



# Impacts of Mega-events

*How can the Eurovision Song Contest 2021, held in Rotterdam-Zuid, accelerate existing urban renewal projects in its deprived neighborhoods?*



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Cover page: Aerial view of Rotterdam-Zuid (Ahoy on the left-side) (NPRZ, 2019)

# Index

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
1.1 <u>Background</u> .....	4
1.2 <u>Research problem and research questions</u> .....	6
1.3 <u>Thesis structure</u> .....	6
<b>2. Theoretical framework</b> .....	<b>7</b>
2.1 <u>Rotterdam-Zuid</u> .....	7
2.2 <u>Mega events</u> .....	8
2.3 <u>Urban renewal</u> .....	10
2.4 <u>Conceptual model</u> .....	11
2.5 <u>Hypotheses</u> .....	11
<b>3. Methodology</b> .....	<b>12</b>
3.1 <u>Research area</u> .....	12
3.2 <u>Research strategy</u> .....	12
3.3 <u>Validity, reliability and trustworthiness</u> .....	13
3.4 <u>Recruitment</u> .....	13
3.5 <u>Data analysis</u> .....	14
3.6 <u>Ethical considerations</u> .....	14
<b>4. Results</b> .....	<b>15</b>
4.1 <u>Main goals of the NPRZ</u> .....	15
4.2 <u>Accelerated spatial changes by the ESC</u> .....	16
4.3 <u>Indirect spatial changes influenced by the ESC</u> .....	17
4.4 <u>Possibilities created for urban renewal</u> .....	18
<b>5. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>20</b>
5.1 <u>Conclusion</u> .....	20
5.2 <u>Reflection</u> .....	21
<b>References</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendix I – Coding tree</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>Appendix II – Interview guide</b> .....	<b>26</b>

## **Abstract**

Over the past few decades, there has been an increasing use of mega-events as a tool for urban transformation to generate a range of different outcomes in cities and regions. After the Netherlands won the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) in Israel in 2019, it became known that the 65<sup>th</sup> ESC would be hosted in Rotterdam. As Rotterdam-Zuid is frequently seen as a shabby and disadvantaged district of Rotterdam which contains many poor households of the Netherlands, this research aims to investigate how the ESC can positively influence the pace of existing urban renewal projects (as included in the NPRZ) in Rotterdam-Zuid to improve its backlog. This study uses a qualitative approach that allows for an in-depth analysis of participants' perceptions of the situation with the help of semi-structured interviews. According to the results it was found that due to the ongoing (long-term) area development, the design of the surrounding environment of Ahoy, the restricting measures of the corona pandemic and lack of generating fiscal transfers, the ESC has little to no influence on existing urban renewal projects or other spatial projects in Rotterdam-Zuid.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Reports of violence, drug nuisance and theft are repeatedly reported in the media as typical for Rotterdam-Zuid (VPRO, 2008), a district positioned on the south-side of Rotterdam. The area consists of many deprived neighbourhoods with cheap and poorly maintained social housing, high unemployment rates, low levels of education and little social cohesion (Hoff et al, 2016). Considering the scope of the accumulated problems in Rotterdam-Zuid, a national program was considered necessary to remedy the problems, resulting in the formation of the 'Nationaal Programma Rotterdam Zuid' (NPRZ) in 2011 (Nijkamp et al, 2017). It includes an overall plan, addressing multiple pillars, to combat the backlog of Rotterdam-Zuid and to improve its quality of life.

Over the past few decades, there has been an increasing use of mega-events as a tool for urban transformation to generate a range of different outcomes in cities and regions (Hiller, 2000; Richards, 2017). Hosting such events can bring abilities to yield extraordinarily high levels of tourism, prestige, media coverage, and economic impacts for cities (Hiller, 2015). Besides, they can have major impacts on the spatial environment and population as well (Müller, 2015). García (2004) adds to this that mega-events can even function as an effective catalyst for urban renewal processes.

After the Netherlands won the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) in Israel in 2019, it became known that the 65<sup>th</sup> ESC would be hosted in Rotterdam (NOS, 2019). It started on May 18, 2021 and was held in Rotterdam Ahoy (Rotterdam tourist information, 2021), which is an event hall located in the area of Rotterdam-Zuid. This edition was actually planned for 2020 but had been moved to 2021 due to the corona pandemic which is still present to this day. However, it was not listed as 'planned' in the public version of Rotterdam's bid book, the ESC could possibly function as a positive impulse for urban renewal processes in Rotterdam-Zuid.

Müller and Gaffney (2018) focus on a comparison of urban impacts of different mega-events throughout the years. They argue that impacts of mega-events on cities are very diverse and moderated mainly by the political and economic context of cities (Müller and Gaffney, 2018). Scholars, event organizers, and the public have to take in mind these diversities of impacts and should be warned not to generalize possible impacts of one mega-event to another (Müller and Gaffney, 2018).

As mega-events can be a tool for urban transformation (Hiller, 2000), the ESC may positively influence urban renewal processes in Rotterdam-Zuid, as included in the NPRZ. Therefore, an integrated policy merging impacts from hosting the ESC with existing urban plans (NPRZ) can result in positive spatial changes in Rotterdam-Zuid, like 'accelerated' urban renewal. These changes can lead to economic growth and social development (Carlsen & Taylor, 2003) in the deprived neighbourhoods of Rotterdam-Zuid. As this research focusses on how the ESC can contribute to the improvement of the backlog and quality of life in Rotterdam-Zuid, containing many poor households in the Netherlands, this research is of great societal relevance.

Furthermore, this research tries to explore the gap in existing scientific literature on mega-events. As is said, impacts of mega-events on cities are very diverse and these diversities of impacts often cannot be generalized from one mega-event to another (Müller and Gaffney, 2018). In addition, the ESC is a mega-event that is not explored often, as there is little solid information about the impact of the ESC on host cities or regions (Arnegger & Herz, 2016). Research on urban renewal in relation to mega-events does not happen very often as well (Hiller, 2000). Little attention is paid to the influence that mega-events can have on concrete urban processes, thus a better understanding of mega-events in relation to urban (sociological) processes is needed (Hiller, 2015). Hence, this research aims to bridge this gap by investigating the possible influence of the ESC on urban renewal projects and its spatial environment as a whole. Subsequently, knowledge can be gathered on impacts of hosting the ESC and how to benefit. In the future, Rotterdam-Zuid can serve as an example for other cities or regions hosting the ESC, so that potential errors can be prevented.

