THE IDENTITY OF SPIJKENISSE

THE (HI)STORY OF A NEW TOWN

Yoshi So

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Yoshi So - 4686535

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Technical University Delft
Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment
MSc Urbanism

Planning Complex Cities Studio

Mentors
1st mentor: Lei Qu
2nd mentor: Geertje Slingerland
External Mentors: Michelle Provoost & Simone Rots (International New Town Institute)

Content

INTER-NATIONAL NEW TOWN INSTITUTE

GEMEENTE NISSEWAARD

1. De Hoek, Spijkenisse (NAI Archive)

This thesis explores the identity of Spijkenisse and how it can be enhanced in its revitalisation. In previous revitalisation efforts of New Towns, both tangible and intangible heritage have been demolished. Therefore, a historical overview of these cities is necessary, covering not only the 'planned city' but also the 'lived city'. To achieve this, the topics of 'Heritage as a vector' and 'Place Identity' will be examined. This study utilises Spijkenisse as a test case for a methodology that can be applied in other New Towns in the Netherlands or internationally. The methodology includes historical analysis, storytelling, and co-creation workshops. The research emphasises participatory planning to empower the local community, fostering a sense of ownership and pride.

PROBLEM FIELD

Context

Groeikernen, literally translated as 'Growth Cores', were small towns designated by the national government from the 1960s until around 1985 to accommodate the expected population growth in the Netherlands. Around the late 1950's the Netherlands anticipated reaching 20 million people by the year 2000 (Faludi & Van Der Valk, 1990), which sparked the need for innovative solutions in urban planning.

Historic cities, particularly in the randstad, were struggling with overpopulation, raising concerns about the emergence of a large, unhealthy and unsafe urbanised area (Figure 2). To tackle this problem, a concept called 'bundled deconcentration' emerged. The approach did not involve densifying existing cities, but rather constructing buildings in more rural areas by expanding smaller towns (Figure 3) into medium-sized cities at a distance from historic cities (Figure 4). These extensions were designed as low-rise suburban neighbourhoods surrounded by green space, and collectively aimed to provide one million new homes (Provoost, 2022).

2. Batavierenstraat Rotterdam ±1960 (National Archive)

3. Achterstraat Spijkenisse ±1950 (Voorne-Putten Archive)

4. Dutch New Towns (INTI, 2022)

Problem

Despite the ambitious initial construction, the Groeikernen have experienced a decline in popularity due to diminishing social standards, resulting in a lack of civic pride and a negative image (Provoost, 2022). However, in response to the pressing need for housing in the Netherlands, the Groeikernen are poised for a resurgence. They maintain their growth mentality, aiming for substantial expansion by increasing density but also diversifying functions to create more employment opportunities and promote self-sufficiency.

The research into the Groeikernen is significant, drawing parallels between past challenges and current housing needs. Learning from their experience is essential. However, within these redevelopment efforts, local identity is often neglected and the unique qualities of these relatively young cities are often overlooked. Examining the history of these young cities is becoming increasingly important as a counterpoint to current urban planning practices used in these cities. (Provoost, 2022)

Despite their youth, the Groeikernen have both tangible and intangible heritage (Provoost, 2022). Instead of exclusively drawing inspiration from larger historic cities, it is essential to recognise and celebrate their unique qualities (Figure 5, 6 & 7). To ensure a holistic approach to redevelopment, it is important to understand both the 'planned city', which refers to the original ideas and design choices the Groeikernen were initially based on, and the 'lived city' that has developed organically over time, encompassing the stories and experiences of its inhabitants.

5. A car free street in Hoek 3, Spijkenisse (INTI, 2022)
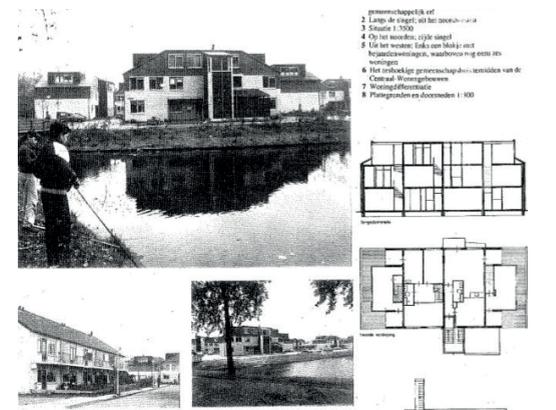
6. 'Centraal Wonen te Spijkenisse' Collective housing in Spijkenisse (BOUW no. 17 p. 28-30, 1984)

7. Tactically placed high-rises in De Akkers II, to increase density. 'Woningen te Spijkenisse', (BOUW no. 8, 59-61 1983)

Research focus

This research will focus on one of the Groeikernen: Spijkenisse, a former fishing village south of Rotterdam, which underwent significant changes from 1958 onwards when it was designated a 'growth municipality' to accommodate the influx of people from Rotterdam (Ontwikkelingsprogramma Spijkenisse, 1958; Werkcommissie westen des lands, 1958). In 1977, Spijkenisse also became a 'Groeikern', which increased the need for urban development even more (Figure 8) (Reijndorp, 2014). In just 30 years the population of Spijkenisse grew from 3,000 (Figure 9) to around 70,000 (Figure 10), making it a medium-sized city (Gemeente Spijkenisse, 1999).

This project will use Spijkenisse as a case study by researching its identity and exploring ways to implement it in the city's revitalisation. The research will delve into concepts such as place identity, the planned and lived city, and heritage as a vector. Additionally, it will examine participatory processes in urban planning and how they can be used to incorporate this identity in the revitalisation.

The main research question of this study is: How can the identity of Spijkenisse be captured through a participatory process and enhanced in its revitalisation?

8. Building boom in de Akkers, Spijkenisse (NAI Archive)

9. Spijkenisse 1950

10. Spijkenisse 1990

11. De Hoek, Spijkenisse (NAI Archive)
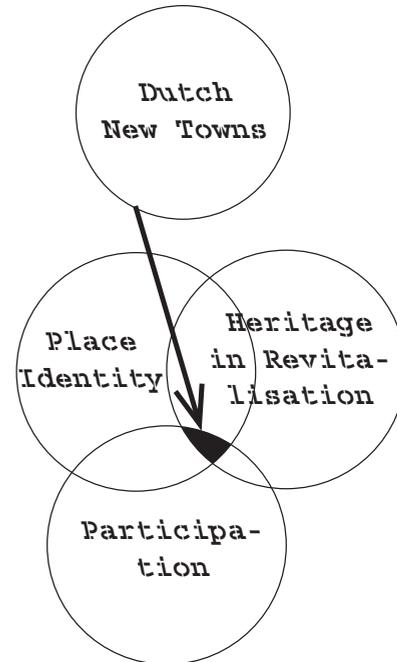
THEORY

Introduction

The theoretical framework of this research covers four core elements (Figure 12):

Dutch New Towns: This section provides a general overview of how the Dutch New Towns were first conceived, their current problems, and the concepts of the 'planned' and 'lived' city, which are central to this research.

Place Identity: This section will explore the meaning of 'place identity' and will explain the interpretation that will be used in this research.

Heritage in Revitalisation: This section will go into how heritage has historically contributed to the regeneration of cities and how it will do so in the future.

Participation: This section will go into the topic of participation, showing ways in which storytelling can be used to reveal a cities identity and foster ownership among inhabitants.

Dutch New Towns

Place Identity

Heritage in Revitalisation

Participation

12. Theoretical framework

13. Metrostop De Akkers, Spijkenisse (NAI Archive)

The (Dutch) New Towns

DEFINITION

According to the International New Town Institute, the definition of a New Town is as follows:

"New Towns are cities or towns that are designed from scratch and built in a short period of time. They are designed by professionals according to a Master Plan on a site where there was no city before. This distinguishes a New Town from a 'normal' city that gradually grows and evolves over time. Also, New Towns are mostly the result of a political (top-down) decision." (Reijndorp, 2019)

In the Netherlands, New Towns are of two types: those that were planned all at once, such as Almere or Lelystad, and those that have developed from former villages, like Zoetermeer, Purmerend, Capelle aan den IJssel and Spijkenisse. Although this study focuses on the latter type, it will be argued that many of the lessons learned from these New Towns will also apply to the former.

CONTEXT

To comprehend the rationale behind the development of these New Towns, one must analyse the situation in the Netherlands during the 1960s.

Forecasts indicated that the population of the Netherlands would increase from around 12 million to 20 million by the beginning of the new century (Tweede nota ruimtelijke ordening, 1966). Simultaneously, the quality of housing in major metropolises such as Rotterdam and Amsterdam was declining rapidly. The Jerry-built housing units dating from the 1900s were in need of renovation or replacement and the cities were overcrowded. This made it impossible to further densify within these cities, meaning they would have to expand. There therefore was a great concern that major cities would expand uncontrollably and merge, resulting in the 'Randstad' becoming one large urbanised area with ghettos and slums. (Provoost, 2022)

As a consequence, the Second Memorandum on Spatial Planning (1966) was conceived with the central idea of 'bundled deconcentration' (Figure 14).
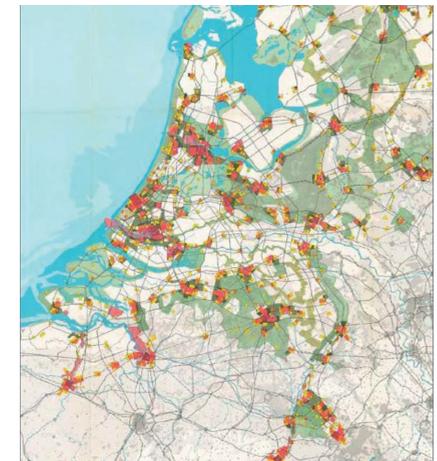
14. Bundled deconcentration, Tweede nota ruimtelijke ordening (1966)

This scheme proposed enlarging small villages into medium-sized cities, instead of expanding already large cities. Nevertheless, soon after its conception, it was evident that the population growth would not exceed 17 million, instead of the expected 20 million, which was still within manageable bounds (Derde nota Ruimtelijke ordening, 1973). Meanwhile, the popularity of villages, with their green surroundings, was growing in comparison to the overcrowded, unhealthy cities. This shift was facilitated by the increase in car use, which allowed people to live further from their workplaces and other facilities (Reijndorp, 2019). However, the villages were unable to sustain this growth alone and required national guidance, leading to the Third Memorandum on Spatial Planning (1973-1983). In this memorandum, certain villages experiencing rapid growth were designated as 'Groeikern'. 'Groeikern' translates to 'growth core', revealing a focus on growth instead of the creation of a new city as seen with the French 'Villes Nouvelles' or English 'New Towns' which were built albeit for the same reason as the Dutch 'Groeikernen' (Reijndorp, 2019). Collectively, these 'Groeikernen' were tasked with providing one million new homes (Provoost, 2022).

STANDARD PACKAGE

Collectively, the 'Groeikernen' were tasked with providing one million new homes (Provoost, 2022). Where and how these new homes should be built, was explained in a 'standard package' which every Groeikern received. Arnold Reijndorp (2019) compares it to a Lego's starters set (Figure 15); it contains just enough pieces to make a start, just enough for a single house or car. The standard package of the Groeikernen

contained "…only a few thousand houses, some roads and streets, a primary school (!), a few shops, a community centre and a single bus stop." (Reijndorp, 2019; p.37). But, like a Lego starters set, the package also included a map with proposed extensions, a zoning plan, demonstrating how the small New Town could develop into a real city (Figure 16). What was not provided as part of the standard package was a manual.

15. Lego city standard package (https://bricksdirect.nl/)

16. Stuctural plan, Spijkenisse (Spijkenisse Nu en Straks, Wordt dit ons structuurplan? 1972 p. 24)

NEVER FINISHED

The absence of guidance and the aforementioned emphasis on growth led to an uncontrolled expansion of these towns. Without a manual, there was no indication of when the Groeikernen would be considered 'finished'. This sense of incompleteness was exacerbated by the reevaluation of the old city. Rather than embracing their unique character, the Groeikernen were forced to conform to the standards of 'regular' cities.

The continuation of this growth mentality also becomes apparent if we look at their current projected growth. The cities have set out their vision for these tasks in documents that indicate their development direction and ambitions for

2040. These plans provide for large numbers of houses to be added, with the outliers being Zoetermeer (15,000), Lelystad (40,000) and Almere (60,000). But Spijkenisse, Capelle aan den IJssel and Purmerend also have ambitions to add thousands of homes (Figure 17). This sometimes takes the form of expansion districts, sometimes in the form of densification of the existing city. (Provoost, 2022)

Arnold Reijndorp (2019) compares Dutch New Towns with Rotterdam, which adopted the concept of never being finished after the reconstruction period. He argues that as the local government perceives the city as unfinished, they will not consider consulting the locals or examining local identity until it is completed.
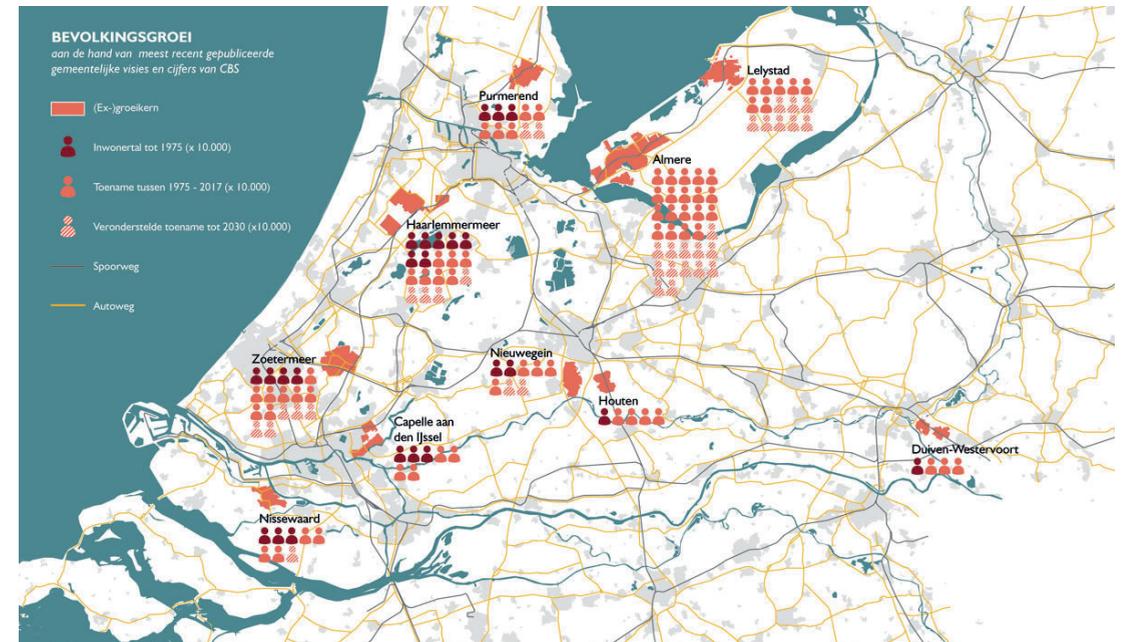
17. Population growth, Dutch New Towns (INTI, 2022)

"Something similar applies to New Towns. The lived city does not arise only when the New Town can boast of its history (how long: a few decades, half a century or three quarters of a century?) and has thus finally acquired an identity - and thus 'city rights'. History and the resulting identity are precisely the result of that lived city.

Procrastination and the constant planning and making of the city leads to blindness to the New Town's mature problem-solving capacity, precisely when problems arise or complex tasks demand new and creative solutions. Involvement is often only requested when the solutions have already been thought up, while there are now plenty of people in the New Town who can and want to think along." (Reijndorp, 2019; p 27-28.)

This is a waste, because the densification of these cities could contribute to solving current problems such as a lack of diversity and a bad or boring image. (Provoost, 2022)

THE PLANNED AND THE LIVED CITY

In his book 'De Nieuwe Stad, een gebruiksaanwijzing', Arnold Reijndorp (2019) distinguishes between the 'planned city' and the 'lived city'. The 'planned city' refers to the city that city planners and architects intended, while the 'lived city' refers to the daily use and perception of inhabitants. This concept is based on Herbert Gans' (1968) idea of the 'potential environment' (planned) and the 'effective environment' (lived), which suggests that a designed or planned space is only a 'potential' environment (Figure 20, 21, 22 & 23). The actual use of a space may depend on social positions and cultural backgrounds.

