

The impact of socioeconomic factors on the sense of belonging amongst German academics in Groningen

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Abstract

In previously conducted research, the relationship between socioeconomic status and inclusion have been explored, narrowed down by specifying the research group to highly-educated individuals or specific cultural groups. Furthermore, exploring how socioeconomic status has impacted the forming of social groups. This research will explore a broader socioeconomic framework and how that impacts the two dimensional, socio-spatial and emotional central place-belongingness, sense of belonging framework. A semi-structured interview guide and a Code Co-Occurrence Table are used to analyse the data. It is found that the perceived social distance to the local community, which is a social component of a sense of belonging, is negatively impacted by socioeconomic factors. However, the status and appreciation that come from working at the University of Groningen tap into the emotional dimension of a sense of belonging.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In academic research, a sense of belonging has gained an increasing interest in its concept. Especially how it encompasses spatially loaded terms like place-belongingness and the build-up of emotional connection to a place that generates identity (Hooks, 2009; Antonsich, 2010). This existence of identity and emotional connection to a place linked to inclusion in society has introduced research into the concept of a sense of belonging (Choudry & Hiatswayo, 2015).

Sense of belonging exists on multiple scales like regional and local (Scholten and Penninx, 2016). It even exists at the micro-level of a workplace (Gauthier, 2016). In previously conducted research sense of belonging has been explored through cultural geography and anthropology (Mackenzie, 2004; Malone, 2007). Furthermore, it has also been investigated in social sciences and communication studies (Antonsich, 2010; Cheung et al., 2013; Easterbrook et al., 2020). In finding a unimodal definition for a sense of belonging lies its hardship of being a self-report measure. It demands a more intensive form of qualitative research to determine if the self-reported measures coincide with the previously collected data from other participants. Resulting in a lack of validity through the use of self-report measures in social studies (Powell-Young, 2012). Making sense of belonging a hard to grasp concept. But over time it has started to establish itself in social and spatial sciences (Antonsich, 2010). A sense of belonging is intrinsically linked to society and communities. Because it gives shape to the emotional ties and social relations within. Societies are often built upon the prevalence of shared identification. This links the individual to society and redefines the self to the other, existing in communities or society as a whole (Katz, 2009).

1.2 Research objective

This study aims to get a better understanding of how socioeconomic factors influences a sense of belonging. Previously, research has been done on the concepts of self-identification in contrast to an individual's place in society. For instance, on the integration of an immigrant in the workforce and how socioeconomic factors influence identification. Firstly, the research gap here lies in the lack of research on the impact of socioeconomic factors on a sense of belonging. Secondly, there is a lack of specificity of previously done research. There been research done on highly skilled working immigrants in a country (Gauthier, 2016) but not highly skilled working immigrants from a specific cultural group in a local context. So focusing on the city level and looking at the specific cultural group in a work segment would fill this research gap. Therefore, the following research question was formulated:

"What impact do socioeconomic factors have on German academics in Groningen on their sense of belonging?"

This research question consists of two concepts; the goal is to understand how socioeconomic factors impact a sense of belonging. To do so it is needed to identify for both elements individually how these relate to the research sample. And to determine if socioeconomic factors impact the sense of belonging. Therefore, the following sub-questions were formulated to help answer the research question. *"What socioeconomic factors influence German academics in Groningen?"* and *"What does a sense of belonging entail for German academics in Groningen?"*. The first sub-question focuses on the socioeconomic dimension

that relates to working at the university. The latter question focuses on the place-belongingness in Groningen and the socio-spatial dimension of inclusion, this will be discussed in the next section.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Socioeconomic framework

Going into detail of the theoretical frameworks. Firstly, the socioeconomic framework. These are socioeconomic factors as a framework defined by Manstead (2018) in his article '*the psychology of social class: how socioeconomic status impacts thought, feelings, and behaviour*'. Easterbrook et al. (2020) stated that socioeconomic factors consist of two elements. Namely, the social factors that determine one's identity and place in society seen from an economic standpoint. The social factors that determine an individual's place in society is a broadly researched topic with an ever-present uncertainty over which factors include social factors (Kraus et al., 2017). These factors are mostly influenced by the cultural build-up of the scale that is looked at. The social factors determine cultural similarity and a sense of identification (Katz, 2009). Within the definition of socioeconomic factors, the following factors are incorporated: income, education level and occupation (Easterbrook et al., 2020). Furthermore, Galle & Fleischmann (2020) argue that the presence of social support, which is country dependent, should also be included in this definition. Furthermore, social cohesion is also a determinant of someone's socioeconomic status (Freeman, 1986). The availability of social support diminishes the exclusion effects ensures security in society (Burgoon & Rooduijn, 2021) for ethnic minorities (Galle & Fleischmann, 2020) and highly skilled immigrants (Choudry & Hlatshwayo, 2015; Gauthier, 2016). Choudry and Hlatshwayo (2015) further mentioned that working immigrants might suffer from discrimination in the workplace, segmentation and struggling to find social cohesion due to a lack of social support institutions that reduce the distance between working immigrants and the receiving society. Furthermore, civic support systems and institutions foster a cooperative structure and build trust between ethnic groups or immigrants with the dominant group. Resulting in better co-operating networks and a more inclusive society (Putnam, 1993). Another socioeconomic struggle that working immigrants face is the concept of precarity (Schierup and Jørgensen, 2016). This concept entails the uncertainty of working immigrants on the labour market and the higher replaceability of natives. Precarity exists in a society with a dominant group that can assert power over other groups. This means that working immigrants have a limited influence on socioeconomic factors and this influences their sense of belonging (Cichocka, 2021). Furthermore, highly skilled immigrants deal with a lack of local social contacts, devaluating of foreign diploma's and skills, prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination (Gauthier, 2016). These impact socioeconomic integration which results in more distance to society and exclusion (Antonsich, 2010). Now moving on to the socioeconomic factors as explained by Manstead (2018). He defines socioeconomic factors as differences in an individual's economic position, educational level, occupation, and subjective social class. He comprises subjective social class and individual's economic position into an individual's socioeconomic status (SES) (Manstead, 2018). The social results being that people with a higher SES identify themselves more with individuals of a higher social class than with individuals with the same cultural background. So, making them more likely to identify themselves with people from the same occupation, education and income level (Manstead, 2018; Easterbrook et al., 2020). As a result, forming social groups and polarising themselves from others outside their social community (Levitas, 2004; Nair et al., 2021).

2.2 Sense of belonging framework

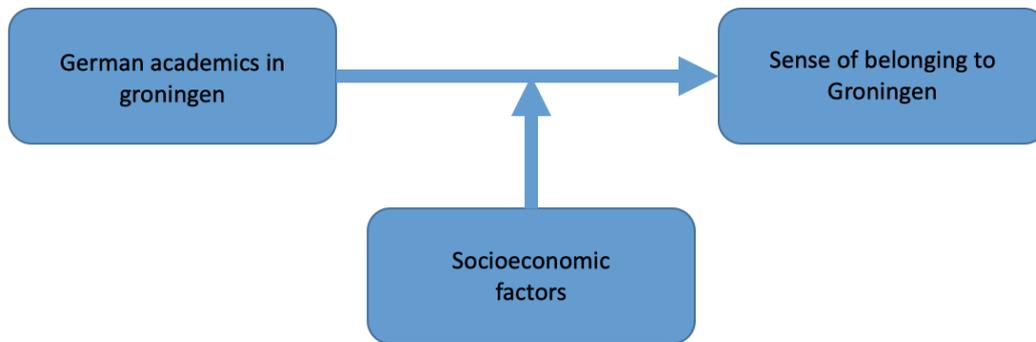
Secondly, a sense of belonging framework as defined by Antonisch in his article '*Searching for belonging- an Analytical framework*' (2010). A sense of belonging is a synonym for a connection with a national or ethnic identity. It is a self-explanatory term with a hard to grasp unimodal definition (Katz, 2009). Fortier further collaborated on this description of a sense of belonging by stating that proximity of cultural or social groups can create a 'group belonging'. This exists in a certain place (1997). Armstrong advocated that this concept should incorporate relations that are founded in a place but are no longer place-bound due to globalisation and protective state-nationalism. which hinders the sense of belonging because it is primarily formed in the local. But this does not evaporate a sense of belonging to a cultural group in a global orientated society (Armstrong, 1998). There is a change in social relations that have become increasingly less place-bound and has taken the form of a network society (Grewal, 2008; Castells, 2010). This network society changed the internal place dynamics by creating new social, political and cultural dynamics in society. The internal place dynamics have changed, but the need for identification is ever-present (Castells, 2010; Haas et al., 2015). However, the social build-up and the power relations between the migrants and the receiving society has changed into an unequal power relation (Castells, 2010). This unequal power relation is at a disadvantage for the migrant. The receiving society is trying to control this changing society by adapting the institutions to cope with these changes (Nilsson & Wrench, 2009; Smith-Doerr & Powell, 2010). Changing the definition of a sense of belonging to fit a globalized society.

Sense of belonging consists of two dimensions the personal dimensions of place-belongingness and the socio-spatial dimension of inclusion and exclusion (Antonsich, 2010). This distinction introduced by Fenster (2005). These dimensions are mutually dependent. The personal dimension focuses on belonging as a private experience of place attachment. They are formed out of the socio-spatial dimension that overarches in community values, everyday practices, institutions and citizenship (Fenster, 2005). Antonsich (2010) further collaborates on this by focussing more on the individual dimension of belonging. Sense of belonging exists as an emotional feeling of an individual that is linked to a place, this emotional attachment to this place forms place-belongingness (Antonsich, 2010). The emotional aspect is associated with security, comfort and social ties (Hooks, 2009).

Belonging is present on multiple scales (Antonsich, 2010). The research is focused on a sense of belonging on the regional scale. So it will be limited to this scale. Moving on to how a sense of belonging is connected to place identity and its socio-spatial determinants. Sense of belonging is beside the individual domain influenced by the social domain. Being excluded will hurt the sense of belonging. This even impacts the place belongingness dimension (Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008; Antonsich, 2010). Elaborating on this, inclusion/exclusion is connected to the socio-spatial domain. This originates in cultural unity and how social relations are formed in a place (Antonsich, 2010). For exclusion to be present there needs to be a dominant group that categorizes another group in a social category. Mostly being done by the people that control the most resources (Massey, 2015). Thus both dimensions of the framework of a sense of belonging are influenced by the receiving society. Firstly, Place-belongingness is indirectly influenced by external factors because of the emotional forming of your place in society. Secondly, the socio-spatial domain is directly influenced by external factors. Because it determines the social relations and cultural values of a place and this radiates to an individual's sense of belonging (Antonsich, 2010).

2.3 Conceptual model

The conceptual model that is used for the research is depicted below. The conceptual model visualises the main elements of the research question. Namely, socioeconomic factors and sense of belonging. The Sample group is specified in here as ‘German academics’ and the research location is ‘Groningen’. As stated by Cichocka (2021) sense of belonging is partially impacted by socioeconomic factors determining the direction of the variable in the conceptual framework.



Conceptual model (Kops, 2021)

2.4 Expectations

Because the research will be based on qualitative data gathering, the less nomothetic form of expectations will be used. The expectation of the outcome of the research is the following. Firstly, economic stability and having an active working life fosters sense of belonging and gives a prospect for future stability and ensurance that the current role that person is fulfilling will also have a place for the future. This according to Kaptani & Yuval-Davis (2008) is a necessary factor for a sense of belonging. The expectation will be that the German academics are expected to work longer at the university have a larger sense of belonging derived from a work aspect.

3. Methodology

3.1 Choice of data collection method

The research questions are formulated so that they could be answered with qualitative research. The decision for qualitative data collection was made, because the research question and sub questions focus on the impact of socioeconomic factors on the sense of belonging to a place, in this case Groningen. Collecting this data using quantitative data collection would mostly test the significance of these factors, without gaining insight into what other hidden factors impact the relation. Therefore, qualitative data collection was the desired tool, to get a broader understanding of what factors impact the sense of belonging of German Academics in Groningen.

3.2 Corona-crisis impacting the research

The Corona-crisis has changed the nature of how interviews could be conducted. Antecedently, interviews would be conducted on a place that had been pre-arranged by the researcher and the respondent. This would make it easier for a trust relationship to arise between the researcher and the respondent, thus allowing for more sensitive data to be

collected. Due to the Corona-crisis the university has changed the interview protocol to strictly online interviews in order to protect the respondent and the interviewer.

3.3 Sampling strategy and contact with participants

The desired sample that has been chosen for the research is German academics in Groningen. When only focussing on Non-Dutch academics in Groningen the cultural differences in the sample would be too large and the research would lose strength when being too broadly specified. Firstly, choosing for German Academics narrows the research sample but also would create a more culturally similar research group than when focussing on European academics in Groningen. Secondly, The German population in Groningen is second to the Dutch population, the biggest cultural group (UG, 2018). This would help in finding participants for a specific research group. Deciding on the sampling method began by choosing between probability sampling and non-probability sampling. The latter was desired because of a specific set of group perimeters.

The used sampling strategy was snowball sampling, this sampling strategy focuses on using your own contacts in finding a respondent that fits the sample. The reach of the sampling enlarges by asking multiple people if they know someone that fits the sample. The result was a sample that consists of 5 participants that are all currently working as a PhD'er, research-assistant and professor at the faculty of spatial sciences in Groningen.

3.4 Form of data collection

In order to get a deeper understanding of the socioeconomic factors that impact the sense of belonging an interview guide was constructed. The interview guide (appendix 1) followed a semi-structured interview approach with a clear line throughout the interview. In the beginning of the interview it tried to establish the distance to the receiving society, the university bubble and the role of the receiving society in accepting the German academic. The second segment of the interview focussed more on the socioeconomic factors that influenced their sense of belonging. Focusing on the social support, income, education and workplace environment.

3.5 Data analysis method

The transcripts of the interviews were put in the coding and analysis software Atlas.TI. Firstly, it was determined that the coding scheme was going to include two types of codes. Namely, deductive and inductive codes this is coherent with the form of the semi-structured interviews. Because the interview questions were based upon the literature but allowed for undefined factors in the interview. So applying the same coding strategy was logical. The deductive codes that followed the literature were placed in code groups for structure. The following code groups were created in line with the literature: individual background, socioeconomic, sense of belonging and social cohesion. The inductive codes that followed out of the transcript fitted in the pre-existing code groups and were added to that. Secondly, to analyse the data, that are the codes with the quotations, the Code Co-Occurrence Table tool in Atlas.TI was used. This would indicate the frequency and in which instances codes coexist. Resulting in the output that is depicted in Appendix 2. Because the research aims to research the impact that socioeconomic factors have on the sense of belonging. Therefore, were the rows filled with socioeconomic factors that existed out of the codes that were found in the interviews. Comparing them to the other codes that relate to the code groups of: position in society, sense of belonging, social cohesion and individual background. Resulting in

quotations that have these code columns and rows intersect when multiple codes are used in a statement. This does not imply that there is a relation between the codes, therefore the quotations need to be analysed in the results section. The possibility of codes that have a relation but are not connected in the Code Co-Occurrence table is unlikely because the coding scheme also includes codes in the interview that talk about the prevalence of a certain theme, even though the existence of this code is being denied in the interview. Thus allowing in the results to confirm that in that context factors are not connected. In the results section the co-occurrences are leading to see what so of relations there are between socioeconomic factors and the concept of sense of belonging and all that in entails.

