ROADMAP TO BELONGING

Urban planning as a tool to facilitate the sense of belonging of Syrian status holders in small towns in the Netherlands

P5 thesis report
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The first chapters of the thesis (Ch. 1-3) give an introduction to the topic and a preliminary hypothesis. The fieldwork is used to test this hypothesis and come to new insights (Ch. 4). After the fieldwork, a synthesis of the fieldwork is presented, in which a critical position towards the initial framework is taken. A new conceptual framework is developed, that takes into account the new insights gathered through the fieldwork (Ch. 5). This new framework is fundamental in developing the final result of this thesis, the roadmap to belonging (Ch. 6). The roadmap presents a number of elements and catalysts that are needed to facilitate the sense of belonging of Syrian status holders in the Netherlands. Finally, a reflection on the process of writing this thesis is done to highlight the relevance of the project, but also the limitations that were encountered during the research.

ABSTRACT

Forced migration has been a significant struggle in the Netherlands, politically, socially, spatially and culturally. The costs of this struggle are paid by asylum seekers and status holders, living in uncertainty and isolation. This thesis discusses the position of Syrian status holders in the Netherlands, refugees who have obtained a residency permit to stay in the Netherlands.

The aim of this thesis is to explore which role small towns play in the integration of Syrian status holders. A hypothesis was formulated that formed the basis for the fieldwork. The fieldwork consisted of site visits to two towns: Hardenberg and Dalfsen and interviews with Syrian status holders. The fieldwork provided opportunities and lessons that informed the final results.

The result of this thesis is a roadmap to belonging: an overview of the factors: places, identifications, policies and collaborations, that influence the sense of belonging of Syrian status holders. A sense of belonging is defined by three dimensions: economic integration, social integration and the expression of cultural identity.

Three catalysts are proposed to showcase how combining different factors results in complicated but effective strategies to improve the sense of belonging of Syrian status holders, while also offering opportunities to the host community. The catalysts concern employment, entrepreneurship, social interaction and leisure activities.

This thesis provides a new view on the accommodation of newcomers, where benefits for the local society are synergized with a welcoming home for Syrian status holders.

MOTIVATION

In the first weeks of September 2022, I was ought to choose a topic for my thesis. For me, this choice was based on who I wanted to work with: which group of people do I want to represent with this thesis? Eventually, I chose to work with refugees, a group that has little to no say in the spatial dimension.

A couple of weeks later, however, a question arose from a colleague student: what is your intention? The question was driven by a discussion on intersectionality, which is defined by the Oxford dictionary as:

> *"the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage."*

As a white woman from a suburban Dutch town taking an interest in the issue of forced migration that question was only natural. But then, when trying to answer that question, I did not know what the actual answer for me would be. Where did my interest come from, besides refugees being a vulnerable group in society?

So after this discussion, I started thinking. To identify my intention, I went back to the way I grew up. I grew up in a suburban neighbourhood of Breda and went to a Catholic, predominantly Dutch, primary school. After which, I attended a high school which was again predominantly Dutch. Within school, I did get classes about religion and social studies, but only to a superficial degree, from which I still couldn't imagine the actual differences between cultures. History classes were focussing again on Western history; the Industrial Revolution, WWI & WWII (excluding the events that happened outside of Europe). During my bachelor's in Delft, I was again surrounded by mainly Dutch students and an education system that is mainly based on Western theories, ideas and concepts. Only, during my master's, I started to realise the lack of knowledge I had of other cultures and countries.

And for that, I know my knowledge of, in this case, Middle-Eastern cultures, is extremely limited, but within this research, I aim to broaden my perspective. And not only that, I think the real underlying intention for this research is to find ways that could help to prevent this 'Dutch enclave culture' to progress, as I also see a large part of this lack of solidarity arising from the fear of the unknown. I believe intercultural interaction can help people to become more empathic and also more aware of the world and its complexity, which I think is a crucial element in diminishing the polarized system I live in, which will hopefully lead to a more accepting society with fewer tensions within localities.

The final trigger, however, took place at the same time as the choice for this topic, as the news about the overcrowded reception centres was broadcasted daily. This instigated the same discussion on anti-immigration, which peaks at times of more newcomers in the country. Here, I was mostly triggered by the different responses from Dutch society.

At the beginning of 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine with an immense influx of Ukrainian refugees coming to the Netherlands as a result. Instead of vouching for 'closed borders' as happened in 2015 (when a lot of non-western refugees entered Europe), people were very willing to open their doors and support the refugees. This was extremely heartwarming, however, still, this seemed rather controversial to me.

What is the difference between someone from Ukraine and someone from Syria? There are a lot of cultural differences, but that doesn't make them less human or less in need of help. The question for me was, how can urban planners help to diminish this prejudice towards, especially, Middle-Eastern cultures?

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context
1.1.1 Syria and forced migration
1.1.2 Asylum procedures in the Netherlands
1.1.3 Bottlenecks of asylum procedures
1.1.4 Politics and anti-immigration
1.1.5 Influence of media on the anti-immigration discussion

1.2 Problem statement

CONTEXT

The context is used to introduce the background and the causes of the problem that is researched in this thesis. On the basis of the context, a problem statement is formulated that summarizes what this thesis will be about.

The context follows the road a Syrian refugee has to travel towards integration in the Netherlands and what problems they encounter on the way. Fundamental developments in the Netherlands are explained in more detail to express the complexity of the issues at hand. First, the topic of forced migration itself is being discussed. After this, the procedures in place for asylum seekers and status holders in the Netherlands are explored. Here, also the bottlenecks of these procedures, their cause and how they affect newcomers in the Netherlands, are discussed. Lastly, there will be a disucssion on the socio-political dimension of the problem and the presence of intolerance, which is enforced by political discussions and misinformation through media channels.

In this chapter, an important difference is highlighted: the difference between large cities in the west of the Netherlands and small towns in the east of the country.

The presence of migration in this world and its effects have grown since the rise of globalisation. However, the capabilities of cities to respond to newcomers in cities have fallen (Crimson Historians & Urbanists, 2019, p.15), causing both segregation and driving social polarisation in European countries (Tammaru et al.,2021).

Within this research, a sub-group is thus brought to the attention: refugees. Instead of opening doors as is done in the case of ex-pats, students and labour migrants, refugees are put in a separate box, subjected to different rules and are limited in many ways from taking control of their living conditions (Crimson Historians & Urbanists, 2019, p.25). As mentioned in the motivation, even within the categorisation of refugees there is a huge difference between the way they are treated, according to their country of origin.

Mid-2021 there were 26.6 million refugees in the world. Even though it seems as if the EU is one of the main refuge locations, this is not the case. Less than 10% of the total refugees are taking refuge in the EU, which makes up only 0,6% of the whole population. In contrast, for example, with Lebanon of which 12,6% of the total inhabitants are refugees (UNHCR & Pereira, 2021).

In the Netherlands, the country this research focuses on, the largest group of refugees comes from Syria, but also people from Eritrea, Afghanistan, Iran and other countries that go through conflict instigate a flow of forced migration, as shown in figure 1.

The conflict in Syria started in 2011. The population revolted against the lack of political power and widespread corruption within the government. The conflict started with peaceful protest from the side of the civilians, but quickly turned for the worse when the government struck back. Civilized protests turned into a long-term civil war, where peace is currently not imaginable. Throughout the years, the conflict between civilians and the government became more complex as different organisations joined the fight. Internationally, support is just as divided. Whereas Iran and Russia support the government, the opposition is supported by Turkey and some Western states. The complexity of the war has led to the fragmentation of the warzone, which results in quickly shifting power dynamics and territories, putting civilians in constant uncertainty and danger (ShelterBox, 2022).

At least 11 million people have left their homes seeking a haven. Most of the refugees, seek refuge in neighbouring countries like Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. A smaller group has travelled further to seek refuge in countries like Germany, Hungary, Sweden and the Netherlands (ShelterBox, 2022).

Refugees are housed in one of the reception centres in the country (figure 2).

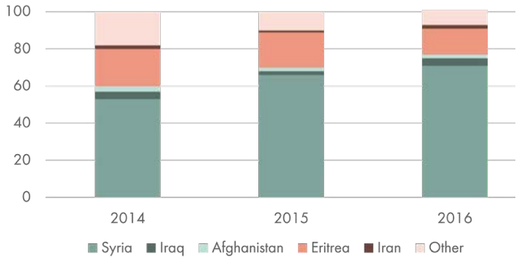


Figure 1: Country of origin (Huisman & CBS, 2017)

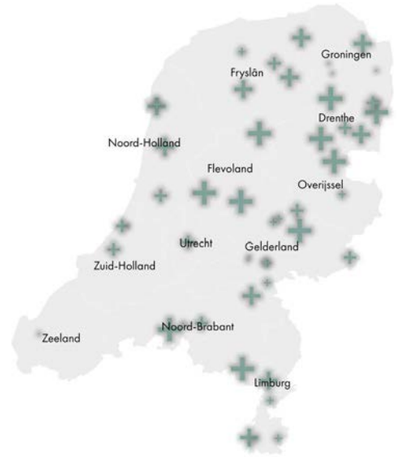


Figure 2: Reception centres in the Netherlands (COA, n.d.)

A person who seeks refuge or safety in another country is called an asylum seeker. These people are displaced because of war in their home country or when fearing prosecution in their home country: which can be based on race, religion, political views or sexual identity.

Once this person is recognized by the receiving country, in this case, the Netherlands, as a refugee, the person receives a permit to stay. From then on the person is considered a permit- or status holder (Refugee Start Force, 2022).

To facilitate the process of obtaining a permit, different organisations are in place. COA (Centraal Orgaan Asielzoekers), the Ministry of Justice's Asylum Seekers' reception service, is responsible for the reception and housing of asylum seekers and the conditions within these centres. The IND (Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst), Ministry of justice's Immigration and Naturalisation service is responsible for the asylum procedure itself. They investigate whether asylum seekers have the right to a residence permit. The people are first registered at the registration centre in Ter Apel by the AVIM (Afdeling Vreemdelingenpolitie, Identificatie en Mensenhandel) or the Department of Alienspolice, Identification and Human trafficking (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2022).

The asylum registration procedure itself should last for a maximum of 8 days. The decision on whether asylum seekers receive a permit should take no longer than 6 months under normal circumstances but could be prolonged on special occasions (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2022), figure 3 describes the procedure.

Asylum seekers and status holders are given different rights and freedoms. Asylum seekers are given the right to:

- *Housing in a reception centre during the process of receiving asylum*
- *A weekly allowance for necessities*
- *Access and insurance to healthcare*
- *Education for children*
- *Working a maximum of 24 weeks a year*
- *Free legal help*

(UNHCR, n.d.)

Within the first five years of their permit, the possibility is present that the status holders are sent back to their home country once the conditions are evaluated as stable and safe (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, n.d.).

A permitholder has the right to housing. COA is responsible for finding a suitable municipality within 2 weeks with a few different guidelines in mind:

Figure 3: Asylum procedure in the Netherlands

- *Family size*
- *Country of origin*
- *Language*
- *Limitations to house*
- *Educational background*
- *Admissions to schools/universities*
- *Particularities of family reunion*
- *Work experience*
- *A job offer*
- *Medical particularities*
- *Networks*
- *Future plans*

(Ministerie van Justitie, 2022)

Until July 1st 2017 permitholders had priority in the allocation of social housing. This was done to prevent the reception centres from overcrowding. However, this policy is not in place anymore, which has resulted in difficulties in housing permitholders. As a result, municipalities often resort to temporary housing accommodations like container housing or unused office space (Kennisplatform Inclusief Samenleven, 2018).

Unfortunately, in the current reception crisis, Dutch organisations are not able to work according to these procedures. Instead of a maximum of 8 days, asylum seekers have to wait for 3 months to get through the registration procedure (NOS, 2022a). After this, asylum seekers sometimes have to wait for almost a year or even longer to receive a permit. And even after that, status holders have to wait in the reception centres to be allocated to social housing in a Dutch municipality. In this process, they have no choice as to where they will be living. Research has shown that this long process has significant effects on the mental health of the asylum seekers, but also on their knowledge of the Dutch language and especially on their position in the labour market. Early integration is needed to provide a good start in the Netherlands but is currently not provided through the procedure (NOS, 2021b).

A lot of these issues are caused by the budget cuts for the reception situation. The government shows a pattern of downscaling the entire capacity once the influx of refugees is lower, resulting in a shortage of space as well as staff that is needed to facilitate a proper procedure (Teeven, 2023).

Another cause of these issues is the major housing shortages in the Netherlands, which make it difficult to provide status holders with proper housing. The waitlists in larger cities, like Amsterdam and Rotterdam, last up to 10 years for social housing (figure 4) (Kraniotis & de Jong, 2021). Especially in larger cities, the pressure is high due to urbanisation. The younger generation often moves away from the periphery of the Netherlands to study or work in the bigger cities, putting more pressure on the housing markets in the cities (figure 5)(PBL & CBS, 2022). This development has also led to an ageing population in the peripheries of the Netherlands (figure 6) and consequently labour shortages in the younger labour sectors. This also shows how the context in the big cities, is very different from the context in smaller towns in the peripheries of the country.

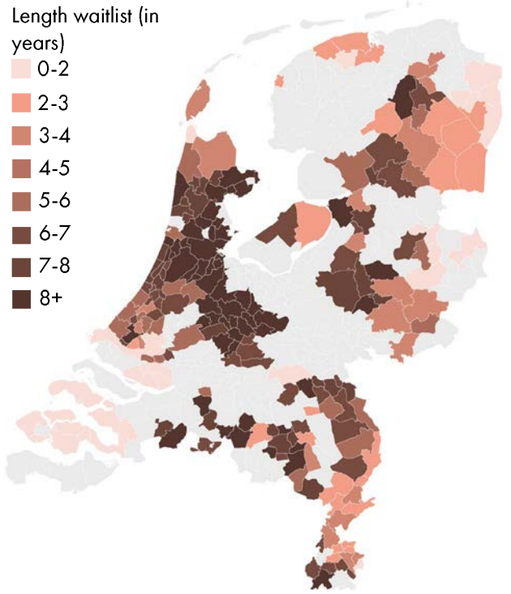


Figure 4: Duration of waitlists for social housing (NOS & Boogaard, 2021)

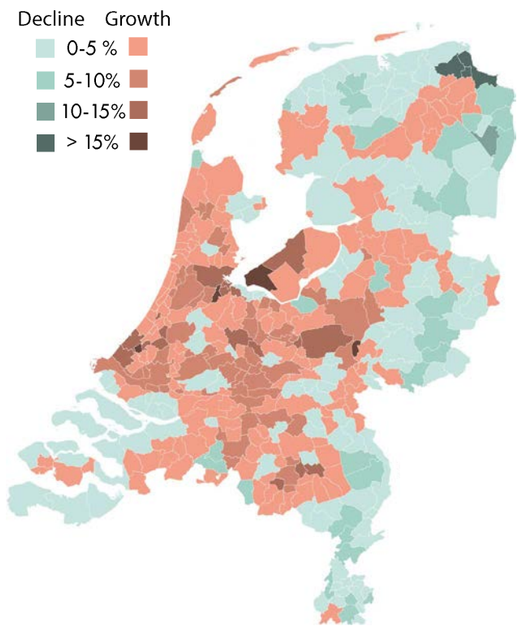


Figure 5: Prognosis on the movement away form the peripheries (PBL & CBS, 2022)

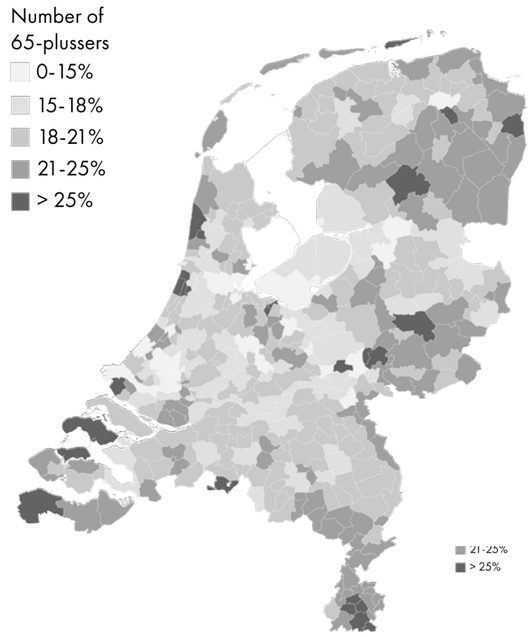


Figure 6: Percentage of 65-plussers per municipality (CBS, 2017)

These national struggles cause difficulties for a lot of Dutch inhabitants, which has made the discussion about asylum seekers and status holders political. The competition for basic resources like housing and subsidies and social security benefits causes intolerance towards newcomers.