Reijndorp (2019) argues that in the revitalisation of New Towns, the 'lived city' is often overlooked, despite the fact that it shapes a large part of the identity of a place. What is actually meant by this identity of place will be covered in the next subchapter.

18. The old centre of Spijkenisse, by design of Pietro P. Hammel (NAI Archive)

19. The new centre of Spijkenisse, designed by Sjoerd Soeters (INTI, 2022)

20. The use of public space can't always be predicted: Puppet show in Bloemkoolwijk Geestenberg (Beeldenboek geestenberg 2013)

21. The use of public space can't always be predicted: Playing children in Bloemkoolwijk Geestenberg (Beeldenboek geestenberg 2013)

22. The use of public space can't always be predicted: Parked cars and children playing on the sidewalk (INTI, 2023)

23. The use of public space can't always be predicted: Car parked in green (INTI, 2023)

Place identity

Before being able to determine the identity of a specific place, one first needs to define identity itself. In this research the term 'place identity' will be used. 'Place' is a flexible, scaleless term. Within the discourse on place identity, there is some confusion on the overlapping of different environmental psychology terms such as 'regional identity', 'attachment to place', 'place dependency', 'urban identity' or 'sense of place' which makes the term place identity difficult to operate (Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020'). The following chapter will give a definition that will be used for the entirety of this research.

ORIGIN

In the 1970's there was a growing interest for people's relationships to and perception of places (Ali, Mansour, Elshater & Fareed, 2022). Urban planner Kevin Lynch agued that the identity of a place was the aspect of a place that distinguishes it from other locations, the thing that shows it is a separate entity (1960) (Figure . The term 'place identity' was first introduced by environmental psychologist Harold M. Proshansky. He describes place identity as "those dimensions of self that define the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, values, goals, preferences, skills and behavioural tendencies relevant to a specific environment" (Proshansky, 1978, p155). Proshansky's definition focusses on the individual perception of place identity, rather than a collective

understanding of it (Peng, et al. 2020). Another important early contribution on the definition of place identity is by the hand of geographer Anssi Paasi. He distinguished two different aspects of place identity; Place identity of place, and people's place identity (Paasi, 1986).
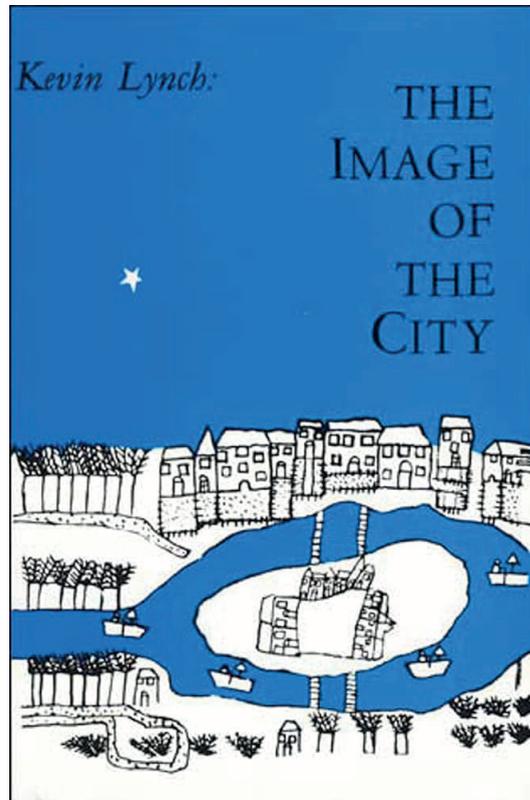
24. Kevin Lynch, The Image of the City (1960)

COMPONENTS OF PLACE

For Relph (1976) place identity could be understood distinguishing three different components, together making up a 'place': physical form, activity and meaning Later this was adapted by Montgomery (1998), who argued that it was the human interaction with the place that gave it its distinct identity. For Montgomery the physical form component encompasses all physical elements of the place, for example the townscape, the built form, landscape furniture, permeability etc. Activity encompasses land uses, pedestrian flow, behaviour, patterns, noise and smell and vehicle flow. Meaning encompasses legibility, cultural associations, perceived functions, attractions and qualitative assessments. (Figure 25)

As this framework offers a comprehensive understanding of the experienced or lived 'place', rather than the intended or planned, this framework will be used throughout this research. Here it needs to be noted that place identity is highly dynamic and ever changing: "As the interaction between people and a place is a mutual, dynamic, and eternal process, the creating and fostering of place identity is also a mutual, dynamic, and circular process." (Peng, et al. 2020; p.14).
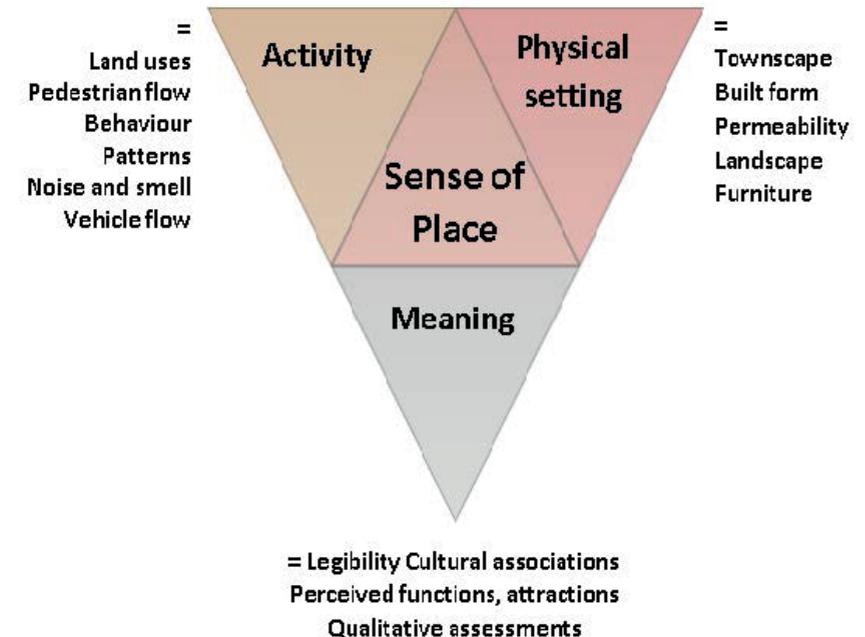
25. Components of sense of place (Ali, Mansour, Elshater & Fareed, 2022 p. 139)

Heritage in urban revita-lisation

Urban revitalisation involves remaking places, and heritage plays a significant role in shaping their identity. For the purposes of this research it is essential to look at the collision of these concepts.

After the industrial revolution, a lot of European mediaeval city centres were in decay. This called for a massive revitalisation. One of the most famous examples is the transformation of the city centre of Paris by Haussmann in the second half of the 19th century. The transformation included the demolition of the overcrowded and unhealthy old neighbourhoods through the creation of broad avenues, parks and squares. (Tavakoli, 2019)

With the rise of modernism, revitalisation of cities was all about progress, which shouldn't be held back by sentimental attachment to historic buildings. More 'historical' parts of cities were demolished to make place for the new architecture (Tavakoli, 2019) (Figure 26).

26. The demolition frenzy of modernism almost meant the destruction of Paris again, Model of Plan Voisin (Le Corbusier, 1925)

HERITAGE AS A SECTOR

Consequently, spatial dynamics were seen as a constant threat to the conservation of heritage and as a reaction to these kinds of developments, the educated class started listing 'monuments' (Janssen, et al. 2017). Also Institutions such as UNESCO and CIAM introduced the concept of international heritage and frameworks for revitalisation of historic cities (Tavakoli, 2019). In the Netherlands, a basic legal framework for the protection of monuments was created in the 1940's. The monuments that were preserved were not left in their original context but were freed from surrounding buildings. This proves that they were not kept to represent local identity but rather to provide reassurance to people during a time of rapid change. (Janssen, et al. 2017)

In 1961, the Dutch Monuments Act (Monumentenwet) was introduced. The Monuments Act laid the foundations for legal protection and a national register of protected monuments and historic buildings (Janssen, et al. 2017). It also introduced the concept of protected townscapes, which had major implications for urban planning, as heritage had to be part of zoning plans.

From the 1970s onwards there was a shift in the appreciation of heritage. Architectural history became more academic, and there was more attention for architecture and urban planning from the 19th, and later even the 20th century. The focus also broadened from

themes like churches to for example social housing, utility buildings and urban planning. (van Koningsbruggen & van Hellemondt, 2010)

The council of Europe had declared 1975 the European year of monuments. The aim was to awaken and stimulate public interest in the still tangible past, combat indifference and demolitionism and encourage conservation activities. (Davids & van der Heijden, 2010)

HERITAGE AS A FACTOR

From the late 70's onwards, the conservation of monuments was increasingly seen as a social task with a corresponding importance and responsibility. At the same time it became clear that not all historical objects could be preserved. The static concept of 'monument' was seen as less appropriate than 'heritage', which is more flexible and expresses a broader, contemporary meaning, for preserving and reviving memories of the material and immaterial past, influenced by foreign studies (van Koningsbruggen & van Hellemondt, 2010).

27. New building on the Gouvernestraat, Rotterdam between renovated 'Jerryhousing' (right) and '70's architecture from Ben Hoek (Ossip van Duivenbode)

The Third Memorandum on Spatial Planning (1973) also enabled local governments to combine resources for urban renewal with heritage conservation, which caused the urban renewal of for example the jerry housing from the 1900's to finally take off. During the 1980s, the oil and economic crises led to an increase in empty and abandoned buildings and areas. This highlighted the need for places to be assigned new functions, as heritage conservation alone was not sufficient. This shows that heritage protection was no longer solely based on historical value but also on contemporary value. This shift demonstrates the change from treating heritage as a 'sector' to treating it as a 'factor'. (Janssen, et al. 2017)

The heritage-as-factor approach considers heritage as a crucial element of spatial quality within a new plan or renewal plan. The plan focuses on transforming areas as a whole rather than conserving individual objects. Therefore, the aim is to support economic value and increase cultural quality rather than focusing on value assessment and rigid preservation. In the pursuit of an attractive and engaging living environment, attractiveness takes precedence over authenticity. Depending on the circumstances, integrated renovation, radical alteration, or even well-argued demolition may be viable options. It is not so much the material substance of the heritage that matters, but the contact with the present; the extent to which the heritage can be productively linked to contemporary claims on territory. (Janssen, et al. 2017)

HERITAGE AS A VECTOR

With the start of the 21st century, the concept of 'intangible heritage' was introduced, and with that the approach to treating heritage as a 'vector'. The argument for this approach is that spatial development does not only disrupt physical structures, but also intangible connections. Heritage was thus no longer just seen as something physical, but also included stories and traditions. Treating heritage as a vector is a way to gain knowledge about and honour the intangible history of a place or the 'lived city'. (Janssen, et al. 2017)

The approach is based on utilising existing qualities or identity and implementing them in the process of revitalisation. Additionally, it involves considering the city as it is experienced by its inhabitants (the 'lived' city), rather than solely concentrating on the planned aspects of the city (the 'planned' city). (Janssen, et al. 2017)

An example of a project where they used this kind of approach is W!MBY!, by Crimson urbanist and historians and Felix Rottenberg (Figure 28). WIMBY is an acronym for Welcome Into My BackYard, as opposed to NIMBY Not in my backyard, which is the characterisation of the position residents tend to take when unwanted development is happening in their neighbourhood.

In 2001 Crimson and Felix Rottenberg got appointed to revitalise Hoogvliet, a New Town suburb of Rotterdam. After being the first modern satelite city of the Netherlands, the neighbourhood slowly turned into a ghetto and was seen as 'failed' and was largely demolished. The vision of WiMBY! is that failed cities do not exist. You have to accept the city as it has

28. WIMBY! Hoogvliet, Future, past and present of a New Town, or The Big WIMBY! Book (Crimson urbanist and historians & Felix Rottenberg, 2007)

29. The Heerlijkheid Festival in 2004 and 2005 (Crimson urbanist and historians & Felix Rottenberg, 2007)

become. Start from that which may never have been planned but undeniably came into being.

They used heritage as a catalyst for the regeneration of Hoogvliet, looking not only at the 'planned' city, but also at the 'lived' city. They stated that a city's identity is defined by its own history of particularities and complexities. In order to find this identity they conducted interviews and historical research, organised workshops, exhibitions and much more, all in cooperation with the locals of Hoogvliet (Figure 29). The input given by the locals was used to create a new community centre, co-housing, school buildings, multiple neighbourhood plans and an integral urban strategy for Hoogvliet.
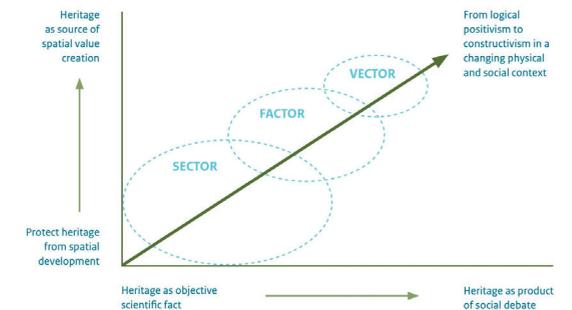
In conclusion, the heritage as a vector approach redefines the perception of the city and landscape by viewing them as dynamic entities with historical qualities that exist in a layered substratum. Traces of the past are seen as

illustrations in a book, contributing to the narrative that interprets the story rather than being isolated or preserved in time and space. Unlike traditional approaches, this method places less reliance on the government or private sector. Instead, it emphasises active dialogue with civic stakeholders to connect with broader society and promote a narrative-driven perspective. (Janssen, et al. 2017)

The approach aims to create more differentiated cultural value by considering not only historical and economic aspects but also social layering in heritage (Figure 30). It values the diverse ways in which individuals and groups identify with and attach meaning to heritage. Furthermore, it proposes an analysis of the historical development of the Dutch landscape, moving beyond a mere collection of monuments to a multi-layered connection of historic sites and landscapes (Figure 31). (Janssen, et al. 2017)

30. FARO: a European Convention that emphasizes the social and connecting value of heritage and the importance of community participation within assigning heritage.

31. Shifting conceptualizations of heritage. (Janssen, et al. 2017 p. 1660)

Participation

Citizen participation is a crucial aspect of urban planning, particularly in the context of regeneration and revitalisation.

The concept of citizen participation in urban planning was first introduced by Sherry R. Arnstein in 1969. Arnstein identified three levels of participation (Figure 33):

Nonparticipation, where citizens are excluded from the decision-making process, and power rests solely with authorities. This level includes 'Manipulation' and 'Therapy'.

Tokenism; a superficial form of participation where citizens are included symbolically, without genuine influence on decisions. This layer includes 'Informing', 'Consultation' and 'Placation'.

Citizen Power; genuine participation where citizens actively influence and shape decision-making processes. This layer includes 'Partnership', 'Deligated power' and finally 'Citizen control'.

This ladder was used as a framework to assess and improve participatory processes and has been adapted into various different practices of participation since.