3.6 Transcribing

Before every interview was conducted a verbal consent was given for the use of a recording device to capture the entirety of the interview. These interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

3.7 Ethical considerations

For this research there are multiple ethical considerations to think about. Because the research is in a very specific research area and sensitive data is being collected with respect to sense of belonging in relation to occupation at the University of Groningen it is important that the participants are being protected in this research by anonymity, confidentiality and diligent data management. In order to protect the participants there is no collection of data with respect to age and any other details that can be used to identify the participants. For this names of spouses and any other personal identifiers are removed.

4. Results

4.1 position in society

4.1.1 Acceptance

As mentioned in the methodology Atlas.TI was used as the coding and analysing software of the gathered results. In the Code Co-occurrence table, you can see that there are discrepancies between the number of cases and that one code occurs and the number of cases that occur with the socioeconomic factors that are being researched. For instance, this difference is only 19 cases out of the 32 cases for the code 'connection with Groningen'. Looking closely in a structured manner at the codes in the order as they appear in the columns. Firstly, looking at the two codes that have similar meanings namely 'Acceptance' and 'Inclusion'. The code acceptance focuses on the interaction with society and how other people in society accept you in society. There is only one code that co-occurs and that is with occupation. Occupation influences acceptance in Groningen as follows from the following quote:

Participant 2: *“So of course, I was always well accepted by other people in society, because a University job is usually considered, I guess, quite a good job. “*

This quote highlights that the individual feels that a strong socioeconomic position relates to acceptance in society.

4.1.2 Inclusion

Acceptance is similar to inclusion because it both talks about the position in society. Looking at the code of 'inclusion' the following is found: Besides the high workload that makes it difficult for the individual to form social groups outside of the university community, there is also a positive effect that working for the university brings. The university is a respectful workplace and open-minded towards immigrants working at university.

Participant 5: *“So sometimes I talk with my friends about it. And then I really feel like I have the sense of serving like, proud of my employer or the system, you're like, yeah, we get a decent salary. And it's, I mean, you're not getting rich, but at least someone is worshipping your work here. And which is super nice.”*

The university occupation has a high workload demand it plays into the socio-spatial aspect of inclusion in Antonsich (2010) sense of belonging framework. The appreciation that is received from the workplace and the university community shows inclusion and identifiability with the local community. So the occupation and workplace environment influences the identifiability with society in the social dimension of Antonsich (2010).

However, inclusion insinuates full participation in society by sharing the same cultural values. The quote states that having a good job helps in acceptance by other people in society. This has to do with that a higher educated job gives you a closer connection to the receiving society and the receiving society is more prone to interaction with the immigrant (Gauthier, 2016).

4.1.3 Connection with Groningen

The next code, connection with Groningen, focuses on the dynamics between the individual on a psychological level and the dynamic between the individual and Groningen. This code co-occurs with multiple codes at the same time and it will be discussed in that capacity. As mentioned by (Manstead, 2018; Easterbrook et al., 2020) people are more likely to connect with other individuals that are in the same socioeconomic status, occupation and income level.

Participant 3: *“But it does concern me a little bit. And it's, yeah, it's difficult to find, especially in a city that is like only students and people like University, it's difficult to find people as part of my social group who are not that educated or belong to different socio-economic groups.”*

This reflects in the quote below, stating that the respondent has difficulty broadening the social group from people with the same socioeconomic status or education. This quote follows no clear sign of deliberate exclusion but it does show a clear distance between the university community and the non-university community which shows that the connection with Groningen is weaker than the university community. Furthermore, social support also has a relation to connection to Groningen. With the presence of better social support, there is a greater sense of belonging to a place (Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2009) . The university and municipality both offer programs to help integrate or help with the administration of moving to Groningen.

Participant 4: *“But I don't know that I don't think there's like any programme that I'm aware of that would put you in contact with the local community.”*

But unfortunately it is apparent in the quote above the university initiatives are only tailored for internationals and does not bring them closer to the local community thus having a lack of connection with Groningen. Connection with Groningen is also related to a sense of belonging that will be discussed later on.

4.1.4 Exclusion

The following code of interest is ‘exclusion’. Both the codes of ‘university working environment’ and ‘occupation’ are co-occurring in the same quotations with the code ‘exclusion’. The work environment code entails work-related stress, intensity and work-life balance and where ‘occupation’ focuses more on how the work is perceived by external people. As Burgoon & Rooduijn (2021) have stated in their article that exclusion for immigrants to the local community or the functioning society is reduced when there is social support. However, the relation between social support and exclusion according to the following quote was not very much present.

Participant 4: *“Yeah, didn't never feel felt like rejected. And it also depends on the on your expectations, but before that, I was living in a German part, which is notorious for being unfriendly. A different experience.”*

as mentioned above the vulnerability to this variable lies in personal characteristics and not necessarily be linked to the characteristics of the local community. This can be a potential follow up research.

4.1.5 Connection with Local community

The next code of interest is the ‘Groningen community’ this entails the connection or the absence of a connection to the locals of Groningen that are not active in the university community.

Participant 1: *“I mean, Groningen in is basically half of the city is the university. So I mean, being part of that university is definitely a core of belonging to the city”*

Because the student population of the city represents a large part of the city. The city and the university are co-dependent. But having a job in Groningen in a University does not guarantee that you are closer to the non-university local life. In this case, it even creates more distance as the university working environment is a demanding job.

Participant 2: *“I think because the university drove us so much of your capacity, that it's sometimes hard to sit outside. Because the workload is so high, so I think that is definitely a disadvantage. And I think that's why some people stay so close and so narrow in their university bubble.”*

As stated in the quotation working at the university may throw up mental barriers which make it harder to form social groups outside of the university. Because people are social beings we search for social groups and in this case, it is more based on convenience than personal preference. Relatability to the same work pressure struggles can enhance the connection between international university colleagues.

Participant 4: *“it’s more like this kind of they’ve also spirit of belonging, because then you share like the same complaints or the same worries. Say and then of course, you, in theory will try to have each other and which was not the case from me so much. But of course, there’s, I did feel isolated also, because of that.”*

In the quote above multiple codes co-occurred, there were two socioeconomic factors which are occupation and university working environment. It also co-occurred with the code ‘university bubble’ and ‘exclusion’. This statement stresses that there is an occurrence of socioeconomic factors like occupation and work environment impacting the social dimension of sense of belonging that was proposed in the framework of Antonsich (2010).

4.2 Dutch language proficiency

The code of social groups co-occurred with other previously discussed codes so now will be looked at the code of ‘speaking the Dutch language’. Speaking the language of the receiving society as an immigrant significantly increases the socialisation and the cultural assimilation in the society which causes the immigrant to feel more included in the local community (Bertacchini et al., 2021). On the contrary not being able to speak the local language can image the immigrant as an outgroup (Elliott & Leach, 2016). This language proficiency increases the sense of belonging to the community (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015). The quote below collaborates on this by stating that the receiving society was more inclusive and welcoming because of the language proficiency. This also taps into the socio-spatial domain of inclusion in the sense of belonging framework and has a positive effect on the sense of belonging.

Participant 2: *“I always felt very welcome. Especially as at the faculty and the university. I mean, that was, of course, my first entrance. But yeah, but it did help. Of course, that people were always quite amazed that I could speak the language so quickly, and so well. So I guess that helped.”*

4.3 Sense of belonging

Looking at the code of ‘sense of belonging’ it co-occurs 20 times with other codes from the socioeconomic code group. Only, the code of ‘education’ does not co-occur with a ‘sense of belonging’. Firstly, Income plays a minor role in sense of belonging looking at the quote below from respondent 5, here is appreciation receiving from society steering the feeling of inclusion. Secondly, the code occupation has an impact on a sense of belonging. In the quote below it is stated that having a job at the university makes a stronger bond with the city, which indicates the presence of the social dimension of the sense of belonging framework of Antonsich (2010).

Participant 5: *“Yeah, I belong here. Because I’m working at this university. And I’m doing my PhD here. Um, yeah, yeah. It’s some sort of belonging I would say, that also makes me connect more connected to the city”*

Thirdly, there is the code of social support. According to Burgoon & Rooduijn (2021), the presence of social support should diminish exclusion effects and establish security in society. The university has special social support programs that help with finding social ties and institutional support for coming to the Netherlands to diminish the distance between the immigrant and the local community and this way foster a sense of belonging. However, according to the quote below the university has a more productivity style approach instead of an individual-centric approach.

Participant 4: *I think for these kind of things you I don't know, if the university does anything in this kind of directions, it's more, more to work better off, you better commence, be more productive, maybe because you feel better. But I don't know that I don't think there's like any programme that I'm aware of that would put you in contact with the local community."*

These programs are more directed towards getting to know people in the university than outside of the university and hereby not closing the gap between the university and the local community. Social support as presented by Galle & Fleischmann (2020) argued that the presence of social support would bring you closer to the local community. In the following quote:

Participant 4: *"this kind of career programmes and, again, put you in contact with academics, maybe from different disciplines, but not necessarily with local people.*

It appears that the precedent of connecting the immigrant with the local community is not achieved and therefore the social support of the university does not help in feeling that you belong in Groningen (Galle & Fleischmann, 2020). Moving on to how socioeconomic status is linked to a sense of belonging. Individuals from the same socioeconomic group are more likely to connect than with people from another socio-economic group. Having a social life contributes to subjective well-being and that increases a sense of belonging for an immigrant (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015). The quote below indicates that the socioeconomic status of an academic working in Groningen fosters the individual centred place-belongingness dimension in the sense of belonging framework. Having achieved a high-status job at university creates security and appreciation that leads to a sense of belonging (Hooks, 2009).

Participant 5: *I think like people of my age, who live here, who are not from Groningen, mostly do a PhD or postdoc at the university, because besides that, there are just not that many opportunities for ex-pats. Just at least from my view, I would say that. So it kind of kind of makes me feeling Yeah, I belong here.*

Furthermore, focussing on how a sense of belonging relates to the university working environment. Universities have fluctuating employee registration because of limited tenure positions and limited employment times for PhD'ers (Alsulami & Sherwood, 2020). This fluctuation can have two results. One following from the quote below:

Participant 2: *"like the whole fluctuation thing at the university is quite high. So then I think that made me go and search for others."*

The university working environment is a fluctuating work environment which results in being less able to connect with people at work so that people are more likely to connect with people outside of the university which fits in the socio-spatial dimension of sense of belonging. The other result is that the high fluctuation of the university community causes for a more distanced approach to social relationships. Resulting in less need to connect with the local community and become more distanced from it. This again influencing the socio-spatial dimension of a sense of belonging.

Participant 3: *"I'm not going to stay anyway. I might just move again after four years."*

Participant 4: *“you can be really comfortable in this bubble, just being in the university and being surrounded by people of the same socioeconomic position and education.”*

Furthermore, looking at the code of ‘university bubble’ this code focuses on how individuals remain in the familiar university workplace and having limited contact with the outside community. The following quote states that there is safety in being surrounded by people from the same socioeconomic position and education. This co-occurs with the codes of socioeconomic status and education. Individuals are more likely to form social groups together if they are from the same socioeconomic status (Manstead, 2018). The rest of the codes that have not been discussed lacked a connection with the research questions or lack a contribution to possible future research.

5. Conclusion

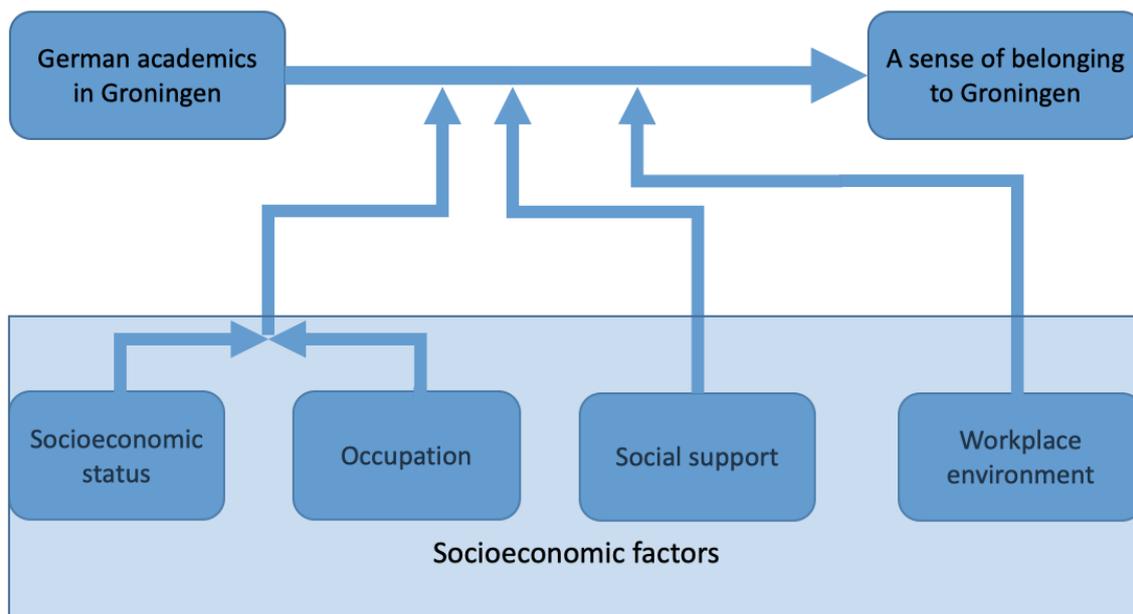
5.1 Answering the research questions

To evaluate the main research question, first the sub-questions must be answered using the results. The first sub question is about *“what socioeconomic factors influence German academics in Groningen?”* In the literature, 6 socioeconomic factors were dominant themes. These are the following: Socioeconomic status (Freeman, 1986), income, education level, occupation (Easterbrook et al., 2020), social support (Galle & Fleischmann, 2020) and workplace environment. Having analysed the qualitative data and it was apparent that education was a factor that influenced how they got into the university job but further there was no noticeable effect that it has on their lives in Groningen. Socioeconomic status coincides with occupation and following from the results that determine their social groups and their social distance to outside of the university community. Social support is a newer concept in the framework of socioeconomic factors. In the data, this concept came forward that social support in the form of institutions and programs are present but the effect it has on German academics is limited, these institutions can help in settling in in society but they lose effect after the newly moved phase. The workplace environment, however, has a very present and not diminishing effect. The presence of an inclusionary workplace environment has a positive impact on the social life on the appreciation for the university workplace. However, its effect is also that they are more captured by the demanding work and have fewer connections outside of the university.