## 1.2 Research problem and research questions

Mega-events are increasingly used as a tool for urban transformations to generate economic growth and social development in cities and regions (Hiller, 2000; Carlsen & Taylor, 2003; Richards, 2017). As little is known about the impact of an ESC on host cities (Arnegger & Herz, 2016) and mega-events (in general) in relation to urban renewal (Hiller, 2000), knowledge is needed on how such events can positively contribute to urban renewal processes in order to foster economic growth and social development. Therefore, this bachelor thesis focusses on a case-study of the ESC 2021 held in Rotterdam-Zuid. The aim of this research is to investigate how the ESC can positively influence the pace of existing urban renewal projects (as included in the NPRZ) in Rotterdam-Zuid.

To find out, it is tried to answer the following main research question:

*How can the Eurovision Song Contest 2021, held in Rotterdam-Zuid, accelerate existing urban renewal projects in its deprived neighborhoods?*

The following sub-questions are designed to answer the main research question:

- Sub-question 1: *What are the main goals of the 'Nationaal Programma Rotterdam Zuid' in terms of urban renewal?*
- Sub-question 2: *What are Rotterdam-Zuid's (proposed) spatial changes accelerated by the Eurovision Song Contest 2021?*
- Sub-question 3: *What are Rotterdam-Zuid's indirect spatial changes influenced by the Eurovision Song Contest 2021?*
- Sub-question 4: *What possibilities for urban renewal are created in Rotterdam-Zuid, with the advent of the Eurovision Song Contest 2021?*

## 1.3 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of a number of chapters that guide you through the research. Chapter 2 presents a theoretical framework which elaborates on theories and concepts relevant to this research. Based on the theoretical framework a conceptual model has been made, followed by a hypothesis. Chapter 3 discusses the used research method based on the research questions and how the data was collected. Then, chapter 4 presents the results that were found. At last, chapter 5 summarizes the main findings in a conclusion and discusses them in relation to the literature.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Rotterdam-Zuid

Rotterdam-Zuid (figure 1) is located on the south-side of the River Nieuwe Maas and belongs to the municipality of Rotterdam. Most of the affluent neighbourhoods are situated on the north-side of the river, whereas the south-side being largely industrial and working-class (Doucet et al, 2010). Rotterdam-Zuid is frequently seen as a shabby and disadvantaged district of Rotterdam which contains many poor households of the Netherlands (Hoff et al, 2016). High unemployment, low levels of education, little social cohesion, cheap and poorly maintained social housing are the result of long political disinterest in Rotterdam-Zuid, due to its geographic location (VPRO, 2008).

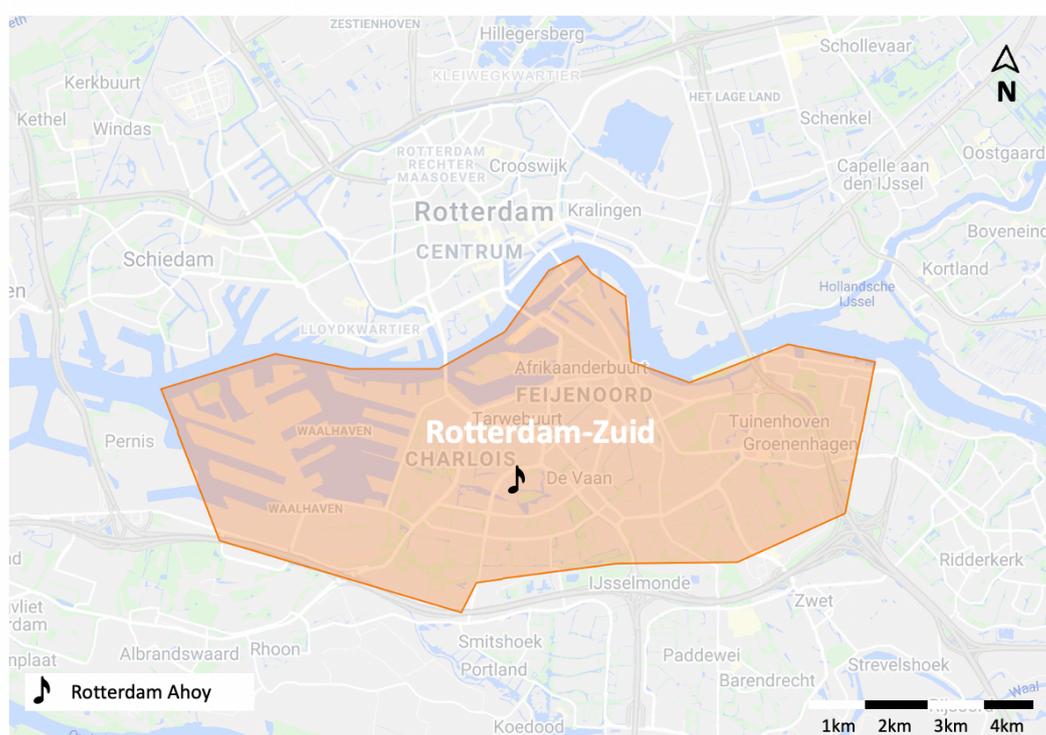


Figure 1. Location of Rotterdam-Zuid on the south side of the River Nieuwe Maas (own illustration).

Rotterdam has undergone a history of long-term processes of reconstruction and regeneration (Van Melik & Lawton, 2011). During the Second World War, its historic city center was heavily destroyed. Rotterdam was largely rebuilt during the 1950s and 1960s and received a modern city center in return (Doucet et al, 2010; Van Melik & Lawton, 2011). Although large parts of the city have been renewed and rebuilt, the development of the city is still far from sufficient (Van Melik & Lawton, 2011). In the late 1980s, plans were drawn up for the redevelopment of Rotterdam-Zuid, as large areas on the river side were vacant and abandoned (Doucet et al, 2010). These redevelopment plans are still in progress, while they already have been working on it for 20 years (Doucet et al, 2010).

However, in Februari 2011 a report *'Kwaliteitssprong Zuid, ontwikkeling vanuit Kracht'* was published. It stated that Rotterdam-Zuid is struggling with socio-economic problems that are unprecedented in size and intensity for the Netherlands (NPRZ, 2021). Advice from this report was taken seriously and resulted in the *'Nationaal Programma Rotterdam Zuid (NPRZ)'* later in 2011. It included an overall plan to combat the backlog of Rotterdam-Zuid and improve its quality of life. One of the pillars addressed by this national program is an area development approach consisting of the creation of higher-income housing, attracting offices and bringing city-center functions to Rotterdam-Zuid (NPRZ, 2019).

## 2.2 Mega events

Mega-events are events with a fixed duration (short-term and one-time) that attract a large global audience, have a wide brokered reach, bring high costs, and have a major impact on the spatial environment and population (Müller, 2015; Hiller, 2015). They can consist of any type of event of significant size, such as the Olympic Games, FIFA World Cups, Music Festivals, Song Contests (e.g., ESC), Formula One Grand Prix, MotoGP, and more (Chamberlain et al, 2019). The most important thing about a mega-event, from an urban perspective, is that its size, scale and special requirements transform the urban environment through the realization of necessary new facilities and amenities (Hiller, 2015).