32. French Student Poster. In English, I participate; you participate; he participates; we participate; you participate . . . They profit. (Arnstein, 1969 p. 216)
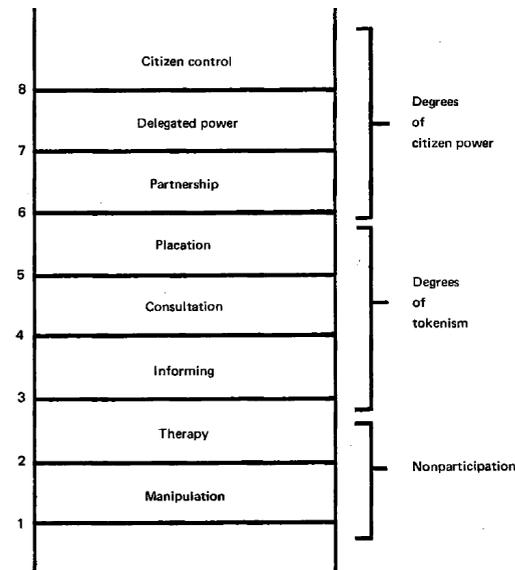
33. Arnsteins Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969 p. 217)

STORYTELLING AS A PLANNING PRACTICE

One of these planning practices within participation is storytelling. Storytelling as a planning practice is primarily used to access data and knowledge from experience, rather than analytic data and knowledge (Sanderock, 2003). There are numerous ways in which storytelling can be adapted into planning practice. For this research these are the most relevant:

Community participation processes:
The most straightforward way in which storytelling is used within planning is through the community participation process. It allows for a wide range of perspectives from the inhabitants to be shared. This process is often used to initiate the planning process and gain a comprehensive understanding of the site. (Figure 34)

Core story:
A second way in which story is used in planning is through the 'core story' (Dunstan & Sarkissan, 1994). The idea of the 'core story', which has its origins in psychology. It draws from the understanding that the stories we tell, actively shape us: "When we tell stories about ourselves we draw on past behaviour and on others' comments about us in characterising ourselves as, say, adventurous or victims or afraid of change or selfish or courageous. But in telling and re-telling the story, we are also reproducing ourselves and our behaviours. Social psychologists argue that communities, and possibly nations have such core stories that give meaning to collective life." (Sanderock, 2003; p.16) (Figure 35)

34. Cocreation workshops with Hoogvliet Youth (Crimson urbanist and historians & Felix Rottenberg, 2007)

35. Haags verhaal: The Haags Verhaal is an initiative connecting communities from The Hague. They organise story nights where communities and groups come together that would otherwise never meet. The Haags Verhaal entices people to cross the border into a different world in the safety of their families and communities. (https://www.haagsverhaal.nl/)

Story as Foundation, origin identity:
The concept of the core story is closely related to the use of story as a foundation or vessel to discuss a city's identity. Storytelling can shed light on different perspectives of a city's identity or help track its ever-changing identity. This becomes particularly important when there are conflicting understandings of this identity, for example, among different ethnic groups. (Sanderock, 2003) (Figure 36)

Story as a Catalyst for Change
Stories and storytelling can be powerful tools for promoting change by shaping a new imagination of alternatives. Stories of success or exemplary actions can serve as inspiration when retold. (Sanderock, 2003) (Figure 37)

It can be argued that these methods of using storytelling in the planning process are not mutually exclusive, and that the same story or collection of stories can serve multiple purposes. The stories shared during a participation process can contribute to the central narrative of a city, shaping its identity and illuminating its origins. In this study, these stories will also be utilised as a catalyst for change, as it is argued that tales from the past can inform the future.

36. Verhalenhuis Belvédère aims to connect as many people as possible with each other and with the city through art, culture and (personal) stories. They make people, communities and the changing city visible to each other and to a wide audience, thus contributing to the cultural and social development of the city. (https://verhalenhuisrotterdam.nl/)

37. Black Exodus: a publication that focuses on local housing justice in the Bay Area. Black Exodus builds on the 'Anti-Eviction Mapping' project's commitment to centering communities as producers of social and historical knowledge. ((Dis)Location, 2019)

Correlation / conclusion

The available literature on Dutch New Towns shows that the 'lived city', and with it its local identity and intangible heritage, is often overlooked in their revitalisation (Reijndorp, 2019).

A framework that can help to clearly identify residents' understanding of local identity is Montgomery's (1998) Components of Place.

To translate this local identity and intangible heritage into regeneration, the heritage as a vector approach offers guidance (Janssen, et al. 2017).

To gain a full understanding of local identity, storytelling as a planning practice can be a useful method (Sanderock, 2003).
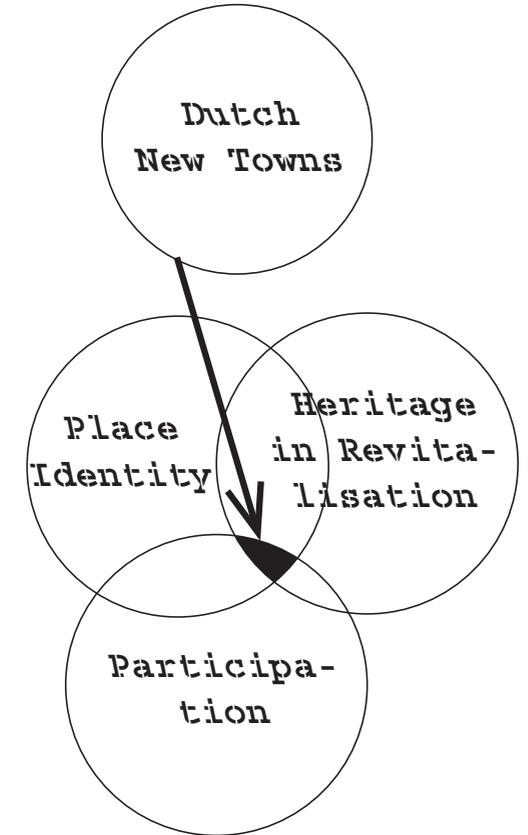

38. Theoretical framework

METHODO-LOGY

Introduction

This research will go into the identity of Spijkenisse and how to use this identity in possible revitalisation. This chapter presents the methodology and methods that will be used to capture the identity of Spijkenisse and make a step towards the implementation of this identity in further redevelopment. The methodology integrates qualitative and participatory research approaches, to find both tangible and intangible elements in the city that shape its identity.
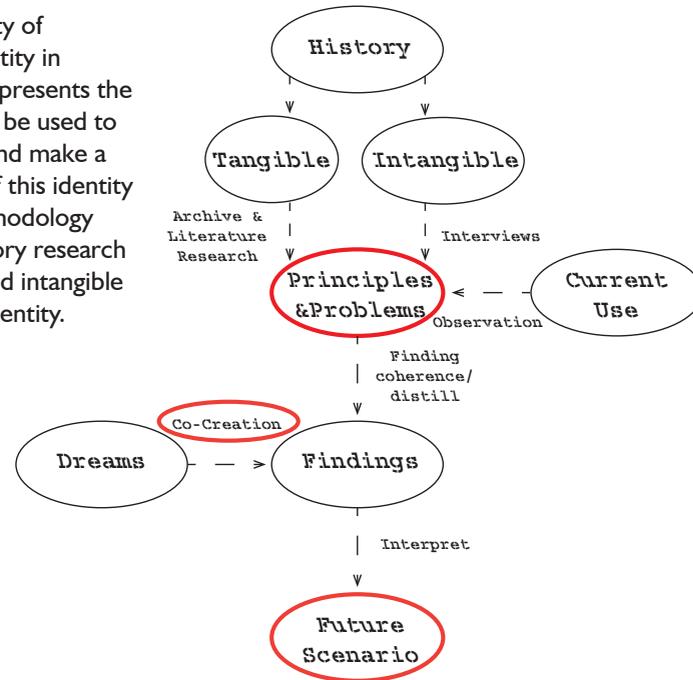

39. Methodological framework

Research Design

The main research question of this research is: "How can the identity of Spijkenisse be captured through a participatory process and enhanced in its revitalisation?"

The research can be split up in three sections: past, present and future. Each section deals with different research questions that will be answered through different methods. This framework is based on the framework of the path of expression used by Sanders and Stappers (2012).
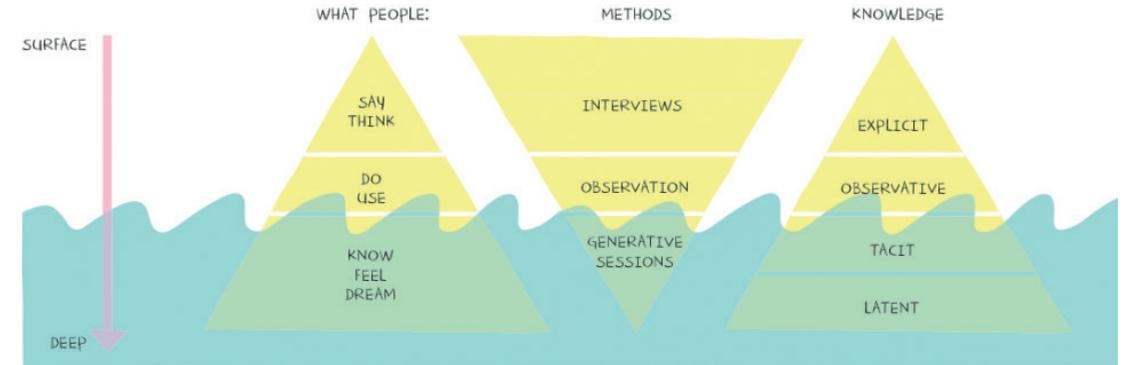
40. Methods that study what people Say, Do, and Make (know/ feel /dream) help access different levels of knowledge (Sanders & Stappers, 2012)
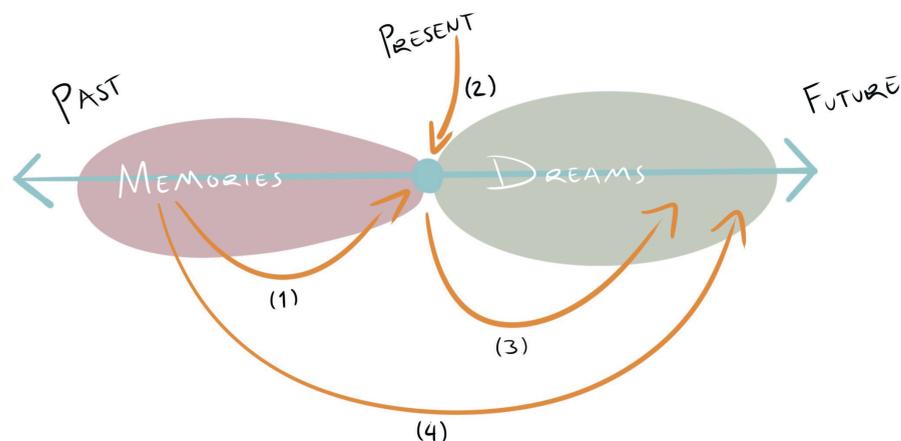
PAST

In this section the central question will be: 'How has its history shaped Spijkenisse? (1) Answering this question requires both analytical and experiential knowledge. The analytical knowledge will be gained through archival research and literature research. The experiential knowledge will be obtained through the stories that people tell. As this is explicit knowledge, these stories will be gathered through interviews rather than generative sessions. The way in which storytelling plays a role in this part is through Story as Foundation, origin identity both as the 'core story'.

PRESENT

The central question in this section is 'How do people currently experience their city? (2). It will look at experiences and stories, values and fears, using storytelling as the main source. These will also be gathered through interviews. Sharing experiences will help to access underlying needs and values, which will help in the next step of thinking about the future.

FUTURE

The final section will go into preferences and ideas for the future, asking locals what elements of the identity of the city they would like to see in future redevelopment (3&4). This section will try to answer the question, 'Informed by its identity, what should the future of Spijkenisse look like?'

Because this is more implicit or tacit knowledge, for this section the method will be generative sessions like co-design workshops in which possible scenarios for Spijkenisses future will be created together with the participants. It will also be informed by the stories from the interviews, making use of story as a catalyst for change.

41. Methodological framework, adapted from the path of expression (Sanders & Stappers, 2012)

Participants or Sample

The target population comprises different residents, community leaders and local authorities in Spijkenisse. The research makes use of purposeful sampling, rather than probability sampling, to ensure diverse perspectives on the identity of Spijkenisse. Also it ensures that participants have a meaningful connection to Spijkenisse, know something about its identity and possibly have an opinion on how it should be revitalised. To account for the dynamic nature of identity, it is crucial to involve participants from various generations. The selection of participants also depends on the International New Town Institute's network in Spijkenisse.
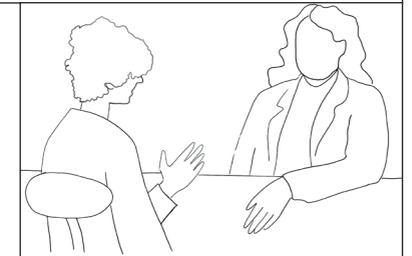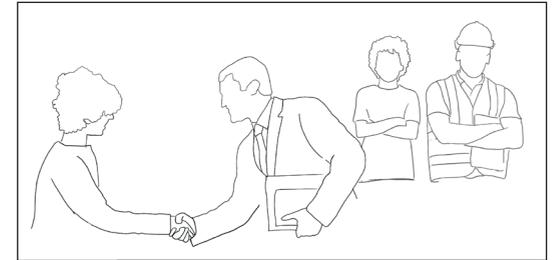
42. Participation Spijkenisse, Werkgroep 2000 (NAI Archive)

43. Visualisation of method

Data Collection

An effective and ethical data collection process is fundamental to the success of this research. This section outlines the methods used to gain diverse and comprehensive insights into the identity of Spijkenisse, integrating archival, literary and participatory approaches.

ARCHIVE RESEARCH:

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the urbanisation and general history of Spijkenisse, archival research will be conducted. The history of Spijkenisse is well-documented in the archives of the NAI and Voorne-Putten, as well as in the 'Oudheidskamer' at the local library and in the personal archives of locals. Archival research will provide insight into the planned development of the city, the designers' ideas for Spijkenisse, and how they were implemented.

LITERATURE RESEARCH

In addition to archival research, literature research will be carried out to place the development of the city in a wider context, looking at the development of other (Dutch) New Towns and the planning principles that shape them. The literature research will mainly be done using the personal library of the International New Town Institute and Google Scholar. The keywords that will be used include 'Spijkenisse', 'Groeikernen', 'identity', 'history' and 'heritage'.

INTERVIEWS

In addition to literature and archive research, local residents and experts on Spijkenisse will be interviewed. The purpose of these interviews is not only to fill in possible information gaps in the archives, but primarily to capture the 'lived city' that has shaped its identity. Individual interviews with key stakeholders will provide a deeper understanding of personal stories, memories, and emotional connections to Spijkenisse. Because general themes have to be found in these interviews and the research question is of an exploratory nature, the interviews will be semi-structured. This allows for flexibility, but still provides enough structure to find general themes. The interviews will partially take place in the community centres in the different neighbourhoods in Spijkenisse and partially in the Boekenberg, the local library.

CO CREATION

To further explore the values of inhabitants, a co-creation workshop will be held. The workshop will focus on the future of Spijkenisse, rather than the past or present, in addition to the interviews. As preferences for the future are more tacit knowledge, co-creation is important here. The co-creation workshop will combine all four ways of storytelling as a planning practice that were presented in the theoretical framework. The inhabitants will collectively make a collage which voices their dreams for the future of Spijkenisse. The design decisions will mainly be small scale as this is where the inhabitants have most knowledge about.

Data Analysis

The research data analysis is a complex process that requires a balance between the participants' narratives and the planner/researcher/designer's expertise. To interpret Spijkenisse's multifaceted identity, historical records, literature, interviews, and co-creation workshops requires a comprehensive approach.

INTERPRETING PARTICIPANT STORIES

The core of this research is based on the stories and experiences shared by the participants. Valuable insights into the lived city, perceptions, and aspirations for Spijkenisse's future are contributed by the participants through interviews and co-creation workshops. These narratives, which are often rich in personal histories and emotions, form a crucial part of the data analysis.

The generative sessions are designed as co-creation workshops to gather information and instil a sense of ownership among the residents. Participants actively contribute to the creation of scenarios for Spijkenisse's revitalisation. In this context, the urban designer is to facilitate and capture these ideas authentically. The aim is to ensure that the proposed scenarios reflect the genuine desires and values of the local community.

INCORPORATING URBAN DESIGNERS EXPERTISE

Although participant input is valuable, it is equally important to consider the expertise of the urban designer The urban designer is responsible for distilling, prioritising, and refining the outcomes of the generative sessions because this requires a careful assessment of feasibility, impact, and alignment with broader urban planning principles.

The urban designer analyses the project with a professional perspective, taking into account factors such as urban sustainability, spatial design, and practical implementation. This expertise is essential in guiding the translation of community-driven ideas into viable and well-informed revitalisation scenarios.

BALANCING PERSPECTIVES

The success of data analysis depends on balancing the community's narratives with the planner's insights. The planner's role is to harmonise the participants' aspirations with the practicalities of urban planning, without overshadowing their voices.

FEEDBACK LOOP

In order to ensure that the input of the inhabitants is processed in a manner that meets their expectations, the future scenarios will be presented to them and to municipal officials. During this presentation, they will be able to provide feedback on the scenarios, which will be used to optimise the scenarios.

Ethical Considerations

Maintaining ethical standards is essential to ensure the integrity and credibility of this research. This section outlines key considerations for safeguarding the rights, privacy and welfare of participants, recognising the ethical responsibilities inherent in the study.

