijk Beleid

- Wat is het ruimtelijk beleid (stedelijke ontwikkeling) omtrent de Nijmeegse Vierdaagse op dit moment?
 - Hoe is het ruimtelijk beleid omtrent de Nijmeegse Vierdaagse binnen uw organisatie tot stand gekomen?
 - Is dat vergelijkbaar met andere evenementen? (Ja/Nee/Waarom?)
 - Op welke termijn vindt er doorgaans verandering plaats in het ruimtelijk beleid?
 - Bij Vierdaagse?
 - Bij andere evenementen?
 - Bij ruimtelijk beleid in algemene zin?
 - Zijn er op dit moment ingrijpende veranderingen geagendeerd? Zo ja, welke zijn dat?
- Hoe verschilt ruimtelijk beleid voor permanente infrastructuur van tijdelijke infrastructuur met betrekking tot de Vierdaagse?

Blok 3: Huidige situatie

- Kunt u mij vertellen over vorige projecten waar er gebruik is gemaakt van infrastructuur van de Vierdaagse? **Overheden**
- Kunt u vertellen over hoe de Vierdaagse op dit moment gebruik maakt van bestaande infrastructuur en/of publieke ruimtes? **Organisatie 4D**
- Kunt u vertellen over hoe de Vierdaagsefeesten op dit moment gebruik maakt van bestaande infrastructuur en/of publieke ruimtes? **Organisatie 4DF**
- Kunt u vertellen over hoe u op dit moment gebruik maakt van bestaande infrastructuur en/of publieke ruimtes? **MinDef**

Blok 4: Ruimtelijke kansen

- Als u naar het huidige ruimtelijke beleid omtrent de Vierdaagse kijkt, waar liggen voor u....?
 - De sterke punten
 - De zwakke punten
 - Bedreigingen
 - Kansen
 - En waar liggen deze vanuit het perspectief van uw organisatie?
 - **Vraag herhalen, andere kansen, bedreigingen etc**
- Bent u in uw werk zaken tegengekomen waarvan u dacht: hier liggen kansen?
 - Zo ja? Welke kansen? Waarom?
 - Zo nee? Doorvragen? Waarom niet?
- Denkt u dat er in het verleden kansen zijn gemist?
 - Zo ja? Welke kansen? Waarom?
 - Zo nee? Doorvragen? Waarom niet?

Interview guide translated to English

Block 1: Introduction

- Who are you and where do you currently work?
- Can you tell us about your background at this organisation?
- How did you become involved in the Nijmegen *Vierdaagse*?

Block 2: Spatial Policy

- What is the spatial policy (urban development) regarding the Nijmegen *Vierdaagse* at the moment?
 - How did the spatial policy regarding the Nijmegen *Vierdaagse* come about within your organization?
 - Is that comparable to other events? (Yes/No/Why?)
 - In what period of time will there usually be changes in spatial policy?
 - At the *Vierdaagse*?
 - At other events?
 - In spatial policy in general?
 - Are major changes currently on the agenda? If so, which are they?
- How does spatial policy for permanent infrastructure differ from temporary infrastructure regarding the *Vierdaagse*?