This intolerance is something that arose as a response to globalisation. In the '70s and '80s, a lot of immigrants from Marocco, Turkey and the Antilles moved to the Netherlands permanently. The country already experienced an influx of labour migrants before that, but most of these people moved back to their home country (CBS, 2004). As a result of this also concentration neighbourhoods came into existence in which new ethnic concentrations arose in the '80s and '90s (de Hoon et al., 2020). A well-known example is Rotterdam-Zuid, a part of Rotterdam that is separated from the rest of the city by a large body of water. This part of the city has a hyperdiverse demographic but also struggles with more issues related to living quality and safety. This area is consequently used as a case study for a lot of research and for governmental projects.

Until the '90s a so-called 'gentlemen's agreement was in place between political leaders to not bring up immigration or anti-immigration in the election manifesto. However, Frits Bolkesteijn, the leader of the VVD (1990-1998), sparked the discussion. During this period though, more progressive leaders took over and the discussion was put on hold. Nonetheless, citizens concerned with the current immigration policy wanted this topic to be part of the electoral programme and were critical of the Dutch immigration policy. They didn't want immigrants to integrate, they wanted newcomers to assimilate, to forget about their own culture (Damhuis, 2019a).

As a response to this public uprising, Pim Fortuyn took the lead in integrating the discussion into his programme. However, right before the parliamentary elections, he was assassinated by an environmental activist. His political party, LPF, collapsed (Damhuis, 2019a). Soon after, Geert Wilders took over leading the discussion on anti-immigration.

Yet, Geert Wilders is mainly focussing on an anti-Islam policy. He argues that Islam is the instigator of all problems in the Netherlands, from social to economic and bases his electoral programme entirely on this belief (Damhuis, 2019b).

This has also instigated a countermovement in the establishment of the first pro-immigration party: DENK. The party was introduced into the parliament in 2017(Damhuis, 2019b).

Van Kersbergen & Krouwel (2008) note that the popularity of Geert Wilders' party is caused by the lack of politicization of the issue by centre-right parties like the VVD. For people who want to see changes in the immigration policy of the Netherlands, they vote for a populist party like the PVV (figure 7) or the recently established parties FvD (figure 8) or JA21. Responding to this, progressive left-wing parties needed to integrate their opinions on immigration policy into their electoral programme as well which has now led to a significantly polarized country.

Figure 7: Social media activity PVV (Wilders, 2022)

Figure 8: Social media activity FvD (Baudet, 2022)

Spatializing this polarization has led to an interesting observation. In figure 9 the results of the 2021 elections are shown per municipality and what party became the biggest. In this map, the large cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam are characterised by the green colour, D66, a progressive left-wing party. Whereas the majority of the country votes for the centre-right VVD, within some border municipalities the populist PVV dominates. In the Bible belt, Christian parties receive the majority of the votes. This shows the contrast between the big cities and the peripheries of the country and again, how the context in the larger cities is very different from the rest of the country.

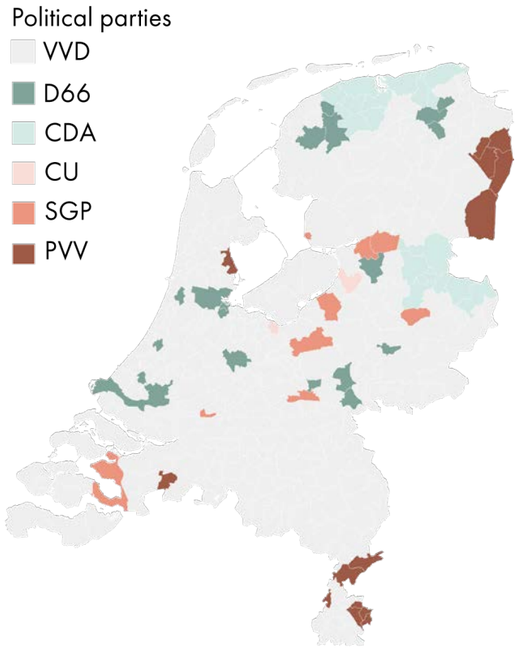


Figure 9: Voting behaviour elections 2021 (ANP, 2021)

Media plays an important role in the (anti-)immigration discussion. To illustrate this influence of the media, an example from October 2022 is used. On the 10th and 11th of October, several news broadcasters and -papers published or broadcasted an article on status holders quitting their jobs once they were assigned to social housing in Utrecht (figure 10). The news (Hoving, 2022; Telegraaf, 2022) stated that the benefits status holders receive outweigh the burdens of working and therefore status holders quit, profiting from the Dutch welfare state.

The comments under these articles showed the upheaval this type of news causes, it fuels the negative opinions on status holders. Utrecht was already facing critique as the municipality decided that for a short amount of time, all available social housing, would be dedicated to the housing of status holders. This shows how especially the competition for these basic needs, results in frustration from the host-community.

The news even received negative comments from national politicians. Tess Meerding, a parliament member of the VVD, even tweeted that they were *'giving the finger to the tax-paying citizens of Utrecht.'*

Throughout the days, however, the number of status holders in question within the articles decreased (from tens to three) (figure 11) and also the media attention towards the problem went down. Eventually, the news came out that only three status holders resigned from their jobs, which were part-time jobs during the summer. Dutch citizens are simply misinformed.

Interesting here is that, even though I watch the news minimally once a day, I did not see this news. I had to google it a few days later to see further follow-ups. So, most people will only read the first, negative articles that further fuel the intolerance. Even if it would have been restored in the end, it wouldn't have mattered much as people would only remember this first article that confirms their prejudice.

All in all, resulting in a distorted image of the character of status holders in the Netherlands, which makes it even more difficult for Syrian status holders to integrate and feel at home in the Netherlands.

Utrecht: werk statushouders loont onvoldoende

Figure 10: Newsheading 11th of October (Telegraaf, 2022)

Wethouder: Niet 'tientallen', maar drie statushouders die huis kregen namen ontslag in Utrecht

Figure 11: Newsheading 13th of October (Hoving, 2022)

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Syria has been in conflict for more than ten years, with no end in sight. People in fear of war, in fear of prosecution, flee their home country to seek a safe place to live. Refugees travel thousands of kilometres on foot to be able to live without the direct fear of war. Nonetheless, the struggles are not over upon arrival in the Netherlands.

Asylum seekers start the long process of uncertainty and await the decision on whether or not they receive a permit to stay in the Netherlands. The conditions within the reception centres, where they await the decision are difficult. Once they do receive a permit to stay in the Netherlands and once they do receive housing in a random Dutch municipality, the next challenge starts: integration.

Integration is very dependent on the context. Different municipalities offer different opportunities and consequently different struggles. These struggles are related to learning the language and finding a job, but also to the social dimension as status holders often face intolerance from the host community.

Research on refugee integration and multicultural societies often focuses on large cities. However, as seen in the chapter above, the context of large cities is very different from the context in the peripheries, especially if you compare it to smaller towns. Whereas, urban- and economic growth are a given in cities like Amsterdam, smaller towns in the east of the Netherlands experience possible degrowth and an ageing population.

Additionally, the political context in cities is different from those in smaller towns, because of the different problems they encounter as well as the different demographics. Cities often have a larger multicultural community than smaller towns, but they often also have a larger group of citizens from a higher socio-economic bracket and thus a higher chance of segregation.

This shows that there is a gap in the research: the lack of knowledge on the integration of Syrian status holders in other parts of the country. The opportunities and struggles Syrian status holders encounter in smaller towns in the east of the country are unclear. Additionally, the question arises whether these regions experience and struggle with the developments related to urbanisation described above and whether status holders can play a role in diminishing these struggles.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research aim

2.2 Positioning

2.3 Conceptual framework

2.4 Research questions

2.5 Methodology

This chapter formulates the basis of the research and the planning of the thesis. First, the main aims of the research are described and how urban planning can contribute to these aims. After this, the main theories used within the research are shortly introduced as they form the basis of the research questions and the methodology. Within the methodology, the different methods used are explained and the planning for the thesis is shown to indicate the time needed for the seperate elements of the thesis.

RESEARCH AIM

Figure 12: Research aims (adapted from Adewale (2022))

The aim of this research is not to create an ideal situation in which status holders and locals live in complete harmony with each other. However, the aim is to find a balance between the needs and capacity of the Netherlands and its citizens and the needs of newcomers, specifically Syrian status holders. The housing of status holders is not considered a question in this research but a given, refugees need to be taken care of in this country, while also embracing the ongoing political discussions.

Consequently, this research aims to not only explore how status holders can benefit from a new spatial strategy in terms of integration and acceptance, in line with their capacity and experience but also how this can help to diminish the problems in the Dutch regions in question. This means that the research focusses on the social dimension, but also on the cultural, economic and organisational dimensions. This study aims to find methods and incentives that can be used to operationalize the envisioned framework.

The second aim of this research is to gain knowledge of other cultures, with a focus on the Syrian culture, from the Dutch perspective. Hereby, I acknowledge the bias I have as a Dutch citizen and minimalize this from having an effect on the research. This is done by formulating a hypothesis, a theoretical and conceptual framework, before the fieldwork. This hypothesis is tested on-site and through interviews to validate or invalidate the assumptions made.

Still, Dutch nor Syrian residents that live in these small towns are interested in a book on each other's culture. The aim is consequently not only to gather knowledge but mainly to use this knowledge to find spaces and places where the different groups can interchange and interact across cultural barriers. The goal is to create a framework that gives the residents the opportunity and the power to interact on their own terms.

The overall aim is then to not consider the cultures explicitly separately but to draw up a framework in which the cultures act simultaneously and hand-in-hand, acknowledging the diversity within the Dutch and Syrian cultures, but also the cross-cultural commonalities they might have.

Figure 13: Dimensions of citizenship (Penninx, 2005)

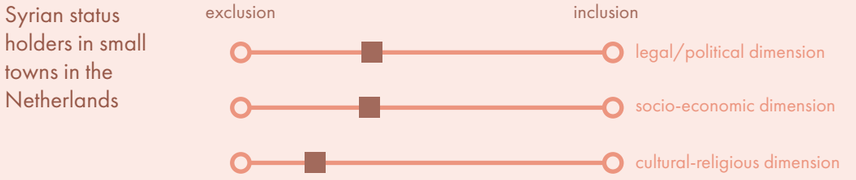


Figure 14: Dimensions of citizenship for Syrian status holders

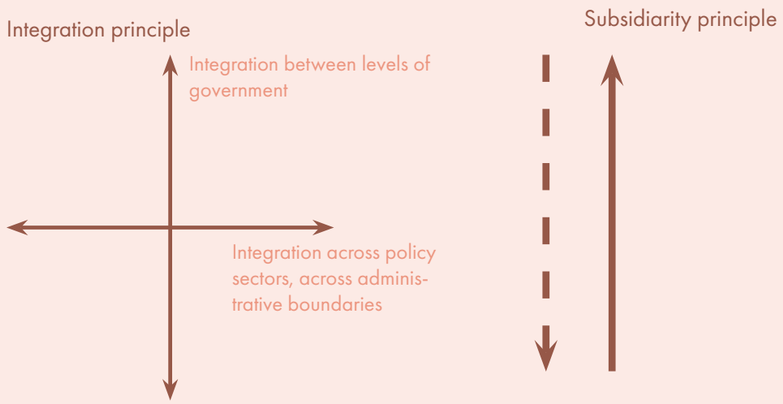


Figure 15: Principles of urban planning (Economic Commission for Europe, 2008)

So then, why would urban planning be helpful to achieve these aims?

To position this research within urban planning an essential paper to explore is written by Penninx (2005) describing the different dimensions that are essential within the integration of immigrants. The focus of this research is on the policy framework that is or was adopted by different countries in Europe. He states that

> *'The common feature of Europe, on the contrary, is one of basic non-acceptance of immigration.'*

He aims to describe how the policies in place for migrants in Europe are more reactive and control-oriented, resulting in policies that could be perceived as exclusionary.

To define this he uses citizenship as a way to measure the extent to which newcomers can integrate into society. Within citizenship, three dimensions are distinguished: the legal/political dimension, the socio-economic dimension and the cultural-religious dimension.

To explain how this works, he uses the example of the Netherlands in the 80s' during which immigrant guest workers, especially from Turkey and Morroco, arrived in the Netherlands. These people were quite literally received as guests, limiting their legal/political capacity. However, as they were workers, their socio-economic power was relatively high, as was their cultural-religious power: the government promoted the practising of one's heritage culture. When the government realised these guest workers were prone to stay in the Netherlands, the legal/political dimension shifted towards more inclusionary practices as well (figure 13).

This system of measurement is also used for Syrian status holders, within smaller towns in the peripheries of the Netherlands, to explore how the current policy framework functions for them (figure 14). Within the legal/political dimension, I would place status holders closer to the exclusionary side of the scale. Status holders are allowed to vote in municipal elections (Artikel 130: Kiesrecht Vreemdelingen, 2017), but not in regional or national politics. Additionally, status holders have very little control over their process of integration. They are allocated to municipalities and housing in a relatively random way, after which the benefits and support they are subjected to vary strongly per municipality. Within the socio-economic dimension, status holders have access to social security benefits allowing them to always have a minimum income, however, after that the support is low. The qualifications of refugees nor their previous work experience are acknowledged by the Dutch system (van Liempt & Staring, 2020a). The cultural-religious dimension is more difficult to place on a scale bar. In larger cities, cultural networks and amenities are often more extensive than in smaller towns. Large cities often have mosques, Arabic supermarkets and a larger culturally similar community. In small towns, this is probably not the case, so again here they are positioned closer towards the exclusionary side.

Within these three dimensions, different scales but also different actors are essential to acknowledge. This is where two important principles from the Economic Commission for Europe (2008) come in. The first one is the subsidiarity principle (figure 15), which indicates that even though the aim is to take most decisions at a local level, sometimes decisions have to be driven to a higher level. For example within the socio-economic dimension: on one hand decisions on the national level can be taken on how to validate status holders' former experience. Regional and local authorities could look at where the need for employees is and how the capacity of status holders can be brought closer to the demand of the region, which might mean that educational- or integrative language programmes are needed. To make this work, the voice of the refugees is needed: their qualifications, experience and wishes in finding suitable employment. The balance between the need for coherence on higher levels, the knowledge of local authorities and the voice of citizens has to be found.

The second principle looks at the horizontal divisi-

on, across sectoral boundaries as well (figure 15). As in the previous example, this 'proposal' would need the support of regional businesses, public transportation authorities and educational facilities to work. Altogether, this shows the complexity of the problem at hand, but also how different scales and sectors could potentially collaborate to achieve new goals.

Lastly, the mentioning of the cultural aspect of the research is essential to discuss. In the section above the cultural-religious dimension of citizenship is mentioned, which relates back to the core of the research aim: understanding different cultures. And to do this, a shift towards a more open approach to urban planning is needed. Other researchers like Newton (2022) agree with this notion:

> *"...we are open to being surprised by the urban reality we meet and refuse to be swayed by easy-to-understand answers and conventional thinking in our efforts to handle the challenges ahead."*

This relates to the 'lived space' as devised from Lefebvre's theories, which really looks at how space is experienced (physically, emotionally, intellectually etc.) which differs for individuals with diverse characteristics (figure 16) (Pugalis, 2009). This challenges the classic position of an urban planner as the *expert* and instigates a shift towards the urban planner as a *mediator*.

In short, this thesis uses urban planning as a bridging method between scales and sectoral boundaries. However, this will only work if the urban planner in question, I, take the position of the mediator who does not project their opinions on the subject but tries to gather knowledge from the people on the front row. This research will therefore focus on all scales, from governance to urban design, to touch upon the different factors that are essential in the integration of status holders. The integrative approach allows to sketch an accurate image of the current issues and complexity of the problem. Not everything will be explored as thoroughly as wished, as the aim is to combine a lot of different factors within a complex system. Consequently, there has to be kept in mind that there is not one solution to this challenge and the problem will probably never be 'solved', but there can be tried to diminish the effects on the parties involved.