Informed Consent: It has to be ensured that all participants provide informed consent. It must be clearly explained what the purpose of the study is and how their information will be used.

Confidentiality: The confidentiality of the participants has to be safeguarded. If information is revealed during interviews and workshops, the participants identity has to be protected and the information has to be anonymised.

Participation fatigue: In order to limit participation fatigue or distrust in future research, it is important to ensure that participation benefits the participant in some way.

Data Security: Data security measures have to be implemented to protect the collected data. This includes secure storage and restricted access to sensitive data.

Role of the researcher/planner: It is important to reflect on the role of the researcher/designer and how personal biases influence the outcome of the study.

44. De Hoek, Spijkenisse (NAI Archive)

Limitations

While this research attempts to provide a comprehensive understanding of Spijkenisse's identity, it is important to acknowledge several inherent limitations that may affect the robustness and generalisability of the findings.

Sampling Bias: If the interviewees and workshop participants do not represent a diverse cross-section of the community, the findings may not fully capture the identity of Spijkenisse.

Subjectivity in Co-Creation and interpretation: Co-creation workshops may introduce a level of subjectivity. The interpretation of participants' ideas and the translation into revitalisation scenarios could be influenced by the researchers' perspectives, potentially impacting the outcomes.

Incomplete Historical Records: Depending on the availability and completeness of historical archives, there may be gaps in the understanding of the history of Spijkenisse. Incomplete or missing records could limit the depth of the historical analysis.

Dependency on Participant Recollection: Interviewees' memories may be subject to recall bias, which could affect the accuracy of historical information or personal experiences shared during interviews.

Limited Generalisability: Despite the similarities between New Towns, the results of the study may be specific to Spijkenisse and not easily generalisable to other cities or contexts.

The uniqueness of Spijkenisse's history and community may limit the wider applicability of the findings.

Resource Constraints: Depending on available resources, such as time and funding, the depth of archival and literature research and the number of interviews and workshops may be limited, affecting the comprehensiveness of the study.

MITIGATION

To address these limitations and enhance the validity of the study, several mitigation strategies were implemented. Efforts were made to ensure a representative sample by actively reaching out to diverse demographic groups within Spijkenisse, thereby minimizing sampling bias. To reduce subjectivity in the interpretation of co-creation workshops, a feedback loop is created with the inhabitants to validate findings.

Regarding the potential gaps in historical records and the recall bias in the interviews: these two methods complement eachother, information from the interviews can be verified using historical records, and missing historical records can be filled in using the historical knowledge of the inhabitants.

While the findings are specific to Spijkenisse and may not be easily generalisable to other contexts, a comparative analysis with other New Towns was conducted to highlight both unique and common elements. Resource constraints were managed by prioritizing key research areas and leveraging local institutional support.

Conclusion

In summary, this research methodology is designed to explore the identity of Spijkenisse in a comprehensive way, with the aim of integrating this identity into revitalisation efforts. By using a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and participatory research, the study aims to uncover both tangible and intangible elements that contribute to the unique character of the town.

The research design emphasises a participatory process involving a range of stakeholders, including residents, community leaders, local authorities and experts. Purposive sampling ensures diverse perspectives, while the integration of archival research, literature review, interviews and co-creation workshops provides a holistic understanding of Spijkenisse's identity.

Data analysis involves a participatory approach, combining different sources to construct a coherent narrative of the town's historical development and current identity. The historical overview, generated through archival and literature research, provides the basis for understanding the urbanisation phases of Spijkenisse.

The participatory elements of interviews, workshops and story collection empower the local community by giving them a platform to express their views. Scenario building, carried out in collaboration with residents, ensures that proposed revitalisation strategies are in line with real local needs and aspirations.
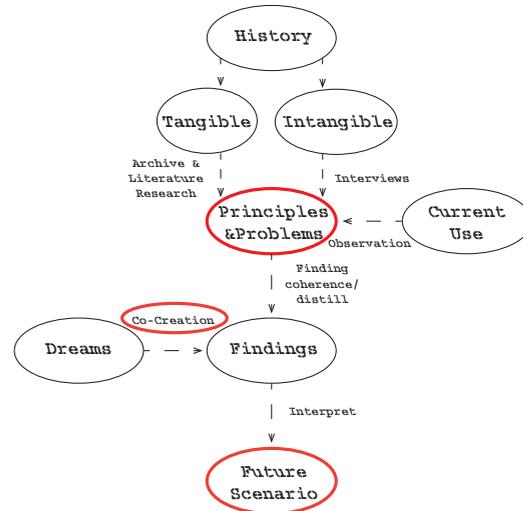
45. Methodological framework

Intended outcome

This research aims to provide a multifaceted understanding of Spijkenisse's identity, with the final aim of informing and influencing its revitalisation. The intended outcomes of this study are manifold and include an historical overview, a collection of stories, workshops and a future scenario for Spijkenisse. The following sections articulate the intended outcomes for each phase of the research.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The first output of this study will be a comprehensive overview of the history of Spijkenisse, mostly drawing from the literature and archive research. This part will go into the history of Spijkenisse, mostly looking at the planned city.

STORY COLLECTION

To capture the lived city and the intangible heritage, a collection of stories will be made, enriching and informing the historical overview. This story collection is a mix of past and present experiences and memories. By incorporating the perspectives of local residents, this method not only consolidates information but also empowers the community by providing them with a platform to express their views.

PRINCIPLES AND PROBLEMS

The aforementioned list of principles and problems is also a significant outcome that can assist the municipality in guiding their planning.

WORKSHOP & COLLAGE

As mentioned earlier a co-creation workshop will be held, which is also considered an output in itself. This workshop will help the inhabitants to articulate their personal dreams for their city, and involve and empower them in the decision making process.
The inhabitants will collectively make collages showing the past, present (also informed by the interviews) and desired future of their city.

DESIGN OUTPUT

The design output focuses on the neighbourhood scale, while also considering the city scale. This approach ensures reproducibility for other New Towns and acknowledges that inhabitants have the most knowledge and opinions on how to revitalise at the neighbourhood scale.

The scenario will be informed by the principles and problems, as well as input from the inhabitants from the co-creation workshop.

EXHIBITION

The final output of the project is an exhibition of the collages created by the inhabitants and the drawings of the future scenario.

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the data analysis, with the aim of extracting meaningful conclusions. As indicated in the methodology chapter, the analysis is comprised of four parts: interviews, archival and literature research, observation, as well as insights from the co-creation workshop.

From the analysis of the interviews, archival and literature research and observation a set of principles and problems will be identified.

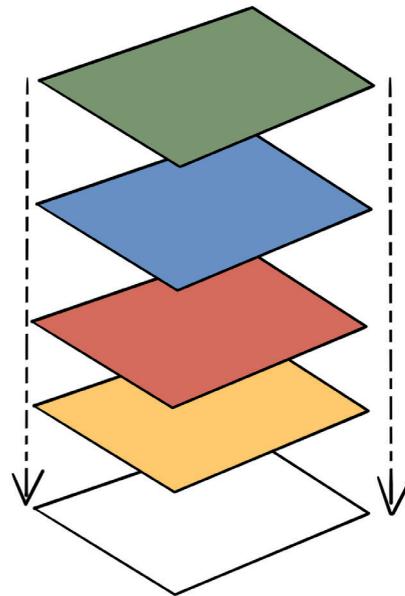The co-creation workshop will together with these principles and problems inform the future scenarios.

Archive & Literature research

Personal observation

Interviews

Co-creation workshop

Future scenario

46. Layers of Data

Archival & literature research

This subchapter presents the findings of archival and literature research. It will first examine the general design and planning principles of the time of Spijkenisse's major growth and of New Towns in general. It will then examine the qualities and problems that the inhabitants experience, as revealed by the interviews, and identify their origins from a planning perspective.

NEW TOWNS AS UTOPIAS

Due to their characteristic feature of being planned all at once, New Towns inherently encapsulate prevalent ideas about design and planning principles. They reflect the zeitgeist of their respective periods, often aspiring towards utopian ideals (Wakeman, 2016).
As Spijkenisse was mostly planned in the 1970's (Figure 48), most neighbourhoods show a strong emphasis on the planning and design principles of that period and this chapter will mostly focus on these. However, to show where these ideas come from and why they're not very present in Spijkenisse, first a little bit needs to be explained about 60's planning in Spijkenisse.

60'S PLANNING IN SPIJKENISSE

When Spijkenisse became a growth municipality in 1958, that growth began north of the existing village centre with the construction of the neighbourhoods of Schiekamp and Hoogwerf. These neighbourhoods demonstrate some of the 1960s planning ideals like high-rise and wide open green space. Nevertheless, the planners attempted to attract residents from rural areas,
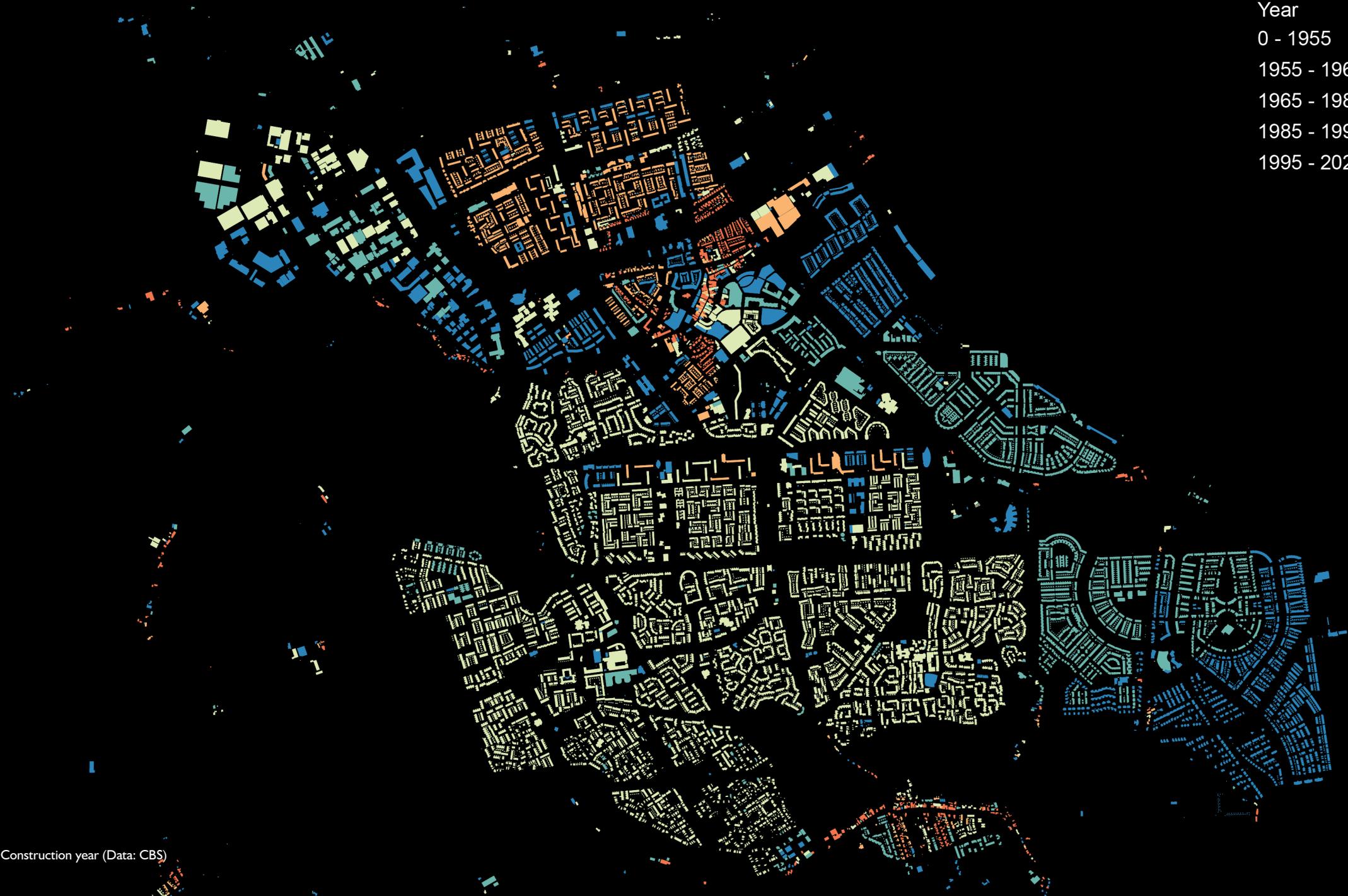
such as Brielen, Geervliet, and even Zeeland, who were unfamiliar with the 1960s high-rise architectural style. However, few of these projects were ultimately realised. One notable exception was the Marrewijkflat (Figure 47), which was designed to have similar structures in the surrounding area. However, due to public opposition, these plans were discontinued.
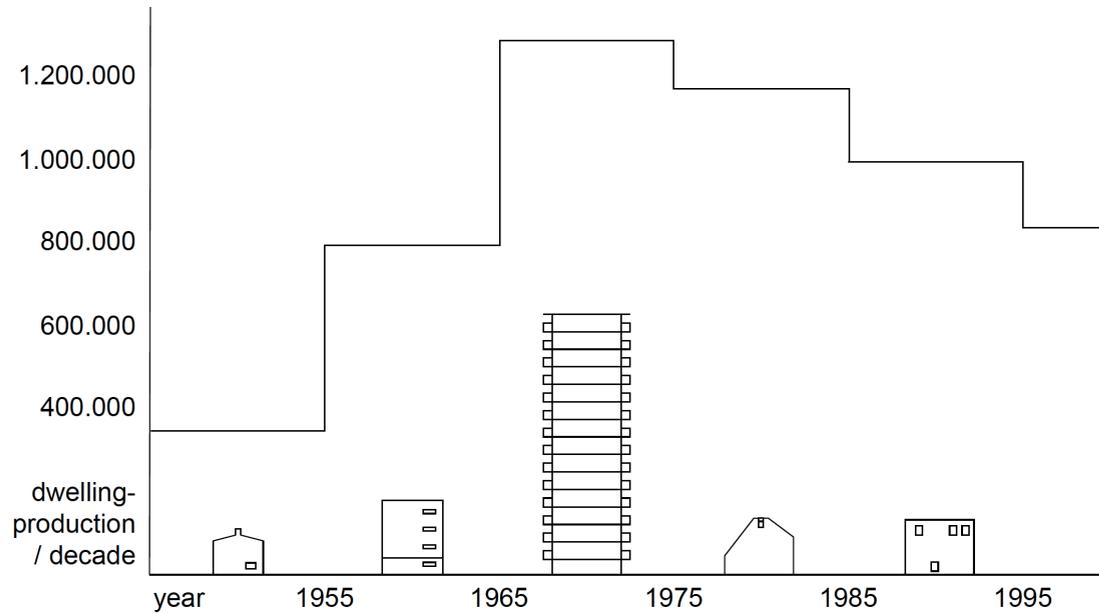

47. Marrewijkflat (Voorne-Putten Archive)

Year

0 - 1955
1955 - 1965
1965 - 1985
1985 - 1995
1995 - 2024
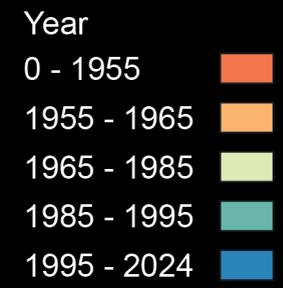
48. Construction year (Data: CBS)

49. Housing production (Spoormans, 2020)

Woningproductie o.b.v. Statline CBS Open data
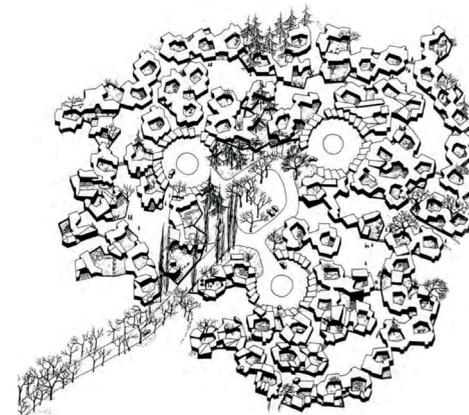
A CHANGE IN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