As these mega-events are *'large-scale cultural events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance'* (Fourie & Santana-Gallego, 2011, pp. 1364), it can provide opportunities to innovate in a wide range of event management activities, like infrastructure and event facilities (Chamberlain et al, 2019; Roche, 1994). Mega-events can be used by cities as a tool to improve the public sector (e.g., faster throughput, new or improved infrastructure), create new facilities (e.g., stadiums, event halls) to host the event, or support the tourism industry through private sector additions in hotels and/or restaurants (Hiller, 2015).

Mega events are mainly internationally oriented and highly visible, they also generate enormous media attention and worldwide visitors. Most mega events are one-off in one place, so destination marketing opportunities are short-lived without proper planning and management (Wang & Jin, 2019). Moreover, mega-events do not only attract an increasingly global audience to a certain place, but most of the time they also leave behind a lasting legacy around the destination where the event took place (Fourie & Santana-Gallego, 2011).

*"Mega-events are high priority events which intervene in normal urban processes by requiring site preparation and large-scale mobilization of resources to facilitate them" (Hiller, 2015, pp. 191)*

In fact, Hiller (2015) states that the scale of mega-events can help to accomplish fiscal transfers from higher levels of government that are not legitimate to other cities. Federal officials can be called upon as well, for assistance with infrastructure matters, such as improving public transportation or creating other necessary spatial transformations, that might not have been "first" on the government agenda without the mega-event (Hiller, 2015). Thus, accelerating spatial transformations for the benefit of the event.

Recurring impacts generated by mega-events are job creation (employment), capitalization on business-related opportunities (Wang & Jin, 2019), improvement of infrastructure, increased tourism, economic benefits in the form of income and tax revenues, or modifying the built form of a site (Hiller, 2015). From a social perspective, a mega event increases the awareness of host destinations, stimulates cultural exchange and promotes the preservation of the local culture (Wang & Jin, 2019).

In relation to the built environment of cities, mega-events play the most important role in transforming places that are considered outdated and dilapidated and the activities that go with them (Hiller, 2015). However, the most dominant roles in mega-event analyses are the costs for the infrastructure and facility construction, incomes from visitor expenses, event receipts and media attention (Hiller, 2000). How mega events are related to urban processes is often omitted, despite the fact that they often influence urban space by building landmark structures or renewing urban space through the realization of parks, squares and new housing/ retail developments (Hiller, 2000). However, there is a growing awareness that a mega event can be a tool for urban transformation (Hiller, 2000).

Mega events can play an important role in destination development. For example, the Eurovision Song Contest, considered as a mega-event, was deployed by Azerbaijan as a strategy to develop international tourism, reduce its "oil" image and achieve long-term development (Wang & Jin, 2019). Roche (1994) states that mega-events are short-term happenings with long-term consequences for host cities or countries. These long-term consequences can be linked to the concept of urban renewal, as these projects can be part of wider economic and social development policies tied to mega-events (Carlsen & Taylor, 2003).

Mega-events can function as an effective catalyst for urban renewal processes (García, 2004). Notably, the size of the mega-event site and adjacent areas will undergo a land use transformation to host the event. Projects that ensure an urban impact that would otherwise be perceived as too ambitious or too pricey will be realized in most cases, because mega-events generate public and private funding that would otherwise not have been generated (Hiller, 2015). Deadlines of hosting mega-events will contribute to catalyzing the process of change which can be considered as symbolic for urban revitalization – even though some changes are based on cosmetic procedures (e.g., disguising unsightly looks) while other changes (e.g., required facilities) were purely necessary (Hiller, 2000).

For example, the Glasgow – 1990 European City of Culture event contributed to a successful regeneration from a depressed post-industrial city to an attractive and service-oriented one (García, 2004). The date of the event served as a common deadline to accelerate many of the downtown development projects, using the event as a kind of catalyst (García, 2004). Furthermore, the city's image has transformed from old stereotypes to an attractive destination for shopping, design and architecture and placement for business activity (García, 2004).

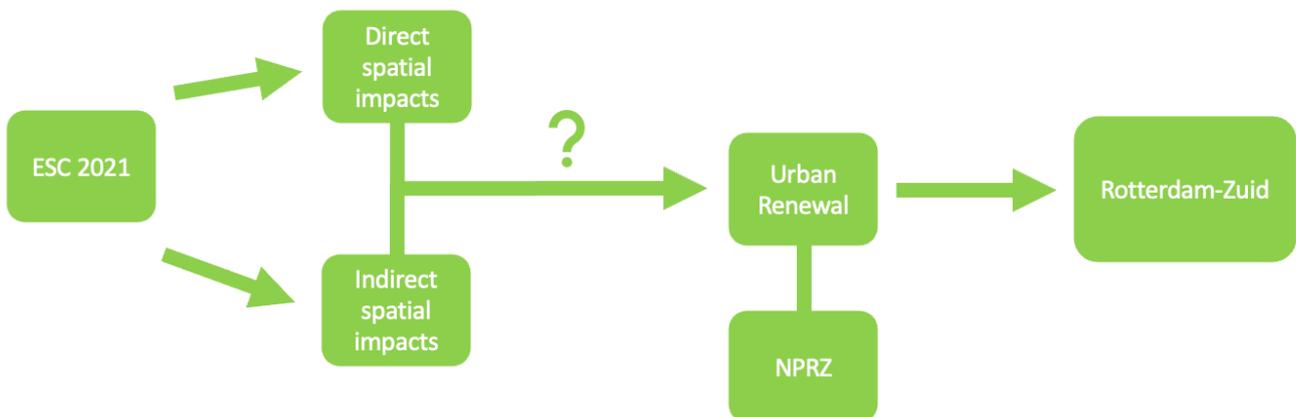
### 2.3 Urban renewal

As stated, mega-events can serve as a catalyst for urban renewal processes (García, 2004). Carlsen & Taylor (2003) describe urban renewal as the improvement of the infrastructure and facilities of neighborhoods, districts or cities to enhance its economic growth and social development. It *'combines social, economic, and physical interventions'* to meet social and economic objectives (Verhage, 2005, pp. 218). Urban renewal is a means to restore the problem of urban deterioration (Chan & Lee, 2008).