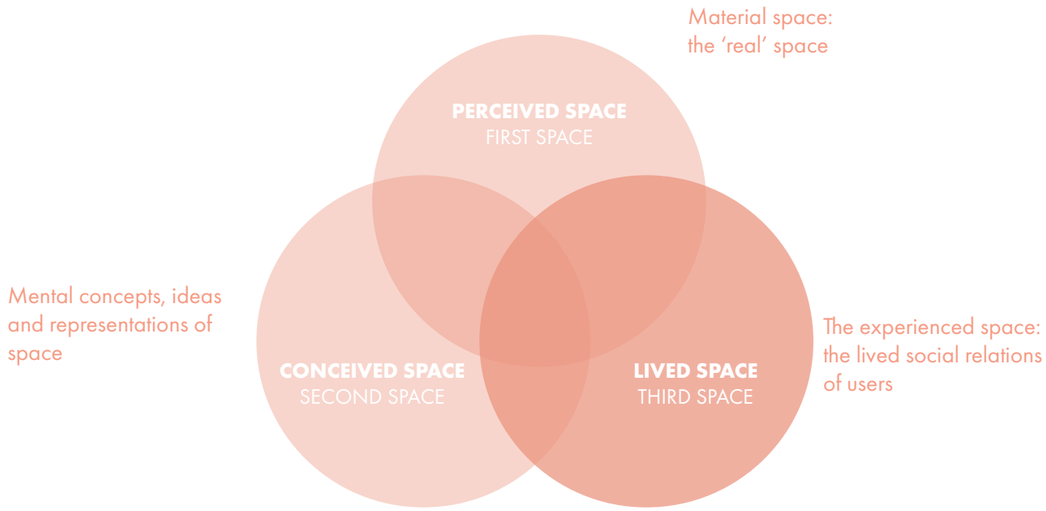


Figure 16: Henri Lefebvre's trialectic of space (Pugalis, 2009)

This thesis consequently leans on broad concepts that take into account this integrative approach. Therefore, the fundamental concept used is one only used in the Dutch context: *brede welvaart* (Aalders et al., 2019), measured through the *Brede Welvaart Indicator (BWI)*, literally translated into *broad prosperity* (figure 17). The concept is used to step away from the traditional definition of prosperity, measured in GDP (Gross Domestic Profit). It encompasses not only the monetary side of prosperity but also other factors that influence the overall life satisfaction of people, these dimensions are described below. Consequently, *brede welvaart* mainly refers to the *well-being* of citizens and therefore, the term *well-being* will be used throughout the rest of this thesis. Keep in mind that the definition described above is used, as this method of measurement is already used in the Netherlands. The BWI is used in the Netherlands to compare regions and to give governmental organisations insights into what can be improved within their region. This means that the indicator is used to distinguish regions from each other. But in this research, I also wish to look at the long-term perspective and distinguish between different groups: Syrian status holders & locals.

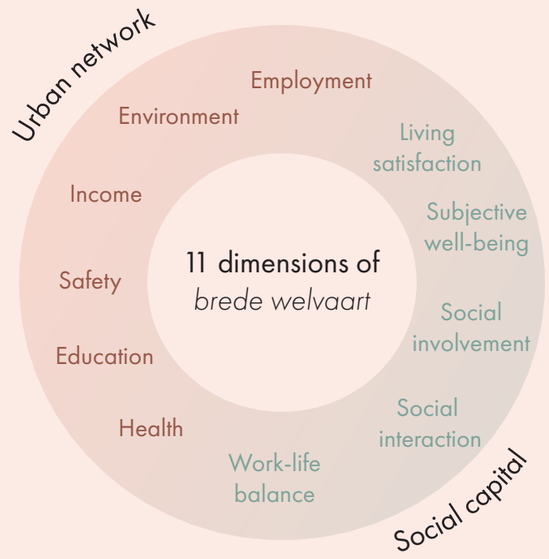


Figure 17: The eleven dimensions of *brede welvaart* (Aalders et al., 2019)

For this research, the dimensions of well-being relate to two other concepts: *the urban network theory* and *the social capital theory*. The urban network theory is mainly used to describe functional resources like employment but also basic amenities and resources. The social capital theory refers more to the dynamics of society and how social relations and interactions contribute to the well-being and life satisfaction of citizens.

The long-term perspective mainly refers to the urban network theory. In the previous chapter, the scenario of degrowth and decay in peripherical areas was described, which will inevitably harm the well-being of the current residents. The higher educated and younger generation moves away, impacting the dimensions of education and employment. Additionally, the older generation will have an impact on the health dimension. Therefore this thesis explores the challenge of this degrowth and the hypothetical negative impact this may have on the region.

The urban network theory is based on the 'Regional City' concept developed by Stein in the 1940s'. The term used in the current Dutch context is the urban network theory and it refers to a polycentric urban region. Meijers (2008) refers to a definition by Kloosterman and Lambregts (2001);

> *"it is a collection of historically distinct and both administratively and politically independent cities located in close proximity, well connected through infrastructure and lacking one dominating city in political, economic, cultural and other aspects."*

The urban network theory proposes a more regional perspective on amenities and resources, a way in which small towns do not have to be limited by their size, but are considered as a network of smaller cores that cooperate to improve the well-being of its citizens. The theory will be discussed in more detail in the theoretical framework.

The eleven dimensions of well-being offer important needs that define the living conditions of citizens, natives, but also newcomers. However, there is a large difference between the two groups. Newcomers need access to basic amenities; education, employment and housing, but they also want to settle in a community and feel at home in a new place. This is where the theory of social capital comes in. Social capital is defined by Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (2022) as.

> *"the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively."*

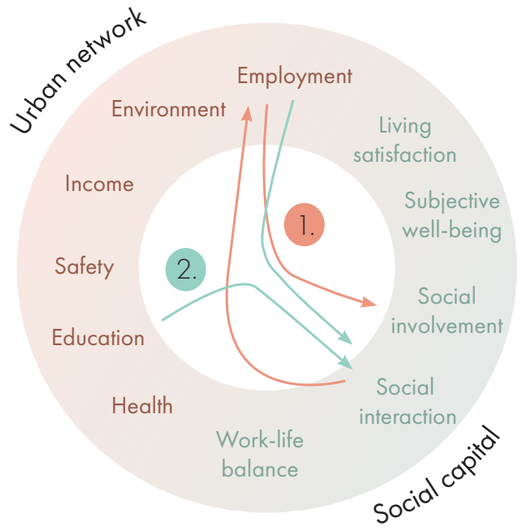


Figure 18: Interdependencies between urban network and social capital

In this case, the hypothesis is that small towns generally have a higher social capital than bigger cities, as the communities have stronger bonds and trust each other more. This result in a generally higher BWI as the social- involvement and interaction is higher. However, once status holders come into the picture there is a chance that they are excluded from the present social capital as the intolerance towards culturally different groups tends to be higher. This shows that even though a region could have a high BWI, that does not mean that there is a high well-being for everyone in this region.

The theories have been discussed separately above, but this does not mean that they are not interrelated. In figure 18 two examples are shown. The first example illustrates a Syrian status holder moving into a new town and interacting with his new neighbours. One of the neighbours refers them to a vacancy that might be interesting, which then results in someone actively participating, working, in a community, and strengthening the social capital. The second example shows how employment and education can be important places for status holders to interact with the host society. The two concepts are therefore not mutually exclusive and this interdependency will become more prominent throughout the thesis.

These different concepts result in the conceptual framework, as seen in figure 19, with which the aim is to establish improved well-being for everyone, for a longer period of time. The urban network theory is mainly about creating capacity or retaining capacity and the social capital theory is mainly about creating solidarity between culturally different groups. These concepts will be explained thoroughly in the theoretical framework.

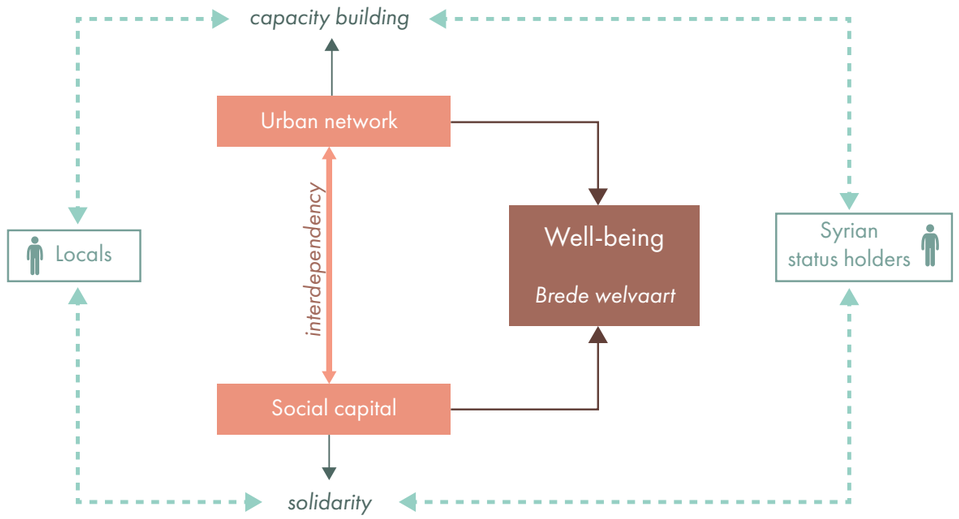


Figure 19: Conceptual framework

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How can spatial planning help to improve the well-being for locals and Syrian status holders in small towns in the Netherlands?

SQ1: Where in the Netherlands are the opportunties for this challenge and which area can be used as a case study?

SQ2: What local and national factors influence well-being of Syrian status holders and locals in small towns?

SQ3: How can space and place in small towns facilitate improvement of well-being for status holders and locals?

SQ4: Which spatial planning initiatives, incentives and policies are needed to operationalize the proposed framework?

METHODOLOGY

The research questions form the basis for the methodology and define what methods are used.

The methodology is projected onto a timeline to show when which part of the research was done. The sub-research questions formulate the main sections and timeframes of the research.

Lastly, the fieldwork is explained in more depth and how these methods contribute to the research.

In figure 21 the planning for the research can be found. The first part is called the project definition. Within this, the scope and focus of the study are formulated to come up with the aim, the conceptual framework and the research questions.

The research questions form the basis for the trajectory of the rest of the project. The research questions generally follow each other chronologically. The first research question defines the location for this research and will consequently be the first to be discussed. The region is selected based on a relatively quick national spatial exploration, looking at general quantitative data on accessibility, the ageing population and other measurable factors.

Next, the second question becomes important to explore the theories at hand, which is done through a literature review on theory, but also on qualitative case studies. This eventually leads to a hypothetical theoretical framework. This framework is also used to define the criteria that are analysed in the regional spatial analysis (SQ1), which eventually leads to the local site selection. Simultaneously, the first policy documents and literature on governance are explored to formulate an inventory of the current conditions and policies. This leads to P2, where the foundation for the theories and the spatial analysis is put in place.

After P2, the hypothetical theoretical framework is tested through site visits and interviews, conducted with locals and status holders. These interviews will be explained in more depth later. These interviews allow the theoretical framework to change according to the context of the research. Simultaneously, the site selected is explored through observation of time-space geography, photography, sketching and note-taking. The results from the fieldwork will be presented in P3. After P3, the fieldwork and the theory will be combined to come up with a roadmap, which will be the main final product of the project. This roadmap will consider the spatial dimension and governance.

The final weeks, between P4 and P5, are used to reflect on all the work done and to put the finishing touches in place.

Additionally, these weeks will be used to develop a game. This game will be used to raise awareness and communicate the results of this thesis in a fun way.

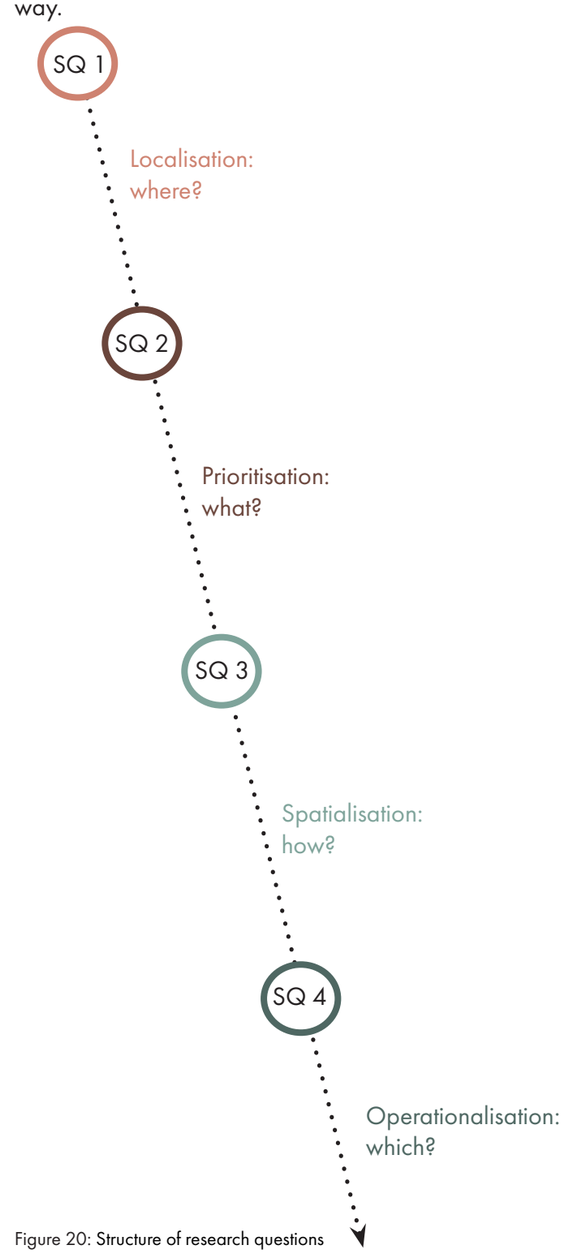


Figure 20: Structure of research questions

METHODOLOGY

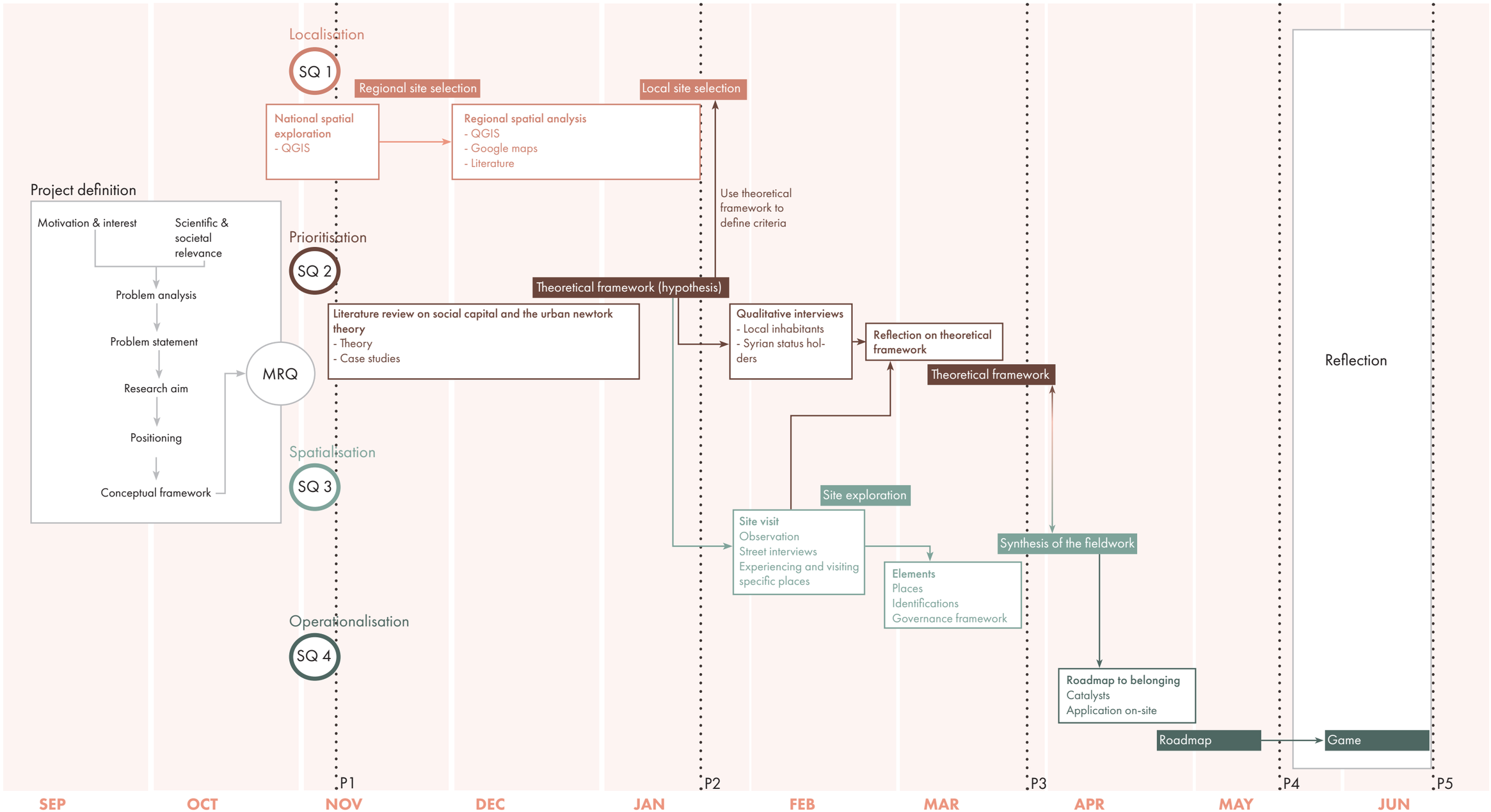


Figure 21: Research planning

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Social capital
    3.1.1 The notion of social capital

3.2 Urban network
    3.2.1 National developments
    3.2.2 Urban network theory
    3.2.3 Site selection

The chapter on the theoretical framework dives into the relevant theories used in this research and how they relate to space. The first section dives deeper into the theory of social capital and what the problems are within this topic. The second section is dedicated to the urban network theory, within which the region of the study is selected. Preliminary hypotheses will be drawn up that will function as a basis for the fieldwork.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

In the conceptual framework, one of the main concepts was the social capital theory. This section discusses this theory in more depth and how it relates to the case of Syrian status holders in peri-urban towns.