As the 1960s progressed, experts began to raise doubts about the prevalent approach of 'rational planning'. Medical professionals observed a surge in mental health issues linked to peoples living environment. Consequently, a countermovement gained momentum, promoting diversity and less structured architecture and urban planning. (Wagenaar, 2015)

This led to the creation of the 'cauliflower' neighbourhoods. The rational housing estates, which were structured, scientifically designed, and displayed the latest innovations, were viewed as repressive. They were replaced by low-rise brick houses arranged in dead-end streets or small squares known as "woonerven". These "woonerven" were intended to be cosy, village-like, and free of through traffic. (Wagenaar, 2015)

As described in the interview analysis (p. 61), this architecture was welcomed with open arms in Spijkenisse.
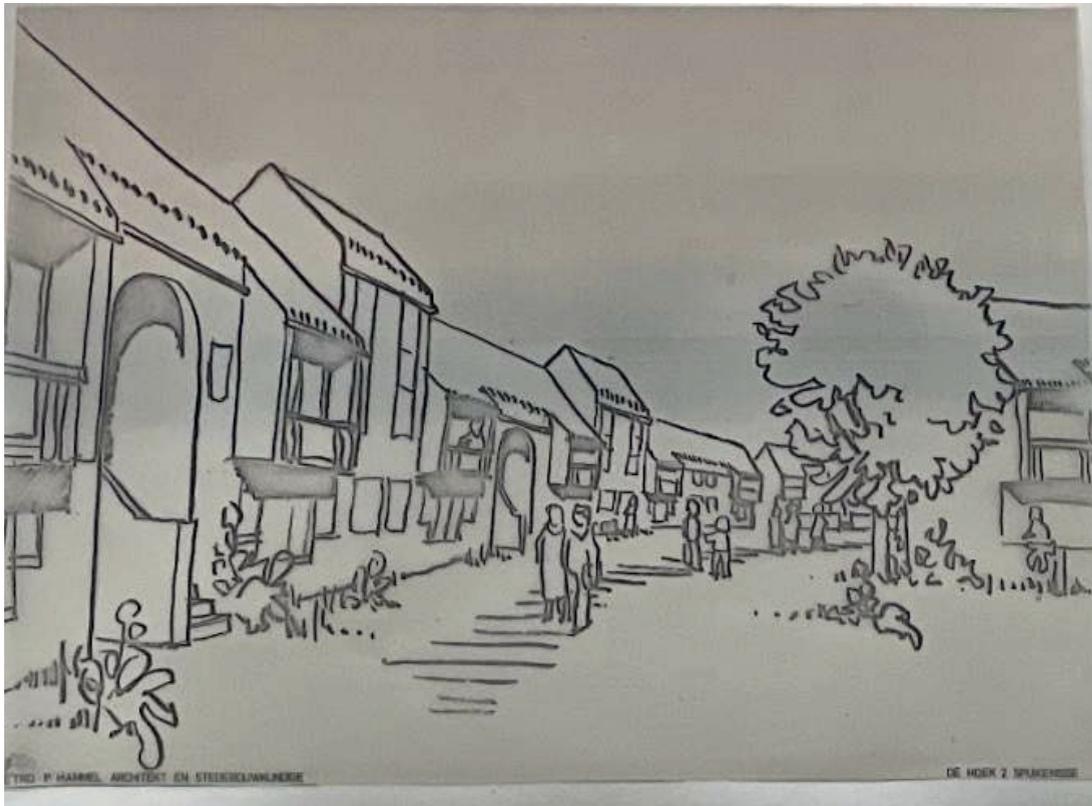
LOW-RISE IN GREEN

With the release of the Second Memorandum (1966), the statement that new housing would be largely constructed in former green areas rather than expanding existing cities triggered significant opposition. People feared that the construction of new housing in not yet urbanised land would result in the loss of precious green spaces.

As a reaction, the cities embraced the rural quality of the landscape, taking the existing green structures as a leading element in the design (Figure 51, 52, 53, 54).
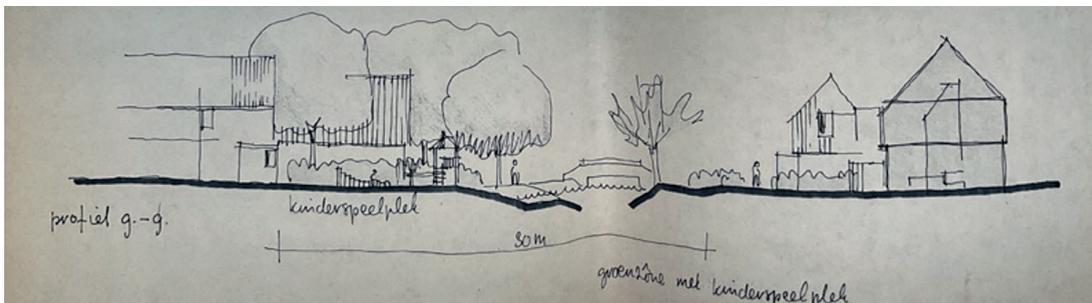

50. Cauliflower neighbourhood scheme (Niek de Boer)

51. Plan for De Hoek: with green 'prickers' and trees to shield the neighbourhood (NAI Archive)

52. Greenstructure of Spijkenisse

53. Plan for De Hoek: with suburban character, and low-rise in green (NAI Archive)

54. Plan for De Hoek: with suburban character, and low-rise in green (NAI Archive)

SUBURBAN URBANITY

By extension the development of Dutch New Towns, as well as those in England, France, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, was intended to address anticipated suburbanisation due to poor quality of living, higher wealth and increased car ownership (Reijndorp, 2019). This led to the creation of a distinct urban landscape, where the entire city took on a suburban feel (Figure 53, 54 & 55). The New Towns were a set of suburban neighbourhoods each with a small centre of their own (Figure 57) with a larger shared centre (Figure 59), which used to be the old village centre, and a vital connection, a 'umbilical cord', to their respective mother cities. This connection was typically provided by a metro, tram, or bus line. (Figure 58) (Reijndorp, 2019) As a result of this structure, Spijkenisse, like other New Towns, is shaped like a tree, as described in Christopher Alexander's influential essay 'The city is not a tree' (1965).

A COMMUNITY

In line with these 70's ideals and this 'village like' image, the premise for the first neighbourhoods in Spijkenisse was clear; they were to be neighbourhoods for young families that facilitated that a thriving community could emerge. This desire was was described by urbanist ir. C. Hoogeveen, in BOUW in 1961 (Figure 56):

"The residential district (Schiekamp-Hoogwerf), which after completion in the year 1964 will have about 3,500 houses, will for the most part be inhabited by people, who were not born in Spijkenisse, indeed who probably until recently barely knew the name of the municipality. For these newcomers, the district will become the living environment, where they can fully emerge themselves into their family life and where they will make contacts with the neighbours."

"It all still looks very new, yet it is visible that the desire was not only to build as many houses as possible, but to create a "community"."

55. Village like ambience of Spijkenisse (Voorne-Putten Archive)
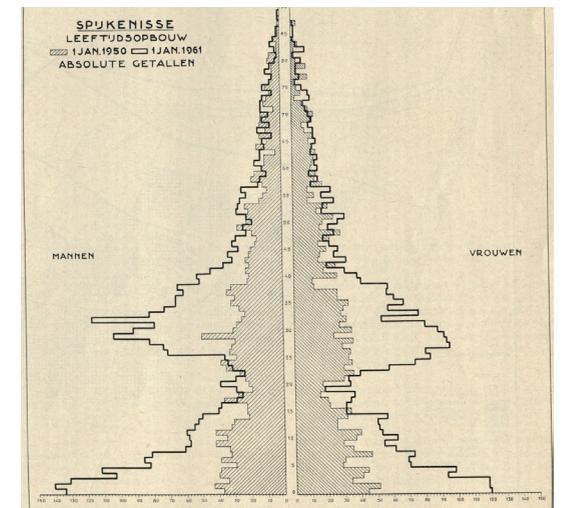
56. Population age Spijkenisse 1950 & 1961 (BOUW, 1961)

57. Neighbourhood centre in Waterland (Voorne-Putten Archive)

58. Metroline to Rotterdam (Voorne-Putten Archive)

FUTURE NEEDS

But even in those optimistic times there was already doubt if the creation of this utopia was actually sustainable. Landscape architect W.C.J Boer voices his doubts in BOUW in 1961:

"Do we also already know the housing needs and recreational aspirations of the children and adults who will be living here in Spijkenisse in 10 and 20 years' time so precisely that we can already expect to have built a liveable town for those people?"

"A living city is alive only when its inhabitants bring it to life, can bring it to life, when they themselves can build on it. The foundations for that margin must be laid right now.
The structure plan and public participation seek to lay that foundation. On that, we can trust that Spijkenisse can grow into a town, where people can again say: I love the city I live in!"

But unfortunately the experiences from the inhabitants point out that the planners of the time couldn't foreshadow the needs of future inhabitants. In addition public participation and even the original structural plan are abandoned.

59. City centre of Spijkenisse (Voorne-Putten Archive)

Story of the city

The following subchapter is an amalgamation and simplification of most of the stories told during the interviews. The interviews were conducted during the months of February and March 2024. A total of 32 people aged approximately between 30 and 85 were spoken to.

PAST

The majority of respondents were born in Spijkenisse, which was a small village at the time, in Rotterdam, particularly in the Charlois district and the satellite city of Hoogvliet, and in the surrounding villages, which were relatively small at the time. These included Brielle, Geervliet and Heenvliet.

"If anything, i feel 'Rijnmonder'"
- Resident of Waterland 1

The respondents born in Spijkenisse recall a time when the village was still a small community. They fondly remember playing in the fields as children or swimming in the nearby waters. Most villagers knew one another and interacted with each other in the village centre. Around 1958, they learned that their village was going to undergo significant changes. Gradually, from playing in the meadows, they transitioned to playing in the construction sites.

The respondents who were not born in Spijkenisse relocated to Spijkenisse because they, their husbands or their fathers were employed at the harbour, and were seeking housing in the neighbourhood. The most popular houses were

those on the ground level, constructed of red brick, as this material evoked memories of the houses in which they had grown up.
"So cute, just like holiday homes!"
- Inhabitant of Waterland 2

The 60's architecture was appreciated less, but the inhabitants still counted themselves lucky: "There we lived three floors up, but an incredibly nice little house. You're 25; the world is still at your feet. It was just great to meet your friends there. Every weekend was a party."
- Resident of de Hoek 1 (then living in Schiekamp)

Given that the majority of houses were sold with a "premie", which entailed receiving financial compensation from the government upon purchasing one of these residences, the housing was considerably more affordable than that in Rotterdam.

"I felt proud I could afford such a house! On the ground floor with a front and a back garden, with a park and water right around the corner."
- Resident of de Hoek 1

"Every morning I would go to the harbour by bike."
- Resident of de Hoek 2

The neighbourhoods were newly constructed and populated by individuals with similar interests. The majority of residents were young families embarking on their residential career.

"When we first moved in, it felt like a utopia!"
"Open, green neighbourhoods with 'woonerven', that was the ideal image at that time. Spijkenisse was the crème de la crème."

- Inhabitant of Waterland 3

The influx of young families necessitated the construction of additional facilities in the neighbourhoods to accommodate this target audience. Consequently, even more playgrounds, primary schools, and other similar institutions were erected.

Upon their arrival, the men of the household were required to work long hours in the harbour. Consequently, they were less integrated into the city than their wives. As the men worked throughout the day and, in some cases, the night, their wives were responsible for establishing and maintaining social connections within the community. They met with each other in the playgrounds where their children played, at the fences of the schools where they interacted with other parents, and at the neighbourhood centres where they purchased daily groceries. The playgrounds, schools and neighbourhood centres were the cornerstones of these neighbourhoods.

Those who came to Spijkenisse at a later point in time report that they were swiftly integrated into the community. They perceived the place to be the optimal setting for starting a family and raising their children.

Nevertheless, it is evident that not all residents of Spijkenisse relocated there for reasons related to the quality of life. In particular, older individuals indicated that they had to move to Spijkenisse against their will. Their sentiments towards their new hometown were almost exclusively negative.

"We had to move from Brielle to Spijkenisse because of my work, I had to teach at one of the new primary schools here in de Hoek. When I accepted the job, I had to move here. I hated it then and I still hate it, but you're busy with work and then suddenly you're too old to move".
- Resident of de Hoek 3

"I just wanted a cheap house close to the harbour and did not really care about the quality. If I would have the choice today, I wouldn't make the same one."
- Resident of Schiekamp 1

CHANGE

As the young families in the area grew older, the neighbourhoods began to lose their appeal. The playgrounds, which had previously been a popular gathering spot for children, were now largely unused, as the children who used to make use of them had now reached adolescence.

Additionally, many families had progressed to newer, more modern neighbourhoods or larger houses, further contributing to the changing identity of the area. From places that were once ideal for young families, the neighbourhoods had transformed into places lacking suitable facilities and activities, or perceived as having "nothing to do".

Consequently, the municipality embarked on a search for a new identity. In pursuit of this objective, they opted to infuse the city centre with a 'new impulse' through the demolition and renewal of the existing structures. When the new city centre by Sjoerd Soeters was finished in 2011, all activities were relocated to the city centre. This resulted in the abandonment of the different neighbourhood centres.

The playgrounds and neighbourhood centres were occupied by youths who would congregate there because there was no alternative space for them to socialise. In response, older inhabitants expressed concern that these places were unsafe or causing noise disturbance. The municipality responded by, for example, removing benches, making the places even more desolate.

The city centre's shops and restaurants were forced to close due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, leaving residents with even fewer leisure options.

PRESENT

The majority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the current public spaces and facilities in Spijkenisse. It appears that the city is once again reliant on the city of Rotterdam, particularly for work and leisure purposes. Consequently, they are appreciative of the convenient metro connection. Spijkenisse's unique selling point is still its green and water, which residents enjoy utilising for activities such as cycling through the polder and walking in the park.

Another point that clearly stands out is a change in the connection to the neighbourhood and the people in it. Most participants point out that there is less connection to the neighbourhood, also amplified by the fading and centralization of functions. That being said, the inhabitants still value the 'village mentality' that is, to a lesser extent, still present in the city.