Looking at the other sub-question *“what does a sense of belonging entail for German academics in Groningen?”*. According to the literature, a sense of belonging to a place comes down to two dimensions. Namely the internal place-belongingness and the more external socio-spatial domain of inclusion. Having analysed the data and resulted in the following conclusions. Firstly, German academics in Groningen did not experience exclusion what should lead to a decreased sense of belonging to Groningen. Secondly, German academics have a strong socio-economic position in Groningen from working at the university. Through this strong position, individuals are more able to position themselves in the communities’ social relations. Thirdly, the German academics stated that the university offers social support programs to connect them with others outside of the university community. However, these programs were only formed around meeting other academics at the university and not outside of the university community. As mentioned in the results this has an opposite effect. The German academics and other international academics are more likely to isolate themselves from the local community and indirectly excluding themselves from the local community. There is also another side to this coin and that exists in the place belongingness domain.

These programs that are only focused on getting to know other academics do create place-belongingness by getting to know people from the same university bubble. The feeling of belonging that this generates is working in a university community that is intrinsically linked to Groningen. Furthermore, the university bubble is important in creating belonging because it is focused on creating social relations and emotional safety. Looking at the main research question, what impact do socioeconomic factors have on German academics in Groningen on their sense of belonging. The data collected helps in concluding that education has no clear effect on a sense of belonging except for how they got their position at the university. Working at the university positively impacts the place-belongingness of the individual. Thirdly, the availability of social support programs of the university creates a sense of belonging for the individuals but at the same time distances them from the local community. Furthermore, it is found that socioeconomic status impacts the social relations formed and has a positive effect on the socio-spatial domain of inclusion by the easier forming of social relations. Lastly, the university working environment creates safety and attachment to Groningen. This is through a working environment that is intrinsically linked to the local community. So in conclusion German academics do feel a sense of belonging to Groningen but it more exists in belonging to the university community which trickles down to the local community.

5.2 Revised model



Revised Conceptual model (Kops, 2021)

In line with the found results, I propose a revised conceptual model. This model compared to the previous model consist of the socioeconomic factors that impact a sense of belonging instead of socioeconomic factors in general. Furthermore, Education is part of the socioeconomic framework set by Easterbrook et al. (2020). However, education had no clear effect on a sense of belonging to Groningen amongst German academics. Therefore, in the revised conceptual model education was left out as and socioeconomic factor that influences a sense of belonging. The results showed that socioeconomic status and occupation predominantly occurred together in their influence on a sense of belonging. So in the revised

conceptual model they operate solely but they occur together when influencing a sense of belonging.

5.3 Discussion

This study can be biased by the positionality of the author because the author is a Dutch native. This can result in that the author might be less receptive to mentioning's of cultural exclusion by the native community. The thesis might be negatively impacted by this through less extensive analysis of exclusionary occurrences. A confirmation bias might have influenced the research by the questions of the researcher that might have steered the research into confirming socioeconomic factors found in the literature. To prevent this a semi-structured interview guide was designed in order to maintain structure and not search for confirmation of the concepts discussed in the literature and even so neglect other concepts.

5.4 Reflection

Reflecting on the quality of the data, there are a few points that could be improved in the future. In the first two interviews, there was some lack of specificity of the sample location. The data was more focused on acceptance and not necessarily on the sample location of Groningen. Furthermore, the research has a very limited generalisability because snowball sampling was used to reach out to participants. This resulted in participants that are only working at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences. It is expected that the working environment is similar across different faculties but it is difficult to make statements about how socioeconomic factors impacts a sense of belonging for academics in other cities.

5.5 Recommendation

The contribution of this research to the existing literature is that it is the first research on a sense of belonging relating it to socioeconomic factors for a specific cultural group in a workforce. Possible future research could research how a single component, like work environment or occupation impacts a sense of belonging for an individual. These components are interesting to further research on their own because in the results each of them displayed a relation to a sense of belonging.

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7. Appendixes

7.1 Atlas.TI Code Co-Occurrence Table

Code Co-occurrence table	acceptance Gr=12	connection with Groningen Gr=32	cultural similarity Gr=4	decision to go to Groningen Gr=5	distance to Groningen community Gr=36	exclusion Gr=15	Groningen community Gr=24	inclusion Gr=24	living situation Gr=7	networks Gr=30	sense of belonging Gr=19	social groups Gr=36	speaking the dutch language Gr=21	university bubble Gr=20	university community Gr=33	university working environment Gr=26
education Gr=7	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	0	3	0	1	1	3
income Gr=6	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	2	2	1	0	1	1	2
occupation Gr=17	1	2	0	2	5	2	2	2	0	2	3	5	0	3	6	7
social support Gr=17	0	5	1	1	4	1	2	2	0	1	2	2	1	2	5	3
socioeconomic status Gr=15	1	2	0	0	4	0	2	1	0	4	3	8	0	5	4	3
university community Gr=33	0	5	0	1	11	3	9	5	0	11	6	8	1	9	0	9

7.2 Interview guide

Introduction questions

- Who are you?
- When did you move to the Netherlands?
- Do you speak Dutch?
- What is your living situation?

Main questions

- What would you define as a sense of belonging?
- Shared identification
- Do you consider yourself to take part in the Groningen society or are you distanced from Groningen?
- Do you feel part of the local community or the university community?
- How come do you feel or not feel part of Dutch society?
- Would you want to be part of local communities?
- Do you feel that you are being welcomed and accepted by the receiving society?
- How does your Working for a Dutch University impact your distance to the Dutch society?
- How does your higher education relate to your connection to the Dutch society?
- How does your work at the University impact your connection to Dutch society?
- How are your social groups formed?
- Do they have the same socio-economic status?
- Does having contact with these social groups make you feel connected to Dutch society?

- Do you receive social support from the government, municipality, university (like informational or service support)?
- How does this relate to the distance to Dutch society?

Closing questions

- Do you have any other questions or remarks?

Thank you for your time

7.3 transcripts

7.3.1 Interview 1

Interviewer 0:00

Thank you for meeting me.

And is it okay if I record this?

Interviewee #1 0:06

Yes, absolutely

Interviewer 0:07

Wonderful.

You can retract any statement you, you make or if you don't want to participate in this interview any longer, you can just say so and then we'll end the interview. That's okay?

Interviewee #1 0:21

Yes.

Interviewer 0:22

Okay. Wonderful. My research is about the impact that socio economic factors have on German researchers in Groningen on their sense of belonging in Dutch society. And I was wondering, could you tell something about yourself? Who are you, When did you move to the Netherlands? Do you speak Dutch? And what is your living situation?

Interviewee #1 0:46

I didn't get the last last words.

Interviewer 0:50

Okay, let's start with Who are you? Can you introduce yourself?

Interviewee #1 0:54

Yes, I'm (name replaced for Interviewee #1). In Groningen as an assistant professor I started in Groningen in September 2019. And then also moved to Groningen in last week of August or so. So right before I before I started. I'm also coordinating the I had a Dutch course last year and like, kan het heel goed verstaan, denk ik. Niet heel veel spreken.

Interviewer 1:35

Wow that is impressive

Interviewee #1 1:37

So yeah, I mean, understanding really word are similar so I, I attend some Dutch presentations, or both on campus until last year, then, then online. So understanding works, but speaking is

Interviewer 1:52

you're also living in Groningen?

Interviewee #1 1:55

No, I'm currently living with my girlfriend in Germany. So I lived in Groningen basically until Corona came. And since then I spent more of my time with my girlfriend here. Because you can imagine that if we do it online that I

Interviewer 2:13

You wouldn't be too happy at all, no.

Interviewee #1 2:16

That we prefer that we thought we do not, then there's no need to stay in different places. If we do all online for the next next time.

I will be have much more time in Groningen of course, once it's possible to do more on campus again.

Interviewer 2:36

Okay, thank you for the introduction. And I would like to move to the main questions. And a big topic about of my thesis is sense of belonging and the concept of sense of belonging. And and I was wondering, how would you define a sense of belonging? and how that relates to yourself in the Dutch society?

Interviewee #1 3:00

That's quite a hard and encompassing question. I would say, in the term of sense, sense of belonging, I would say, first of all, that I do have a strong sense of belonging to the university and to Groningen. And also, because I mean, I moved to Groningen, and that's that was five months before the pandemic started, has sort of, of course Groningen and that the university is the environment that I really got to know where I met many people and where I think this is, this is where I feel a sense of sense of belonging in that sense. The whole Dutch society is still a bit more difficult to grasp for me. Also, because I mean, you hear talks that Groningen in is different to answer them and so forth. Yes, I cannot really get from the other side, how Amsterdam is never never left there.

Interviewer 3:56

But would you say that the university community is different than the community of Groningen as a whole?

Interviewee #1 4:04

I think I think so. So, I mean, the university is younger as more people moving around from different places.

Interviewer 4:14

And do you feel distanced from that other community from the the non-university community?

Interviewee #1 4:24

Not really distanced, I would say as most of the other community is somehow also related to the university in Groningen.

Interviewer 4:32

Okay

Interviewee #1 4:33

So I just feel I had some talks and buses with some elderly people who asked me. sat next to me and we just tried to talk a bit in the few Dutch words that I was able to talk so they I mean, they are definitely interested in the university and so forth. But I think that's still that separated worlds.

Interviewer 4:55

And would you describe that you're welcomed and accepted by Groningen by the receiving society. Well, because people talk to you on the bus and said

Interviewee #1 5:06

yes, so that definitely, definitely. But I mean, I must admit that I'm German from So not really far from the border. So Northwest Germany has also kind of I think the cultural difference, let's say would be Northwestern Germany to the Netherlands is the same as between Northwestern Germany and South Eastern Germany.

Interviewer 5:27

Yeah. Okay.

Interviewee #1 5:29

Except language, language issues.

Interviewer 5:32

Would you say that the language is a plays a big role in this, because it's so close. Well the cultural similarities are smaller?

Interviewee #1 5:42

Yeah, I think it makes it easier to see that also in comparison to maybe other international colleagues that the way of, of talking and the way of acting is not completely different. There are differences, of course, but it's still within the range that I can understand without let's say this, saying this is a different culture. And language is definitely in an issue outside of university outside of our faculty. So I think for me, it's quite okay, because I can, if there's anything in Dutch, I can read that and I get what it is. But what else? So in that sense, I don't feel a problem. And if I then try to ask it works in English.

Interviewer 6:31

But do you feel you're sometimes excluded? Because you're not a native? native Dutch speaker.

Interviewee #1 6:39

Yeah, I wouldn't say that I feel kind of deliberately excluded. I see that, whenever it happens that most people are quite polite and slowing down a bit, or in trying to say things in English

when I don't get the touch words. But of course, if it's out of outside of university, then it's harder to get into some, some local, very local regional discussions.

Interviewer 7:09

Okay. And do you also try to be part of, well, you were in county for six months before governor? But did you try to become part of small communities or like something like? Association?

Interviewee #1 7:27

Not really, outside of university. Okay, so I mean, the different networks that the university holds and so forth, and they are connected to the outside world, whatever that is, but not independently of university. Okay.

Interviewer 7:46

And what would you say that boosts or damages your sense of belonging to Dutch society? What would harm what would harm your, the feeling that you would belong to? To the Dutch society?

Interviewee #1 8:05

That's quite a broad question. I think it's, if we get into stereotype discussions of what is that versus international? And so I think it's because I think it's more most of the things are, if we talk about Europe, and much makes much more sense to me, than to say, think about stereotypes of touches different to, to Germany or France. So I, I think if it gets to such stereotypes, so as a planner, I really like to think from what is what is out there, what is at stake, and there are things that are really counting and based. And there are things that are kind of where it's better not to close off, but just to stay open.

Interviewer 9:05

And now let's move on more to the socio economic factors. And that's okay. And how would you say that your socio economic status, like your income, your education, as determines your place in Groningen?

Interviewee #1 9:23

What do you mean by my place where I live/

Interviewer 9:26

that you're well educated, that you're working at the university, that you're living in a student's community? Would that say that strengthens your bonds with Groningen, or?

Interviewee #1 9:39

Definitely, so in that sense, I mean, Groningen in is basically half of the city is the university. So I mean, being part of that university is definitely a core of belonging to the city as well as universities are everywhere, where wherever you go in the city, you meet People often University you see University buildings. OR people doing research on these things. So there's it's just part of the city. So it definitely makes it.

Interviewer 10:12

The city really needs the university as well.

Interviewee #1 10:15

Yeah. So I mean, it's a reciprocal relationship. And, of course, my relation and background was the reason that that's possible. Without the specific type of education and university, PhD and so forth, I would probably not have never have gone to Groningen or as a tourist.

Interviewer 10:38

Probably not for working, and you're still happy at the University of Groningen?

Interviewee #1 10:42

Yes.

Interviewer 10:43

Okay. how are your social groups formed? Are they people, only people from the university?

Interviewee #1 10:58

Not only university, or let's say not only the university working environment. But let's say most are still somewhere of the part of this university bubble. And that, that's probably quite usual as when you move, new to a city, especially from another country, you tend to first meet others who have the same background to move from somewhere else looking for a new, new context. So I met with a running group a couple of times, and that was many different people out of University and the Hanze or other mostly internationals.

Interviewer 11:43

Would you say, because those social groups live mostly consists of internationals would say that you wouldn't feel the necessity to connect with other social groups that are predominantly formed of Dutch people?

Interviewee #1 12:04

I wouldn't talk about necessity, it's also made to be an issue of just how easy it is to get in touch into and to enter and so.

Interviewer 12:16

and how would you say , that it would be easier for you to get in touch with them?

Interviewee #1 12:23

From my side, I mean, language is a major, major issue of course. As soon as it's someone international there's no no problem with English as soon as it gets very local, I need a bit more more Dutch to really to really get be part of that.

Interviewer 12:47

Do you receive social support from the government, municipality, the university in sense help to integrate or to find a social groups or information on how to interact with Dutch society?

Interviewee #1 13:06

Not in not in terms of finances, money or so I get a salary that's probably enough. And then I mean, there is quite some support of the international Welcome Centre North for from for new people moving to Groningen from internationally. So IWC and there are different like connect internationals I think they are in association. So I know got interesting at the university provided quite some information from their how is it called their HR officers, but also they have specific people working for providing information to internationals.