First, a definition of social capital is given. After this, the problems Syrian refugees encounter within building social capital are highlighted.

Social capital has been defined by many different scholars in many different ways. But to me, one of those definitions seems to encompass all that needs to be said;

> *"the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit. Social capital thus comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilized through that network" (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998).*

This definition highlights that social capital is not only about the social relations or the network itself, but also about the opportunities that arise from that network. This definition described the three different parts of social capital: bridging, bonding and linking. Newton (2008) wrote a comprehensive study on social capital, compiling a variety of studies to formulate definitions for the different parts.

Bonding is based on internal social bonds, which are more intimate and formed by trust. This means close friends or family. Within the context of this research, this bonding is seen between Syrian status holders, their families or other friends, usually from the same cultural background. **Bridging** social capital happens between different individuals or social groups, with different values. These bonds vary from weak to strong and the bridging of social capital can therefore be seen as a spectrum. In the context of this study, the bridging presumable happens between native Dutch and Syrians. However, these people can range from colleagues to neighbours, to fellow moms at school, all positioned in a different place on the 'bridging spectrum'. It also means that at some point, social capital can shift from bridging to bonding when people become close enough to make that shift. **Linking** social capital is defined as the bonds between the ones in power and the ones that are not, this relates to policymakers and institutions that have the power (usually economic and political) to actually make changes. But it is also related to the difference in

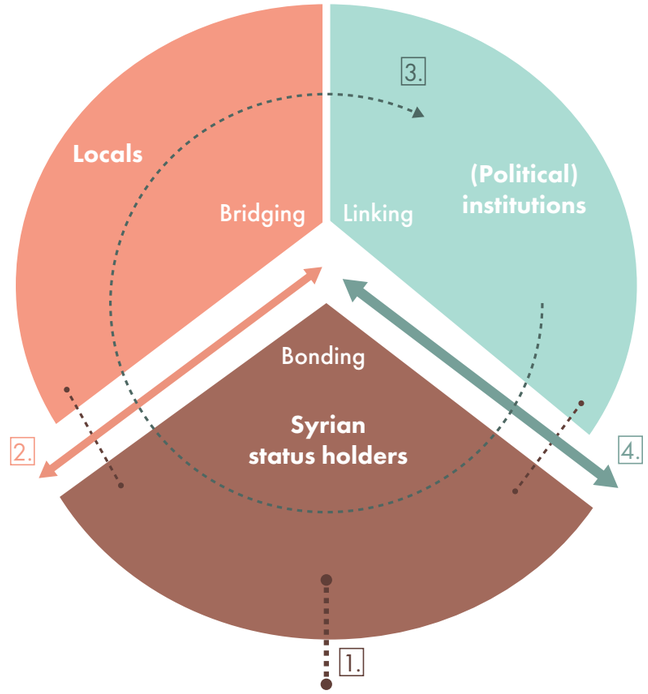


Figure 22: Bonding, bridging & linking social capital

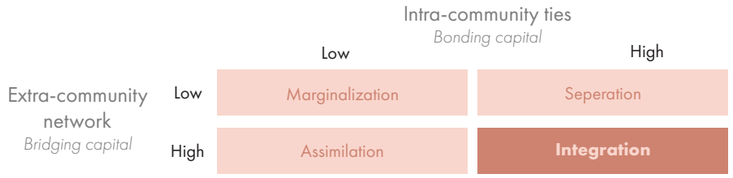


Figure 23: Acculturation & social capital

power between citizen groups when considering an intersectional approach. Status holders might have less power than locals.

Newton (2008) explains how Woolcock and Narayan (2000) set out the bonding against the bridging to show what type of people can be linked to the various levels of social capital. I crossed this literature with the literature of Schwartz. (2010) on acculturation to show how social capital and acculturation are related and how then the highest levels of social capital will result in 'integration' as from my perspective this offers the best of both worlds for both parties (figure 23). Status holders stay in touch with their own homes and culture while also creating new bonds with the local community and Dutch practices, plus, Dutch people get to know a new culture.

However, the integration process now faces some significant problems of which the first one is the sense of belonging, or in this case the lack, thereof. In Dutch towns, instead of cities, access to cultural services is lower and Syrians have more struggles in feeling at home (van Liempt & Miellet, 2020). The second problem is the clash between the Dutch and Syrians which is caused by (in)visible cultural, but also religious, walls between them. In this research, the aim is to identify some causes and the sources of these problems and to develop a spatial strategy or design that could help to diminish these problems (figure 22). However, to do so there is a need for authority, for economic and political capital, which refers to the third pillar of social capital: linking (figure 24).

Lastly, there is a more inherent problem within the integration process. This is caused by the government taking a passive role in the integration process. The linking of social capital is missing. In the research by van Liempt & Staring (2020a) the negative experiences with the integration process are illustrated. The government, on one hand, leaves the status holders to take charge of their own integration, but also in terms of education and employment, the government limits the possibilities by not validating their past experiences and certificates, thereby restraining their mobility in finding jobs. This leaves them with very little cultural capital, lower education and job qualifications, than the Dutch. Cultural capital can be defined as;

> *"The distinctions that develop between individuals and groups due to differences in access to education, family background, occupation, and wealth, giving them advantages and serving as a signifier of an individual's status within a group or society" (Bell, 2022)*

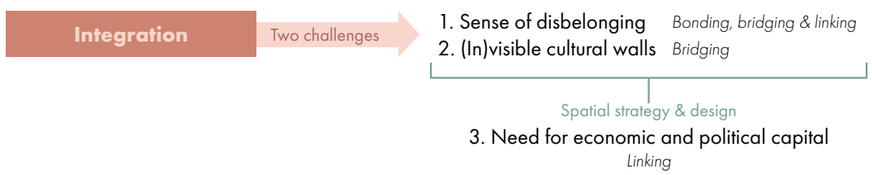


Figure 24: The challenges of integrating into a society

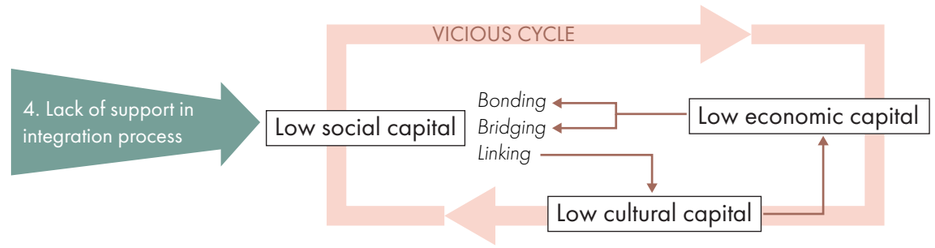


Figure 25: The vicious "social topography" circle

So, therefore, their cultural capital in Syria was possibly high, but when arriving in the Netherlands, this shifted. This consequently results in lower economic capital as they are less able to take care of themselves. This has instigated a counter-movement from the Dutch who then claim that *'refugees only profit from the Dutch welfare state without contributing, 'we pay tax, they make use of it.'* Even though status holders want their autonomy and do not want to be dependent on the state. However, this perception from the Dutch lowers the social capital again, leading to a vicious circle for the status holders which is difficult to break away from (figure 25).

The layering of these different levels of capital (social, cultural, economic etc.) can be called '**social topography**' as defined by Bourdieu (Newton, 2008). Syrian status holders in this case become very vulnerable members of society as they possess very little capital of any kind. Here, the contrast between the Ukrainian and Syrian situation is visible again. The social capital in the case of Ukraine was way higher, resulting in an integration and reception situation that was much more welcoming. The bridging (and possibly also the linking) in this situation was higher: Dutch people were even willing to house the refugees within their own homes. This example shows how much difference social capital can make for people in a vulnerable position.

Therefore the four main problems are (figure 22):

1. Sense of belonging
2. (In)visible cultural walls
3. Economic & political capital
4. Integration process

In **Appendix I**, these problems will be explored in more depth based on literature and case studies.

The additional information helps to get a better idea of the problems and provides the right foundation for the fieldwork.

URBAN NETWORK

In the conceptual framework, one of the main concepts was the urban network theory. This section discusses this theory in more depth and how it relates (or does not relate) to the Dutch context.

First, some national developments and issues are discussed that are relevant for the problem at hand. Next, a critique is outed on the current approach of the Dutch government, after which the urban network theory is explained in more depth. This eventually leads to the criteria that were used to select the region of this study. The region is then introduced according to those criteria, to give a first impression of what the region looks like.

Looking at the national spatial strategy for the upcoming years in the Netherlands, an interesting observation can be made: the focus on the Randstad. This is visible in the National Environmental Vision (NOVI) by the Ministry of Interior affairs and kings relations (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijks Relaties, n.d.) in which the focus is really on further developing the capacity of the Randstad, where the question can be posed if this is still feasible.

Another way in which this becomes visible is through the budgeting of infrastructure, within which 4% of the budget is allocated to the three (out of twelve) Northern provinces, which are already characterised by a lack of proper public transportation (WNL, 2022).

The current plans are focussing on quantitatively solving the problems: building more and more in the 'most attractive', urbanised areas. But shouldn't the focus be on how emptier areas can be made more attractive and how the means that are already there can be used to not diminish the symptoms, but to tackle the cause of the problem? An opinion piece by Alkemade (2021) takes a similar approach. The demand for housing is a societal question. It is not necessarily about quantity but it is also about the current way of living. Is there a way completely new neighbourhoods do not need to be build by utilizing the means that are already present? Are there different forms of housing needed to accommodate the demands, especially when considering the ageing population? According to Alkemade a paradigm shift is needed, a different way of looking at the demands and the resources that are already there.

Looking at the reception crisis of the Netherlands throughout the years, an interesting pattern of other institutional problems, that arise from the neo-liberal approach of the government, becomes apparent.
The first one relates to the social-housing stock of the Netherlands. Over the past decades, the social-housing stock was slowly sold to private organisations, liberalising the market. An opinion piece in 2015 by Onderwater, underlines this by explaining a situation in which a minister allegedly, took part of the housing stock out on an international market and sold them for a good price to international investors. This was quite controversial as he was the Minister of Housing, who should assure proper housing for everyone.

The second part relates to the capacity of the reception centres. Every time the influx of refugees peaks, the government struggles with offering proper accommodation for those refugees in reception centres. This recurring problem is caused by the down-scaling of the capacity, whenever the influx becomes lower. Locations are closed and employees are sacked, ultimately resulting in a reception crisis again. The government is not willing to invest money in the longer term, however, the question could be posed whether these short-term, mega investments are cheaper than long-term investments in a constant capacity.

This question could be a whole master thesis in itself, but won't be discussed in much more detail, but the reality is that the government is discussing the issue again at the moment. Currently, there is even a stop on the family reunion policy (which means that children coming into the country on their own are not able to be reunited with their families as was before) (NOS, 2022a). Parallel to this discussion is the discussion on the distribution policy: the *'asieldeal'*. This would force municipalities to take in refugees if they are not doing this yet (NOS, 2022b). Within national politics, but also within local politics this causes a lot of discussions.

In general, a lot can be said for the approach of the government, but instead of only critiquing this, an alternative is proposed in this research. The urban network theory is suggested as an alternative to the focus on Randstad. Hopefully, through a different approach to the housing of status holders, this discussion can be shifted to a more open-minded approach. Instead of seeing the housing of status holders as a burden, this can be seen as an opportunity, within this urban network, to create attractive and comfortable living environments for the newcomers, but also for the current citizens.

Policy-makers and politicians in the Netherlands focus on the Randstad, an agglomeration of large cities that drive the economy in the Netherlands. In their eyes, the east of the country is bound to empty out, the towns and cities are too small, and the vibrancy is in the Randstad. And in the current system, they might be right.

However, in the 8th cohesion report by the EU, interesting insights are published into the relationship between cities, towns and suburbs and rural areas. Here they use a large variety of classification categories to indicate differences between countries and the differences between levels of urbanity. In a seminar given by Dijkstra (2022), about this cohesion report, the focus was consequently not on cities, but on towns. Several interesting statements were made, that relate to the topic:

- Towns that lose services are more likely to become populist.
- The smaller the town, the more important the network in which it is situated is.
- A holistic assessment of towns is needed. It should not about money or GDP, but about quality of life and well-being. An example of this is that for 200 000 euros you can barely buy a garage in Amsterdam, but for this same amount of money, you can buy a house in the East of the country. Money is not the right way to measure differences between cities and towns.

All three arguments can be used to further substantiate for the urban network theory. The first argument shows that the loss of services can have significant consequences for the entire dynamics of the population. The second argument highlights the importance of a network to support smaller towns. The third argument further substantiates a focus shift from the neo-liberal focus on the Randstad, towards an approach that focuses on living quality, which is in line with the *brede welvaart* discussed in the conceptual framework.

This leads back again to the urban network theory. The aim of this theory is not necessarily to match the functionality of monocentric areas but to make sure that further decline of amenities and people is contested.

> *"The creation of networks of smaller towns in less densely settled and economically weaker regions is also important. In these areas, cooperation between urban centres to develop functional complementarity may be the only possibility for achieving viable markets and maintaining economic institutions and services which could not be achieved by the towns on their own." (CEC,1999,21).*

However, without interference from higher authorities like the national and provincial governments, complementarity is hard to achieve as municipalities focus on the priorities within their boundaries, which eventually results in duplication of functions in towns that could actually benefit from competition. Without the polycentric view, medium-sized towns tend to reach a limit (in terms of critical mass) which results in never being able to match the functionality of metropolitan areas and consequently the attractiveness of cities.

This perspective is also useful when considering the housing of status holders. The first argument here is that through housing status holders here, the countermovement of people moving to urban areas is diminished thus maintaining enough critical mass in the region, which is also beneficial for locals. But here, keeping in mind that not all status holders would want to live in these areas. The second argument is that status holders are in need of specific resources concerning their integration, but also in terms of cultural facilities. Through the urban network principle, people with migration backgrounds can still be connected to services and each other while living in smaller communities. Thirdly, the general perspective of urban networks can be helpful to create a support base for better connections, labour opportunities and more amenities for both locals and status holders. Fourthly, the explicit consideration of public transportation is essential for status holders, but also for less mobile locals like elderly people or people who cannot afford to have a car. By diving deeper into connectivity, the various scales and the amenities needed within various scales become important and especially the focus on the local dimension.

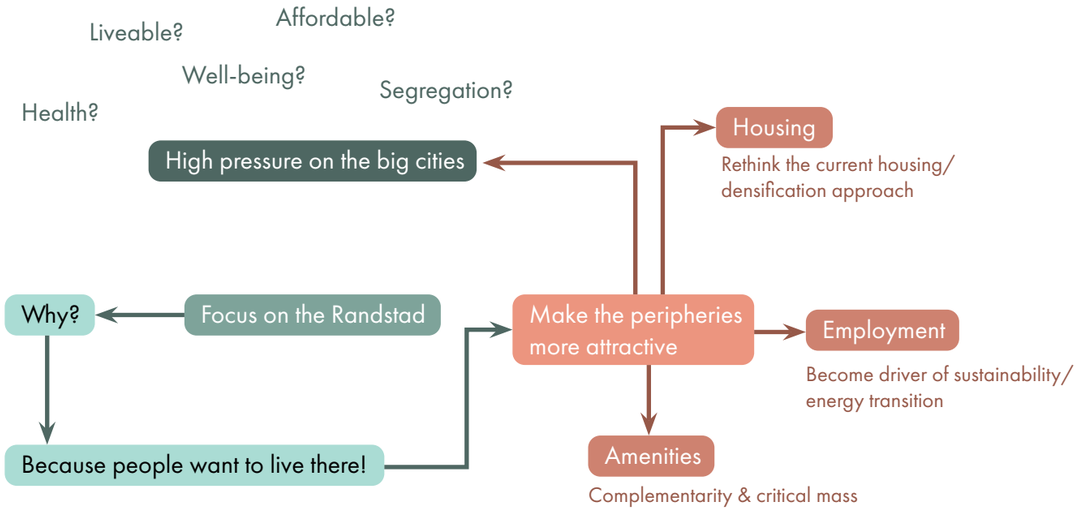


Figure 26: A revised national housing strategy

This thesis explores the potential of the peripheries of the Netherlands by using the case of the housing of status holders as a driver. Several factors are essential in achieving this, of which amenities are at the core. However, in order to make the regions more attractive the availability of jobs and housing should not be forgotten about. As mentioned earlier, within the field of housing, a paradigm shift is needed. Instead of building and building, there is a need to first look at what is already there and what the citizens actually want. Within the field of employment, there is potential to create a new 'business model' for example driven by innovation within the field of the energy transition. Farming is an important part of this region, however, this sector is now going through significant problems due to the nitrogen crisis. Wouldn't it make sense to stimulate innovation within the field of farming in this area then? These types of questions arise when shifting away from the focus on the Randstad, revealing new opportunities for other regions of the Netherlands.