Placemaking can be considered as a part of urban renewal. Placemaking is a process of making better places by improving their quality, through creating physical areas that meet people's needs and leave a sense of place (Wykhoff, 2014). Placemaking can result in an increase of interaction between inhabitants of a certain area, while creating better and more balanced communities (Madden, 2011). Furthermore, the concept of placemaking can influence the speed of large-scale projects, such as urban renewal, through small local initiatives that change areas in places of belonging which will attract people, investments and developments (Wykhoff, 2014).

Place marketing by cities is seen as a crucial strategy to expand the size of *'business visitors and tourists, attract new businesses, help existing businesses expand, and enlarge their export markets'* (Hiller, 2015, pp. 187). Different host cities tried to use mega-events as a tool to adjust their images. For example, the Manchester 2000 Olympic bid expressly connected the Olympic games to urban renewal through marking the mega-event as the "Regeneration Games" (Hiller, 2015)

## 2.4 Conceptual model



*Figure 2. Conceptual model (own illustration).*

The conceptual model (figure 2), based on literature in the theoretical framework, displays the relation between the mega-event (ESC 2021) and urban renewal (processes). As stated in the theoretical framework, mega-events sometimes require necessary new facilities and amenities (e.g., infrastructure and event facilities), can stimulate private sector additions in hotels and/or restaurants and through deadlines accelerate urban projects. These impacts can be considered as direct spatial impacts that can have a catalyzing effect on urban renewal processes. Furthermore, mega-events can also have indirect spatial impacts, such as media attention that results in attracting people, public/ private investments and developments that can positively contribute to the process of urban renewal as well. A coding tree of the direct and indirect impacts, based on the existing literature, can be found in Appendix I.

## 2.5 Hypotheses

As stated in the theoretical framework, mega-events (e.g., ESC) have a major impact on the spatial environment and population (Müller, 2015). They transform the urban environment through the realization of necessary new facilities and amenities and can be used by cities as a tool to improve the public sector (Hiller, 2015). Besides, mega-events can be linked to urban renewal, as mega-events can function as an effective catalyst for urban renewal processes (Carlsen & Taylor, 2003; García, 2004). Urban renewal is a means to restore the problem of urban deterioration in order to enhance its economic and social development (Carlsen & Taylor, 2003; Chan & Lee, 2008).

Based on the existing literature, it is expected that the ESC 2021 will likely have an accelerating effect on urban renewal processes, as included in the NPRZ program. The creation of higher-income housing, the attraction of offices and bringing city-center functions to Rotterdam-Zuid may be accelerated by the ESC in order to eliminate the backlog in its deprived neighbourhoods.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research area

As can be seen in figure 3, Rotterdam Ahoy is located in Charlois. The area of Charlois is divided into a few neighborhoods that are positioned around Ahoy. Some of these neighborhoods are considered 'focus neighborhoods' by the NPRZ (NPRZ, 2019). This means that the NPRZ will focus on these neighborhoods in their national programme. Most of the respondents participating in this research work in and around the area of Charlois or know it very well. Therefore, this study is mainly involved in this area of Rotterdam-Zuid.

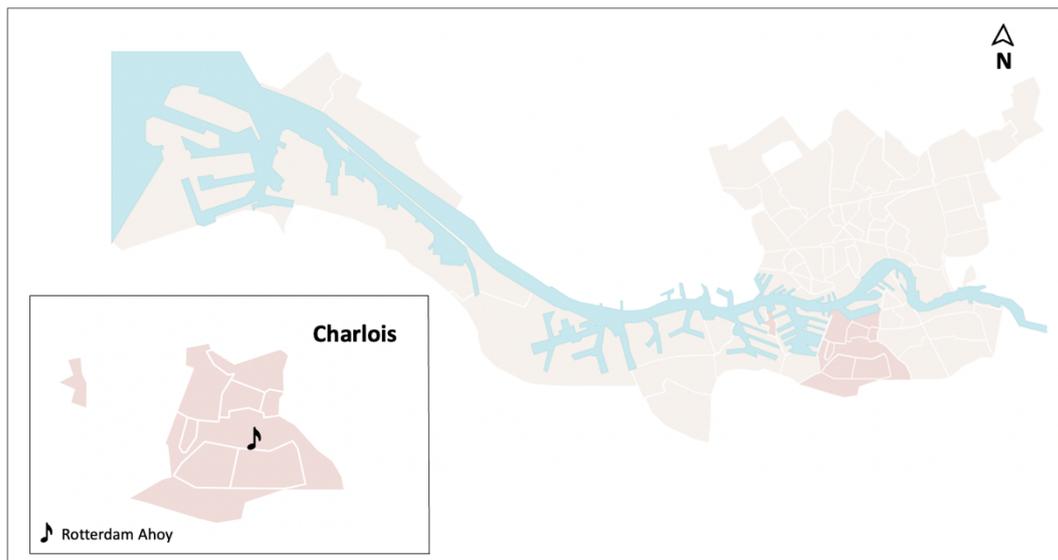


Figure 3. Rotterdam Ahoy located in Charlois (municipality of Rotterdam, 2020; edited by author).

#### 3.2 Research strategy

This research aims to reveal how the ESC, held in Ahoy, can positively impact urban renewal processes in Rotterdam-Zuid. To this end, the perspectives of various stakeholders involved in area development, hosting the ESC or other disciplines in Rotterdam-Zuid must be mapped out. Therefore, this study uses a qualitative approach that allows for an in-depth analysis of participants' perceptions of the situation (Punch, 2014). Their perspectives can present insights from different angles that will help answer the research questions.

On the same note, semi-structured interviews are conducted to answer these research questions. Semi-structured interviews are versatile and flexible (Clifford et al, 2016). It consists of open-ended questions that allows for understanding and exploring the specific perspectives of respondents, but it has sufficient structure for targeted data collection (Clifford et al, 2016). These semi-structured interviews are all conducted in Dutch, as all respondents are Dutch and active in Rotterdam-Zuid. The interview guide used for the interviews can be found in Appendix II.

A table is given in figure 4. It shows the function of the anonymized respondents, the date of interview and their perspectives on the subject. The various perspectives of the different stakeholders helped getting a comprehensive overview of the possible influence/ accelerating effect of the ESC on urban renewal in Rotterdam's deprived neighborhoods (Rotterdam-Zuid).

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Perspective</b>
Respondent 1	District manager	15/04/2021	Bottom up
Respondent 2	Management NPRZ	22/04/2021	Top down
Respondent 3	District committee member	07/05/2021	Bottom up
Respondent 4	Area developer	21/05/2021	Top down

*Figure 4. Overview of the anonymized respondents, their perspectives and date of interview (own illustration).*

### 3.3 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness

Using a qualitative approach can have limits, as results are very context-specific and difficult to generalize to other cases (Punch, 2014). However, these new insights can form a basis for further research on this topic.