"Within the neighbourhood, it's still a bit village-like. I always joke around with the flower merchant."
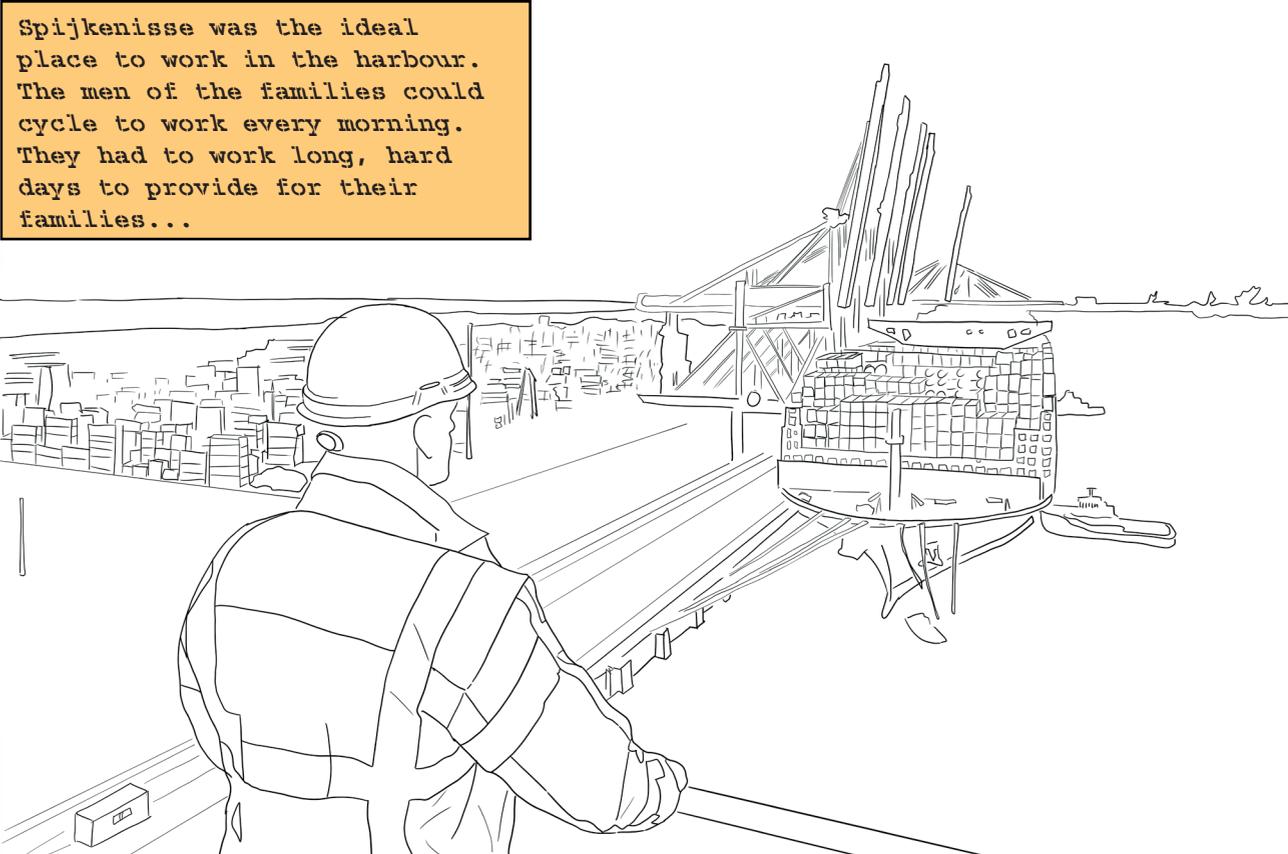- Inhabitant from Waterland 1

"I still know the people from before, but if you come here as a newcomer, I suppose it must be harder now.
- Inhabitant from de Akkers 1
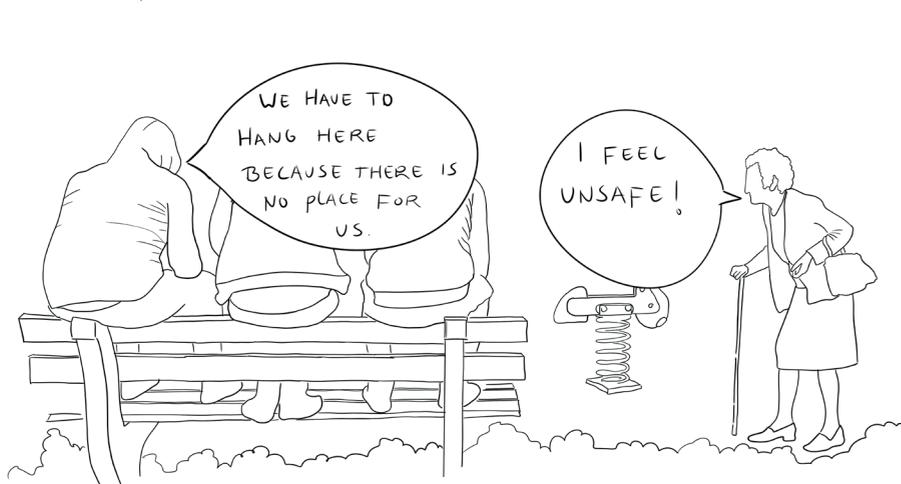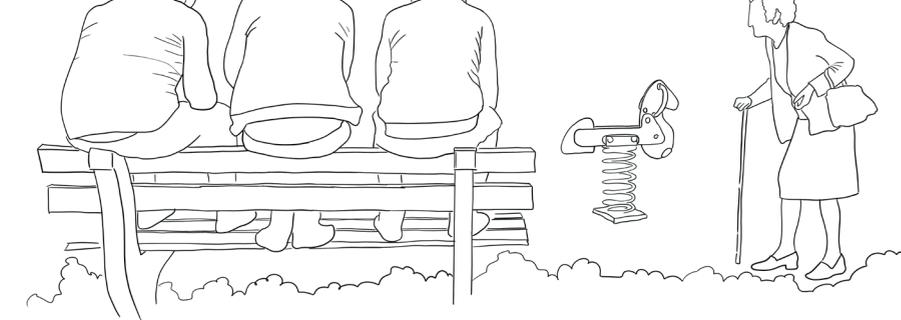
The once close-knit community has partly fallen apart, and neighbours often do not even know each other anymore, only looking at each other through closed curtains...
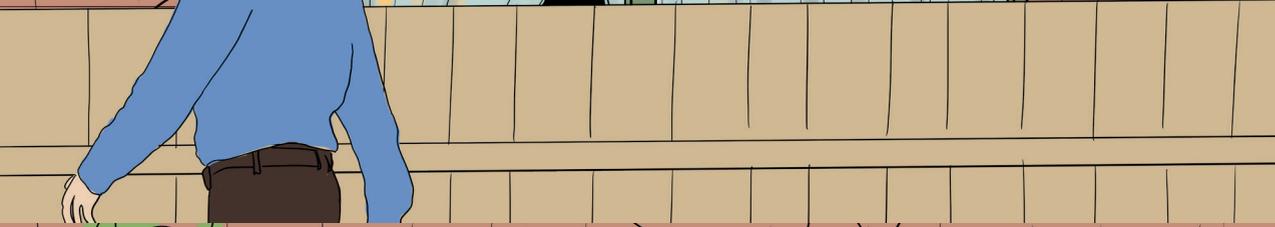
I DON'T KNOW WHO LIVES HERE, BUT THEIR HOUSE AND GARDEN LOOK LIKE SHIT!

WE WORK SO MUCH WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR MAINTAINANCE OR A SOCIAL LIFE!

Residents have seen their environment deteriorate and wish they could have their beautiful neighbourhoods back...

THIS USED TO BE WHERE I MET MY NEIGHBORS. WHAT HAPPEND TO THIS SQUARE?

PARKING ON TOP OF THE JUMBO, SO PEOPLE DON'T HAVE TO BE IN THE STREETS.

COMMUNITY CENTRE WITH INVOLVED CITIZENS

THIS USED TO BE WHERE I MET MY NEIGHBORS. WHAT HAPPEND TO THIS SQUARE?

THERE USED TO BE SEATING HERE, BUT IT WENT AWAY BECAUSE OF COMPLAINTS.

MOST SHOPS WENT OUT OF BUISINESS DUE TO DEVELOP-MENTS IN THE CITY CENTRE.

If only there was something they could do...

I WISH THERE WAS SOMETHING I COULD DO TO MAKE MY NEIGBOURHOOD NICE AGAIN!

69

60. De Akkers, Spijkenisse (NAI Archive)

Observation (fieldwork)

The city of Spijkenisse is notable for its lack of a clear centre upon entering the city, which contributes to a sense of spatial ambiguity. With a sparse distribution of functions, the cityscape appears as a nondescript assembly of houses, lacking the vibrancy typically associated with urban centres. Despite the close proximity of neighborhoods, there exists a clear sense of separation, accentuated by physical barriers or delineations that inhibit organic connections between communities. This fragmentation of the urban fabric hinders social interaction and community cohesion. The prevalence of parked cars, often occupying front gardens (Figure 61), underscores the dominance of automobile-centric infrastructure within the cityscape. This ubiquity of vehicles further detracts from the visual appeal of residential areas and limits the potential for pedestrian-friendly environments.

The prevalence of security cameras (Figure 61) and closed curtains adorning most houses evidences a pervasive sense of privacy and surveillance permeating the space. This culture of seclusion may contribute to a perceived lack of openness and social engagement within the community. While green spaces are present, their aesthetic quality and biodiversity are markedly diminished, with minimal maintenance and limited recreational amenities such as benches. Consequently, parks and squares remain underutilised, devoid of vitality and communal activity.

61. Parked cars in front gardens, monitored by security cameras

Despite the abundance of beautiful greenery, water features and public squares, their potential as communal gathering spaces remains largely untapped, with minimal evidence of public engagement or utilisation. This underutilisation of natural assets underscores missed opportunities for community interaction and urban vitality. Furthermore, the scarcity of street life further accentuates the sense of desolation within the urban landscape, with public spaces devoid of the vibrancy and dynamism typically associated with active urban environments (Figure 63 & 64).

63. Neighbourhood centre of Waterland

62. Appreciation for the rural feel of the city

64. Desolate playground

65. Green edge of the neighbourhood

66. Heavily paved front garden

67. Heavily paved public space

Principles and problems

The following is a list of principles and problems that have emerged from the analysis of archival and literature research, interviews and personal observations. They include conclusions about both the 'planned' and the 'lived' city.

PHYSICAL FORM:

Principles:
1. Emphasis on low-rise brick houses, "woonerven" and cosy, village-like neighbourhood planning. (Figure 68)

2. Green spaces and their integration into the urban landscape, preserving the rural quality of the surroundings. (Figure 69)

3. Establishment of a suburban urban landscape, with distinct neighbourhoods having their own centers and connections to larger cities.

Problems:
1. Loss of appeal and changing identity of neighbourhoods as young families grew older.

2. Demolition and renewal of existing structures in the city center, leading to abandonment of neighbourhood centers.

3. Cars taking up a lot of space (Figure 70)

4. Lack of suitable facilities and activities in neighbourhoods, resulting in a perceived sense of "nothing to do."
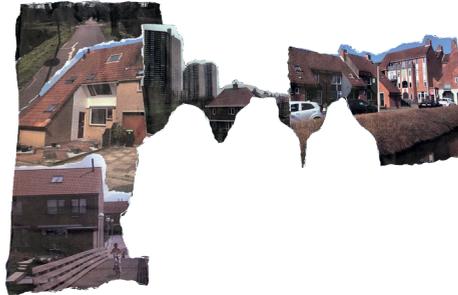
68. Architecural form (Snippet from collage 1)
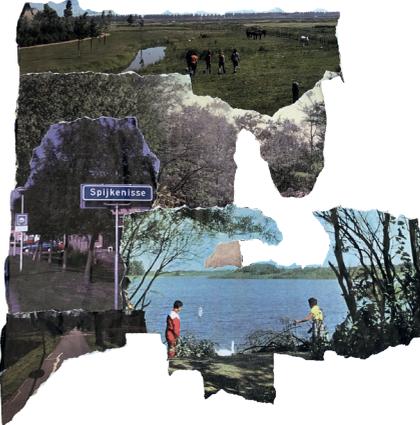
69. Water and green (Snippet from collage 1)

70. Dominant presence of cars (Snippet from collage 1)

ACTIVITY:

Principles:
1. Provision of playgrounds, primary schools, and other facilities to accommodate young families. (Figure 71)

2. Formation of a thriving community through social interactions in playgrounds, schools, and neighbourhood centers.

Problems:
1. Decreased utilisation of playgrounds and neighbourhood centers as children reached adolescence.

2. Reliance on the city of Rotterdam for work and leisure activities. (Figure 72)

MEANING:

Principles:
1. Sense of pride and satisfaction among residents in affordable housing with front and back gardens.

2. Appreciation for the "village-like" atmosphere and community connections within neighbourhoods.

Problems:
1. Decreased sense of connection to the neighbourhood and its residents, exacerbated by fading and centralisation of functions.

2. Dissatisfaction with the current public spaces and facilities, leading to reliance on neighbouring cities for amenities and leisure activities. (Figure 73)

71. Inhabitants (Snippet from collage 1)

72. Public transport (Snippet from collage 1)
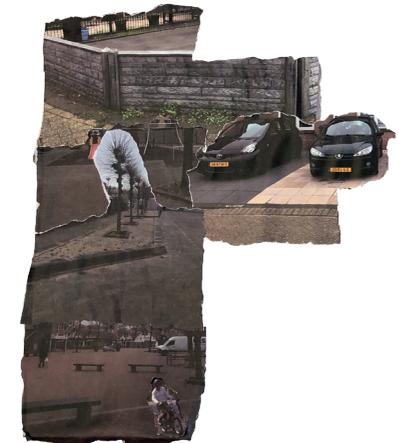
73. Public space (Snippet from collage 1)

74. Picture of the collage workshop (Spieke.nl)

75. Picture of the collage workshop

76. Picture of the collage workshop

77. Picture of the collage workshop

78. Picture of collageworkshop (Spieke.nl)

Communicatie als kunstuiting

Fotografenexpositie

BEELD KUNST

Gallery FOTO EXPOSITIES

KUNST

'Fotografie is een geluk'

Cultureel draagvlak expressie

Spijkenisse

TWEEDE KANS

Nissewaard Exposed (EXPOSITIE RUIMTE)

Doorstromen voor ouderen

Handen ineen voor toekomstbestendig wonen

Lieve ouders, maar nog liever een eigen huis

"Ons duurzame nieuwbouwhuis"

WOORDKUNST

Samen werken is de sleutel voor succes

Spijkenisse

Havenwerk

Centraal Station

VM

79. Collage 1 of past and present

72. Collage 2 of the desired future

Co-creation

The co-creation workshop took place on the 8th of may 2024 between 9:00 and 16:00. Over the whole day a total of 24 inhabitants participated. The workshop aimed to gather residents' dreams and aspirations for the future of their city and visually represent these ideas through a collaborative collage.

The main takeaways from this participatory event can be grouped into several themes that highlight the desired direction for Spijkenisse's development.

BALANCE BETWEEN THE URBAN, THE VILLAGE-LIKE AND THE RURAL

One of the most striking outcomes of the workshop was the apparent dichotomy between the desire to preserve the village-like character of Spijkenisse and the aspiration to become more urban.

Most inhabitants indicated to value the village-like character of the city and said this has to be preserved, as this is one of the main elements of Spijkenisses identity.

Some of them expressed that this is combined with the rural setting of the city and that the green and water structures should be key elements in the cities redevelopment. In some cases even that the urban structures should be transformed to more rural. (Figure 82, 83 & 85)

Another group of inhabitants expressed the need for more urban or metropolitan functions and and for a more urban environment. They often referred to Rotterdam as an example for how Spijkenisse should become. In their opinion the city should get clubs (Figure 81), museums and large centralised hospitality zones (Figure 80 & 84).

80. Large horeca squares (Snippet from collage 2)

81. Club / entertainment venue (Snippet from collage 2)

82. Quiet rural feel (Snippet from collage 2)

83. Green and water (Snippet from collage 2)

84. More horeca facilities (Snippet from collage 2)

85. Experience of nature (Snippet from collage 2)

EXPERIENCING NATURE IN DAILY LIFE

The appreciation of nature is also evident in the discussion about public space. Residents indicate that they would like to see more biodiversity in their daily environment. They suggest that the now heavily paved public spaces should be unpaved and that more species of plants and trees should be introduced. (Figure 86)
By extension, participants felt that the existing water features in the city should be more actively used and integrated into public life. This includes improving accessibility and recreational opportunities around these natural assets. (Figure 86)

86. More biodiversity in green / public space (Snippet from collage 2)

MOBILITY

Inhabitants indicate that nature is best experienced by bike and walking. They express a desire for recreational walking and cycling routes through the natural areas and the borders of the village-like areas. These routes could be supplemented with informative signs about the flora and fauna. (Figure 88)

In terms of mobility, the residents have stated that they are highly satisfied with the metro connection to Rotterdam. However, they have expressed a desire for a more convenient and accessible connection within the city itself and to the harbour, with the hope that this could be achieved through the implementation of frequent busses (Figure 87).

87. Public transport (Snippet from collage 2)

88. Biking and walking (Snippet from collage 2)

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL SPACES

The participants advocated for increased investment in cultural and social facilities. They proposed a number of bottom-up initiatives, including the establishment of museums and exhibition spaces. One such proposal was for an industrial museum that would showcase the industrial history of Spijkenisse. Another was for an exhibition space for photographers from Voorne Putten, which would provide a forum for sharing ideas and showcasing their works. (Figure 89)

With regard to social facilities, there was a clear call for the creation of additional spaces for social interaction within the neighbourhoods. This was particularly pertinent for the elderly, who often encounter mobility issues that prevent them from accessing centralised meeting spaces. The participants advocated for the establishment of neighbourhood 'living rooms' where residents can come together and maintain the social fabric of their communities (Figure 90).

89. Cultural facilities (Snippet from collage 2)

90. Neighbourhood livingrooms (Snippet from collage 2)

FLOW THROUGH IN EXISTING BUILDINGS

In order to accommodate these new functions, residents have proposed the creation of a more efficient flow-through in the existing buildings. For instance, when functions in the centre become less popular and there is a high level of vacancy, this could be an opportunity to house a temporary or pop-up exhibition space. A similar argument can be made for the centres of the neighbourhoods, where there is often also a high level of vacancy. These could be ideal locations for neighbourhood 'living rooms', even if it is only temporary.