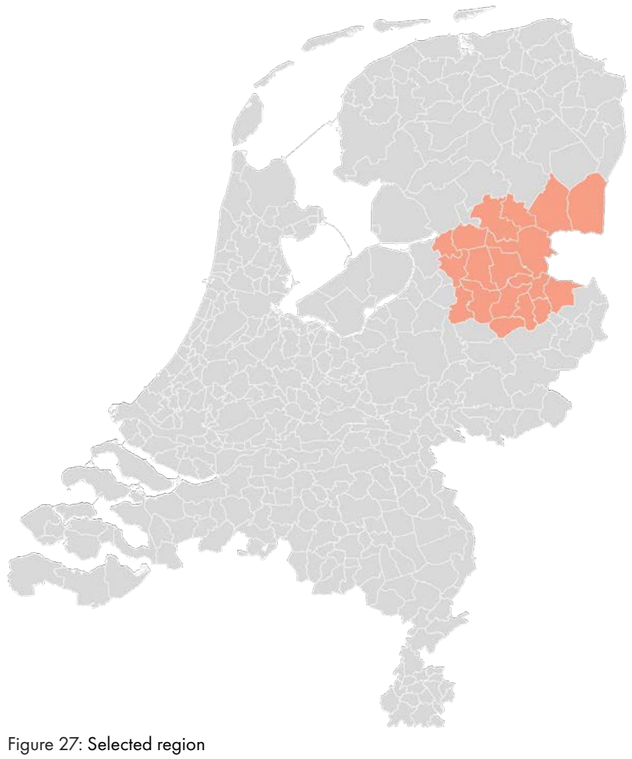


Figure 27: Selected region

On the basis of the urban network theory and the factors discussed, several criteria were formulated that are used to select a region. Examples of these criteria are the expected (de)urbanization, age diversity & public transportation. The aim of this exploration was not to find the area that is most prone to decline, age etc., but an area that has both these possible issues, but also the potential to grow. The region eventually selected is therefore in the east of the Netherlands, with both more attractive and less attractive municipalities within, well-connected through railways. For each criteria, a short explanation is given.

Urbanization

Figure 28 shows that one part of the area is slightly growing and the other might be slightly shrinking indicating that the number of inhabitants in the region is possibly quite balanced.

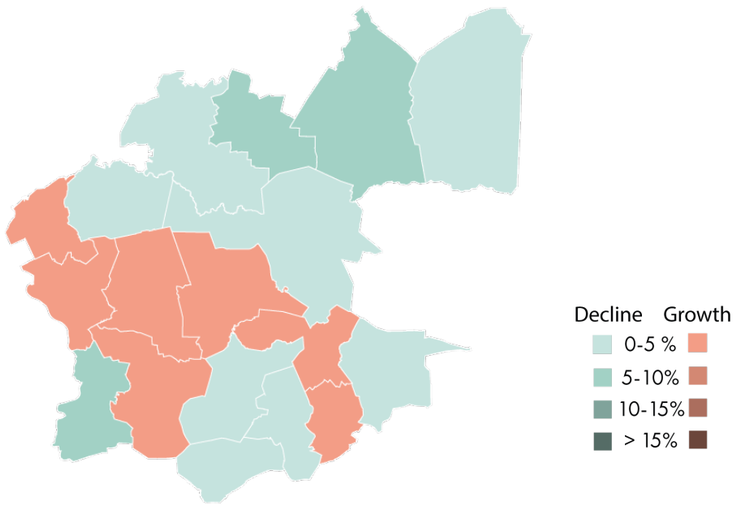


Figure 28: Urban decline & growth (PBL & CBS, 2022)

Age diversity

Figure 29 shows that some municipalities in the region experience ageing more significantly than others.

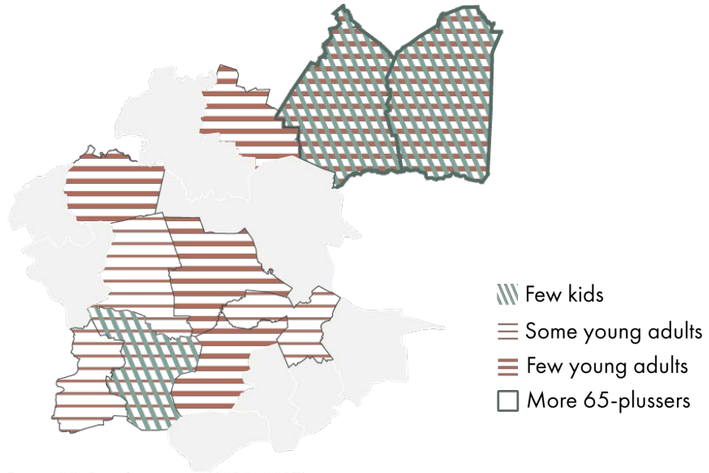


Figure 29: Population ages (CBS, 2017)

Asylum reception centres

Within the area, most of the larger reception centres are located (figure 30). The main centre of the Netherlands is located just above the region. The presence of these could help to reflect and possibly criticize the allocation of housing to status holders rather randomly.

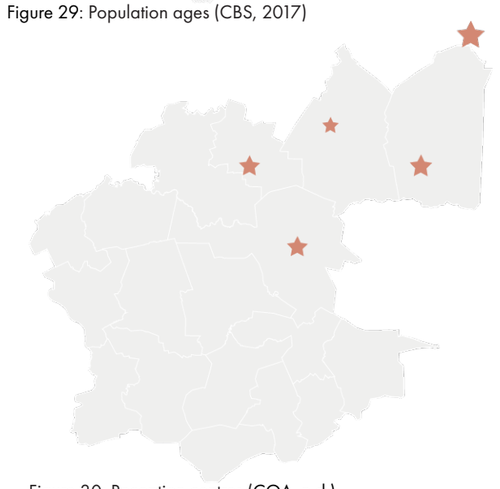


Figure 30: Reception centres (COA, n.d.)

Political diversity

The area in question has different political preferences, as shown in figure 31. Partly, the centre-right party VVD is the most dominant. In other muncipalities Christian parties are dominant and in one of them the populist party PVV takes the lead.

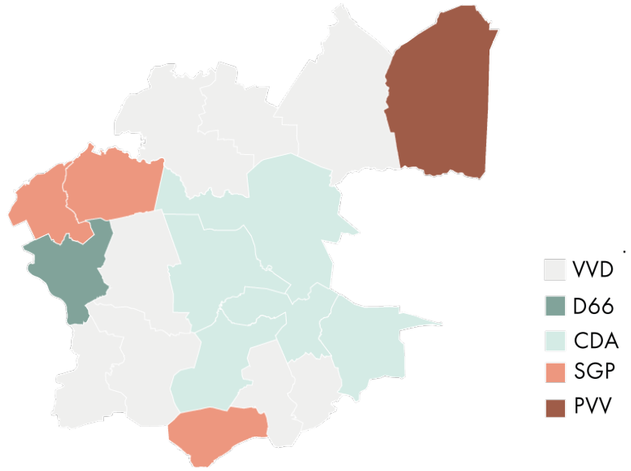


Figure 31: Political diversity (ANP, 2021)

Ethnic diversity

The area has a couple of municipalities that have quite some Syrian status holders living there already, but there is also some which don't (figure 32).

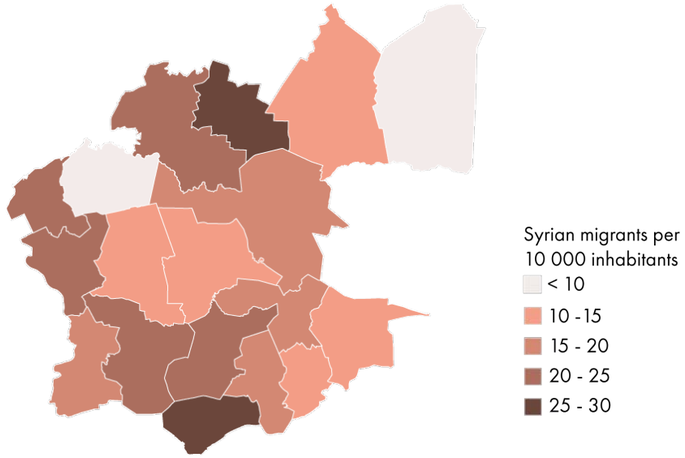


Figure 32: Syrian inhabitants (Huisman & CBS, 2017)

Public transportation

Figure 33 shows how the region is rich in railways which also connect the smaller municipalities to the urban cores.

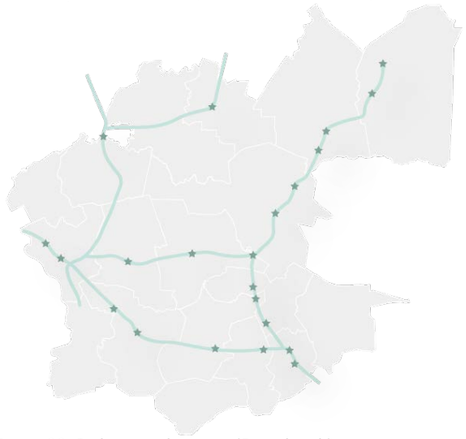


Figure 33: Railway and stations (Prorail, n.d.)

Network of towns & urban cores

In figure 34 the network of towns and urban cores is shown. This shows that the region has lots of towns, but also some larger urban cores.

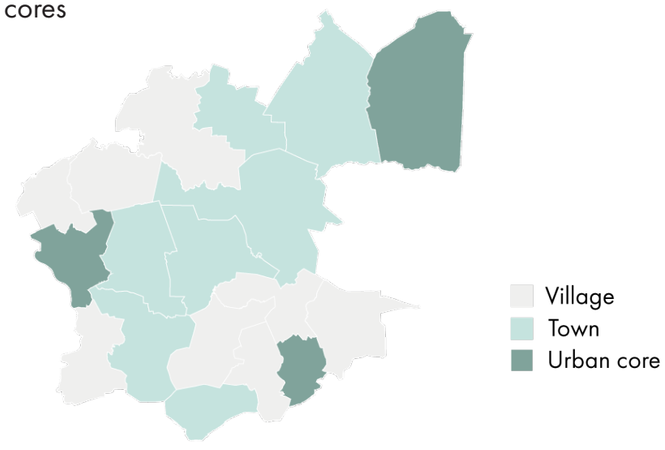


Figure 34: Towns and urban cores (European Commission, n.d.)

By overlaying these maps the differences between the municipalities arise. Again, this shows the diversity of the region and the different capacity and opportunities that each municipality might have on offer.

In **Appendix II**, a further analysis of four towns can be found: Dalfsen, Ommen, Hardenberg and Coevorden. Based on this analysis, local sites for the fieldwork can be selected and a plan for the fieldwork can be made.

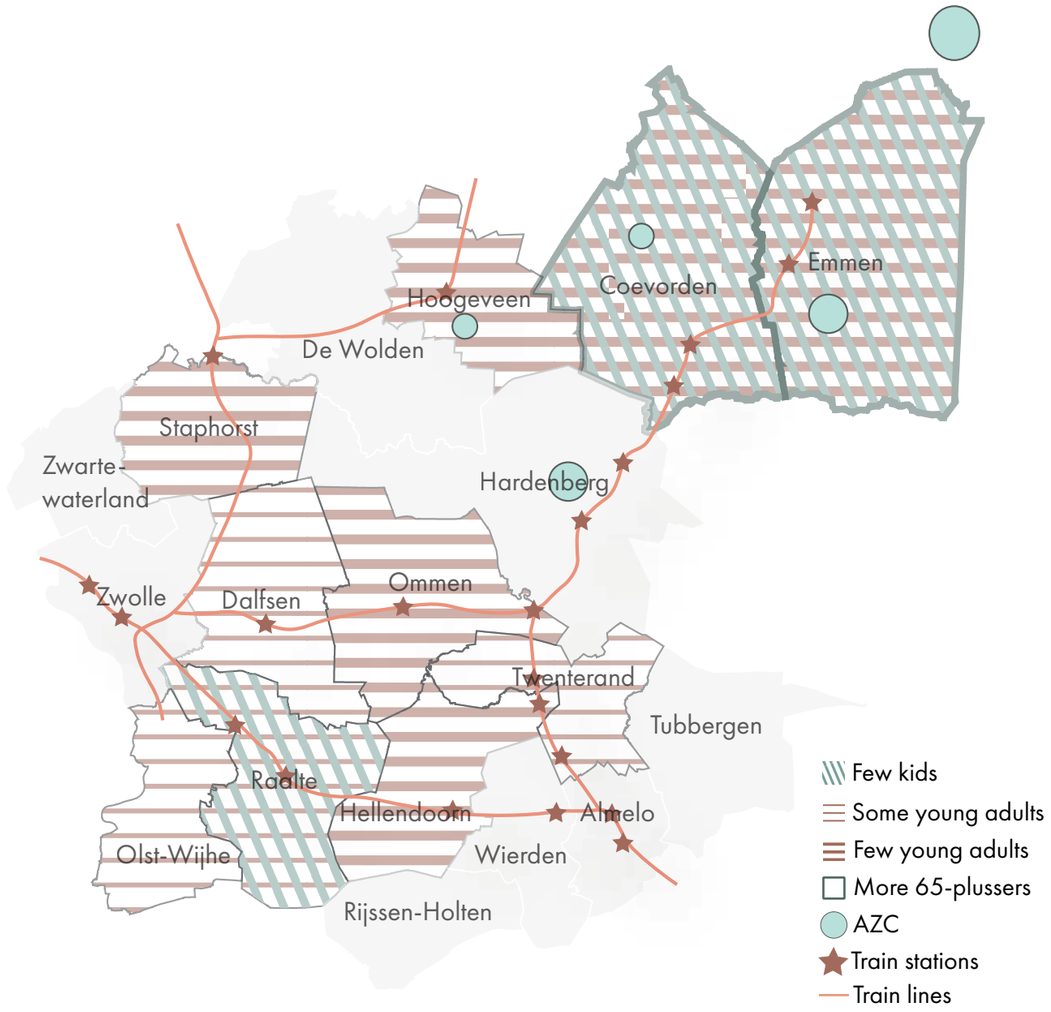


Figure 35: Site selection

4 FIELDWORK

4.1 Local site selection
- 4.1.1 Dalfsen
- 4.1.2 Hardenberg

4.2 Site visit
- 4.2.1 Overview
- 4.2.2 Hardenberg
- 4.2.3 Dalfsen
- 4.2.4 Main findings

4.3 Interviews

In this chapter, local sites are selected, which are visited during the site visits. Additionally, the main findings of these site visits are discussed, as well as, the interviews with the Syrian status holders