Regarding the validity of this study, the results derived from this research only reveal a part of the reality. Semi-structured interviews start with equal structured questions that make the results of the respondents intercomparable, but allow for a certain amount of flexibility (Clifford et al, 2016). Different respondents approached the subject from bottom-up, while others from top-down. Therefore, situations could arise whereby one respondent is better informed than the other and gave better insights. To understand the full picture, many more interviews, with all stakeholders involved in this topic, are needed (Punch, 2014).

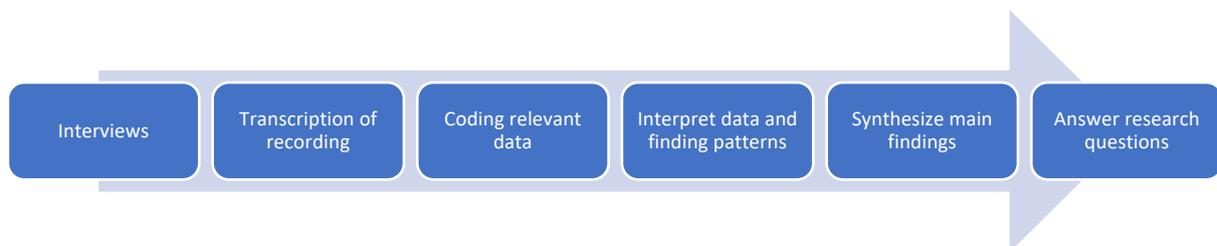
Furthermore, the positionality as a researcher within the context of this research can be labelled as an “outsider”. The ESC 2021 is held in Rotterdam, different from where the researcher comes from. The researcher functioned as an independent observer only to reveal the various perspectives of the different respondents.

### 3.4 Recruitment

The interviewees were recruited through e-mails or through phone calls. While recruiting respondents, information was given on the content of the interviews to obtain informed consent. Snowball sampling, using contacts to gather and recruit other experts, can be a great method to recruit relevant respondents (Clifford et al, 2016). Therefore, respondents could refer to other interesting experts in the field who could be of interest for this research.

### 3.5 Data analysis

At time of research, it was not allowed by the University of Groningen to conduct physical interviews due to the restricting measures that came with the corona pandemic. Therefore, the semi-structured interviews were conducted via videocalls in Google Meet. They were recorded as well, using the recording function in Google Meet. Subsequently, the recordings were transcribed using 'Amberscript' which is a web app for transcribing recorded interviews. Amberscript uses algorithms, so to avoid possible errors the transcripts were carefully checked afterwards and adjusted manually where necessary. Thereafter, the transcripts were coded via the coding software 'Atlas.ti'. Corresponding findings were collected in groups with common codes based on the coding scheme that can be found in Appendix I. These codes provide a structured interpretation of the data and the finding of patterns. The main findings, based on these codes, were used to synthesize information in order to answer the research questions. Furthermore, representative quotes are used to substantiate the answers given to the research questions. A data analysis scheme can be found in figure 5 below.



*Figure 5. Data analysis scheme (own illustration).*

### 3.6 Ethical considerations

To comply with ethical considerations, respondents participated on the basis of informed consent. Transparency about the aim of this research, data collection process, data analysis and who will have access to the findings, helped gaining trust and (voluntary) cooperation. It led to clear verbal agreements and created a nice atmosphere to talk with each other. Furthermore, the protection of the research participants their privacy is ensured, as well as their anonymity. The data derived from the interviews is handled with care and will strictly be used for this research only.

## 4. Results

What should be taken into account is that the interviews were held before the start date of the ESC. That is why in the results section, doubts are sometimes expressed by various respondents about certain consequences of the ESC in relation to the corona pandemic.

### 4.1 Main goals of the NPRZ

In this section, results are given in relation to sub-question 1, based on the perspectives of the different respondents. Below this section, figure 6 gives a compact overview of the main findings that emerged from the interviews.

Originally, almost the entire housing stock in Rotterdam-Zuid is cheaply priced and therefore a very one-sided functioning part of the city. Due to this one-sidedness, all kinds of problems are concentrated in Rotterdam-Zuid. Creating differentiation in the housing stock was one of the most important challenges Rotterdam-Zuid has to face. In order to realize this differentiation, the Dutch government has become a partner in this, which subsequently resulted in the NPRZ in 2011.

Most respondents indicated that the NPRZ is based on three pillars. Education, work and the supply in the housing stock. In relation to the first sub-question, the emphasis is mainly on urban renewal (e.g., the housing stock). Respondents 2 and 4 indicate that the aim of the NPRZ is to tackle 35,000 of the 95,000 homes available in Rotterdam-Zuid. Part of it will be demolished and rebuilt, a part will be improved, and some parts will be merged.

Respondent 4 states the following about the whole differentiation process: *“It is a bizarrely expensive task ... removing stacked homes and bringing back single-family homes”*. Therefore, a partnership with the Dutch government was desperately needed. Besides, it is a program that is said to last at least 20 years. It started in 2011 and is now halfway there. Even though, Rotterdam-Zuid is in full swing with regard to making changes in the spatial environment. Respondent 3 confirmed this, as respondent 3 said the following: *“When I came to live here 15 years ago, we had a neighborhood with a lot of high-rise flats ... it's all gone now”*.

Furthermore, the outdoor space, during the differentiation process, is addressed as well. Mainly the infrastructure is being adapted or renewed, such as new roads between city blocks. Respondent 2 states the following: *“If you are going to demolish or rebuild houses, attention is also paid to the outdoor space around it ... a new road can be realized when a new housing block is built”*.

	<b>Main findings</b>
<b>Sub-question 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Creating differentiation in the housing stock</i></li><li>- <i>Infrastructure being adapted or renewed</i></li></ul>

Figure 6. Summary of the main findings with regard to sub-question 1.

## 4.2 Accelerated spatial changes by the ESC

This section presents the results that can be related to sub-question 2. Various results of the direct spatial impact, influence on spatial projects and the possible accelerating effect on urban renewal of the ESC can be found here. Below this section, figure 7 gives a compact overview of the main results.

To start, most of the respondents questioned the link between the ESC and its influence on urban renewal or other spatial projects in Rotterdam-Zuid. For example, respondent 3 stated: *"I can't imagine that such a song festival, which is a one-off, has any influence on that"*. Besides, what many respondents noted is that in the immediate vicinity of Ahoy, the ongoing (long-term) area development, is very decisive for what happens in Rotterdam-Zuid. Respondent 4 even stated: *"We are working on such a long-term task (NPRZ) that such an event is really a very small dot in this very long implementation process"*. Furthermore, it was said that the ongoing long-term area development consists of developments in the design of the outdoor space, the road structure and even the materials used to furnish these actual structures. Therefore, respondent 1 stated: *"I think it is a bit simplistic to say that the ESC would have initiated that area development"*.