Furthermore, a more efficient housing market is also required. In order for new young families to obtain a residence in Spijkenisse (Figure 82), it is necessary to provide housing that meets the needs of elderly individuals for them to flow-through to new housing. Consequently, there is a need to explore the potential of elderly housing or communal living for the elderly (Figure 91).

92. "Lovely parents, but preferably a home of my own." (Snippet from collage 2)

91. Proper housing for the elderly (Snippet from collage 2)

URBAN FORM

In terms of architectural design, there is a clear division between a desire for urban and village-like structures. On the one hand, there is an appreciation for the current architectural style, particularly the village-like 1970s housing found in neighbourhoods like Waterland. On the other hand, there is a desire for more architectural icons in the city, such as the Boekenberg. People express a desire to have something they can be proud of and that they can identify with.
The public space in Spijkenisse is perceived as grey and soulless Participants have proposed a series of interventions to address this, including the addition of street and word art, the depaving of certain areas and introducing green spaces (as mentioned earlier), and the installation of more benches. (Figure 93)

93. Urban form (Snippet from collage 2)

Discussion and interpretation

Although the findings demonstrated the central narrative of the outcome, there was considerable divergence of opinion regarding the visions for future Spijkenisse. In this context, the role of the urban designer is of particular importance.

In order to present a convincing vision, synergies have to be created. This chapter will present the challenges of interpretation and mediation of the different perspectives, elaborate on the role of the urban designer and demonstrate the decisions made in the translation to the future scenario.

ROLE OF THE URBAN PLANNER

In this context, the role of the urban designer is to act as a mediator between the inhabitants and the municipality and to balance between the different data inputs.

These different data inputs, inhabitants' stories, personal observation and historical analysis are sometimes contradictory. It is the planners role to prioritise between these different data inputs and make choices accordingly.

The urban designer's responsibilities include interpreting the ideas and visions of the inhabitants and visualising them in a way that can be effectively communicated to the municipality. This involves transforming abstract concepts into tangible designs. Design is therefore used as a communication tool, something to spark dialogue between the inhabitants and the municipality.

Given the diverse opinions held by the inhabitants, the urban designer must make informed design choices and compromises in order to reconcile these differing visions. By visualising the ideas of the inhabitants, the urban designer facilitates better communication between the community and the municipality, ensuring that the voices of the residents are heard and considered in the planning process.

CHALLENGES

One of the biggest challenges within interpreting the data is weighing the various data inputs against each other. The biggest contrast was in that historically important aspects weren't always reflected with how they were valued by inhabitants or how they came across in personal observation. The way this was mitigated was through prioritising historical importance. Especially in a city like Spijkenisse where there is very little considered 'heritage', assets of possible historical importance should be treated with great carefulness. Ideally there can be made synergies where the historical importance is honoured both as the wishes of the inhabitants.

One of the considerations was that historically the poly-centric village-like structure is a big part of Spijkenisse's identity, on the other hand it makes the city structure unclear sometimes, its not really clear where the center is and all the different small centers make it hard for these individual centres to function on their own.

The same is true for the preservation of green. On the one hand it is one of Spijkenisse's best assets, on the other hand it inhibits the city of densifying and becoming a 'real urban city'.

Additionally, currently there is no support for all the desired functions like more horeca, more cultural spaces, more social spaces, more commerce etc. Consequently, in both the neighbourhood centres as the city centre there is a lot of vacancy.

Again this reflects the biggest point of discussion, should the city become a 'real city' or remain village-like/suburban.

INTERPRETATION/TRANSLATION

The findings from the co-creation workshop, interviews, archival and literature research, and personal observations offer a layered view of Spijkenisse's identity and the challenges it faces. The interpretations of these findings highlight the complex interplay between historical planning principles, current community needs, and future aspirations.
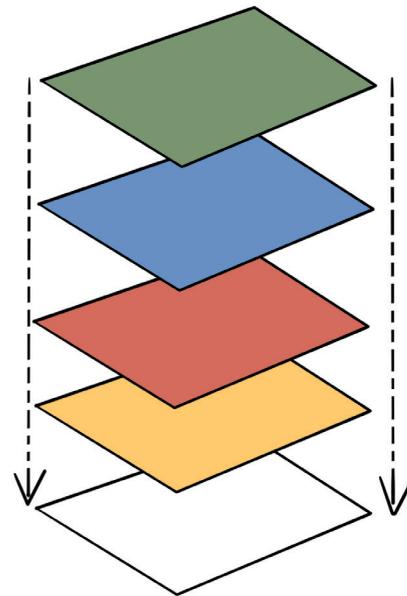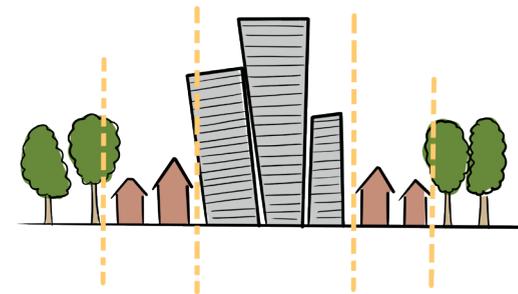
Balance between urban, rural and village-like

The co-creation workshop revealed a clear dichotomy in residents' wishes: to preserve the village-like character of Spijkenisse's 70s neighbourhoods (Figure 65), characterised by low-rise buildings and green spaces, while at the same time introducing more large-scale, metropolitan facilities in the town centre (Figure 80, 81 & 84). This balance is crucial to maintaining the town's unique identity. The village atmosphere is highly valued by residents (Figure 81). However, there is a strong demand for urban amenities such as cultural venues (Figure 89), restaurants (Figure 84) and improved public transport infrastructure (Figure 87). During implementation, the role of the community planners should be to ensure that urban development in the centre does not detract from the village charm of the residential areas. In addition, further densification has to take place to support these new functions. In order to preserve the village-like character of the neighbourhoods, it is recommended that most large-scale densification takes place within the city centre. Densification in the neighbourhoods can then be small scale, in an acupuncture way, by 'topping up' or 'knitting in'.

Integrating Nature into Daily Life

As the natural environment and the integration of the original green structures are one of Spijkenisse's greatest assets (Figure 69) and are highly valued by the inhabitants (Figure 83 & 85), this requires a good integration of natural structures in future planning. Although there is a large amount of green space, it is often very poorly maintained or of very low biodiversity (Figure 73). The desire for greater biodiversity and more effective use of natural areas suggests that future developments should prioritise green infrastructure (Figure 83 & 85). This includes creating walking and cycling routes through natural areas, improving the accessibility and recreational potential of water features and introducing more biodiversity into public spaces (Figure 86).

96. Integrating nature into daily life

94. Layers of Data

- Archive & Literature research
- Personal observation
- Interviews
- Co-creation workshop
- Future scenario

95. Balance between Urban, village-like and rural

Improving Mobility

The observations regarding parking and infrastructure indicate a necessity for the improvement of transportation opportunities outside of car traffic. In particular, the public transport connections to the harbour and the connection within the city itself can be enhanced (Figure 87). Secondly, there is a clear demand for the improvement of the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure (Figure 88). Enhancing this infrastructure will also support recreational activities and everyday commutes. These interventions also require the densification mentioned above, again because of the critical mass needed to sustain these infrastructures.
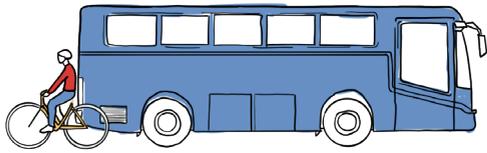
97. Improving mobility

Expanding Cultural and Social Infrastructure

The historical analysis reveals that Spijkenisse's initial planning aimed to create thriving communities for young families (See comic and 'principles and problems'). However, changing demographics and the centralisation of functions have led to fragmentation. As mentioned in the findings neighbours often do not even know each other anymore and the social fabric is in a very bad state (See comic). Consequently there is a strong call for increased investment in cultural and social facilities (Figure 89 & 90). Residents proposed multiple bottom-up initiatives such as local museums and exhibition spaces (Figure 89). This reflects a desire for more community-centric development, where cultural and social hubs serve as points for interaction and engagement.

98. Cultural and social spaces

Utilising Existing Buildings Efficiently

Efficient use of existing buildings is crucial for accommodating new functions and addressing housing needs, but also for the appearance of the city. Residents suggested repurposing vacant spaces in the city and neighbourhood centers (See comic) for temporary cultural and social uses. This approach supports the dynamic adaptation of urban spaces to meet changing community needs. Additionally, ensuring a fluid housing market to facilitate the movement of elderly individuals to appropriate housing will free up residences for new young families, promoting a balanced demographic composition, and again a support for a wider variety of functions (Figure 91 & 92).

99. Using vacant buildings

Architectural Identity

The division in preferences for urban versus village-like structures highlights the need for a layered architectural identity. Maintaining the integrity of village-like neighbourhoods (Figure 68) while introducing iconic architecture in the city center will create a sense of pride and identity (Figure 93). Enhancing public spaces with interventions such as street art, depaving, and adding green spaces (Figure 86) and benches will improve the visual appeal and functionality of the urban environment.
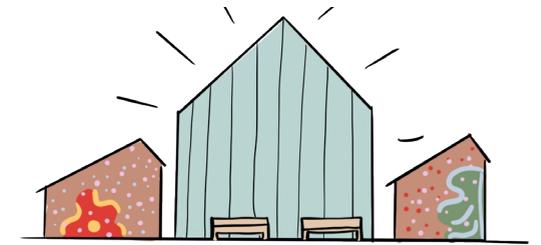
100. Architectural identity

Future scenario

This chapter presents a translation of the key findings from the interviews, observations, archival and literature research, and the co-creation workshop, into a future scenario for Spijkenisse.

The city will have three levels of urbanity. The highly urban centre, the village-like neighbourhoods with their own small neighbourhood centres, and the rural/natural surroundings.

1. The city centre needs to be further densified to create a critical mass to sustain urban functions.

2. As a result, there will be a good basis for real metropolitan functions such as clubs or exhibition spaces (which can be temporarily housed in empty shops), but also for improving the public transport infrastructure.

Een stad is niet alleen een stapel stenen.
- Herman Herzberger

3. Meanwhile, the neighbourhoods can retain their village-like character, building on the design principles of the 1970s. Neighbourhood living rooms can be implemented and public space can be revitalised to increase social interaction.

3. In this way, these spaces can be transformed from heavily paved, little-used public spaces into social, green spaces. Such areas can be found all over the city.
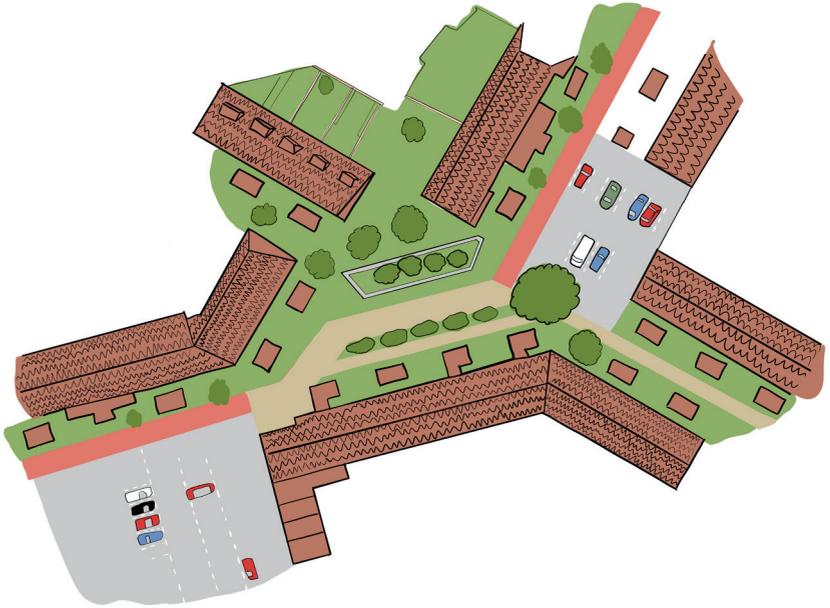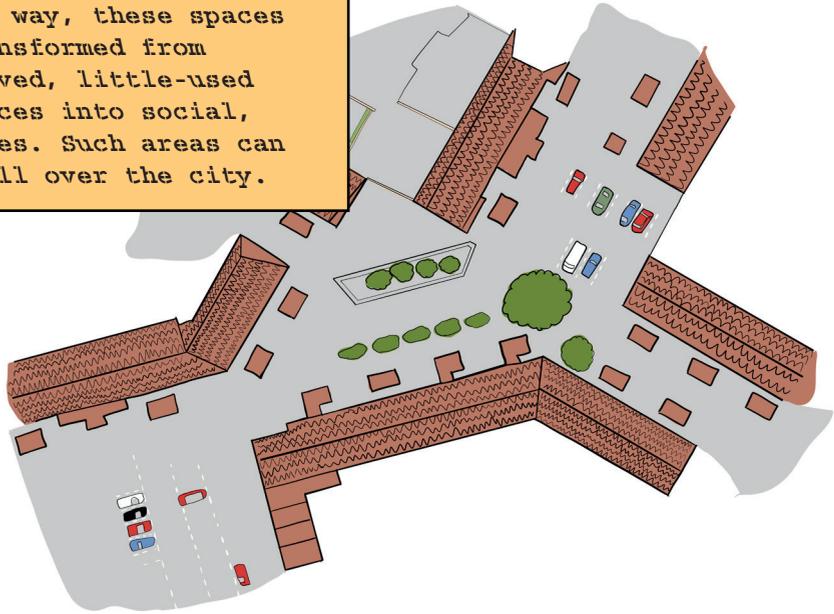
4. The introduction of greenery, street art and benches are important tools to further upgrade the public space and make the city less grey.

5. Towards the green surroundings of the city, walking and biking routes can be implemented. Adittionally the water and green can be made more accessible and the biodiversity can be improved.

Exposition

As a final stage of the project, an exposition was organised, presenting the process and outcomes of the project. The exposition was opened with an event where municipal officials and inhabitants were invited to give feedback on the outcomes of the project and discuss and add to the future scenario's. The exhibition is also meant to inspire the municipality to look differently at their city and their urban planning methodology. With this exposition the project is semi open-ended, hoping to have sparked the municipalities imagination and fostered a sense of ownership among residents. This is the point at which they can take the initiative and continue the project.

102. Picture of exhibition opening

103. Picture of exhibition in the Boekenberg

101. Picture of exhibition in the Boekenberg

104. Picture of exhibition in the Boekenberg

APPENDIX

Reflection

APPROACH AND ARGUMENTATION

The choice of methods - interviews, archival research, observations and co-creation workshops - was driven by the need to gather information about both the 'planned' and the 'lived' city, covering the past, present and future of Spijkenisse. This mixed-methods approach aimed to balance subjective insights and information from experience with 'objective' data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the city's identity.

The initial phase of my final year project focused on understanding the city and its people. This was done mainly through archival research, literature reviews, site visits and communication with various institutions via email and phone calls. The communication in this phase was essential to establish a basis for my contacts in Spijkenisse, which would be crucial for the later stages of the project. The archival research and literature reviews provided historical context and theoretical grounding, while the site visits helped to contextualise this information within the lived realities of Spijkenisse's residents.

In the second phase, I delved deeper into archival and literature research and arranged or attended meetings with local residents. These meetings were crucial in developing a more nuanced understanding of the city's current dynamics and issues, as well as broadening my network and identifying people who would participate in later phases. Engaging directly with residents allowed for the collection of personal narratives and experiences, adding depth to the historical and theoretical knowledge previously gathered.

The next stage was to conduct interviews with local people to gather their perspectives on the city's past and present. These interviews were instrumental in capturing a wide range of viewpoints and uncovering underlying themes and concerns within the community. The insights gained from these interviews, along with observations and further archival and literature reviews, helped to identify key principles and issues that were later incorporated into my future scenario. This phase highlighted the importance of personal stories in understanding the city's identity and provided a rich source of qualitative data to inform the project.

I then organised a co-creation workshop where local people were invited to share their visions for the future of Spijkenisse. The outcome of this workshop, combined with the identified principles and problems, was used to develop a future scenario. The workshop was an important moment in the project, as it allowed residents to move beyond the constraints of their current reality and articulate their dreams and aspirations for the future of the town. This participatory approach ensured that the future scenario was grounded in the community's wants and needs, and fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment among participants.