Pleijendal, Dalfsen

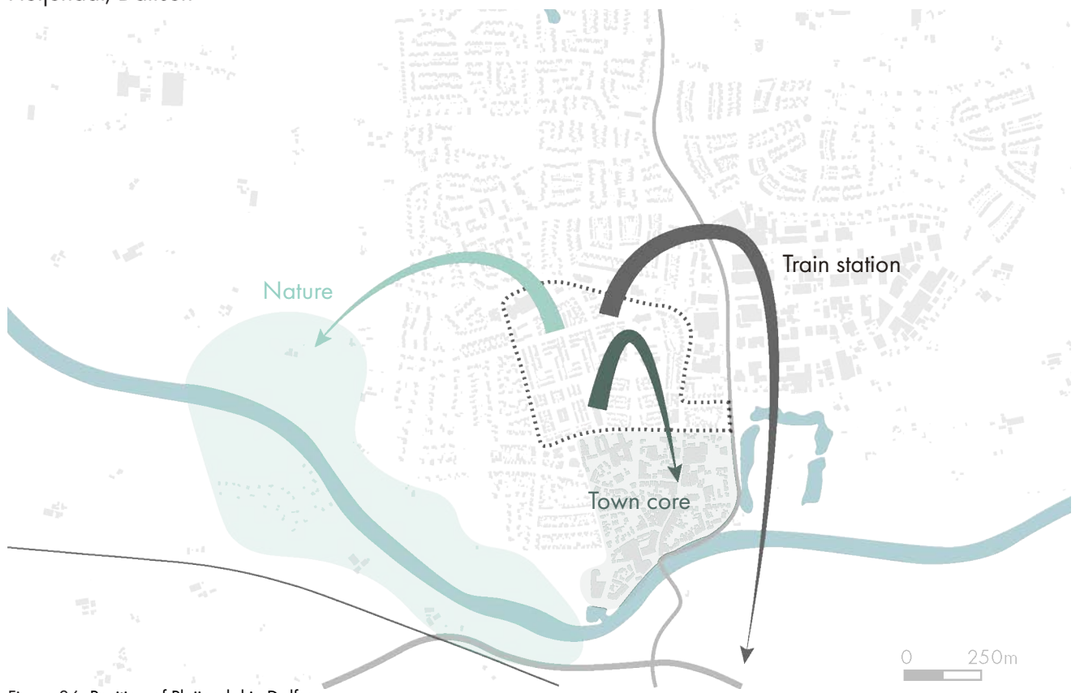


Figure 36: Position of Pleijendal in Dalfsen

Baalder, Hardenberg

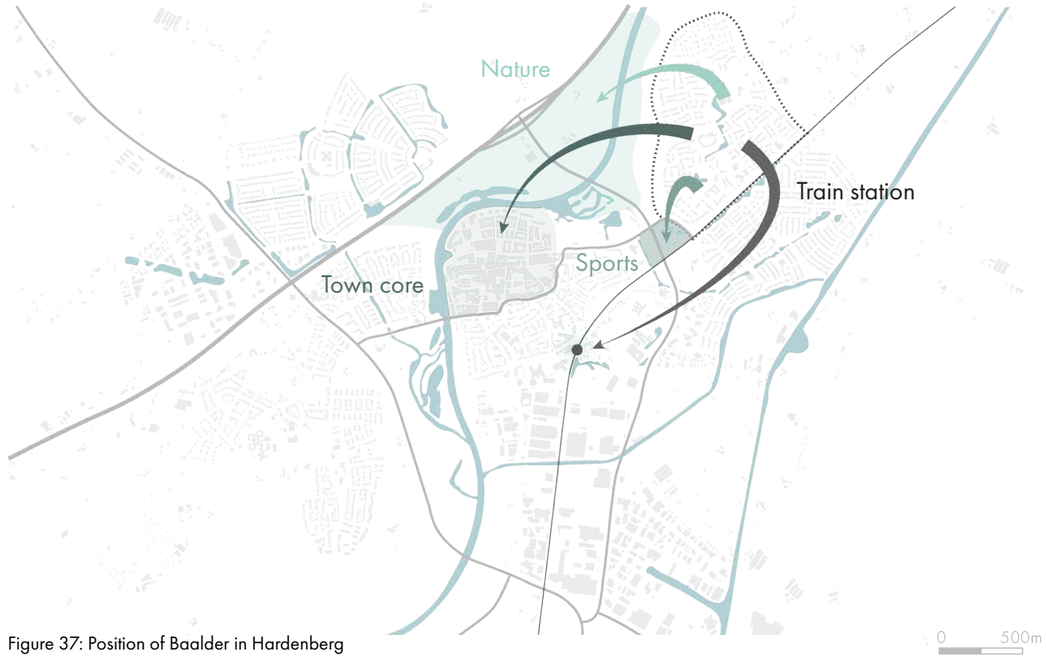


Figure 37: Position of Baalder in Hardenberg

PLEIJENDAL, DALFSEN

Pleijendal counts 1365 inhabitants, with a high population density of 981 addresses per km^2, however the household size remains underneath the Dutch average, with only 2 people per dwelling (Weetmeer, 2023b). This average is potentially a result of the older population. Elderly people tend to live in couples or when widowed or divorced, alone. This can result in loneliness, if the right social network (read social capital) is not in place. This hypothesis plays an important role for the further exploration of the neighbourhood. Is their a lot of social capital? Then where is space available? Can it be strengthened further? This relates to the value of *naoberschap* mentioned in the environmental vision.

Eventually, the question will be whether the social network and the neighbourhood is open to newcomers and if these newcomers can add value to the neighbourhood. It is difficult to establish the view of the population on refugees and status holders. Firstly, the neighbourhood is predominantly white, with only 1,5% of non-western inhabitants, which is extremely low (Weetmeer, 2023b). This makes it difficult to make assumptions on the perception of foreigners, but it also means that the slade might be blank still. The current residents do not necessarily have bad experiences with immigrants yet, which gives opportunities for this research.

On top of that, the voting behaviour of this region is different from the rest of the country. Due to the religious background of the region, ChristenUnie is a dominant party in the region. When looking at the agenda of the ChristenUnie Dalfsen (2022), for the municipal elections, a promising statement related to status holders is made:

> *"The municipality of Dalfsen has the responsibility in arranging proper housing for refugees. People who left their homes behind, deserve a safe environment..... Integration is not a choice, but a moral duty. This is why we want newcomers (status holders) to integrate into society as quickly as possible. This starts with learning the language, but also that goes quicker and better if newcomers participate actively in society. ChristenUnie pleads for distributed, small scale reception of refugees." (translated by author)*

The ChristenUnie acknowlegdes that the housing of status holders is a moral duty, why not make the best of it? They set out a couple of guidelines:

- The housing for status holders should not suppress the housing market, therefore the focus is also on temporary housing or transformation of offices and empty buildings.
- Status holders have to learn that the Dutch norm and value system is leading
- Newcomers should participate as soon as possible in society through (voluntary)work and associations. Initiatives that stimulate integration are stimulated by the municipality. An example of this is a buddyproject, in which a local guides the newcomer through life in the town, teaching them the language, culture and values of the community.

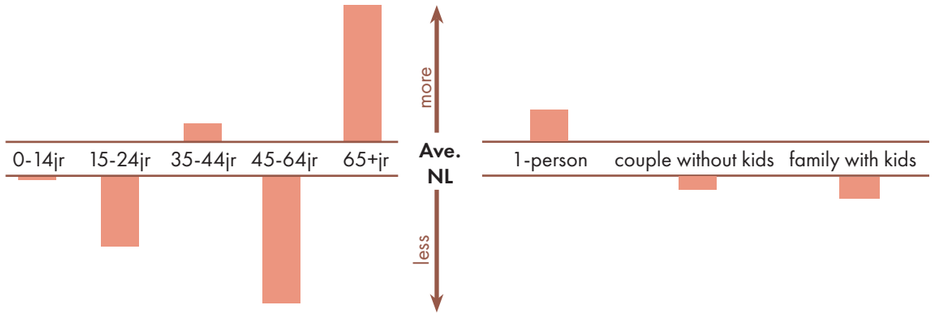


Figure 38: Comparison age and household composition of Pleijendal and the Dutch average (Weetmeer, 2023b)

Businesses are stimulated to hire status holders by offering financial support and clear rules to make is as easy as possible. The municipality sets the right example by doing the same. Lastly, the municipality stimulates the interchange of the food culture of the newcomers and the Dutch by organising events related to food.

This last guidelines quite beautifully illustrates how local politics can take an active role in facilitating the integration process of status holders.The main question that still stands for me is whether, even though a lot of people vote for ChristenUnie, inhabitants of the neighbourhood support this view, a question that can be explored through interviews on site.

Figure 39: Migration background of the citizens of the neighbourhood (Weetmeer, 2023b)

Figure 40: Amenities in the neighbourhood

BAALDER, HARDENBERG

The neighbourhood Baalder in Hardenberg is primarily chosen because of the Wijkboerderij, but also for the potential Hardenberg has as a town in a larger network.

The neighbourhood is characterized by the high amount of amenities in proximity, a slightly lower income, but especially the focus on children. The neighbourhood has a high amount of children aged 0-14, which is also seen in the amenities in place like primary- and secondary schools and day cares. The average household size is consequently bigger than in Pleijendal, with an average of 2,6 (Weetmeer, 2023a).

When looking at migration background of the population, this is slightly more diverse than in Dalfsen, but still mostly western, with only a very small share of non-western migrants (Weetmeer, 2023a).

The neighbourhood is spatially divided by a green park structure through the centre within which the main amenities are located like the primary schools, the sports centre and the community centre (De Wijkboerderij).

The contrast between the two neighbourhoods allows to compare between a neighbourhood that is currently more in decline and one that is doing well already: is the view of the residents different depending on the conditions of the neigbourhood? This question will be a guiding theme throughout the fieldwork.

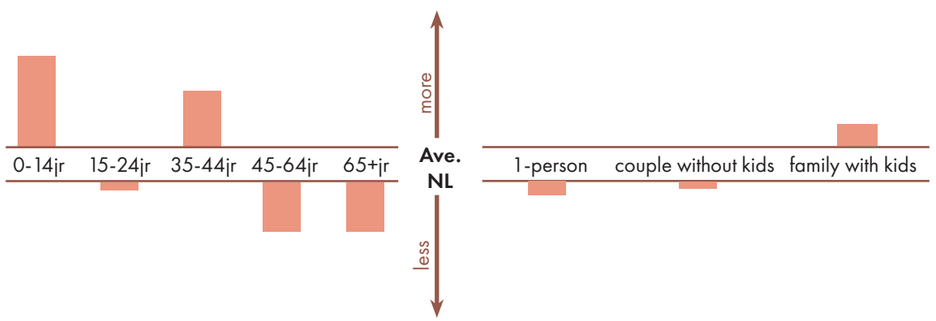


Figure 41: Comparison age and household composition of Baalder and the Dutch average (Weetmeer, 2023a)

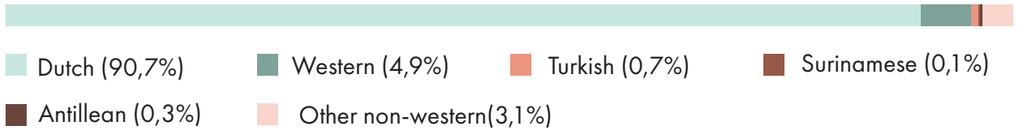


Figure 42: Migration background of the citizens of the neighbourhood (Weetmeer, 2023a)

Figure 43: Amenities in the neighbourhood

SITE VISIT

The site visits were spread over four days. Two days were spend in Hardenberg and two were spend in Dalfsen. Firstly, an overview is given of the approach used during the site visits. After this, a short explanation of each town is given. Finally, the main findings within the two towns are discussed. A complete summary of the site visits can be found in **Appendix III**. This summary explains the different places visited in Hardenberg and Dalfsen. Additionally, it goes into the interviews with the local residents.

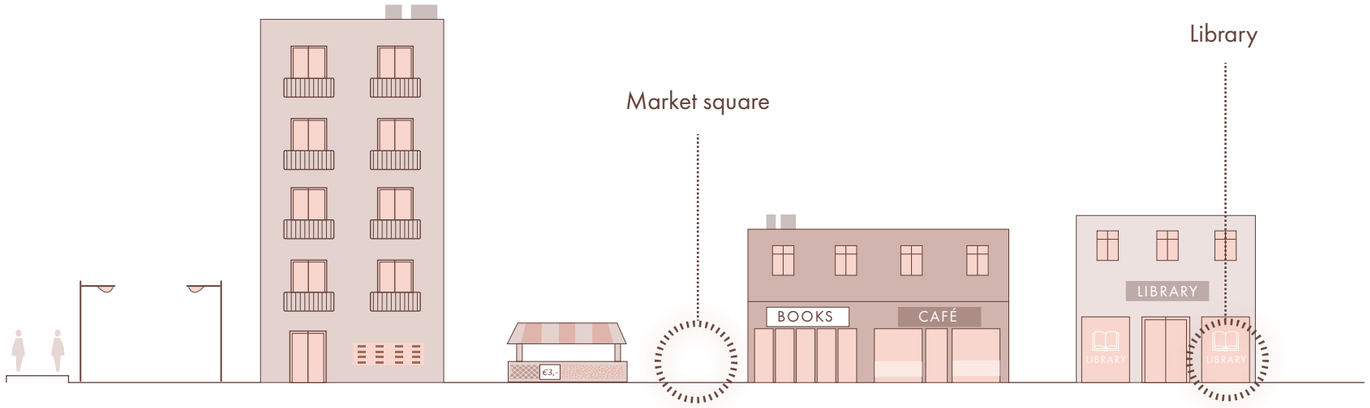
Before going into the field, a couple of possible activities were set out to guide the site visits. The site visits were a combination of observation, interviews and visits to specific places.

The interviews conducted with local inhabitants were unstructured. The first question asked was about their opinion on the town. Follow-up questions were asked where necessary. The second part of the interviews went into the topic of status holders and the experience of the locals with newcomers.

The unstructured approach resulted in completely different conversations, with different inputs.

	Dalfsen, Pleijendal	Hardenberg, Baalder
1. Transect walk Neighbourhood ⟷ Nature ⟷ Town core ⟷ Train station	- What do you see? - Who do you see? - Is it walkable? Is it safe? Is it cycleable? - What do you pass? - How long does it take? - Do people say hello on the street?	
2. Observation Public spaces • Parks • Shopping streets • Schools (weekdays) • Church (Sundays) • Sports facilities (weekend) • Streets • Playgrounds	- Is it busy or abandoned? How many people? - What type of people? (be specific: family, elderly people, kids with schoolbags/sportsbags, people with dogs, less mobile people etc.) - What do they do? Do they pass by or do they use the spaces? - Do they come together with other people?	
3. Visit & experience Select specific sites to explore in more detail and to actively mingle with the people in the place	Community centre Trefkoele+ Church on sunday Town core Petting zoo	De Wijkboerderij Charity shop Library Town core
4. Interviews Interview people on the street, but also at the specific sites chosen	• People on the street • People at Trefkoele+ • People at the schools	• People on the street • People at De Wijkboerderij

Figure 44: Plan for the fieldwork



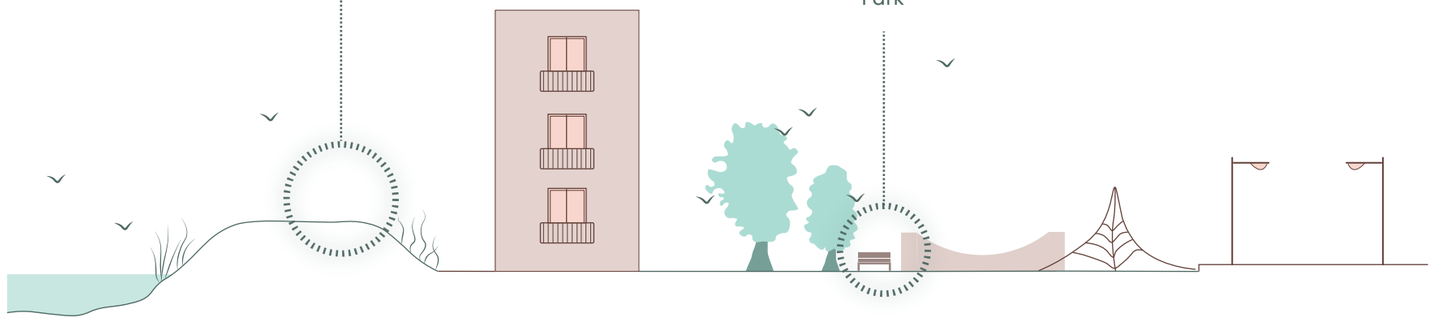
TOWN CORE

The area explored can be subdivided into three parts: the town core, the transition zone and the neighbourhood Baalder. The town core is characterised by the central market square, where the market was held on Mondays, a diverse set of shops and at the edge of the core: the library.

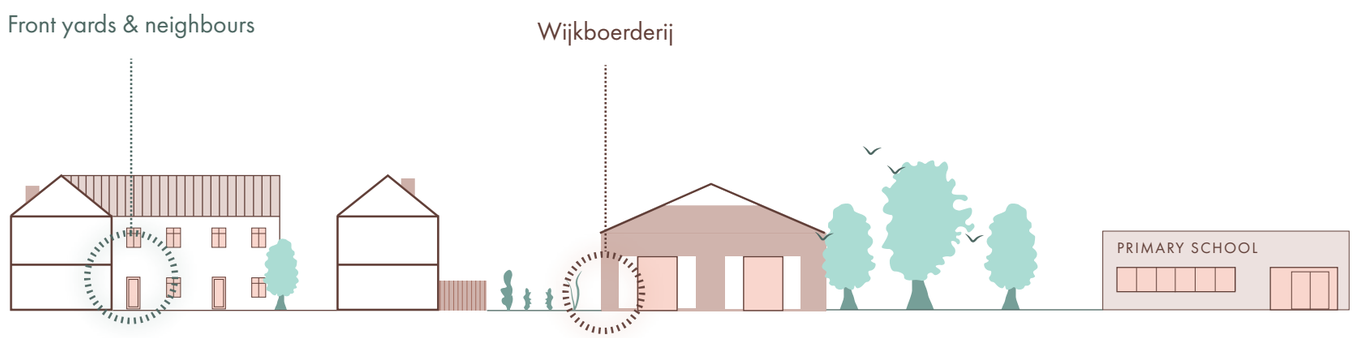
When walking or cycling from the town core to the neighbourhood, you go through an area I would call the transition zone. A pathway runs along the Vecht, parallel to a main road. In between the road and the pathway you will find lots of new developments, mostly low apartment buildings, a sports club and a park.