When the respondents were asked about the direct spatial changes in the environment as a result of the ESC, they referred to the design of the environment around Ahoy. In the past, the surrounding area of Ahoy was designed in such a way that not only the Ahoy parking lot was created with roughly a few thousand parking spaces, but also a large parking garage in the Zuidplein area, a parking garage next to the Ikazia hospital and several P+R parking garages were realized. Respondent 1 stated: *"That environment is designed to receive a large number of visitors who come by car"*. Respondent 3 adds to this by saying that Rotterdam has a very good bus, tram and metro connection and that Ahoy can always be reached. The infrastructure around Ahoy is very well equipped as well, because it is fairly close to the A15, positioned at the roads to the highways. So, the surrounding area of Ahoy and Ahoy itself have been designed to accommodate large events and large numbers of visitors.

In addition to the emphasis on the design of the surrounding area of Ahoy, most respondents said that due to the corona pandemic, few visitors are allowed to come to Ahoy. Not even all facilities that are located around Ahoy, to accommodate large numbers of visitors, will be needed. Let alone that new facilities or direct spatial adjustments have to be made. Respondent 4 substantiated this by stating the following: *"It has landed on a much smaller scale than was initially hoped for ... hosting the ESC ... you can easily facilitate that"*. Indicating too that the existing facilities around ahoy could easily accommodate the number of visitors allowed.

Furthermore, many of the respondents told, in addition to using existing facilities, that the decoration of the spatial environment is being adapted here and there. Outdoor space is more accurately adapted where necessary, due to the great media attention the ESC receives. This is done for the image of the area, but these are minor interventions such as straightening posts, delivering tight paving, etc. Respondent 2 stated: *"Ahoy is just an event location ... things are cleaned up well the days before ... that does not entail any structural changes"*.

Later, respondent 1 told that in the surrounding area of Ahoy, there were at least two artistic expressions that could be directly related to the ESC. The Splash of Rotterdam, a temporary work of art that will appear at the Annie M.G. Schmidt square and a mural on a blank wall next to the Dirk supermarket opposite of Ahoy. Respondent 1 clearly reflected on this by saying: *“These are expressions that are very directly linked to the ESC”*. Besides, respondent 3 told that traffic lights have been adjusted in various places around the Ahoy. These, when they go green, play music from former ESC participants. However, these spatial impacts will disappear again after the ESC.

When asked about the accelerating effect of the ESC on ongoing spatial projects, most respondents said it has no effect or only a small effect on the speed at which ongoing spatial projects were implemented. For example, respondent 1 stated: *“What I feel has accelerated is the expansion of Ahoy itself”*. Partly, because Ahoy had to be finished before the ESC started. As this is a feeling of the respondent, it cannot be said with certainty whether this was really the case. Furthermore, respondent 1 and 4 indicated that all projects having a direct influence on the appearance of the Ahoy area (i.e., infrastructure, construction sites and the appearance of buildings) have been accelerated by the ESC. This mainly concerned cosmetic procedures that were accelerated by the deadline (start) of the ESC.

	<b>Main findings</b>
<b>Sub-question 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>The ongoing (long-term) area development, is very decisive for what happens in Rotterdam-Zuid</i></li> <li>- <i>Ahoy and its surroundings have been designed to accommodate large events and large numbers of visitors</i></li> <li>- <i>Outdoor space is more accurately adapted where necessary</i></li> <li>- <i>Artistic expressions initiated by the ESC</i></li> <li>- <i>Only cosmetic procedures are accelerated</i></li> </ul>

Figure 7. Summary of the main findings with regard to sub-question 2.

#### 4.3 Indirect spatial changes influenced by the ESC

Here, results can be found in relation to sub-question 3. Below this section, figure 8 shows a compact overview of the main findings with regard to Rotterdam-Zuid’s indirect spatial changes influenced by the ESC.

At first, when asked about the indirect spatial changes initiated by the ESC, most respondents referred to the current corona pandemic. Mainly, due to the corona pandemic almost no public is allowed at the ESC. Therefore, few income streams from visitor spending can be generated in the surrounding area of Ahoy. Respondent 2 stated: *“The ESC does not generate any money now ... in the normal situation ... you would still have quite a few visitors who would spend the night and spend money in the hospitality industry”*. Indicating that normally these kinds of events generate money flows, but due to the corona pandemic this becomes difficult. Respondent 3 even expresses the corona pandemic as: *“a financial blow to the business*

world". Now, hospitality businesses and hotel owners do not have to make private sector additions to accommodate large numbers of visitors whereas otherwise this would be the case.

Secondly, due to the corona pandemic, there is little commotion from neighborhoods. Last year, when the ESC was initially scheduled to start and there was no corona yet, quite a few small-scaled and somewhat larger-scaled activities could be noticed. Respondent 1 stated:

*"The ESC would normally have taken place last year and before corona there was a whole list of activities: small neighborhood activities, large-scale neighborhood activities and even in the area of Charlois ... that is actually very unique"*.

With this, respondent 1 and the other respondents indicated that without the corona pandemic you would have seen a peak of events related to the ESC. As such an event could create a huge spin-off where entrepreneurs see opportunities to organize things. Unfortunately, this has not happened.

When asked about the extensive media attention the ESC receives and whether this also triggers investment flows, most respondents actually stated that the ESC has no role in this. Respondent 4 argued that there are much stronger factors that determine whether or not to invest in Rotterdam-Zuid. As respondent 4 stated the following: *"We have cheap money, an overstrained housing market, and space in Rotterdam-Zuid ... those kinds of things are much more decisive"*.

In contrast to investment flows, a few respondents indicated that due to the extensive media attention the ESC receives, Rotterdam-Zuid is highly exposed to the outside world. The image that Dutch and international people have of Rotterdam-Zuid will be positively influenced. Respondent 2 stated: *"All of Europe now sees Ahoy, sees Rotterdam and therefore also Rotterdam-Zuid"*. As there are so many existing ongoing renewal projects in Rotterdam-Zuid, these are now positively highlighted in the media (place marketing strategy), which probably ensures an image change resulting in more visitors to Rotterdam-Zuid.

	<b>Main findings</b>
<b>Sub-question 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Hardly any income streams due to few visitors</i></li> <li>- <i>Hardly any neighborhood initiatives</i></li> <li>- <i>No investment flows initiated by the ESC</i></li> <li>- <i>Changed image due to extensive media attention</i></li> </ul>

Figure 8. Summary of the main findings with regard to sub-question 3.

#### 4.4 Possibilities created for urban renewal

At last, here is reflected on possibilities for urban renewal created by the ESC, flowing from the respondents their perspectives. Below this section, figure 9 gives a compact overview of the main findings in relation to created possibilities.