Interviewer 13:50

Do you think this would help you to become close to the Dutch society?

Interviewee #1 14:00

In the end it's an entry point. I would say, but I mean, these things mostly target, of course internationals. Then at some at some point, you reach the end of what you can get from that.

Interviewer 14:22

[small disruption] Yeah, sorry, sir. Please continue.

Interviewee #1 14:27

Yeah, what I what I do, for example, is usually I also look into Dutch news. Not every day, maybe every second day or so. To see to see what what just happens there. And that's, that's really helpful to not only to talk about what's that, and also to see what's, what's happened, what's really happening, what is currently discussed, and what.

Interviewer 14:55

Do you think it's hard to understand all the Corona related news from the from the Government?

Interviewee #1 15:02

that's nothing that's related. So that's hard to understand. I don't know. So I think it's even harder in Germany to understand the rules and

Interviewer 15:12

Trying to keep up with it so hard to keep up with.

Interviewee #1 15:14

So that's, that's nothing connected to that that's context. Okay. So let's think I understand the words and what they mean. But is the chain. Yeah, then what it actually how fast changes and the all the intermediate discussions and relevant factors?

Interviewer 15:33

It feels like a blur right now.

Interviewee #1 15:36

So but that's nothing Dutch, that's just exactly the same in in Germany. And probably the same in other countries where I have no insight.

Okay. I think that would be, that would be all. Oh, there's a small addition. And I forgot to tell you, the, the transcript would be totally anonymous. Because I will be interviewing German professors. And otherwise, it would be really easy. If I wrote your name down or about the faculty or what position to find you. Everything will be done entirely anonymous. And if it's okay, I can send you the transcript of the interview. And if you'd like to, I can also send you the end, the end result of the thesis.

Okay, great. Yep. Okay.

Interviewer 16:30

Wonderful. Do you have any other questions or remarks for me?

Interviewee #1 16:35

Did you get enough other German professors?

Interviewer 16:38

Yes, I got five in total. Right. Okay. But I'm also broadening to another faculty. So, but effort, thank you, for your help, because it's helping me with respondents really helped. And everyone was really, really kind.

Interviewee #1 16:57

Yeah, I mean, it's, it's really interesting research that you're doing there. And? And Why did you choose Germans?

Interviewer 17:07

must first of all speaking of non Dutch, but then the sample size wouldn't be too specific. And otherwise, we'll have to do a comparative study. And that was a little bit worried about his time.

Interviewee #1 17:19

I guess, I mean, there is some specific factors for for Germans moving to the Netherlands that make it easy, like the close relation of the language. But also in terms of administration, that that's official bodies in the Netherlands accept documents in German, English, or Dutch. At least the city of Groningen. And so I can imagine if you move from other countries, there's more also administrative burden to

Interviewer 17:51

Oh, that is a nice addition. I didn't know that. Thank you.

Interviewee #1 17:54

Yeah, so that was when I got in touch with a Gemeente for registration and so forth. So they accept German, English or Dutch. So that makes it really also easier to say do the formal stuff and to then, and then get started.

Interviewer 18:15

Unfortunately, my German isn't that strong. I was taught me on the high school, but I fail to maintain my German level. I chose for French.

Interviewee #1 18:27

If you see a German document, you will most likely get what it is, and at least the basic information even with the Dutch words.

Interviewer 18:37

Okay. I think that will be or at least thank you for your time. Of all keep your contact information. And if I have the transcript, I will send it to you. Great. Thank you. Okay, good luck for your research and looking forward to

Interviewee 18:55

also seeing your results. Wonderful. Thank you. Have a nice day.

Interviewee #1 19:00

Thank you. Bye,

Interviewer 19:01
bye.

7.3.2 Interview 2

Interviewer 0:01

Well, first of all, thank you for wanting to meet me. Is it okay? If I record is?

Interviewee #2 0:06

Yes, sure

Interviewer 0:07

Wonderful.

Um, first of all give i'll you a small introduction about the research. And my bachelor thesis is about what impact the social economic factors have on German academics in Groningen on their sense of belonging in Dutch society.

Interviewee #2 0:25

Okay,

Interviewer 0:26

and it will be a qualitative research. And everyone I interview will be totally anonymous because the most of the people I interviewed will be on the faculty of spatial sciences. And if I will state a name or an age that would be easy to find out. The person who was interviewed so it wouldn't be anonymous. If that's okay.

Interviewee #2 0:51

That's fine.

Interviewer 0:53

First of all, if you want to revoke a statement, or do you wish to quit their interview at any time, that's okay. Just let me know. And if that's all right for you, shall we start?

Interviewee #2 1:06

Sure. I was just curious. Who's your supervisor?

Interviewer 1:10

My supervisor is Stephen Adaawen. I don't know if I might mispronounce it.

Interviewee #2 1:17

Okay, no, I don't know him. Well, I'm new to the faculty. Well, I've been there before, but I'm back now.

Interviewer 1:25

I think he thought something like migration courses.

Interviewee #2 1:29

Okay, so you see more from the Demography or is it economic geography,

Interviewer 1:34

More demography, more demography?

Interviewee #2 1:36

Okay.

Interviewer 1:37

This is like the first time I got to know him. I've never seen him in real life.

Interviewee #2 1:45

What is it that you study like?

Interviewer 1:48

Human Geography and planning at spatial sciences? Okay. And I'm now a third year. So I'm finishing up my bachelor thesis.

Interviewer 1:58

Yeah. Okay. All right. Sorry for interrupting Oh, no.

Interviewer 2:03

It's always good to get to know each other. First of all, can you tell me something about who you are? and when did you to move to the Netherlands?

Interviewee #2 2:14

Sure, yeah. Well, my name is [name replaced with Interviewee #4].. I'm now a postdoctoral researcher at the faculty. And well, I moved to the Netherlands for the first time for my masters. And actually, I thought about this morning. So I know why. I got the data now, right? I think so I moved here first in September 2010. Because I was studying water and coastal management, which you might know it's a double degree Master, the University at the University of Oldenburg and the University of Groningen. So the first year was an Oldenburg. And then for the second here, you've come here to Groningen. And then I was here for about a month because then all the courses were finished. And then I went to Germany to finish my thesis, of course, my master thesis. But then I started also a job in Germany first. So I was quite some time in Germany again. And then in November 2012. I came back to the Netherlands because I started here as a PhD at the faculty.

Interviewer 3:27

Oh, wow.

And then from then on, I stayed in the Netherlands. Yeah, so then my main address, I guess, was always the Netherlands, although in the first Yeah, but till 2015 I think I was quite a lot in Germany still. So it was a bit of a mix. Because I was also still in relationship in Germany. And then now, I guess the last years, I'm really much more focused on the Netherlands and a little bit going back and forth. So after my PhD, I defended in May 2018. So then, actually, 2018 2019 I was working at the University of Oldenburg. So I was working in Germany again. What did I want to say, but I was still living in the Netherlands, because now I'm here the relationship. I am dependend on relationships. The social aspect is very important as well.

Interviewee #2 4:28

Yeah, sure. Yeah.

Interviewer 4:30

This is doable with Corona or do you live close?

Well, actually, well, despite I come from Oldenburg. Oh, yeah, that's is also interesting. so not too far away. So for me and my Yeah, during my life coding is actually the closest spot to home I've ever been after I finished school. So I first went to Ember, which is a bit further than coding and then later on They worked in healthier design, which is also further. So yeah, for, let's say my family and my friends were still in Oldenburg. This is closest I've ever gone too far.

It's one hour, no two hour drive to Oldenburg?

Interviewee #2 5:16

One and a half now because now we're actually living in Zuidhoorn, but it used to be one hour, 15 minutes. So really close. Although, in the beginning, I yeah, it went quite a lot, also in the weekends to go to Germany, but now, I'm usually here.

Interviewer 5:35

So you live closer to home than I do?

Interviewee #2 5:39

Yes, well, actually, my boyfriend his, his parents also live like 15 minutes further away than my parents. Now important because we have a child. So it's always good to know how close grandparents?

Interviewer 5:55

Well, I guess the next question speaks for itself. Do you speak Dutch?

Interviewee #2 6:00

Yes. Very good.

Interviewer 6:04

Okay, let's move on to the main questions. And the main theme in the in the research is about a sense of belonging. And how would you define a sense of belonging? When would you say you belong to a certain place?

Interviewee #2 6:20

Oh, wow. So this is the kind of theories I'm not so familiar with, I have to say. So that's good for you. Because it means I'm not to. To taken away already.

Interviewer 6:32

it is good to see multiple views on sense of belonging? Because everyone defines is on in another way.

Interviewee #2 6:39

Yeah. Well, it makes you feel, I think, for me, actually, what is very important is the people that I have in that place. So for me, I think social relationships are one of the most important aspects. So obviously, I also went through some kind of, where do I belong phase, and well, that's ongoing, by the way. But I think in the first years of my PhD, I definitely felt more like I belong to Germany than the Netherlands. And that had much to do with what that I have long standing friends, there are also just spontaneous encounters. So if I would go to my parents that then I would also know the neighbours and if you see them on the street, yeah, I don't know, that makes you feel like you belong there. Because you know, people. So I think for me, the social relationships are one of the most important things. But of course, it's also just about recognising like the physical, physical elements of the landscape. And I think that's also what, well, I'm in Oldenburg, you're also not far away from the coast. So in that sense, I've also always felt very, in North northern Germany, Northern Netherlands, definitely different but also not too different. So that also helps me to feel like I belong here. So the more the coastal elements to it. Yeah, those kinds of things, I think, okay, I don't know, if you want to know more deeper,

Interviewer 8:25

it's more of how you feel like you're connected to, to community or to a certain place and do you feel connected to the Dutch society?

Interviewee #2 8:35

Yes, I do. Okay,

Interviewer 8:37

and I've only started when did you start to feel connected to the, to the Dutch society from the from your masters or later on?

Interviewee #2 8:49

I think there are different gradations you feel sort of connected also right away, I guess somehow. Remember that in my first year of the PhD, I was invited to focus group which was about feeling at home and I think back then I thought I would also feel at home in the Netherlands. But the longer you stay you The longer the more you notice that the feeling at home thing comes well it comes in phases. So back then I was so much so stable still in my network, I think in Germany and feeling so much at home there. That that here I thought I everything is easy, and so on. But the more you lose the sense of belonging a little bit to your place of birth or the feeling at home, but I guess a different thing, of course than the sense of belonging. I think there was a time where I was not sure where I belong. (german quote?) . And yeah, obviously Yeah, I guess I belong to both somehow. But yeah, since when that's difficult to say but I think now with Yeah, with the relationship here with a Dutch guy, so also being embedded into his family. Now having a child here that goes to daycare. Those are all like the next steps and feeling, feeling more a part of society. Yeah,

Interviewer 10:11

yes.

Interviewee #2 10:12

And I don't know if that's interesting to you. But I'm a bit annoyed.

Interviewer 10:16

Yes it is

Interviewee #2 10:17

I'm a bit annoyed by the fact that I'm, for example, not allowed to vote in the Netherlands, because what I follow politics in both countries, but since I live here, I would much be more I would prefer to be able to vote in the Netherlands, because this is the place where I would like to have impact or influence politics. And for national and provincial elections, I'm not allowed to vote because I'm German. So I would have to give up my German residency if I wanted to vote here. And that is something, that is still a step too far.

Interviewer 10:49

I can image. I would have figured that you were able to vote but because you've been living here for.

Interviewee #2 10:57

you need to have, you need to have the nationality. So I'm still allowed to vote in Germany, in my parents place. But that feels odd, because I'm not living there. So yeah. But yeah, so that's a personal struggle.

Interviewer 11:12

That's also part of your identity

Interviewee #2 11:13

Nationality, or being able to vote.

Interviewer 11:20

Would you say, you're connected to Groningen or more of the university community of Groningen?

Interviewee #2 11:32

I would say that I'm more connected to Groningen. But that's also because I've been away from the university, of course, for some time. And I always, for me, it was always important that I also have a crowd outside of the university. That I know people in that I have friends. And so now the friends that I have here that I've known for the longest time that still are in Groningen, are not necessarily all connected to the university. So there's also a few people that I know, outside of the university, which I think is very healthy.

Interviewer 12:10

Are they predominantly German or Dutch?

Interviewee #2 12:15

No, most of them are Dutch.

Interviewer 12:17

Okay. Okay.

Interviewee #2 12:19

I think I Well, I have now. I'm now connected to a group of German mums. But that is a new thing? I like it.

Interviewer 12:34

it's a big social life. What do you think? Do you think that you was welcomed and accepted by the receiving society by the Netherlands by phoning? When you when you first came here?

Interviewee #2 12:51

Yes. Very much. Yeah. Yeah. Whenever? I guess they were here. And there may be some incidents where of course, there were like, unfriendly jokes about Germany or? Yeah. But I have to say that I'm not so easily bothered by it. And I never had the idea that it was targeted, and me personally. So. So no, I always felt very welcome. Especially as at the faculty and the university. I mean, that was, of course, my first entrance. But yeah, but it did help. Of course, that people were always quite amazed that I could speak the language so quickly, and so well. So I guess that helped.

Interviewer 13:33

Yeah. But it's, of course, you have international students who have come here, and they do not want to study Dutch. And this also keeps them more distant from Dutch society.

Interviewee #2 13:46

Yeah, I guess sometimes I feel a bit like an intermediary between, because I'm not really international anymore. Because I've, I guess I've been, like, assimilated with Dutch society so much. But on the other hand, I'm also not truly that I guess I will still be in the middle. So I understand both viewpoints. But sometimes, I also have to say that I'm a little bit annoyed by internationals, which are all, like, pushing so much for that has to be English. And it has to be this and there has to be that. Okay, I get I understand that they're asking for it. But on the other hand, they also have decided to come here. So I guess there's also always that part that you yourself, have to play an active role in trying to integrate into the country's culture. Yeah. Yeah. So yeah, but that's a personal opinion.

Interviewer 14:39

Yeah, I agree. Understanding the history or the background of a country makes you understand people more so.

Interviewee #2 14:47

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And I was always interested. I mean, if I go to a place for me, it's not only about my work or study there, then I also choose for the place itself. So then I'm interested in what's going on there, and who's living there and how things work there. And yeah, so for me that comes, I guess, quite naturally. And I also moved at the idea that other people are more focusing on, like economic aspects, maybe the job that pays well. And, and what's maybe also interesting for you to thesis, actually, in the sense of belonging thing. So I've, I like to go sailing. Actually, my family always went sailing in the Netherlands. So from the first time, I think I was six years old when I was on a sailboat here on the Waddenzee. Also, like the IJsselmeer And we always went on those one of those platbodem thingies, the nice German tourist thing, and then with lots of families, and it was always an awesome vacation. There, of course, we met always the captain of the boat, and the maatschipper and maat. And I always, I always thought that they were very fun. And I always liked the language. And I guess that also helped me to wanting to go to the Netherlands. When there was the toys with the masters, and later on with a PhD and everything.