In the final phase, I presented this scenario and the rest of the project to municipal officials and residents in an exhibition at the Boekenberg in Spijkenisse. This presentation not only showed the culmination of the research and design process, but also served as a platform for further feedback and engagement with the community and municipal stakeholders. The exhibition was a crucial step in bridging the gap between research and implementation, and highlighted the potential of the proposed future scenario to influence actual urban planning and development in Spijkenisse.

REFLECTION ON FEEDBACK AND LEARNING

In the first phase of my graduation project, I was fortunate to gain considerable insight from the expertise of the INTI team, who provided invaluable literature on New Towns and contacts within the municipality of Nissewaard. This literature formed the basis for the topic of my project, while the contacts in the municipality proved to be invaluable for later participation in the project. In addition, my mentors provided me with useful theoretical frameworks on 'place identity', participation and storytelling within planning practice.
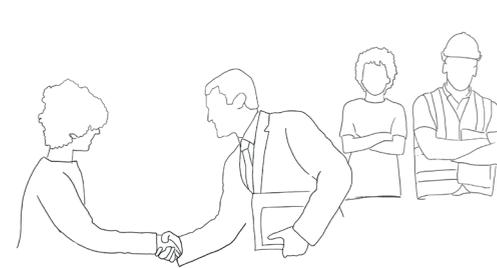
105. Meeting institutions
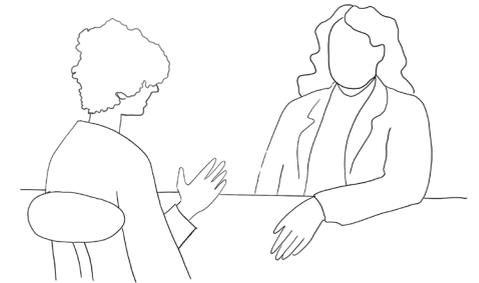
107. Gathering input from locals

106. Meeting locals

108. Presenting to stakeholders

An important outcome of this project was the learning and organising of participatory processes. Working with the combination officers of Nissewaard municipality and various municipal officials provided practical insights into effective community involvement strategies.

My mentors played a crucial role in grounding these participatory processes in theoretical knowledge, particularly in the areas of participation and 'placemaking'. They helped to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring that the participatory methods used were both academically sound and practically effective. This integration of theory and practice was instrumental in shaping the project's approach and outcomes.

The feedback and support from both the INTI team and my mentors highlighted the importance of a strong theoretical foundation, practical application and community engagement in urban planning. These insights not only enriched the project process, but also contributed significantly to my personal and professional development as an urban planner.

RELATION TO URBANISM

By employing various methods such as historical analysis, storytelling, and co-creation workshops, my project thoroughly explores Spijkenisse's identity. This aligns with the primary objective of the Urbanism master track, which is to equip students with the academic skills required for critical analysis of urban environments and the development of sustainable, efficient, and liveable solutions.

Additionally, presenting a strategy that can be adapted and applied to other New Towns within the Netherlands or on an international scale fits perfectly with the global perspective of the Master track of Urbanism.

RELATION TO THE MASTER PROGRAMME

My project fits within the broader scope of the Master's in Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences (AUBS) programme. The program not only cultivates analytical skills for a profound understanding of urban environments but also encourages the development of innovative solutions for sustainable and liveable urban spaces. My project's research-based and design-led aspects align with the program's emphasis on blending knowledge and skills from design practice and social sciences.

INFLUENCE OF RESEARCH ON DESIGN AND VICE VERSA

In this project, design was not only a communication tool but also an integral part of the research methodology. Design made historical analysis and archival research visually accessible and brought stories from the past to life. Residents used design to express their dreams and visions for the future, making the design process participatory and inclusive.

Conversely, design was used as a research method. By experimenting with design concepts and presenting them to the residents, a feedback loop was established, making design an essential tool for gathering insights and refining ideas. This iterative process ensured that design proposals were evidence-based and closely aligned with the evolving needs and preferences of the community.

ACADEMIC AND SOCIETAL VALUE AND TRANSFERABILITY

This research builds on the ongoing work of the International New Town Institute, particularly in the areas of heritage and storytelling in new town revitalisation, which has demonstrated international relevance. By emphasising participatory planning and co-creation, the project empowers the local community. Involving residents in shaping the future of their town fosters a sense of ownership and pride. Exploring Spijkenisse's identity and historical narratives helps to preserve and celebrate its cultural heritage, which is essential for maintaining a strong sense of identity and pride among residents.

The strategies proposed in this project, while tailored to Spijkenisse, offer a replicable model for other New Towns facing similar challenges. This has implications for urban planners, architects and policy makers involved in revitalising similar urban developments nationally and internationally. The combination of historical analysis, storytelling and co-creation workshops represents a methodology rarely used in urban research. This approach may inspire further studies and research methodologies in the field of urbanism.

THEORY
PRACTICE
MENTORS PROJECT INTI
MUNICIPALITY
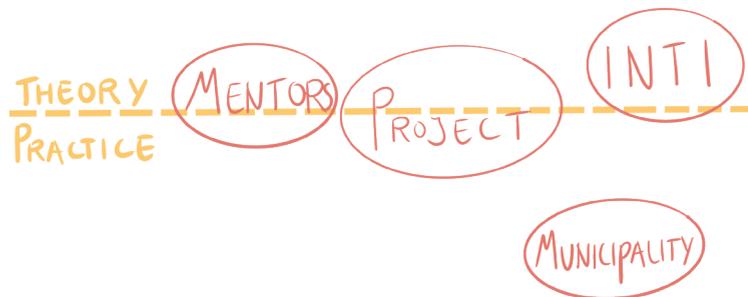
The methods and findings of this project are transferable to other New Towns facing similar challenges, including the need for regeneration and the struggle to create and maintain a distinct identity. The approach to understanding place identity and involving residents in the planning process can serve as a model for other urban design projects. Particularly in New Towns, which are often perceived as lacking history, storytelling can be a powerful tool to uncover and highlight the deeper, often overlooked narratives that exist beyond what archives or visual surveys reveal.

Given that many Dutch New Towns were built around the same time and with similar principles and aspirations, such as the 1970s ideals of village-like architecture and community, a significant proportion of the findings, particularly those from archival research, are likely to be applicable to these other towns. The demographic similarities - typically young families with a practical education and relatively high incomes due to the towns' industrial past - suggest that their interests and needs may also be comparable. However, further research would be needed to establish a more detailed and specific place identity, as well as to uncover the unique bottom-up initiatives and visions of the future of the residents, which can vary considerably from one town to another.

ETHICAL ASPECTS

At the outset of my project, I was primarily concerned with the issue of participation fatigue. If the outcome of my project would not be implemented by the municipality of Spijkenisse, would it be ethically justifiable to engage in citizen participation solely for the purpose of practising such an activity? In order to address this concern, I mitigated this issue by integrating the project as closely as possible into the real urban planning practice. This involved organising real events, working closely together with municipal officials.
Another way of mitigation was by establishing a feedback loop between the project and the inhabitants and municipal officials. This was partly established through the organisation of an exposition in the local library in Spijkenisse. As said, in this exhibition I showed the collages of past and present and future and the images of the future scenario. The exhibition also included blank paper where people could leave feedback on the scenario's and add to the dreams for the future.

CHALLENGES

One of the primary challenges was the organisation of the events, including interviews, the exhibition, and the workshop. The scheduling and rescheduling of these events became a recurrent issue, with the exhibition having to be rescheduled three times and the workshop twice. This was mainly due to the agenda of the municipal officials and residents I was working with, for whom participation in a master thesis is obviously not the first priority. For this participation they were doing me a favour and not the other way around, so it was important to stay flexible. This challenge is difficult to mitigate completely. The most viable solution would to plan well ahead and allow ample time for potential rescheduling. However, this is not always realistic. This shows that within participatory processes, the methodology needs to be designed for flexibility, so that it doesn't make or break the project if something goes differently than initially planned.

Additionally, a significant proportion of the work involved relatively mundane yet essential tasks such as coordinating logistics, ensuring sufficient supplies, and planning catering. These tasks, although critical, often do not reflect in the final outcome but consume a significant amount of time. Of course in professional projects, ideally you would have a team where these tasks are divided. In a masters project this is of course not realistic. Although it may not have contributed to the academic value of the project, these tasks were very useful to experience and learn for personal development.

Another major challenge was ensuring participation. Initially, promotional efforts through posters proved ineffective in recruiting participants for interviews and workshops. As a result, it became necessary to attend various local events to engage with potential participants. Here I had a lot of help from one of the municipal combination officers, who helped me find my way through the social fabric of Spijkenisse and invited me to all the meetings he thought I needed to attend, like local coffee mornings, meetings of the neighbourhood watch, local heritage enthousiasts meetings etc. Additionally, because he already had the trust of the locals and vouched for me, they listened to me more quickly than they would have if I had been alone. The same was true of my contact in the municipality of Nissewaard, who put me in touch with many other municipal officials.

A negative consequence of these very valuable contacts was that most communication with both locals and municipality officials went through my key contacts, which meant that I was very dependent on them. As a result, I had a limited view of how many people would attend the events I organised, which wasn't ideal for logistics. For the workshop it was less of a problem because I was very involved in the promotion and attended a lot of meetings at the time, but for the promotion of the exhibition, I had a more passive role, which resulted in lower attendance.

In summary other peoples networks and trust-relationships can be invaluable, but it is recommended, especially in projects over a longer timespan, to create your own network as much as possible or to find a balance. For the scope of a masters-project this wouldn't be viable.

Managing the diverse interests among participants also presented a challenge. Some individuals attended events with the primary intent of promoting their own projects, which could overshadow the voices of others. For instance, in the collage workshop, there were individuals who aspired to establish their own exhibition space. These people were uncooperative with the other participants and were solely preoccupied with discussing their exhibition space. Balancing these interests was essential to maintain the focus on the collective vision for Spijkenisse while allowing all individuals to feel heard.

Strategies included setting clear guidelines for participation and ensuring a structured format that allowed equal opportunity for all voices to be heard.
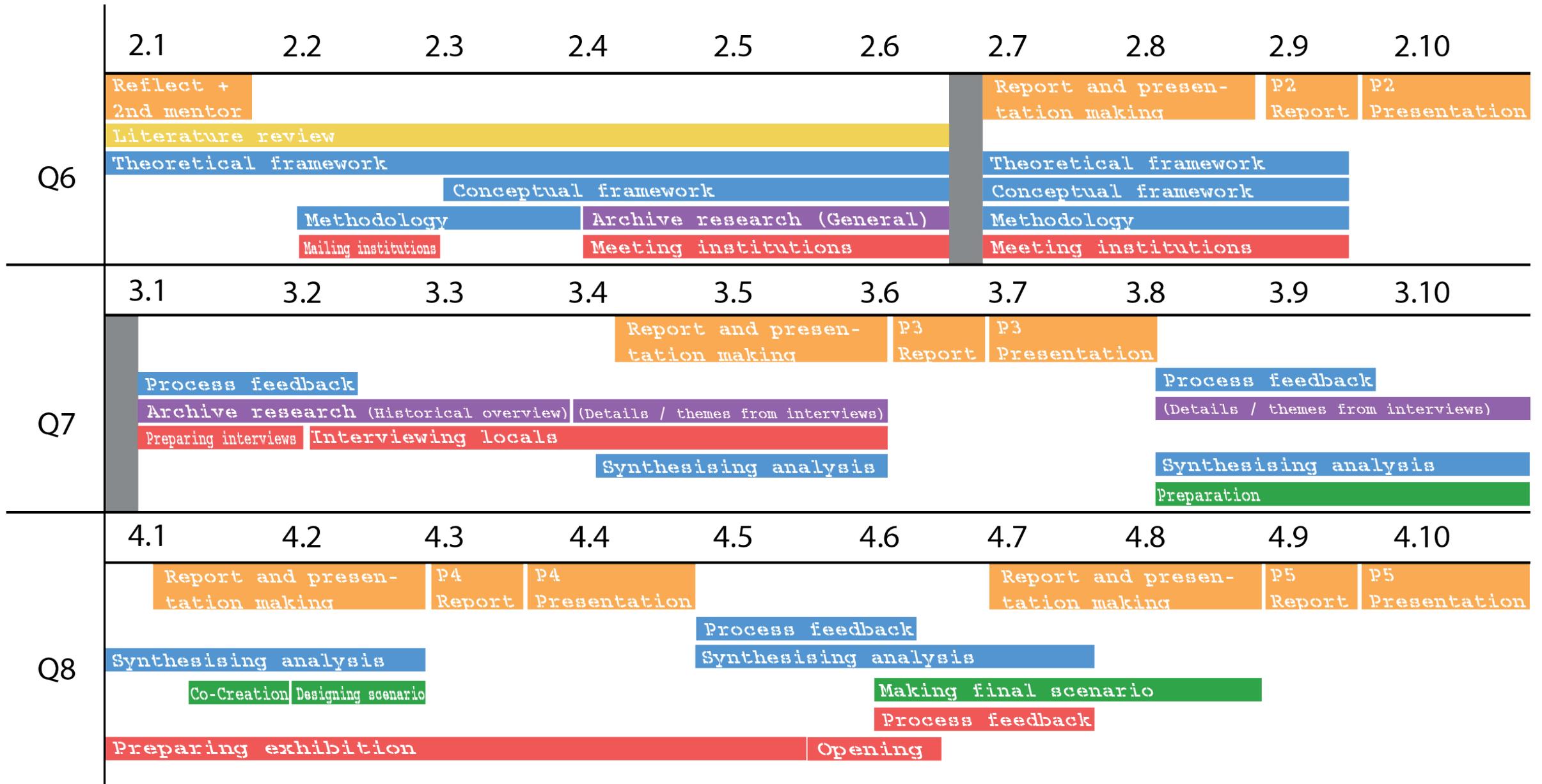
CONCLUSION

This graduation project has successfully integrated historical analysis, storytelling, and participatory planning to explore and enhance the identity of Spijkenisse. Through a methodical approach combining archival research, interviews, and co-creation workshops, the project has provided a comprehensive understanding of the city's past, present, and future. The participatory methods employed have empowered the local community, fostering a sense of ownership and pride while ensuring that the proposed future scenarios are rooted in the actual needs and aspirations of residents.

The project's academic and societal contributions are significant. It not only builds on existing research in urbanism but also offers a replicable model for other New Towns facing similar challenges. The strategies developed here, particularly the emphasis on community involvement and storytelling, provide valuable insights for urban planners, architects, and policymakers. Furthermore, the project's methodologies could inspire new approaches in urban research and planning, highlighting the potential of design as both a research tool and a means of communication.

Ethically, the project has navigated the complexities of community participation with sensitivity, ensuring that the process was meaningful and closely integrated with real urban planning practices. The establishment of feedback loops and the organisation of tangible events, such as the local library exhibition, have reinforced the project's connection to the community and enhanced its impact.

In conclusion, this project underscores the importance of combining historical context, theoretical grounding, and community engagement in urban planning. The project demonstrates that an effective approach to enhancing a city's identity requires a multifaceted approach that values both the planned and the lived experiences of its residents. Through its innovative methodologies and participatory processes, the project has made a contribution to the research and practice in the revitalisation of New Towns.

	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10

Q6
- Reflect + 2nd mentor
- Literature review
- Theoretical framework
- Conceptual framework
- Methodology
- Mailing institutions
- Archive research (General)
- Meeting institutions
- Report and presentation making
- Theoretical framework
- Conceptual framework
- Methodology
- Meeting institutions
- P2 Report
- P2 Presentation

	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.10

Q7
- Process feedback
- Archive research (Historical overview)
- (Details / themes from interviews)
- Preparing interviews
- Interviewing locals
- Synthesising analysis
- Report and presentation making
- P3 Report
- P3 Presentation
- Process feedback
- (Details / themes from interviews)
- Synthesising analysis
- Preparation

	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.10

Q8
- Report and presentation making
- P4 Report
- P4 Presentation
- Synthesising analysis
- Co-Creation
- Designing scenario
- Process feedback
- Synthesising analysis
- Making final scenario
- Process feedback
- Report and presentation making
- P5 Report
- P5 Presentation
- Preparing exhibition
- Opening

110. Planning scheme

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