When asked what opportunities for urban renewal were created with the arrival of the ESC, most respondents said that no new opportunities were created. Mainly because they all indicate that the existing urban renewal projects and other spatial projects are the main reason for the adjustment in the surrounding environment of Ahoy. For example, respondent 3 stated: *“Rotterdam is in full swing, but I doubt whether that has anything to do with the arrival of the ESC”*. Respondents 2 and 4 even say that it has nothing to do with the ESC at all. There already have been long ongoing area developments initiated by other factors. The ESC makes no further contribution to this.

In contrast, respondent 4 sketched a situation in which events could arise in the slipstream of the ESC, from people who are going to set up a new initiative. Although this will not be a major movement, it will be more about small initiatives that will contribute to a stronger entrepreneurial network in Rotterdam-Zuid. However, respondent 4 doubted if this would be the case by saying: *“It would be nice if the ESC could contribute to that, but whether it does ... I wouldn't know”*.

	<b>Main findings</b>
<b>Sub-question 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>No new possibilities are created</i></li> <li>- <i>Other factors already initiated long ongoing area developments</i></li> <li>- <i>Initiatives might arise in the slipstream of the ESC</i></li> </ul>

Figure 9. Summary of the main findings with regard to sub-question 4.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Conclusion

This section will answer the following main research question: *How can the Eurovision Song Contest 2021, held in Rotterdam-Zuid, accelerate existing urban renewal projects in its deprived neighborhoods?* The research aimed at investigating how the ESC can positively influence the pace of existing urban renewal projects (as included in the NPRZ) in Rotterdam-Zuid in order to combat its backlog and improve the quality of life. With the use of semi-structured interviews, the perspectives of various stakeholders involved in area development, hosting the ESC or other disciplines in Rotterdam-Zuid were mapped out. Their perspectives helped getting insights from different angles to answer the research questions.

Based on existing literature, it was expected that the ESC would likely have an accelerating effect on urban renewal processes in Rotterdam-Zuid, as included in the NPRZ program. However, the results showed a different reflection of the reality.

Firstly, it was doubted whether the ESC had any influence on urban renewal processes or other spatial projects in Rotterdam-Zuid at all. It was argued that the ongoing (long-term) area development, is very decisive for what happens in Rotterdam-Zuid, instead of using the ESC as a tool to improve the public sector. Furthermore, contrary to the existing literature, reference was made to the design of the environment around Ahoy, as it has been designed to accommodate large events and large number of visitors. Indicating that special requirements, which transform the urban environment, were not needed while hosting the ESC. Besides, due to the corona pandemic, the existing facilities around ahoy could easily accommodate the few visitors that were allowed to come.

Secondly, outdoor space is more accurately adapted where necessary, due to the great media attention the ESC receives. The ESC initiated the creation of artistic expressions as well. However, in relation to the possible accelerating effect of the ESC on urban renewal or other spatial projects, mostly cosmetic procedures were accelerated by the deadline (start) of the ESC. Partly, this lines up with the existing literature as deadlines of hosting mega-events contribute to catalyzing the process of change, but it has to be nuanced as it only catalyzes cosmetic procedures instead of required facilities.

Furthermore, the results show that due to the corona pandemic, few income streams from visitor spending can be generated in the surrounding area of Ahoy. Therefore, private sector additions in hotels and/or restaurants do not have to be made, contrary to the existing literature. Besides, due to the corona pandemic there is little commotion from neighborhoods as well. No small local initiatives are established that can change areas in places of belonging which will attract people, investments and developments.

At last, it is stated that the ESC will not generate any fiscal transfers as stated in the existing literature, as much stronger factors determine whether or not to invest in Rotterdam-Zuid. However, the extensive media attention of the ESC probably ensures an image change resulting in more visitors to Rotterdam-Zuid, serving as a place marketing strategy.

So, due to the ongoing (long-term) area development, the design of the surrounding environment of Ahoy, the restricting measures of the corona pandemic and lack of generating fiscal transfers, the ESC has little to no influence on existing urban renewal projects or other spatial projects in Rotterdam-Zuid.

## 5.2 Reflection

While this research was being conducted, there were some difficult moments due to the corona pandemic. Recruiting respondents was difficult at first but went smoothly after the first respondent was interviewed. Furthermore, because the ESC was still in the early stages, it was difficult to speak to people who managed the ESC. Therefore, it was not possible to touch upon this perspective.

Partly because the corona pandemic had a lot of influence on the results of this research and not all the respondents, needed to form a good picture of the situation, could be interviewed it is suggested that further research has to be done under normal conditions. Without influences from a certain pandemic and a study that takes all necessary perspectives into account in its research. This will contribute to the lacking literature on impacts of ESC's on host cities.

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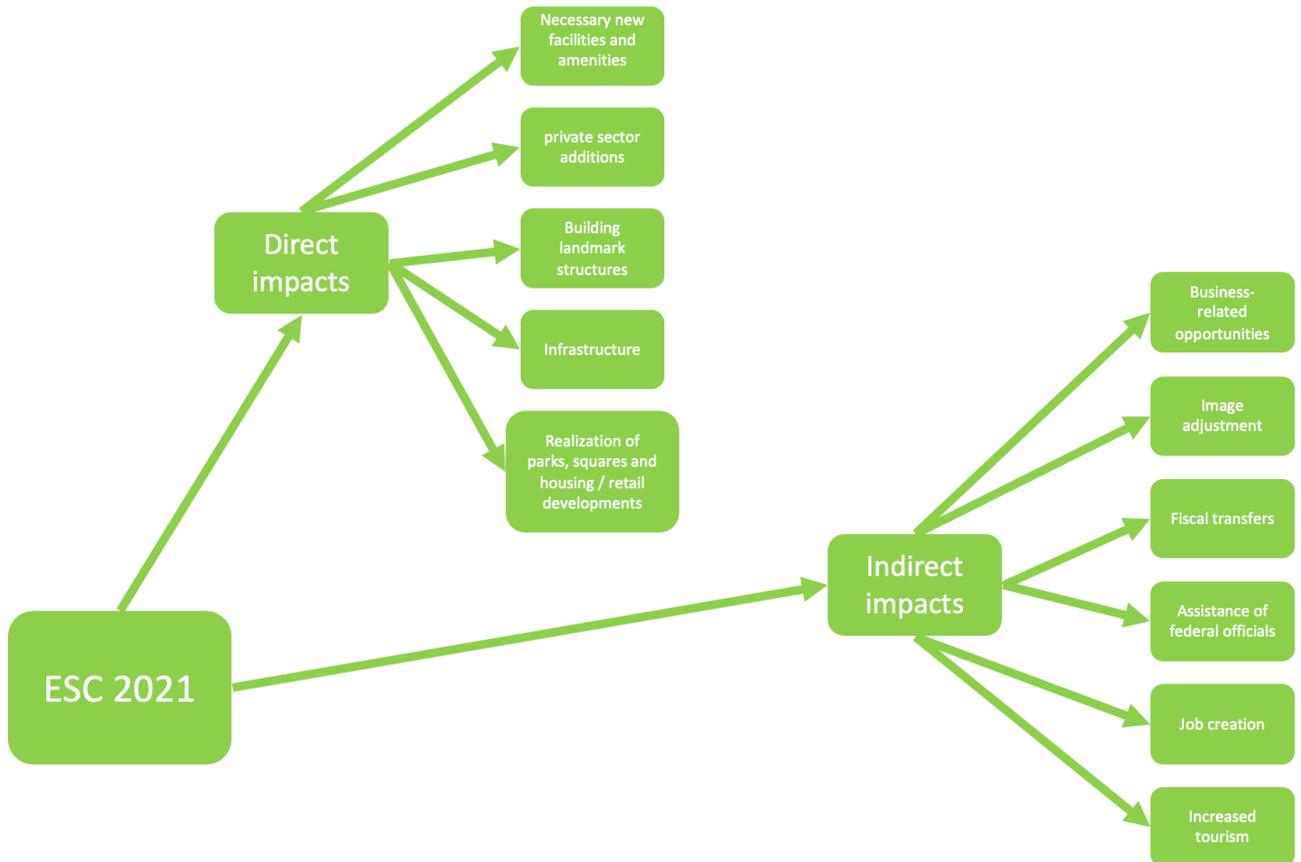
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## Appendix I – Coding tree