After crossing a busy road, you enter the neighbourhood Baalder. Where I found one of the most interesting sites of the visit, the Wijkboerderij and a multitude of schools, which were positioned along a park-like structure in the centre of the neighbourhood.

The circles highlight the sites thorougly discussed in the summary of the site visits in **Appendix III**.



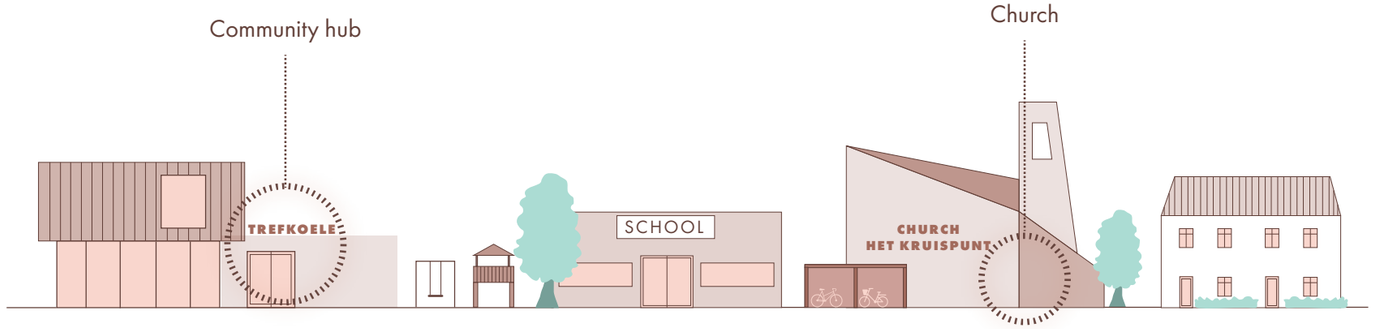
TRANSITION ZONE



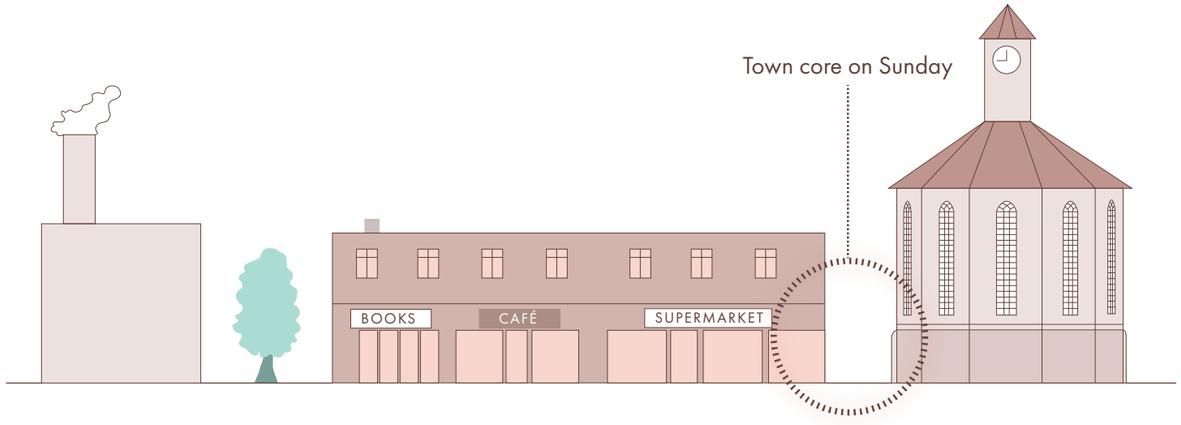
NEIGHBOURHOOD BAALDER

Figure 45: Section Hardenberg

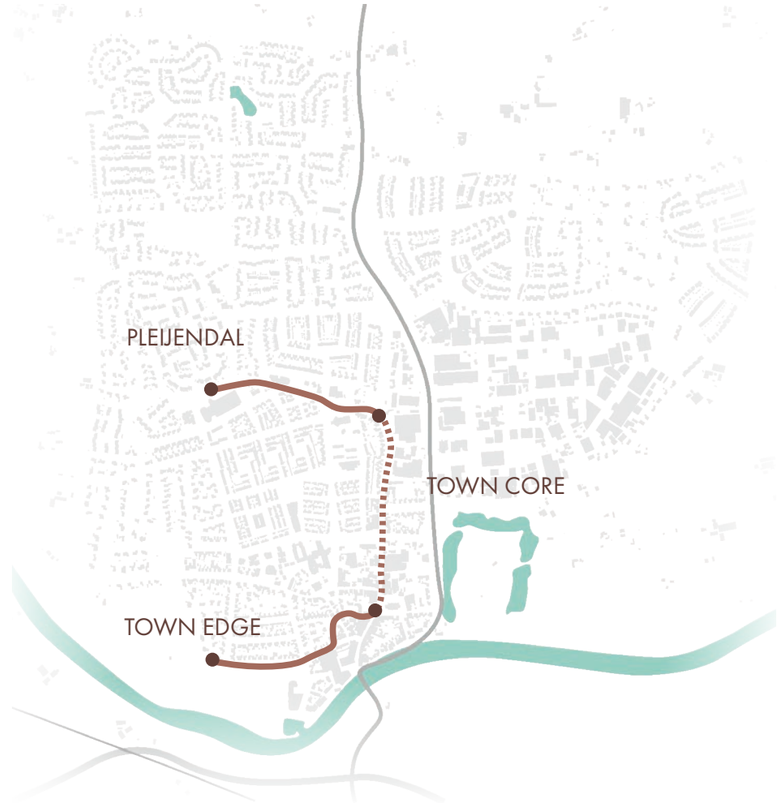
SITE VISIT
Dalfsen



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLEIJENDAL

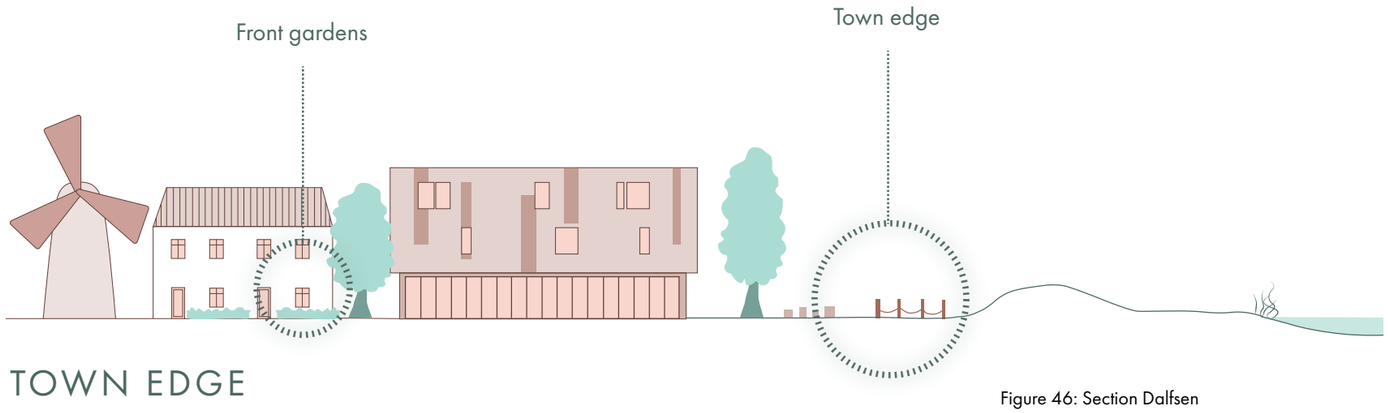


TOWN CORE



The area explored can be subdivided into three sections. The starting point lies at the central node of the town, where the different neighbourhoods intersect. This central node is marked by a collection of semi-public buildings: primary schools, a church and the collective building: TrefkoelePlus. Walking through the neighbourhood, past an industrial strip, you enter the town core. The town core can be reduced to a church with one main street. A two-minute walk from the town core, you are directly at the town edge, where you can look over the Vecht. The boundary of the town is marked by the large municipality building. In this area, there is a little park with a natural playground and a jeu de boules site.

The circles highlight the sites thoroughly discussed in the summary of the site visits in **Appendix III.**



TOWN EDGE

Figure 46: Section Dalfsen

The main findings in Hardenberg were:
- The library as a community hub
- *Naoberschap* as a core value
- Successful local collaborations.

The library in Hardenberg was more than a place where books were lent and borrowed. The library offered an accessible, warm and cosy space to a wide group of people for reading, relaxing, studying and working. When I visited the library, there were always a lot of visitors present varying in age from children to students to elderly. Additionally, there were always a couple of librarians present for questions or a conversation. The library provided various services like a Taalpunt, which provided language classes to newcomers and a Digipunt, which provided classes in using the computer for seniors, but there was also a cafeteria and maker space.

The wide range of services, cosy atmosphere and presence of other people made the library a community hub in Hardenberg.

The second finding was *naoberschap* as a core value. *Naoberschap* is a historical value describing the reciprocity between neighbours. In the past, communities in rural areas were forced to help each other to survive. Now, this reciprocity between neighbours is still visible, however, today is it based on choice and not on necessity. This value is inherent to the local inhabitants and also drives several social initiatives in the town.

An example is the *Naoberschap Baalder*, a neighbourhood organisation providing help where needed, through volunteers from the same neighbourhood. This organisation also owns a part of the community garden at the Wijkboerderij. Naoberschap Baalder donates vegetables, herbs and other products they harvest from the community garden to neighbours who struggle to pay for their groceries.

The Wijkboerderij leads to the final finding as it showcases a successful local collaboration between different parties. The Wijkboerderij consists of a community centre, community garden, playground and petting zoo. The initiative is set up by a collaboration between the municipality, a school, the neighbourhood organisation and a health care organisation. The healthcare organisation is in charge of maintaining the site, through providing daytime activities and a job to people with a mental disability. The small-scale collaboration leads to a successful community centre that adapts to the needs of the local community and brings neighbours together.

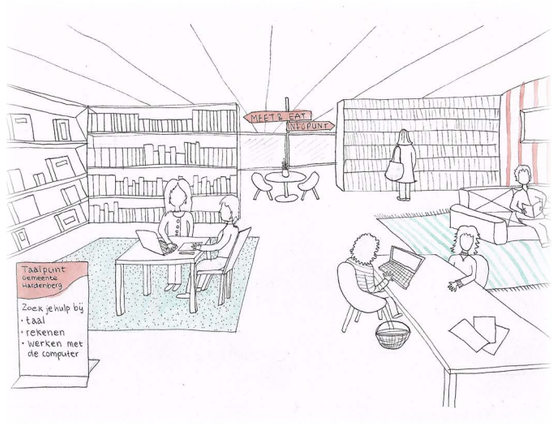


Figure 47: Library as a community hub

Figure 48: Successful local collaborations

The main findings in Dalfsen were:
- The church as a source of solidarity
- Gardening as a calming activity
- New developments: a threat?

The first finding in Dalfsen was the solidarity shown by the church. The solidarity was shown through several social initiatives the church had set up. One of them was the Fietserieje. The Fietserieje is located in a red shed next to the church. Local residents are invited to bring old or unused bicycles to this facility, where they will be repaired and checked. The bikes are then sold for a very small fee (or donated) to people in town who have less money to spend. This also happened when a group of Ukrainian refugees arrived in Dalfsen. Besides this facility, the church offers language classes and tutoring sessions to newcomers, as well as, translations of the church service.

During the site visit in Dalfsen, a lot of people were working in their gardens, preparing them for spring. The people I spoke to, told me that gardening and neatly kept gardens are important to the locals and appreciated by neighbours. People interacted with bypassers when working in the gardens, showing that these front gardens and gardening are important interactive activities in Dalfsen. There was also a neighbourhood garden and allotment gardens in town.

Lastly, on a more negative note, inhabitants spoke about the negative new developments. People from neighbouring cities moved to Dalfsen for peace and quiet. However, this resulted in local youths not being able to afford housing in town anymore. Additionally, new constructions and developments were ignorant of the unique and historic character of the town. This is visible in figure 51, where a community building called TrefkoelePlus is shown. The generic and large design does not fit the small-scale identity of Dalfsen.

Figure 49: Gardening as a calming activity

Figure 50: The church as a source of solidarity

Figure 51: New developments: a threat? (Spring Architecten, n.d.)

INTERVIEWS

For this research, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three Syrian women of different ages. The women were found through different channels, which will not be mentioned to prevent reidentification. One of the interviews was conducted in person, the other two were conducted through a phone call. Two women have been in the country for more than 5 years, the other woman has stayed here for a little less than that. The results of the interviews are set out in a thematic analysis. The main themes that arose during the conversations are highlighted.

All Syrian women highlighted that they were thankful for being in the Netherlands, for being safe and away from war. However, in spite of that, the struggles they encounter here in the Netherlands are significant and limit the women from settling in properly. In the following sections, these struggles are highlighted.

Figure 52: Juggling the struggles

1. Two identities

The first struggle the Syrian status holders noted was the 'two identities', the one which was still in Syria and the one in the Netherlands. For example, one participant fled from Syria on her own leaving behind her family, which was a very difficult decision to make. Now in the Netherlands, she is trying to build a new life, but at the back of her mind she is worrying about her parents: do they have access to the medicine they need? Are they in danger? Are they healthy?

This makes it very difficult to focus on one of the two identities, as one part will always remain in Syria and will take up part of your consciousness, which will make it hard to put all your attention into integrating.

One of the women said that she felt like she was traumatized, but because she is trying to get everything together she does not have time to even think about her trauma. As long as there is no justice, there is no peace.

2. Bureaucratic landscape

One of the main struggles upon arrival in the Netherlands is the complicated and vast bureaucratic landscape, which has to be unravelled without a guide. This already starts in the reception centres, where the Syrian status holders shared stories of themselves staying there for a year or even longer. Once they have received their status to stay in the Netherlands and have received housing in a Dutch municipality, a bulk of new paperwork arrives at the doorstep. One of the women shared that most of the paperwork is not in their native language, complicating the process even more. She said that for every little thing for example WiFi, telephone bills, rent, health care etc. letters end up on the doorstep that need to be checked and possibly signed within a certain time. Sometimes the communication issues lead to unforeseen bills and agreements that cost a lot of money, money the participant and her acquaintances don't have, as they often have to live off a social benefit, which limits their budget.

3. Validation

Within the theme of validation, a variety of problems came forward. The first problem is related to confidence and how the current system treats refugees as if they are less. One woman noted that this already starts in the reception centres where you are treated as a number. You live with three other people in a room, there is no privacy and people treat you like you are less. She even started believing it and started losing confidence. You would hope that this would change once you obtain a permit to stay in the Netherlands but that is not the case. All Syrian women said that they and their friends had issues with finding a job. Which was mostly caused by the lack of validation of previous education and/or experience in a certain field. The women spoke of doctors, writers, architects and other professionals who could not proceed with their profession in the Netherlands because their education and experience were not good enough, but there are also no proper options to retrain themselves. There was a story of a woman who wanted any job she could find, for practical reasons, but could not find one. This has led to voluntary work among them. One of the women told me that she worked part-time as a volunteer for other refugees, but this work extended into her free time, which meant that she is almost always working. Frustratingly, Dutch people complained to her that she was profiting from the Dutch welfare system without working, and living off the taxes of Dutch citizens. This invalidation hurt her as she was working really hard every day, she just did not receive an income for it.

4. Discrimination

This last example is not only linked to validation but also to discrimination. In this case, one of the Syrian women gave an example of a friend with loads of experience, fluency in Dutch, and tons of applications, but (probably) due to his Middle-Eastern name, he was not invited to any job interviews. Especially, organisations or at least individuals as representatives of organisations tend to use discriminatory practices. One of the women asked for help at the organisation she was volunteering for. The

man was willing to help her, but the woman next to him shooed her away and told her to go to the organisation in charge of this particular problem.

Additionally, a participant mentioned the way companies or organisations misuse language barriers for their own good through phone calls. She said that whenever she asks them to speak slowly, they ignore her and keep speaking at the same pace. Through this, one of her friends who wanted to get a phone subscription ended up not having one. Three months later a bill reached his doorstep that billed three months of the subscription he never used.

One Syrian woman told me about how she asked her neighbour, an elderly man, for help with reading a document in Dutch. He told her he would help her this time, but that she shouldn't knock on his door anymore, because this would be the first and the last time he would help her.