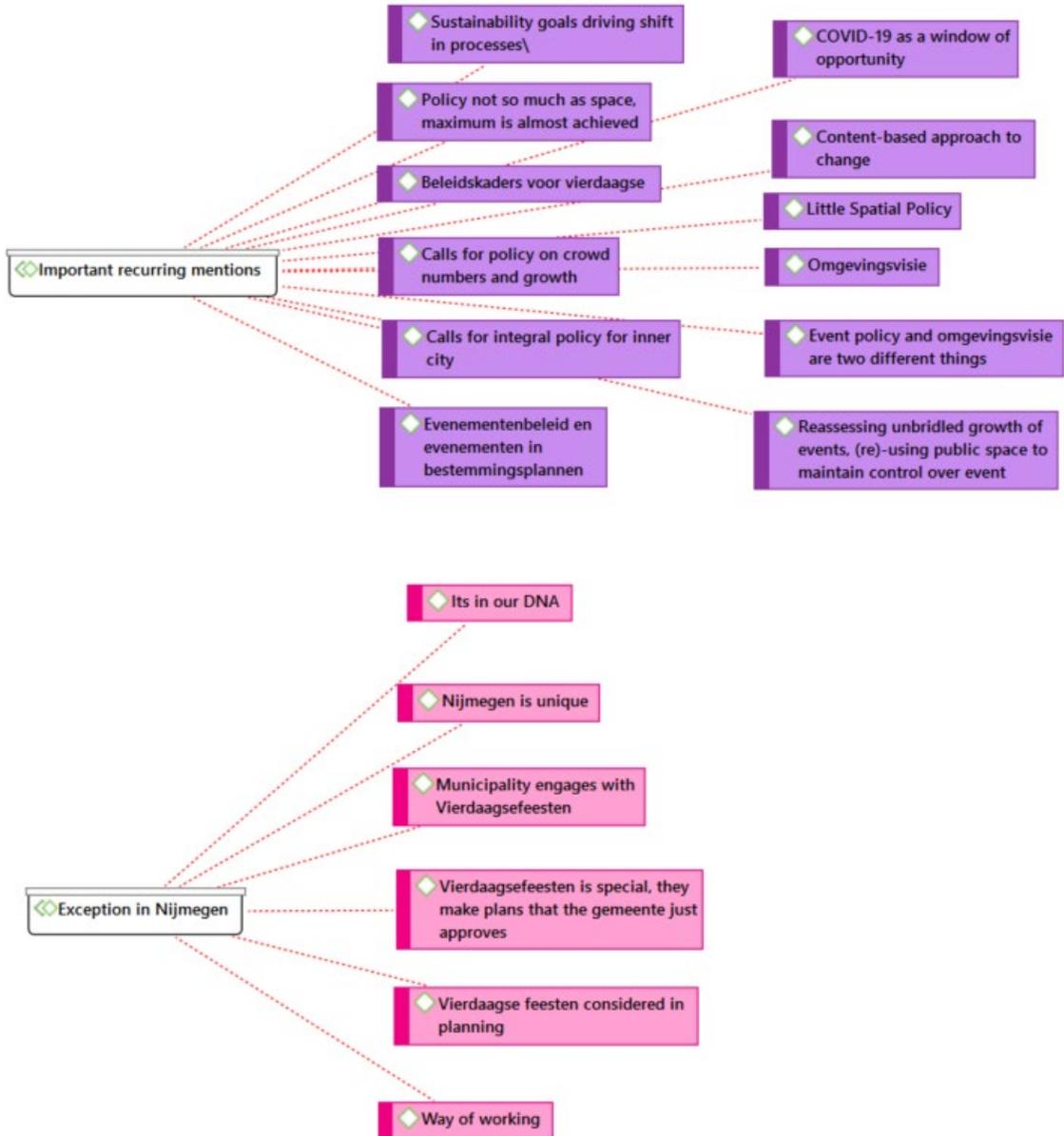
Block 3: Current situation

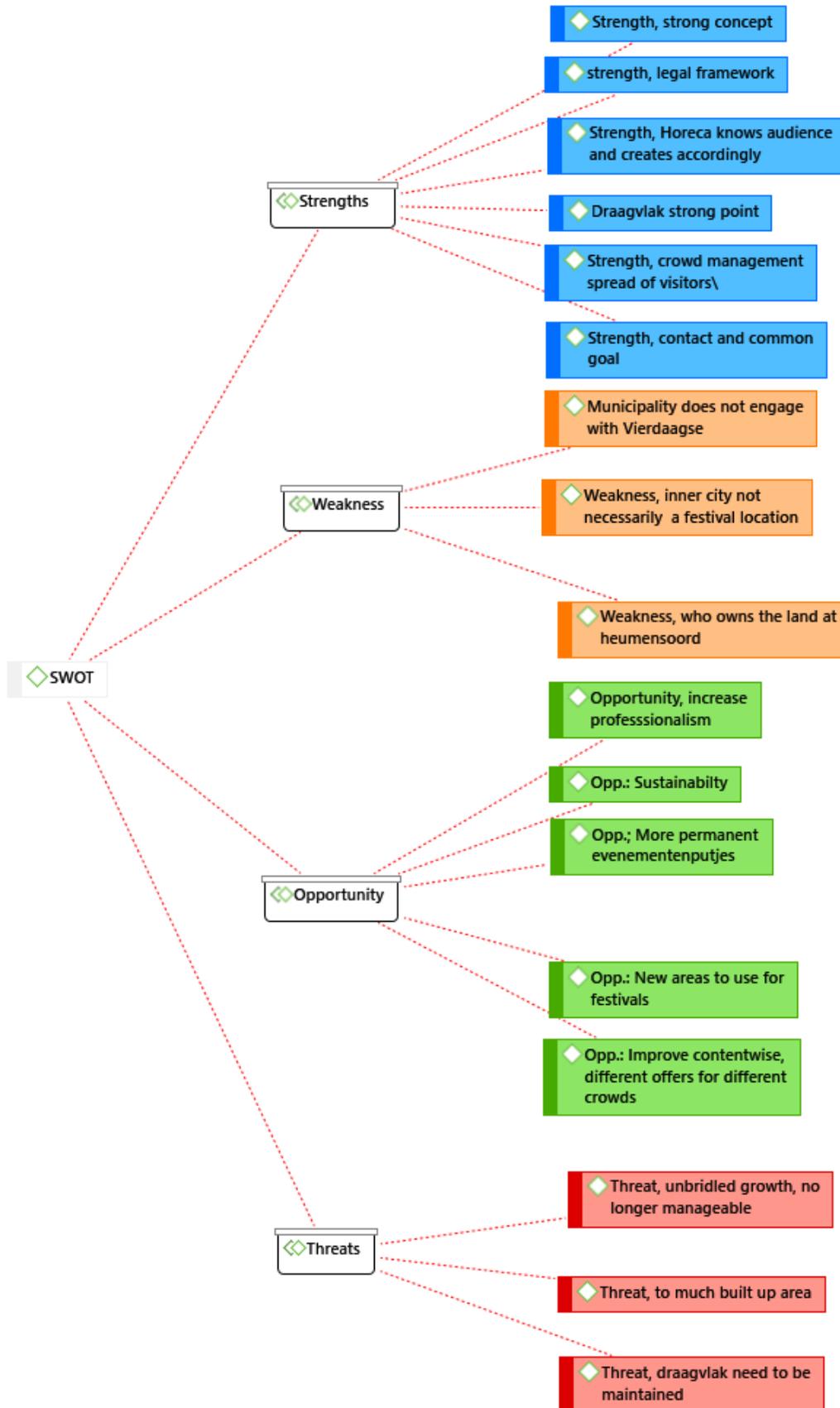
- Can you tell me about previous projects where the infrastructure of the *Vierdaagse* was used? **Governments**
- Can you tell us about how the *Vierdaagse* marches currently uses existing infrastructure and/or public spaces? **Organization 4D**
- Can you tell us about how the Vierdaagsefeesten currently uses existing infrastructure and/or public spaces? **Organization 4DF**
- Can you tell us about how you currently use existing infrastructure and/or public spaces? **MinDef**

Block 4: Spatial opportunities

- If you look at the current spatial policy regarding the *Vierdaagse*, where do you see....?
 - The strong points
 - The weak points
 - Threats
 - Opportunities
 - And where are these from your organization's perspective?
 - **Repeat question, other opportunities, threats etc**
- Have you come across things in your work that made you think: there are opportunities here?
 - If so? What opportunities? Why?
 - If not? Inquire, why not?
- Do you think opportunities have been missed in the past?
 - If so? What opportunities? Why?
 - If not? Inquire, why not?