*Coding tree based on the existing literature.*

## Appendix II – Interview guide

### **Interview guide – in Dutch**

*The questions in the interview guide may vary per respondent*

#### Introductie

- Bedank de respondent voor zijn tijd en bijdrage aan het onderzoek.
- Stel jezelf voor (naam, leeftijd, studie, etc.).
- Geef een korte toelichting waarom dit onderzoek gedaan wordt en wat je er mee wil bereiken.
- Leg uit wat de respondent kan verwachten tijdens het interview en geef een indicatie van de benodigde tijd.
- Informeer de respondent over zijn privacy (mogelijke rechten) en vraag voor toestemming om het interview op te nemen.
- Vraag de respondent of er nog iets onduidelijk is.

#### Vragen

	Deelvraag
Wat wordt geprobeerd te bereiken met het ‘Nationaal Programma Rotterdam-Zuid’? Wat zijn de doelen? Hoe ver is het gevorderd? Wat is al bereikt? (Met name richten op stadsvernieuwing en doorvragen op de context van het programma)	1
Heeft de komst van het Eurovisiesongfestival invloed op stadsvernieuwing en ruimtelijke projecten in Rotterdam-Zuid? Op welke manier? In hoeverre zijn er directe ruimtelijke veranderingen in Rotterdam-Zuid als gevolg van de komst van het Eurovisiesongfestival?	2, 3
Heeft het Eurovisiesongfestival invloed op het uitvoeren van de snelheid waarin huidige plannen, wat betreft stadsvernieuwing en ruimtelijke projecten, worden uitgevoerd? Op wat voor manier? Wat is de invloed van het Eurovisiesongfestival op de kwaliteit van deze projecten? Beïnvloed het ook de sociale cohesie in Rotterdam-Zuid? Op welke manier(en)?	2
Heeft het Eurovisiesongfestival ook indirecte ruimtelijke invloeden op de omliggende omgeving van Rotterdam-Zuid? Op welke manier? Zijn deze positief of negatief? In hoeverre versnelt het Eurovisiesongfestival deze indirecte ruimtelijke invloeden? Kunt u uitleggen waarom?	3
Worden er nieuwe mogelijkheden voor stadsvernieuwing gecreëerd in Rotterdam-Zuid, met de komst van het Eurovisiesongfestival? Hoe? Zijn er voorbeeldprojecten die tot stand zijn gekomen door de komst van het Eurovisiesongfestival? Hoe? Zijn de ontstane mogelijkheden blijvend of verdwijnen deze zodra het Eurovisiesongfestival is afgelopen? Waarom?	4

#### Afsluiting interview

- Geef aan dat je tot het einde bent gekomen van het interview en vraag of de respondent nog iets wil toevoegen aan het gesprek.
- Bedank de respondent nogmaals voor zijn tijd en deelname aan het onderzoek.
- Vraag of hij geïnteresseerd is naar de resultaten van het onderzoek.

- Neem afscheid.

### ***Interview guide – in English***

*The questions in the interview guide may vary per respondent*

#### Introduction

- Thank the respondent for their time and contribution to the survey.
- Introduce yourself (name, age, study, etc.).
- Provide a brief explanation of why this research is being conducted and what you want to achieve with it.
- Explain what the respondent can expect during the interview and give an indication of the time required.
- Inform the respondent about his privacy (possible rights) and ask for permission to record the interview.
- Ask the respondent if anything is still unclear.

#### Questions

	<b>Subquestion</b>
What is being attempted to achieve with the ‘Nationaal Programma Rotterdam-Zuid’? What are the goals? How far has it progressed? What has already been achieved? (Focus in particular on urban renewal and further questions about the context of the program)	1
Will the arrival of the Eurovision Song Contest affect urban renewal and spatial projects in Rotterdam-Zuid? How? To what extent are there direct spatial changes in Rotterdam-Zuid as a result of the arrival of the Eurovision Song Contest?	2, 3
Does the Eurovision Song Contest influence the speed at which current plans, with regard to urban renewal and spatial projects, are implemented? In what way? What is the influence of the Eurovision Song Contest on the quality of these projects? Does it also affect social cohesion in Rotterdam-Zuid? In which ways?	2
Does the Eurovision Song Contest also have indirect spatial influences on the surrounding area of Rotterdam-Zuid? How? Are these positive or negative? To what extent does the Eurovision Song Contest accelerate these indirect spatial influences? Can you explain why?	3
Will new possibilities for urban renewal be created in Rotterdam-Zuid, with the arrival of the Eurovision Song Contest? How? Are there any example projects that came about with the arrival of the Eurovision Song Contest? How? Will the possibilities that have arisen remain or will they disappear once the Eurovision Song Contest has ended? Why?	4

#### Closing of the interview

- Indicate that you have reached the end of the interview and ask if the respondent would like to add anything to the conversation.
- Thank the respondent again for his time and participation in the survey.
- Ask if he is interested in the results of the study.
- Say goodbye.