Interviewer 16:21

Sailing is pretty cool. And the Waddenzee is amazing. It's beautiful.

Interviewee #2 16:25

Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer 16:27

Did you start in the northern part of Germany, that you sailed from Northern Germany?

Interviewee #2 16:31

We always went to harlingen, and I think once we started, In Franeker was always going by car here.

Interviewer 16:43

what you think is the role of the receiving society for your sense of belonging? How does the receiving society like in this case to the Netherlands, impact your sense of belonging? How does it impact that you feel?

Interviewee #2 16:59

Very much! Because if I wouldn't have felt as accepted as, I felt like then. I think I probably would have left quite quickly again. I mean, it's very important to me that I feel welcome. And that I get that I have the idea that yeah, that there is some confirmation that it's good that you were there. I think if I wouldn't have felt that way, then obviously I would have had also other options. So for me, it was not necessarily the Netherlands or I have nowhere to go and then yeah, so then I guess I would have left.

Interviewer 17:36

And it's okay, if I move on a little bit more to the socio economic factors.

Interviewee #2 17:41

Yeah sure.

Interviewer 17:45

How does your socio economic status impact your place in society, your role at the university or job, does it does it impacts that you feel connected to Groningen?

Interviewee #2 17:58

Did I have to say, this is a little bit of an ambivalent point, I guess, because on the one hand, obviously, it helps. And obviously, at the university, you get to know many people that are in the same phase or go through similar things, but also lots of other international. So that helps definitely. On the other end, to be embedded into Dutch society, I had the idea that there the university job was not very much of a help. Because it really stays a bubble for itself. So I don't know yet. So this is maybe not too much. So of course, I was always well accepted by other people in society, because University job is usually considered, I guess, quite a good job. But it's not, you do not necessarily meet the ordinary Dutch person or so or it gets a bit harder to be embedded into just normal life. You can easily stay inside the university bubble and just hang out with colleagues and then maybe do not really have too much of a clue what what is really going on in the Netherlands at that moment, because it's always so international and so broad. So that's why I would also say that only recently I felt feeling so much deeper in the society, because now I have other channels next to the university, I guess. Yeah.

Interviewer 19:37

And if you wouldn't speak Dutch, would you only be. Do you feel that you only would be connected to the university bubble? If you were not able to step outside of the bubble?

Interviewee #2 19:49

I think it would definitely be much harder to step outside that bubble. Although not impossible, because there's so much offer also in in English, and actually I have a friend of mine she is learning Dutch but she is Portugese so for her it's a bit harder. I would say she's a perfect example of that you can still do it even though you were maybe not proficient in Dutch. But yeah, I guess that her level of embedded embedding into the societies is still at a more mature point than than mine. But that naturally is the case.

Interviewer 20:30

And did you receive a lot of social support from the, from the university, the municipality or government to integrate in, in the Netherlands when you were working here as a PhD'er?

Interviewee #2 20:43

Not from the government, also not from the municipality, from the university itself. I think it depends very much on the individual colleagues and how much they welcome you.

Interviewer 20:56

Sorry, there's something like a Welcome Centre. Right. Did they help you or did you contact them, okay?

Interviewee #2 21:02

Never heard of, no. I think, towards the end of my PhD, I got to know the WIRE thing, which is, I think, welcome international research. I don't even know what it stands for, but I remembered was WIRE and they organise activities and things like that. But no, I think in my, during my master's, I did a tour that was given by Paul van Steen about the Dutch Landscape, where there was a lot of internationals in the bus, and you would drive through the country and Paul would tell the story about Dutch water management, which happens to be my topic. So I thought was interesting. I actually made friends there, which I'm still connected to now. But no, not. Maybe I was also not so much aware of all these kind of offers. But I think back in the days, there were also there was maybe less attention for it. Like, like 2012? And wouldn't no.

Interviewer 22:10

Would you say they could have an impact on your sense of belonging, if you had known that they were in existence before so that you were better? They gave better information about what the possibilities were?

Interviewee #2 22:24

I think that would definitely be helpful. Yes. Okay. Yeah, because now it depends very much on myself, how much effort you put into it. And I mean, I was I always felt accepted here as a German. But still, I would say, I would say that. Trying to get a sense of home here in Groningen, was one of the most difficult things I had to do, like compared to before Hamburg it's time where I was at the idea that here, people are a bit more reserved, even more than I would say, in northern Germany. And there's such an overflow of internationals that are always at the idea that people think I actually see it now. She's nice, but she'll be gone. Like two or three years. And so how, why bother to maintain a really long relationship with itself. And then that goal, like the whole fluctuation thing at the university is quite high. So then I

think that made me go and search for other. So I joined the Rowing Club. For example, The Hunze. Those are people that I still hang out with today. And now recently, well, we've only moved here to Zuidhoorn at the end of October, but I very much like to live in the streets with people that have jobs elsewhere and not at the university because I feel like this is a bit more normal life. Yeah,

Interviewer 23:57

by the way, really cool that you row at the Hunze. I row at Gyas.

Interviewee #2 24:02

Yeah, I saw your sweater. I think so.

Interviewer 24:08

Yeah.

Really cool. Pretty cool. Yeah. And also, we got another question. And in your social groups are people that that you feel distant from because you're afraid that they will be gone in a few years or doesn't that limit you in your Well, distance to eachother.

Interviewee #2 24:37

Subconsciously, you never really know what what's going on, but consciously I would say that I tried not never to make it a big thing. Because I know things go and you never really know how it goes. But I do have to say that now with the people that I have around now. Those are really people that I think will stay for a longer time. Or you have at least the opportunity to stay for, for example here in Groningen. And that does probably affect a little bit how you approach friendships.

Interviewer 25:14

And one final question, how would you say that you're? Did you also chose your friends according to their socioeconomic status vote because they were in the same point of life as never working at the university? Or same income?

Interviewee #2 25:34

No, no. No, I think, yeah, of course, those are the people that you meet more. I mean, it's more natural that you meet people with with a similar income, and things like that. And I have to say, like, for example, at the Rowing Club, that's, of course, also a little bit of a more of an elitist sport, maybe. So yeah, there are also lots of well educated people with well paid jobs. Yeah. But for me, it doesn't matter too much. For me, it's important that I get along with a person and that I have the idea that it is an honest relationship. I

Interviewer 26:23

think it's very important, of course. Yeah. Um, well, I guess that was it was the questions. Also got one more thing. If you want to, I can send you the transcript, after the interview, when I'm done transcribing, if you'd like to, and I can also send you the end result of my thesis if you would like to.

Interviewee #2 26:47

Well, I'm definitely interested in the end result of your thesis, and I'm not going to bother you with sending you the transcript. I think it will be a lot of work. And then people go through it

and tell you, this is not what I said. So well, I trust you, so I guess you make something out of it.

Interviewer 27:06

Okay, I've recorded that. And I will go over to multiple times. So I will definitely sent you the end result then.

Interviewee #2 27:13

Yeah.

Interviewer 27:14

Once again, thank you. Thank you so much for meeting me. And really help. Thank you for the new insights. Oh, yeah.

Interviewee #2 27:25

Yeah, welcome. Well, maybe I'm interested. So what is the kind of the concept sense of belonging? So we're from a theoretical point of view? What are things that belong to it? Or how would you conceptualise it,

Interviewer 27:38

that's the central line is mostly based upon as social relations, it's a range of the place level, so how you can define social relations, place based, and how you have social relation at that place, but also have a relation with the place itself. And when you have no social relations in a place, there's nothing to adhere to. But when you only have social relations, you can have a sense of belonging to a place without there being a place for that needs to be. It's fostered in the connections with your social relations, and social networks. It's mostly the feeling that you belong to somewhere that you're accepted and welcomed in a place or mostly in a social relation.

Interviewee #2 28:32

Yeah. Okay. Interesting.

Interviewer 28:34

It's mostly formed in a certain place, and then it can develop from, from one place to no places. That's how it mostly works.

Interviewee #2 28:44

Yeah. Okay. Well, interesting. And there it is. So you're now looking at the socio economic factors? Yes. But does that also mean like questions you're asked about, if I hang out with people over similar socioeconomic status, so that is the idea maybe or your hypothesis that affects your sense of belonging to place

Interviewer 29:11

true and mostly having communities now when you are in a university bubble, that you mostly stay within that university bubble, and also cultural aspect like language, how that impacts how that impacts the social relations between each other. And when people don't feel really connected to a place they will mostly stick to their university bubble and will not interact with the environment around the university bubble.

Interviewee #2 29:45

Yeah, sure.

Interviewer 29:47

You're a beautiful example.

Interviewee #2 29:50

Yeah, but it's a problem. I think because the university drove us so much of your capacity, that it's sometimes hard to sit outside. Because the workload is so high, so I think that is a definitely a disadvantage. And I think that's why some people stay so close and so narrow in their university bubble.

Interviewer 30:11

And can you relax in the weekends? Or is that?

Interviewee #2 30:15

I do. This is a choice and in the end it is a choice? But you have to? Yeah. It's not always easy, because lots of people do work in the weekends. So, but I don't want to be one of those examples, because that effects also what other people will get, we will do. So, me personally, I do not work in the weekends. I try to limit my evening hours as well. Of course, there are always weekends where that doesn't work out. But most of the time, so this is a standard rule.

Interviewer 30:49

Yeah, it's important to keep some work life balance.

Interviewee #2 30:54

Yeah, definitely.

Interviewer 30:56

At a University it might be a little bit difficult I can imagine.

Interviewee #2 30:59

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Okay, well, thank you. Looking forward to reading the thesis. I guess that there are quite a lot of Germans indeed, nowadays. Because when I started my PhD, I think I was one of the few. But yeah, now I had a training, but what was it cultural awareness. And there were also other PhD'ers from Germany. And so you must find quite a big sample.

Interviewer 31:29

I have now six interviews planned. Yeah. And I know some other people that also knew other German academics. So I think my sample size won't be an issue. This mostly because after the Dutch. I think Germans are the largest academic group in the in the university after the Dutch.

Interviewee #2 31:53

Yeah, so we are also the biggest student group, international student group, I think.

isn't it? Yeah,

Interviewer 32:00

yeah.

Interviewee #2 32:01

Think it's Germany. And then it's Romania also nowadays in China. I've recently been in a pop quiz where this was a question so I think those three countries. Yeah, so that is a funny, or Italy? I'm not sure Italy or Romania because we put one and that wasn't wasn't correct. But then that Yeah, because I think those are definitely among the top five.

Interviewer 32:29

This interesting question for a pubquiz.

Interviewee #2 32:33

All right.

Interviewer 32:33

Thank you for your time and I hope you enjoy your day. It's beautiful outside.

Interviewee #2 32:38

I'm working so not so much on time, but yes, maybe for work later. We'll see. Okay,

Interviewer 32:44

I will keep in contact and sent you to end result and thank you very much.

Interviewee #2 32:50

Bye

7.3.3 Interview 3

Interviewer 0:00

I've started the recording. Thank you for meeting me. And first of all, I would like to let you know that if you don't like the interview or don't wish to continue, you can stop at any, any time. If you want to revoke a statement, that's also fine. Just let me know. So the research question is what impact the socio economic factors have on German academics, including on the sense of belonging in Dutch society? First of all, would you like to introduce yourself? Who are you? And when did you move to to the Netherlands?

Interviewee #3 0:34

I can certainly do that. My name is Francisco bay. I am from Germany. I first moved to the Netherlands for my master's degree in 2016. I moved to Rotterdam for like, a good year, I would say. And then I moved back to Germany for a while. And then I came back here in 2019 when I started my PhD trajectory, so I moved back to Groningen. And ever since then, I have been living here.

Interviewer 1:16

And where did you grew up in? In Germany, close to the Netherlands?

Interviewee #3 1:22

Kinda, I would say so my hometown is called Duisburg. That's like, maybe half an hour drive from Venlo.

Interviewer 1:30

Oh, yeah, that's in the border region. So to say,

Interviewee #3 1:34

pretty much. Yeah.

Interviewer 1:35

Um, would you say that you speak Dutch?

Interviewee #3 1:39

I try to avoid saying that, because then people would speak Dutch to me. No, I do. I followed some classes. I don't matter. Like B1 level, I would say.

Interviewer 1:53

And what's your living situation? Do you live in Groningen right now or?

Interviewee #3 1:58

I live in Groningen and just outside of the Binnenring? thing, inner city.

Interviewer 2:04

Beautiful place to live? Yeah. Let's look at every move to the to the main questions. Absolutely. So the big theme, surrounding my thesis is a sense of belonging. So I have identification to place, and social relations that are connected to a place. And it's specifically for the Dutch society. Umh would you say that you have a feeling that you're connected to holding as a person? in a broad sense.

Interviewee #3 2:43

was actually difficult to answer because, you know, the situation with Corona kind of gave me a little bit of detachment from a community sense of the city. So well, I pretty much close down kind of shortly after I really had a group of people here and I felt like, Oh, this is my home now. on everything shut down. So like, my home has become really just my home and less of the whole city.

Interviewer 3:19

But you started to PhD in September, or?

Interviewee #3 3:24

Sorry

your PhD in September, or?

Interviewee #3 3:27

I started in September

Interviewer 3:30

2019. Yes, so like six months later than Corona started off?

Interviewee #3 3:34

Correct.

Interviewer 3:36

That kind of sucks.

Interviewee #3 3:40

I saw that it's quite lively place when it's it has like a big social scene and has a lot of possibilities. But ever since they closed down, apparently. You know,

Interviewer 3:53

how did you find your social groups then? Did you get some friends if you find some people you could hang out with or just connect with?

Interviewee #3 4:03

Yeah, so most people are like most of my friend group are people from my work. Or, I mean their friends or their their roommates or something like that. And then I'm also a little bit lucky because my boyfriend moved here last year. Though he's also a big part of my social group. And he's, he's studying so I also know his peer's a little bit which I wouldn't necessarily call my friends also, but they're part of my wider social circle.

Interviewer 4:40

And your friends are mostly formed from university or you know them via University?

Interviewee #3 4:49

My friends, that also work at the university. Yes, like similar. In a similar group, all mostly PhD students. My neighbours umh, my neighbour is a postdoc. So yeah, I don't know many people in the city outside of university, I would say.

Interviewer 5:09

And are they also from Germany? Or are also dutchies, internationals?

Interviewee #3 5:16

Ah, funnily most of them are Dutch, like my work friends are Dutch, which is new for me, because when I first moved to the Netherlands, my my group of friends was mainly International. Yeah. So I changed a lot of world between these two living experiences.