Appendix 3: Code Tree





Appendix 4: Consent Form

Overeenkomst van deelname

Onderzoeksproject: bachelorscriptie Technische Planologie Roman Schuijers

Titel: The Four Days Marches as a driver for spatial change in Nijmegen

Het doel van het onderzoek is om erachter te komen op welke manier het mega evenement van de Nijmeegse Vierdaagse positief kan bijdragen aan ruimtelijke vraagstukken en ruimtelijke kwaliteit in Nijmegen.

Geachte heer/ mevrouw,

Bedankt dat u mij wil helpen met mijn bachelorscriptie onderzoek naar de mogelijke positieve ruimtelijke bijdrage van Vierdaagse aan de stad Nijmegen. Met deze brief informeer ik u over het verloop van het interview.

Vanwege de huidige ontwikkelingen omtrent het coronavirus, zal het interview online plaatsvinden. Het gesprek zal circa 45 minuten duren. U kunt op ieder moment aangeven te willen stoppen, of een vraag niet te willen beantwoorden. Het interview kan door de open structuur ook uitlopen wanneer u extra toelichting wenst te geven. Het interview zal worden opgenomen met een audiorecorder en vervolgens worden getranscribeerd. U heeft de mogelijkheid het transcript te controleren en waar nodig aan te passen op feitelijke onjuistheden. Het transcript zal worden gebruikt om de informatie uit het interview nader te analyseren, om zo de onderzoeksvraag te kunnen beantwoorden. Het audiobestand zal verwijderd worden wanneer het onderzoek is afgerond. De gegevens die tijdens het interview worden verzameld zullen vertrouwelijk worden behandeld. De gegevens, evenals het transcript, zullen worden gedeeld met mijn begeleider Jacco Kuper, MSc.. Daarnaast zal de scriptie worden opgenomen in het archief van de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. Het transcript zal niet in de scriptie worden opgenomen. U heeft de mogelijkheid anoniem te blijven indien u dit wenselijk acht.

Met het ondertekenen van deze overeenkomst verklaar ik dat:

- Het mij duidelijk is waar dit onderzoek over gaat.
- Ik begrijp dat deelname aan dit onderzoek vrijwillig is en ik het recht heb om individuele vragen niet te beantwoorden.
- Ik begrijp dat mijn deelname aan het onderzoek vertrouwelijk is en dat, zonder mijn schriftelijk bezwaar hiertegen, materiaal (algemeen of in de vorm van quotes) in de rapportage kan worden gebruikt.
- Ik begrijp dat alle informatie die wordt verkregen vertrouwelijk zal worden bewaard, zij het op een met wachtwoord beveiligde computer of bestand.
- Ik begrijp dat de data die voortkomt uit het interview gebruikt kan worden in artikelen, hoofdstukken van boeken, gepubliceerd en ongepubliceerd werk en in presentaties.
- Ik begrijp dat ik na afloop van het interview mijn antwoorden slechts kan aanpassen op feitelijke onjuistheden.

Voor verdere vragen kunt u contact opnemen met:
Roman Schuijers (student) en Jacco Kuper MSc. (begeleider)
R.h.schuijers@rug.nl b.j.kuper@rug.nl

Wanneer u akkoord gaat met bovenstaande, graag invullen:

Ik geef toestemming tot het opnemen van het interview
voor verwerkings- en coderingsdoeleinden JA / NEE

Ik wens anoniem te blijven binnen dit onderzoek JA / NEE

Wanneer NEE:

Mijn voornaam kan worden gebruikt binnen dit onderzoek JA / NEE

Wanneer JA:
Er kan een pseudoniem naar mijn keuze worden gebruikt JA / NEE
(Bijvoorbeeld: 'respondent *nummer*')

Naam deelnemer interview
.....

Datum
.....

Email.....

(Indien u wenst een transcript van dit interview te ontvangen om te checken op feitelijke onjuistheden)

Handtekening
.....