Interviewer 5:39

And would you say that having some Dutch friends brought you closer to Groningen or to the Dutch society?

Interviewee #3 5:47

I certainly know more about what's going on. In like Dutch news, our since then, because we then also discuss these things, which you probably wouldn't with other international people. Has it brought me closer to one most people aren't from Groningen. So I don't really know if that has brought me closer to or make me feel more connected to cloning itself? Because many people came from, like other cities, in the Netherlands. But it's certainly. I mean, culture wise, it's pretty similar to my own culture. So I don't feel that it's that big of a difference. So I know it has brought me closer. It shows me that it's very similar.

Interviewer 6:39

Do you think you were welcomed? Do you have the feeling that you were welcomed by the Dutch culture or as in German?

Interviewee #3 6:50

Well, I feel for me, it's easy to adapt. But I also have the feeling. And I know a lot of internationals would agree that it's it's difficult to become very closely connected to Dutch people. I don't know if that's probably is the same for Germans as well, I don't really know. But I'm not because of like a language barrier. Because I try my best I speak Dutch everyone speaks English. But I think it's because a lot of people came here to study and have been here for a long time. So for me, it felt like it was difficult to get here as like an outsider, and tightly connect to people. But like, over time, it definitely developed naturally.

Interviewer 7:38

So do you think the receiving society so the Dutch society plays a big part in this big part in this playing a big role that they feel that international students have feel more distant from the Dutchies? Do you have that feeling?

Interviewee #3 8:03

I don't know. As a student, I didn't have that feeling very much. But I think it's just a cultural thing. For me, that's,

that's my explanation. So I think that the Dutch are very good at separating work, and like leisure or fun time. So it doesn't really make them very friendly, if you get to know them in a work setting or some kind of professional setting, but then moving into their free time activities is difficult.

Interviewer 8:33

And how do they perceive that? Do you have the feeling you're perceived differently? Because you're a German professional living in Groningen?

Interviewee #3 8:41

umh differently than who?

Interviewer 8:46

then a Dutch person that grew up here? Would you say they treat you differently?

Interviewee #3 8:56

Oh, that's difficult to treat me differently? Well, I mean, I think it is. No I'm in I couldn't think of any example right now where I would have been treated like, unprofessional or something. So it certainly helps to understand Dutch and to speak Dutch in some situations to show people like you're trying to level with them. And you know, but also because my appearance because I'm German, I think most of the times people would just assume I'm Dutch. And so I don't have any kind of stereotypes that people would come to me with and know.

Interviewer 9:42

And are their other non verbal feelings that are being excluded or is that not present?

Interviewee #3 9:55

No, no. I don't think so.

Interviewer 10:01

Sorry for the deep questions, I hope it is not too

Interviewee #3 10:05

trying to think about it. But um, no. I mean. No, actually, it's that's also very different from like, Rotterdam is so international a lot of people would just even when I started speaking Dutch, they would just switch to English would be like, Oh yeah, you're not from here, people would just stick to Dutch and go like. Oh yeah, I don't care.

Interviewer 10:30

Is there so big a difference between Rotterdam and Groningen?

Interviewee #3 10:34

It is? I think so. Yeah. I didn't know why.

Interviewer 10:40

And if you also been to Amsterdam, or because Amsterdam is a very international city?

Interviewee #3 10:45

I have been there. I haven't actively live there. I have friends there. But that's just a tourist experience. So.

Interviewer 10:57

interesting, because I never figured that Rotterdam would be so such an international student community. Well, I never thought about it was second so.

Interviewee #3 11:07

Yeah, you know, and then like here, even if they're like, Oh, it's so International, all the international students, it's mostly Germans. Like, for me, that wasn't very international,

Interviewer 11:19

small Germany across the border.

Interviewee #3 11:23

A little bit.

Interviewer 11:24

But are there actually any German Student Associations?

Interviewee #3 11:29

I wouldn't know that

Interviewer 11:34

I was just think about it. I never fully I've never heard about it. So maybe I missed it. Another question. And this is more focusing on the socio economic part. How does your education and income impact your distance to society? Do you feel that because you're highly educated, and feel that you're more distant from from the, from Dutch society, like living your home? Or does it bring you closer to, to the, to the Dutch society?

Interviewee #3 12:18

That's. well you have a lot of difficult questions. So I feel this city is very special, in in the sense that. Well, most people in this city are in some way affiliated with either the university or some of the other universities of Applied Sciences. So I think of this place, Groningen, as like a little bit of an utopia city. Because many people are highly educated. And it's not like, the place I come from is more like, like Rotterdam and that sense that it's a working class city. So I feel like I feel definitely I belong to this, this part of the Society of a Dutch society also that is present in this city very well. I'm well connected. I know many people in my field. I know people from the university. But I don't know that's very representative of the society as a whole. In the country.

Interviewer 13:20

Yeah. Because there's, of course, a big difference between the University society and the society, outside Groningen. It needs the university to exist, but it's also a big difference.

Interviewee #3 13:33

Absolutely. No, I mean, I feel sometimes when I read the news, and people would complain about all the students coming into the city and driving up the prices and stuff like that, I i understand that that's a valid concern. But I can also connect you but yeah. I feel like I belong to a privileged part of this society. And that sense definitely.

Interviewer 13:58

Do you have to fit in it sometimes people perceive you as a PhD'er or as highly educated that they, well. feel more distant from you because I feel like I'm more working class. I don't want to connect with you or this is not the case?

Interviewee #3 14:22

In general, maybe here in this city specifically? No, I think a lot of people are just so used to the big presence of the university and in the economy and like, and everyone's lives. I think, here in this city specifically, I haven't been experiencing that.

Interviewer 14:46

okay, and well because you work at the university and a lot of your friends are from the university. Umh your socioal, your social group there. A lot of people are from the same socio economic status, the same jobs? Would you say that being connected to these groups would cause you not to share it outside this group for other friends? Or that you're only sticking in these groups?

Interviewee #3 15:16

Oh, yeah. Well, certainly that's, that's something that happens. And that as something I'm a little bit worried about, actually, he's, um, I'm aware of this privilege that I only mostly only interact with people who have a very high degree of education. And,yeah, I know, I used to be friends with people from back home. I'm still friends with them, but like the rate of interaction has gone down. So most of my friends even from earlier times, went to university as well. Maybe not at a, like master or PhD level. But it does concern me a little bit. And it's, yeah, it's difficult to find, especially in a city that is like only students and people like University, it's it's difficult to find people as part of my social group who are not that educated or belong to different socio economic groups.

Interviewer 16:20

Are they? Are there any institutions that help you find other people to connect with? Find a university the municipality does offer you like, an exchange office, an expert offices help you connect with people or give you information where to find people to interact with?

Interviewee #3 16:39

Um, well, I know of some initiatives, I mean, I know that the international Welcome Centre, will connect people for like language classes and all kinds of interests, interest groups, I have not actively been a part of that in a long time, I did one or two of their activities in my first half year maybe. I am somewhat active in like Facebook groups for expats, or with mainly international people, but so I've been meeting people over these kind of things. But as I said, most people are affiliated with the university in some sense, especially if they come from, like, outside of the country. So yeah, I mean, I know also, what is that the city central offers some kind of buddy system that you could sign up with a local or? I haven't I haven't been in any of those, but I know they exist.

Interviewer 17:50

Would you say because you participated in first half year, you did some with that? Did that bring you closer to Dutch society or didn't it really help?

Interviewee #3 18:01

Uhm, well, it's weird because most of these activities are tailored at people who are internationals and like, Hey, we want to help find people, but then it's just, it's just the same group of people. It's not really connecting local Dutch people.

Interviewer 18:18

So it's created more of a bubble.

Interviewee #3 18:21

Sorry.

Interviewer 18:21

So it's more creating a bubble instead of connecting?

Interviewee #3 18:25

with so yeah, so I wasn't participating in the meet the local thing because, you know, I'm kind of working with locals. But yeah, I also went to the, I don't know if you're, or if you ever went to one of the USVA courses. I participated in that while that was still open,

Interviewer 18:48

no unfortunately, not.

Interviewee #3 18:51

But yeah, it's, I mean, it's mainly that was local, Dutch people, but it's students. So I'm like, I feel a little bit too old. You guys. Yeah.

Interviewer 19:03

They give a lot of theatre courses, right. And book, book clubs.

Interviewee #3 19:08

I was in a choir. But yeah, they have they have that as well. So

Interviewer 19:12

I think there are some also some other experts initiatives on Facebook going on with that help bring people together.

Interviewee #3 19:21

I mean, it's always weird how many to find your group of people. Like wherever you go. Yeah.

Interviewer 19:31

do you feel afraid that you're becoming more and more distant from from Groningen? and that you're only your friends are in an international bubble. Well, not not only international bubble, but from university that you're creating distance between University and that and the people after the university might move and that you're left with. Well, little social contacts.

Interviewee #3 20:00

Um, no, actually no. I'm like, I'm really trying to make connections also outside of the university, like being a regular, like coffee, places that I go to or something like that. But I think it's also the stage in my career that a lot of connections that I make in the University are people who have like a tenure position. So they're not going to leave anytime soon, even if some of the people I've worked with are going to leave. Yeah, I know. Also, I don't know if I'm going to stay here. So it's, that's also, you know, for me, it might be temporary to be here.

Interviewer 20:54

Does it influence your. Well, your behaviour not to connect more with the community, the local community? That you, that you might move out in a year?

Interviewee #3 21:10

Um, well, I have some more time. So it's definitely more than two and a half years that I still have to do. But in the beginning, it was my, my attitude is that well, I'm not going to stay anyway, I might just move again, after four years, but then it was still four years. So that's a long time to not make any connections. So no, I mean, like, at first, it did influence for a little bit until I realised that four years is a long time to to not find people. And to be social with. Yeah, well, I think right now, it's mostly Corona. That's that's affecting, not connecting with a wider community. No.

Interviewer 21:59

I hope your house and having some connection from the university helps.

Interviewee #3 22:06

It's not that bad. It's just I could be volunteering and doing stuff with other people. If it was open, but.

Interviewer 22:15

That's a big if, if it was open.

Interviewee #3 22:18

Yeah.

Interviewer 22:21

I think that's that's all my questions. Do you have other questions for me or remarks, something that just crossed your mind?

Interviewee #3 22:35

Well, I don't know maybe what, why do you focus on German, German scholars? In your research? For many of us?

Interviewer 22:45

Yeah, I was first thinking about and focusing on non Dutch academics. Because there was already a lot of research on dark academics in, in a Dutch society. So I focused on German scholars, because if I would focus on non non Dutch, that would be way too broad, and then you would have too much cultural differences. And if you would focus on Germans, Germans are the biggest group of non Dutch natives in Groningen. So that would be the easiest to find the sample size. And there's another thing that slipped my mind for the research Would be entirely anonymous, by the way. And because well, the most respondents I found using snowball sampling, and the most respondents are from the University of Groninge at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences. So if I would state a name, or age, that would be really easy to find the respondents, everything will be entirely anonymous. If you'd like to, I can send you the transcript and the end result of the thesis, if you'd like to. Yeah, just some more clarity. I'm sure I should have introduced this.

Interviewee #3 24:08

perfectly fine.

Interviewer 24:12

Yeah, yeah. That's the more of the technicalities. Any other questions? Or?

Interviewee #3 24:20

Oh, no, no, thank you. I'm interested to see what you're going to find and what other people said. Yeah,

Interviewer 24:28

Yeah, me too. Yeah, this I think this is this my third interview. I've got three more plans. So Oh, if I can give you a small advice, go visit. It's a black and bloom in the inner city.

Interviewee #3 24:42

Best Coffeel know. Yeah. Not the best place for socialising. Because what's his name?

Interviewer 24:48

Gerben

Interviewee #3 24:49

Yeah.

He's a special guy.

Interviewer 24:54

Yeah, he really is. He really is. But he opens up to you. He opens up

Interviewee #3 24:58

Yeah absolutley

Interviewer 25:00

Yeah, I come there a lot. It's pretty cool. Pretty cool coffee place, but it takes him a while for her to get to know. Yep. I think that's it. I would like to thank you again for your time. I really appreciate it.

Interviewee #3 25:17

Thank you.

Interviewer 25:19

I will send you the end result.

Interviewee #3 25:21

Okay, yes,

Interviewer 25:22

And enjoy your day

Interviewee #3 25:25

You too.

Interviewee #3 25:26

Thank you and good luck for your thesis.

Interviewer 25:30

Oh, wonderful. Well, bye

Interviewee #3 25:33

bye

7.3.4 Interview 4

Interviewer 0:00

Well, first of all, my name is Yannick Kops. And I'm a bachelor student at the Faculty of spatial sciences, studying human geography and planning. And I'm writing my thesis on what impacts do social economic factors have on German academics in Groningen, on their sense of belonging in Dutch society. So I'm conducting interviews, and every interview is entirely anonymous. And if you would like to retract the statement that's possible at any time. And if you don't like to proceed, the interview, that's also possible. And so could you please introduce yourself? Who are you? And when did you move to the Netherlands?

Interviewee #4 0:42

Well, my name is (name replaced for Interviewee #4) I am an assistant professor for healthy ageing at faculty of spatial sciences. And I moved to Groningen in September 2017. But yeah, I commute, I am commuting now. So And currently, yeah, having like, divided times, family lives in Berlin. And I commute there to work there a couple of days, A week? So I'm living, so to say on both sides of the border?

Interviewer 1:14

okay. And do you speak Dutch? Or did you learn to speak Dutch over time?

Interviewee #4 1:21

I try. No, I really didn't learn it. I should have. I know. So you're touching like a weak point. So yeah, bad. Yeah. Eventually, I will do it. It's more like everyday learning, like to go to a shop or something like that. But I didn't really do a course.

Interviewer 1:39

And is it possible to still commute every day from one day, one week being in Berlin another week in Groningen? Or?

Interviewee #4 1:46

It's I mean, it's possible, but yeah, I mean, right. Now, I felt pretty necessary to do it. But yeah, it's possible. And actually, the trains are working better than usual times. So it's, it's also nice, yeah, but it's possible, but I'm not commuting every day. So it's commuting once a week there and back

Interviewer 2:05

Is it now you need in order to come into Germany, you need an negative Corona test, right?

Interviewee #4 2:12

Yep, that's right. So but there's like always additional regulations for cross border commuters. Okay. So I what I need to have is like to sneltesten is like a rapid test, then you can go to the setting a couple hours. And you know, there's rapid testing lane. And so that's what I do. But I didn't know that they didn't control me at the border. I think they just do it from time to time. So not every bus going to Germany, but being really controlled. So it's possible.

Interviewer 2:43

It's an extra obstacle, but it's okay, if we move on to the main part of the research?

Interviewee #4 2:51

Yeah sure

Interviewer 2:52

A big theme in the resource is a sense of belonging. And I was wondering, do you have an idea about what sense of belonging or how would you define it?

Interviewee #4 3:03

No, maybe you can, okay.

Interviewer 3:04

Yeah, for sure. Uhm sense of belonging, the now concept that I use is mostly the definition of a shared identification with people that are formed around the same place. So now to feel connected to people that live in the same place or that connection started at a place that isn't necessarily need to be at the place itself. So it's getting transcendent. over, over time to, to only the social relations. Is mostly formed around the feeling of belonging to, to social relations, or to a place it's all focused. So with this definition in minds, would you say that you're connected to Dutch society or the local community of Groningen?

Interviewee #4 3:55

Yeah, in certain ways. So I mean, right now, it's bit more difficult, but you move back like last summer, but before that, my kids were going to school and daycare there as I had some interactions, but I want to have like, Dutch friends. So when I came here, I was first living together with some Dutch men to say and we shared a flat. So he's still my friend. And then I've also other friends who, who live here. And of course, there's always the interaction with colleagues. But of course, some of my colleagues are also International. So they live there in Groningen, but yeah, it's not affected. We all kind of international so then you have more like it's kind of connections, starting with those who always new there and because once you are from Groningen or you're from the Netherlands and you already have your network?

Interviewer 4:48

Yes

Interviewee #4 4:48

Different than when I moved there. But no, I feel quite integrated. I belong there.

Interviewer 4:53

And do you feel that there is a difference between the university community and the local Groningen and non University community?

Interviewee #4 5:01

Yeah, I think it was, yeah, like any other university towns that it's kind of youthfull. So to say like University, because most of the contacts do in university or their students. And if you don't do any, I would say like, social activities in the wider community of the city, then probably you will stay in this community. But But as I said, as I have, like friends who are not related to the university, so then I am also feeling a bit more related to the local community.

Interviewer 5:32

Do you feel part of the local community as well, or mostly to the university community?

Interviewee #4 5:38

The university community? Because if I fell apart, for example, I don't read the newspapers about Groningen. I don't I don't know what's going on in the city in terms of, of politics, or what, what kind of planning is decided. Or what are the big issues being discussed. So at this kind of sense, I am, I'm an outsider, but not related to the universities. Of course, I know what's going on in the faculty or the plans for the universities. I feel more, let's say integrated in this kind of society, then in the general society of Groningen my relationships to the general societies, as I said, it's more like meeting friends, going out.

Interviewer 6:17

things like that. And do you want to be part? Do you feel that you want to become more part of the local community?

Interviewee #4 6:25

It is also before when I was living there, like most, like everyday, so that I was, there have been a plan, but now like my sense of, of my daily life has also shifted a bit to Berlin. So that's why I'm happy to have both places. But no, I'm not planning right now to get more integrated. So I think I'm fine as I am.

Interviewer 6:47

Okay, and do you feel that when you move to Konya that you were welcomed by the receiving society that they welcome to you as a person and as a German?

Interviewee #4 6:57

Yeah, didn't never feel felt like rejected. And it also depends on the on your expectations, but before that, I was living in a German part, which is notorious for being unfriendly. A different experience. I mean, there wasn't like, someone actively welcoming me from the society. But of course, there's certain procedures from the university, which are fairly easy for someone who's coming in, or the like, is, what is it not on Welcome Centre, or something like that from the, from the city administrations, which makes everything quite easy. And then I mean, Groningen is a young town, academic town. So that it's for me, it was easy to, to feel welcome so there was nobody really approached me here, but I've also didn't really feel rejected or not. Right, in my place, I think it was good.

Interviewer 7:53

And no passive forms of exclusion, being not included in meetings, or?

Interviewee #4 8:00

I think there's this kind of university, this kind of awareness that is that you should speak, you should not be Dutch when they are foreigners, or something like that around, which I personally find a bit strange, because I mean, I'm here I came here and I selected, I chose to come to the Netherlands. So I mean, I'm fine with people who speak Dutch. So I know that it's the local language, so. And for society no, it No, so it was. No I didn't reject it. I couldn't say that. No.

Interviewer 8:12

Would you say that you would feel more connected to Dutch society that if you spoke Dutch on a regular basis?

Interviewee 8:16

I would say so, yeah. The only thing which I could say is then at that time and my children were living here, of course, then it's a bit different, because then you should speak Dutch because otherwise you don't get in contact with the other parents. Because they form their, their communities. So this would be an issue where you certainly should should learn Dutch. So, just being an academic living in Groningen and you get very well along with just being English because many people in the Netherlands speak English, it's almost not necessary to speak Dutch. But as soon as you want to get integrated in daily live, of course, you should learn the language. But it's, I think it's everywhere the same so otherwise. Yeah, you won't have like these kind of contacts or because I also cannot expect it. The other parents speak English with you.

Interviewer 8:35

Okay, and it's okay, if you move from a little bit more to the socio economic factors?

Interviewee #4 9:27

Yeah.

Interviewer 9:27

Oh, wonderful. How does your education and income impact your distance to Dutch society? So working at university does it bring you closer to to the Dutch society or to the local community?

Interviewee #4 9:44

I didn't really understand the question how that was related to my education.

Interviewer 9:50

Do you feel it's working in the same environments creates a bubble for you that you feel only connected to the bubble and not to the bubble outside the university?

Interviewee #4 10:02

Well, I mean, there's no I wouldn't say so. But it's all depends. I have, as I said before, I think that's all bit your personal preference or activities, you can be really comfortable in this bubble, just being in the university and being surrounded by people of the same socioeconomic position and education. About Yeah, as I said, like I was the friends who are working outside of the, of the university being Dutch. So then I also in Germany also have friends who are not academics, or it's, but I see, not really a risk, but yet that you can really get comfortable in a bubble like that. Ofcourse there's no need to, to move outside. I doubt, maybe it's a bit more about personal preferences and activities, how you look for your relationships.

Interviewer 10:52

And how do you experience the workload at the university?

Interviewee #4 10:57

Well, I mean, there's always something to complain. So it came. At the beginning, I thought it was quite a lot, because then you also have like this adaption problems. Because you have to organise all the courses. And it's everything is new that it takes, it takes a while and you feel I guess, there's a lot of real working pressure. And of course, now I have children in home office. And academic This is of course, also not decreasing your workload, but increasing it. But in normal times, I would say after a couple of years, of course, you get used to organising it, we were staying and different orientation and works, The workload decreases but the beginning of February is fast.

Interviewer 11:37

And do you feel that the extra stress and the higher workload prevent you from creating social groups?

Interviewee #4 11:45

That's a difficult question. So no, I wouldn't say so. But because for me, personally. I had some colleagues who were in the same positions on them. Maybe this creates, not necessarily for me, but I think it's great. It's more like this kind of they've also spirit of belonging, because then you share like the same complaints or the same worries. Say and then of course, you, in theory will try to have each other and which was not the case from me so much. But of course, there's, I did feel isolated also, because of that.

Interviewer 12:16

Okay. And so most of your social, most of your friends are also from work, or outside university?

Interviewee #4 12:25

mean, at some point, we can, you know, as an academic, you change quite a bit between places, and you meet new people, and others are going somewhere else. So yeah, many friends that I still have. I met (name of spouse), when I was in University, you are working in different places, also there before. Looking now, as I made quite a lot of friends during this, due to my due to my job.

Interviewer 12:54

And there were also people, because you mentioned that you have Dutch friends, and they were also from university, or?

Interviewee #4 13:01

Yeah, and they are not from the universities, or they're working in other another jobs. So I have friends from university, but they are an international. Not so many Dutch friends from the university.

Interviewer 13:13

And your friends are mostly academics or people from the same socioeconomic status?

Interviewee #4 13:21

And in the Netherlands, yes they have studied. So about Germany also have friends who who didn't study.

Interviewer 13:30

And do you feel more connected to? Or do you feel that you were easier to make friends In Groningen with people that work at the university because you meet an easier or they feel that you want to step outside the bubble?

Interviewee #4 13:44

No, I think it's easier to meet people at your workplace. So and then, I mean, if we'd go to a sports club or so then of course, you could also meet more local people, but I'm not doing it at all. If you go to a language courses, of course, then you also can make friends. But yeah, so far, for now, I'm just working here. And I'm not looking, actively looking to add more friends to my to my network. There is a, that would, if this would be my plan and probably I would go to a sports club or do some social activities where you could meet some more people from outside the university, which is also nice. Because then you can switch a bit, not have to talk a bit. You don't have to talk all the time about your work, but then you can also talk about other things.

Interviewer 14:31

You also mentioned that there was the Welcome Centre, they helped you when you have moved to Groningen. Did you receive more social support from the university or the municipality to help you being welcomed in in the Netherlands?

Interviewee #4 14:49

I mean, they provide you with some information that is what you could do and where you could learn Dutch. But actively no, so there's just a number of options that you can can take. And I think that is also what I didn't use. Got this kind of network for foreigners who come here. And as I said, I didn't use that. But there's a number of options for foreigners to get integrated. They also every take this kind of, what is it. Like this partner programme from

university. If you have a partner who wants to work in academics, I don't say it's really good, but at least it's there. And so they have at least tried to, to make you feel like.

Interviewer 15:33

Did you participated in this programme?

Interviewee #4 15:37

Not me, my wife, but she also did work out at the end. So that I have no personal experience only if secondhand, so but I know that it exists. But I don't know if it's really successful or really good.

Interviewer 15:53

And if you would have participated in the programme, would you say that you would become more connected to the local community or would that have helped?

Interviewee #4 16:04

Probably not, because this kind of career programmes and, again, put you in contact with academics, maybe from different disciplines, but not necessarily with with local peoples? I think for these kind of things you I don't know, if the university does anything in this kind of directions, it's more, more to work better off, you better commence, be more productive, maybe because you feel better. But I don't know that I don't think there's like any programme that I'm aware of that would put you in contact with the local community. There's like sports clubs as well. But then usually, they're also kind of these academic sports clubs, not not ones for from different neighbourhoods in Groningen with more activities.

Interviewer 16:51

I think those were my questions for you. And it was a small interview. But do you have any questions or remarks

Interviewee #4 16:57

or? No, I think it's curious for us what the outcome will be. If you are done, you can send me your bench?

Interviewer 17:05

Yeah, that's exactly what I wanted to propose. If you would like to, I can send you the transcript and the thesis at the end.

Interviewee #4 17:09

Yeah, sure. Did you find more Germans that you could talk to?

Interviewer 17:18

Yes. Yes. I interviewed (names of respondents)

And this afternoon, I'm meeting. name again. Sorry, I forgot her name. It's a it's a busy schedule of I'm not too good with names, unfortunately.

Interviewee #4 17:41

Right. Okay. Is a PhD students,

Interviewer 17:43

PhD students, PhD students, but I'll just look it up.

Interviewee #4 17:46
(Name of a respondent)

Interviewer 17:48
Yeah, that's her.

Interviewee #4 17:49
a PhD students.

Interviewer 17:51
Yeah, no, see? Well, I was really surprised because everyone was so welcoming. And so so kind with responding. So that also that really warmed my heart.

Interviewee #4 18:02
Yes. And I think that we all know that it's sometimes difficult to find interview partners. So that's, if you have like, such a selective group, then of course, it's even more important that you get some positive responses. Yeah, but

Interviewer 18:15
I really, I really, really felt warmed by the, the kindness and the effort was trying to help those really, really kind and, well, I want to say thank you very much for wanting to meet me for this interview. I will set you the end result.

Interviewee #4 18:34
Alright, and good luck with your thesis and Thank you.

Interviewer 18:40
Enjoy your day. Bye

7.3.5 Interview 5

Interviewer 0:01
Hi, I'm Yannick Kops. I'm a bachelor student at the Faculty of spatial sciences. And I'm researching what impact through social economic factors have on German academics in Konya on their sense of belonging in Dutch society. So I'll be conducting interviews. And I'm curious about both short effect economic socio economic effects your experience on your sense of belonging. So, can you introduce yourself? Who are you? Are you living iclone right now?

Interviewee #5 0:35
Sir. So, my name is (name of respondent). I'm a second year PhD student at the Faculty of spatial Sciences here at the University of Groningen. I'm, I came here after my I did my master here as well. And I also live in Groningen. And I moved here who, I think one year

Interviewer 1:00
and where where did you get your bachelor's degree?

Interviewee #5 1:05

I got my bachelor's degree in Germany.

Interviewer 1:07

Okay. And were in Germany?

Interviewee #5 1:10

University of Cologne.

Interviewer 1:11

Where is it? Actually, I'm not familiar?

Interviewee #5 1:14

Keulen

Interviewer 1:14

Oh, Keulen. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So it's pretty close to the Dutch border.

Interviewee #5 1:19

Yeah, exactly. And I'm even closer. Well, where I was born. That's like 16 kilometres from the Dutch border. Okay, so it was not such a weird idea to come here.

Interviewer 1:31

And so you grew up close to the border, but are you able to speak Dutch as well?

Interviewee #5 1:38

Not really, unfortunately I never had it in high school. I came here and took one course during my master's. But then the master is quite tough itself. So I didn't really follow up with it. And yeah, I'm taking a course right now. Yeah, learn more Dutch.

Interviewer 1:58

And it's, it's very hard for you to learn Dutch, or are you getting getting the hang of it?

Interviewee #5 2:05

It's actually okay. Like, the grammar is really fairly similar to German, sometimes even a little bit more simple, I think, more intuitive. I have some problems with the vocabulary and just the talking. Because I have, I think, yeah, I barely have Dutch people in my social environment, so to speak. Yeah. So and I also work in English. Yeah, there's no actual pressing reason to be fluent in Dutch.

Interviewer 2:33

but at least you wanted to learn Dutch. So that's nice. You're now living in Groningen, or?

Interviewee #5 2:40

Yeah

Interviewer 2:41

Okay, and you're living? What's your living situation? Are you living with other PhD students, Or?

Interviewee #5 2:48

I live with my boyfriend, who's Dutch and he's also another PhD student. Yeah,

Interviewer 2:55

Okay. Well, those were the introduction questions. is it okay, if we move on to the main questions? The big theme in the thesis is a sense of belonging. Are you familiar with a sense of belonging?

Interviewee #5 3:10

I have an idea about it. But maybe you can introduce a little bit more what you exactly mean.

Interviewer 3:15

Yeah, sure.

My definition of sense of belonging for my thesis is, the feeling that you get that you belong to a society or to local community, and it's mostly focused on social relations. So social relations can exist in a place but it doesn't need to be bound to a place but it mostly starts in a place and it focuses on shared feelings being able to communicate and connect with other people. And the feeling that you are being accepted. That's what you focus on. So how would you define your sense of belonging in relation to Groningen? Would you say that you feel accepted in Groningen?

Interviewee #5 4:06

That's, that's really difficult to say. So on the one hand, I feel I'm not really belonging here. Also, because I'm living in a really like isolated sort of social bubble. Like my friends. Also, expats working mostly at the university, after getting the entire university bubble is really international and not necessarily linked to Groningen as such. On the other hand, I also don't have the feeling I'm excluded here or anything. I feel like people in Groningen in that really open it's really easy for me, even though I'm not fluent in Dutch to get in touch with people. So yeah, but I also i'm not sure how this COVID situation comes here into play, because I moved here when COVID was already happening, and I think since then, everyone is living more distance, things get a little bit. This life is not like normal, things are close, there are certain events that are not happening, you're more bound to stay at home. So I think that makes it also difficult. So I would say like, I don't feel I totally belong here. But I'm also not feeling I don't belong here.

Interviewer 5:23

And if Covid weren't around, would you say that you will feel have more energy to connect with the local community?

Interviewee #5 5:32

Yeah, definitely. I mean, I also took my master here. And I remember back then there was no COVID. Yes. And it was really, really easy for me actually true to get in touch with people, also local people. And yeah, it was super nice. And I also really liked that about Groningen. And that although it is such a small city, I have the feeling that very many young and open people and that might be fairly easy.

Interviewer 5:57

Yeah. You mentioned that you are living mostly in a university bubble. And so the University of Groningen is also a big part of the city of Groningen. And do you feel that you are in

contact is people outside the university as well? Or only within the university bubble? That you connect with people outside?

Interviewee #5 6:21

Actually, not at all. I just thought whether I know anyone outside of university bubble and I just really don't. It's Yeah, that's a shame. But, yeah.

Interviewer 6:33

Well, it's not a shame. It's her personal preference, or things that just end up in your in your way. So it's easy to get to know people when, when opportunities are there. And well, there are very little opportunity right now.

Interviewee #5 6:48

Yeah, that's true.

Interviewer 6:52

Do you feel that the Dutch society was when you first moved here was welcoming you welcoming you in the society as a as a German? Or did you feel that you were being excluded?

Interviewee #5 7:05

I didn't get excluded. But I also did not feel welcomed as a German per se. But I felt there was really like a huge, um, it was really easy to arrive here. Because for instance, the municipality has all information about the city registration in English, that helps a lot already. And I think that's, especially in Germany, where I'm from, you will not find that. If you move somewhere, which is not like the capital Berlin or another big city, then you're just basically screwed. You don't speak German. And here, it was really easy. Also, I remember when I registered, everything was in English. I found like a place to stay. And the landlord tried to communicate in English and little bit in German with me as well. So it felt like it was really, really easy. And then also, of course, the university is making our I felt at least was making a big effort to welcome the international students. So yeah, I felt quite welcome.

Interviewer 8:06

Oh, that's, that's great to hear. But would you say that it was mostly because they were helping you in order to to speak English or German to help you interact more?

Interviewee #5 8:23

How do you mean that exactly?

Interviewer 8:25

Well, your landlord spoke German and English with you in order so you could better understand him. So that's just one of the reasons why you feel that you're more or less being welcomed?

Interviewee #5 8:40

Um, yeah, definitely. Because it's somehow accommodating you and makes your life easier. And if you just understand each other or find a way to communicate with each other, then it's already way easier. And I remember that made me feel more comfortable. So I was not really anymore in this tense position of coming somewhere. I don't know anything and anyone. Yeah, so definitely. And I think then I also was when I realised that so many people here were

able to speak English so I did not have to learn Dutch, first. Before I could find my way around. Think I was also more brave to then ask people for things for instance, I don't know I remember I just at some point ask a random guy on the street. Hey, how's it working here in the evening with like, do I have to cycle with lights on your bike or not? Because I maybe would not have done if I would be scared of asking in Dutch.

Interviewer 9:32

Yeah, hmm. You also mentioned that the municipality helps you with the with the Welcome Centre. And the university also has some expat services that help you. Did you get some help from the university as well or only from the municipality?

Interviewee #5 9:57

When I came here as a student, it was mostly my specialty University. When I came here, as an employee afterwards, like as a PhD student. It was actually, I think it was more than University. But since I removed here during the pandemic, like also in the start, that was last year in March. I did not receive much help, I have to say. So it's more like, yeah, here's your contract. Good luck. That was it. But I think I was also super exceptional situation. I don't know what it's usually like, I can't imagine if you're coming into work and the focus is maybe a little bit more on your employer.

Interviewer 10:35

Yeah. But as well, there's a big part of work is also your social life, next to work. So there are some programmes of the interfere, see, to accommodate or to help you get to know other internationals? Did you participate in one of those programmes?

Interviewee #5 10:55

I, I only heard that some of those were cancelled.

Interviewer 10:59

Okay. unfortunately.

Interviewee #5 11:02

I really that yeah, that's what I mean, with exception situation. I think at some point, I changed them to online. And I think I actually just missed to sign up for those. I just tried to Yeah, they were sometimes events where I could meet some colleagues and I just tried to get to know people. Yeah, those events, but I actually didn't participate in any programme or anything yet.

Interviewer 11:26

Okay. Do you appreciate University for at least organising those programmes? or could they have done more?

Interviewee #5 11:37

I definitely think they could do more. But I also have to say. I'm sorry that I'm talking so much about this COVID situation, but that really shaped my arrival here. I have to say that, I also don't know how it works. If you are if you can go to the office, and maybe can enjoy the rich social life of Groningen.

Interviewer 11:59

Yeah

Interviewee #5 11:59

I guess. Yeah. When I came with was just nothing was happening. And the university was also not making a huge effort. But I also don't know, I mean, many things happened last year, and you cannot like balance out everything. So I also think the university has like, I don't know. put all the things their their efforts in that.

Interviewer 12:22

But you're still not able to go one day or two days a week to the university?

interviewee #5 12:28

I could, but then I have to see that no, one of my colleagues is there, and then I'm alone at the university.

Interviewer 12:35

Yeah, that's,

Interviewee #5 12:36

that doesn't help.

Interviewer 12:37

No, that doesn't help. Indeed. And it's okay. If we move on a little bit to the socio economic factors?

Interviewee #5 12:45

Yeah.

Interviewer 12:49

These are a little bit more abstract question. So if you have any questions surrounding the questions, please, please ask. How does your working for reduction diversity impacts your distance to Dutch society? So do you feel more connected to the to the Netherlands, by working for a Dutch university?

Interviewee #5 13:11

Actually, I do, and that's I have so much to do, I think with other working conditions, because I also have a lot of friends who do their PhDs in Germany. And yeah, I have to say that the conditions in the Netherlands are super nice, like you are actually employed at the very often you're employed. And even if you receive a scholarship, it's way more than you can expect in other countries, for instance, Germany. So sometimes I talk with my friends about it. And then I really feel like I have the sense off serving like, proud of my employer or the system, you're like, yeah, we get a decent salary. And it's, I mean, you're not getting rich, but at least someone is worshipping your, your work here. And which is super nice. And I also start seeing more, more and more good things about the Dutch society where did that system at least, because I'm just in the system now, like, I realised that it's really easy to do your taxes here. And it's really nice to see. And I also now know about all those benefits I can receive through my employer, which is just like part of the law. And I think those things are just amazing.

Interviewer 14:25

that's very good to hear. Uhm and you mentioned at some of your German friends that are also doing a PhD but in Germany, and if you would get a lower income from the university, would you be less appreciative of the university?

Interviewee #5 14:46

No, I don't think so. Because it's not only income. That's one part of the story, but I also feel like the way you were treated here as a PhD students, and they're already thought that during my master's I had a job at the department. It's a little bit more equal, like you, I immediately felt like I'm part of this department. I'm just not one tiny PhD student, and there's a big professor and I cannot really reach this person or there's really limits also. Yeah, maybe it's also deal with the faculty, because it's a really small faculty, but I feel like the hierarchies are really low, and you can really like just talk to people. It's really yeah, everyone is really closely working together. And that kind of makes me it's just a nice working environment I have to say.

Interviewer 15:33

That's great to hear. That's great to hear. And how does it feel now? Because your PhD students and and that's an well respectable status. Does it feel you make you feel more connected to Groningen? Because it's an academic, a academic city? Does it feel you more connected to the city?

Interviewee #5 16:00

That's really interesting question. I think like people of my age, who live here, who are not from Groningen, mostly do a PhD or postdoc at the university, because besides that, there are just not that many opportunities for expats. Just at least from my view, I would say that. So it kind of kind of makes me feeling Yeah, I belong here. Because I'm working at this university. And I'm doing my PhD here. Um, yeah, yeah. It's some sort of belonging I would say, that also makes me connect more connected to the city.

Interviewer 16:38

And why did you chose for Groningen instead of any other city, or any other city?

Interviewee #5 16:46

Good question. Yeah, since I did my master here, and knew about Groningen. And I have my boyfriend here. So was also like, a socially driven decision. I would say, Yeah, but it's also super good university. And my supervisors are very good in their fields. So it was not like, I'm only coming in with my boyfriend's here, it was like, because my boyfriend is here, I started looking for opportunities here.

Interviewer 17:15

And well you mentioned your social groups are mostly from the university. And they're, they're all doing a PhD or some other manster students are in the same socio economic status status?

Interviewee #5 17:32

I would not say so. Okay, a few are PhD students. Then I have one friend who was a postdoc. And I met her in my Dutch class. So and then I have one friend who was a bachelor student, and one friend has a master's student. So I would say, although the majority are probably PhD students, yeah.

Interviewer 17:59

You've met them all through university? well, except for the one from the language course.

Interviewee #5 18:04

Yeah, that's Yeah. But even that was from the university language course. So yeah.

Yeah. And in some way, the University was connecting all my, my social relationships here.

Interviewer 18:16

And how do you feel that you're? Well, I, I imagine a PhD is pretty intensive. So do you feel that you have time to connect with other people, in your spare time?

Interviewee #5 18:28

I think I would have time. But I actually, at the moment don't know how, that's chang. Like, yeah, so usually, I don't know, if I move somewhere usually sign up at the gym, or sports club. I also, like, hobbies, like I do a lot of artsy stuff. Usually I meet people through that, but at the moment is little bit difficult. Yeah. So I think it's not about a time it's more about what's possible at the moment, but I think I will definitely find the time.

Interviewer 19:00

Okay. And you're mostly in the university bubble. But does it make you feel more distant? Your social group is mostly a university bubble? Well, this will make you feel more distant from the local community or the Dutch society?

Interviewee #5 19:18

Not necessarily from the Dutch society, but sometimes a little bit from the local community. Okay, I guess the university level is quite International. I also have a lot of colleagues coming from the run start. So they're also Yeah, at the moment, always there or go back there and weekends. So it's a little bit like it's a really selected level, I would say, and it's not really mixed or anything. I think I have one friend. She's from Groningen and actually. Yeah, but also, she's completely soaked up by this university bubble. So yeah. Yeah, a little bit difficult, but I think it does matter where you are, if it's like, you live in such a very specific level, I feel like you really only are in touch with a certain part of the population. And yeah, subsequently miss out on others.

Interviewer 20:15

And of course your work is at university, so it's most likely that you'll meet those people.

Interviewee #5 20:21

Exactly.

Interviewer 20:22

And Are you a member of any Sports Association right now? Or gym, gyms are not open but anything?

Interviewee #5 20:31

unfortunately, yeah, just doing stuff by myself.

Interviewer 20:36

Yeah, that's, that's game get to quite hard to after after a while. Sporting is a very important aspect. And I think these were my questions. I've got some small details. I forget, forgot to

mention that this interviews entirely anonymous, so my thesis, because I'm only interviewing German academics. So to be really easy to find. Who is who. So everyone is entirely anonymous note, ah, names, nothing. If you would like to, I can send you the transcript after the meeting. And also the thesis at the end. So you can see the end result, if you'd like to.

Interviewee #5 21:23

The transcript is fine. But the thesis I would pretty much like to see.

Interviewer 21:26

okay, yeah, that's really cool.

Interviewee #5 21:29

Who is supervising you?

Interviewer 21:30

Stephen Adaawen.

Interviewee #5 21:32

Oh, cool. Yeah, he is a colleague of mine.

Interviewer 21:35

Oh, yeah.

I've never met him in real life, unfortunately. So he's sometimes has troubles with his Wi Fi connection. during meetings. He can be quite hard to, to hear, because Wi Fi struggles but yeah, my WI FI isn't the best as well.

Interviewee #5 21:57

No Wi Fi judging.

Interviewer 22:01

Do you have any questions or remarks or something that just popped up in your head?

Interviewee #5 22:09

Actually, I want to know? Who recommended me to you? as you said.

Interviewer 22:15

(Fellow student). Recommended you. And (fellow student).

Interviewee #5 22:26

Okay. Yeah, I know (fellow student).

And also (other respondent).

Okay, sorry. I'm really bad with names for me. If I see their faces or something. I'm like, Oh, yeah.

Interviewer 22:37

yeah. So yeah, that's how I got your name. So I'm really appreciative of you were agreeing to meet. I have to say everyone was so kind when they were replying via email. It was it was amazing.

Interviewee #5 22:51

Ah that's great. Yeah, I think qualitative research is quite a quite a thing. And I'm happy. Yeah. So good. Yeah. experiences.

Interviewer 22:59

Yeah. Every time I did an interview, it made me smile. Because everyone's so kind and yeah. I thought everyone to be kind. It really helped.

Interviewee #5 23:12

Are you good with your interviews now or do you need more contacts?

Interviewer 23:16

No, no, I've now conducted conducted six interviews right now.

Interviewee #5 23:21

Oh, wow. Yeah, that's that's quite something. Congratulations.

Interviewer 23:24

Yeah. And everything was in the past one and a half week. So.

Interviewee #5 23:28

Oh, wow. Wow you were speeding.

Interviewer 23:32

It was a busy week. It was a busy week.

Interviewee #5 23:37

Okay, now you have to transcribe everything.

Interviewer 23:40

Yeah.

Interviewee #5 23:42

Okay, good luck with that.

Interviewer 23:44

It's, uh, I will manage Enjoy your day. I think the weather's beautiful outside. Hope you can enjoy it for a bit.

Interviewee #5 23:52

don't work too much today.

Interviewer 23:53

Oh, no. Just if I will get this done the by the end of today, and then I will just go for a walk. So I'll be fine

Interviewee #5 24:00

Yeah, that's a good idea.

Interviewer 24:01

Thank you very much for the interview. And I will sent you the end result.

Interviewee #5 24:05

yeah, thanks

for watching your thesis.

Interviewer 24:08

Hey, bye.

Interviewee #5 24:09

Bye bye.