Another woman shared a story of her and her friend, who wore a hijab, and waited for a bus in a smaller Dutch town. The bus passed by them without stopping. Twice. She told me that she didn't encounter this type of discrimination herself often because she does not wear a hijab and dresses Western, so this experience even shocked her.

Lastly, a phenomenon that all Syrian women encountered was the kind of patronising position Dutch colleagues, neighbours and individuals took, treating them like they were less.

5. Cultural differences

Besides discrimination, the participants encountered other struggles related to cultural differences, especially related to building relationships with Dutch people. One of the women described a friend as someone you can call anytime and someone you can go to any time. In the Netherlands, no one invited her to their house while in Syrian culture this is common and a sign of hospitality. Due to these smaller differences, she had difficulty connecting with Dutch people.

Another example she gave was when Dutch people around her were complaining about the energy prices and the unaffordability of houses in the Netherlands. She said that she wanted to, but couldn't really relate because she worries about very different things.

6. Language learning

In all interviews language learning was a main theme. Two of the women spoke enough Dutch to have the conversation in Dutch, although sometimes I had to repeat or rephrase questions. The problem they noted was the difference between being in a reception centre and having no access to real language learning facilities and then once receiving status, being expected to learn the language as fast as possible. Additionally, one woman noted that there were even waitlists for Dutch classes for status holders, which was difficult as she really wanted to learn the language as fast as possible. This eagerness was present in all the women. The woman who didn't know Dutch yet first had to learn English for her field of expertise, which made it difficult to simultaneously learn Dutch. This also indicated the difficult choices and the intensity of all the new things you have to learn to integrate.

7. Reciprocity

One of the women was involved with a Syrian organisation. She talked about the problem around reciprocity and cultural groups. Her group tried to interact with other organisations and the municipality as much as possible, reaching into the Dutch organisational structure. This worked out sometimes, but it was very difficult for them as it was more of a one-sided interaction. Dutch organisations or municipalities didn't reach out to them, which was very difficult for them as 1. they couldn't achieve as much as they wanted and 2. they didn't feel validated.

8. Willingness and ability

One of the Syrian womenx noted that it is, however, important to keep the differences within the Syrian community in mind. She was very open and had more of a Western view, but there are more traditional Syrian groups coming into the Netherlands who might be less inclined to actively integrate and adopt Dutch norms and values. With that, she highlighted that not all Syrians are the same and that she even felt as if she came from another country compared to specific other Syrians. Additionally, she talked about the (dis)ability of some groups to integrate. Especially older generations struggle with learning a new language and often don't know any English, which makes it a lot harder for them to integrate into the Netherlands.

9. Belonging

The last theme is about belonging, the places where they did feel welcome and where they went during their free time. The first thing that arose was the library. One of the women explained that she went there for her language classes and met other Syrians there when she first arrived in the Netherlands. The other woman also went there in her first weeks in the Netherlands. She was sad and decided to go to the library as she loves reading and writing. The librarian noted her sadness and asked her what was wrong. This was the first (and one of the only) caring Dutch people she encountered. The librarian helped her arrange language classes at the library, but also with other more personal stuff. She told me that the library felt like her second home, the only place she could relax and be herself. Another place she felt safe in was the church, where she occasionally went to gatherings to meet other refugees from various backgrounds.

Unfortunately, places like restaurants, café and other places that cost money are not accessible for a lot of status holders as they cost too much money.

5 SYNTHESIS

5.1 Economic spheres of integration
- 5.1.1 Definition
- 5.1.2 Experience of Syrians
- 5.1.3 What is missing?
- 5.1.4 The value of Naoberschap

6.2 Reflection on framework
- 5.2.1 New insights
- 5.2.2 Revision urban network
- 5.2.3 Revision social capital
- 5.2.4 New conceptual framework

6.3 Interscalarity
- 5.3.1 Definition
- 5.3.2 The economic spheres through scales
- 5.3.3 Places vs. identifications

6.4 Approach
- 5.4.1 Places
- 5.4.2 Identifications
- 5.4.3 Governance framework
- 5.4.4 Elements

In this chapter, the results from the fieldwork are explored in more depth. Here, the aim is to bring the interview results from both parties, as well as, all observations closer together. In order to do so, new theories and additional literature is explored to explain the new insights that arise.

This chapter will also reflect on the conceptual and theoretical framework developed before the fieldwork, in order to see how the real-life conditions have altered the fundamental conditions of this research. Additionally, it offers insights into what elements are most important and should be highlighted and prioritized.

This chapter will also display how governance plays an important role in this thesis and where struggles related to governance can be found. Additionally, this chapter offers the first insights into the spatial dimension of the research. Connections between observations on site, interviews and literature are used to explore how space plays a role in this research.

Lastly, this chapter presents the approach and elements used for the roadmap.

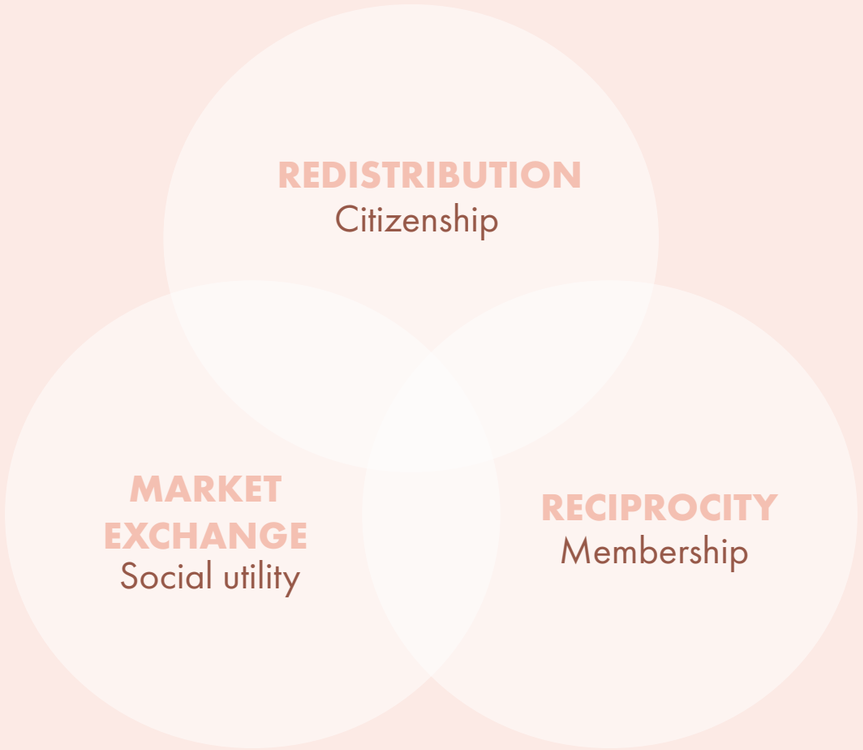


Figure 53: Spheres of economic integration (Meert en Kesteloot, 2000)

The conversations I had with the Syrian woman offered me insights into what issues they encountered during their integration or settling in the Netherlands. There was a certain pattern to it, but it was hard to bring them together. So for that, I was guided towards the theory of economic spheres of integration, which helps to identify how there are systemic problems that can be linked to the way status holders can (not) economically integrate into Dutch society. Meaning, they don't have balanced access to the three economic spheres of integration. The theory is based on the literature from Meert and Kesteloot (2000).

The first sphere is the most obvious one, which is market exchange. Market exchange is the exchange of money, either on the receiving side as a return for labour. Or as the consumer, by giving the money to pay for products or services. This forms the basis for the present-day economy.

However, in order to keep a somewhat fair distribution of resources, distribution is used. Redistribution, in associative form, concerns subsidies and insurance. This means that a group of people all put a certain amount of money into a collective fund. This money is redistributed to whoever needs it at certain times. An example of this is health insurance. Everyone pays their monthly premium. This premium is collected in a fund. Whenever you need health care, you receive the money to pay for this. This also means that some people put in more money than they need, the healthier population, but there is also a group who needs more than they pay. This system prevents people from going bankrupt when they get sick. This system is also used through taxes. Taxes are paid and redistributed through social security benefits or through investing in public resources.

Semi-associative redistribution is used to describe the process of redistributing among a group that has not put money into the collective fund. This is considered charity. In my opinion, charity does not only include monetary charity, but also labour charity. People offering services to a group who is not able to pay.

Lastly, there is reciprocity. Balanced reciprocity is an exchange based on trust. Borrowing an egg from a neighbour without expecting something directly in return. But if two months later you need a cup of sugar, she will be glad to give it. Reciprocity is not quantifiable. Reciprocity is often seen within families or between friends, but also as in the example above, between neighbours. Within reciprocity there is also have negative reciprocity, where people misuse the kindness of others and common reciprocity, giving without expecting a return (also considered charity).

The difference between the two kinds of charity is that the redistributional charity often works through an organisation, bringing the volunteer and the people or cause in need together. Reciprocal charity is often on a more personal level, helping acquaintances or friends who are having difficulties, without expecting something in return.

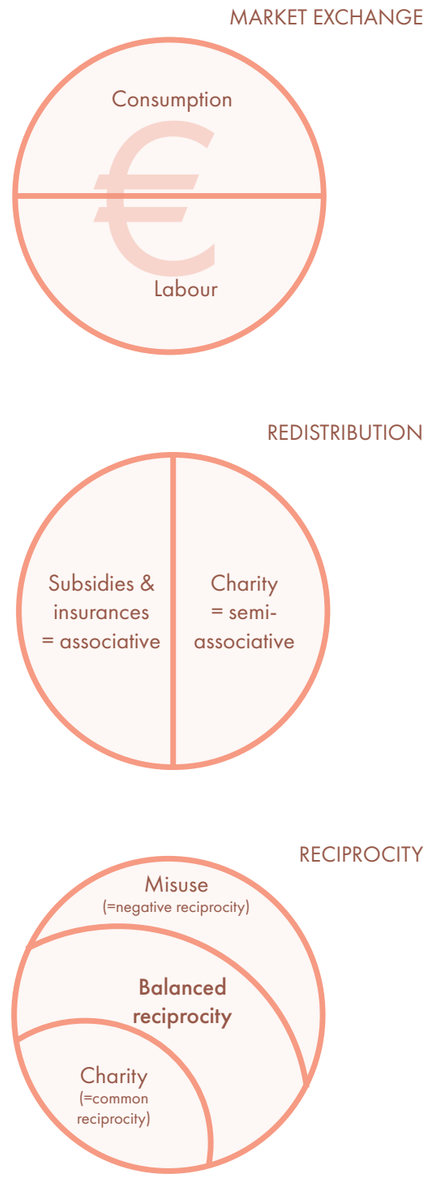


Figure 54: Definition of the spheres (Meert and Kesteloot, 2000)

Syrian status holders are often dependent on subsidies and social benefits as they struggle finding a paying job that suits their experience and education and are, as a result, only able to do charity or voluntary work.

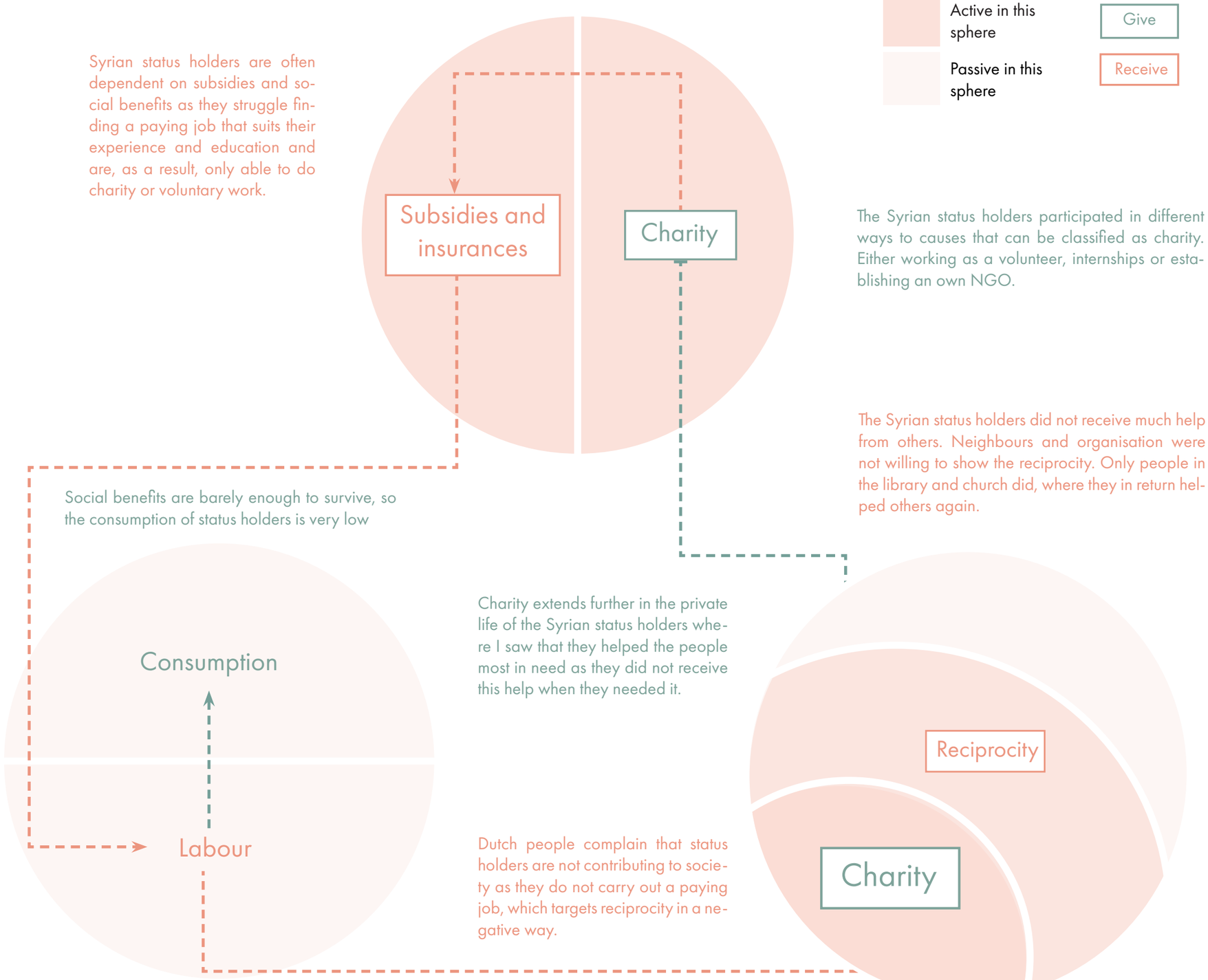
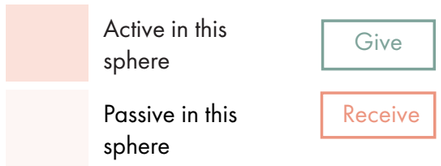


Figure 55: The experience of Syrian status holders



The Syrian status holders participated in different ways to causes that can be classified as charity. Either working as a volunteer, internships or establishing an own NGO.

The Syrian status holders did not receive much help from others. Neighbours and organisation were not willing to show the reciprocity. Only people in the library and church did, where they in return helped others again.

In figure 55, the findings from the interviews with the Syrian status holders are projected onto the spheres to help to identify the main bottlenecks.

What can be seen here is that status holders are especially active in the redistribution sphere. One the receiving hand, they get social security benefits to ensure access to necessities. In return, they often provide charity services to others in need. This is often because they know how it feels to not be assisted enough during the integration process.

Within the sphere of market exchange, status holders struggle to find their way. They want to get a paying job, not only to be independent of benefits but also to help their families left behind in Syria. However, finding a job within their own field, on their level is very difficult. Consequently, they have very little money to be active consumers in the local economy.

Lastly, status holders are often active in the reciprocity sphere. However, Dutch people do not always return this reciprocity, limiting reciprocity to happening between fellow Syrians. This observation is strongly linked to the social capital discussed in the theoretical framework. Therefore, you can also clearly see the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. These will be discussed later.

Interestingly, the site visits brought a new perspective to this reciprocity, a value dominantly present in the towns discussed: **naoberschap.**

Naoberschap has also been mentioned in the research done before the site visit. Then the question arose: how much is this value used in real life?

To understand the concept, the origin of naoberschap is explored, when it was something out of necessity. Rural towns in the east of the Netherlands were removed too far from other places during winter to travel to. Within these isolated towns, neighbours became dependent on each other to survive: *naoberschap*.

Naoberschap was consequently a physically marked place, with 8-10 neighbours. This social value was therefore not a choice, but a duty, which was functional, but often also oppressive. Group morale was more important than individual identity. If you were not willing to contribute to the *naoberschap*, you were completely cut off from the community (Abbas, 2013).

An example of the old *naoberschap* is the reception of a new neighbour. A new neighbour introduces themself to the new community, after which the community goes out to get the belongings of the newcomer (even if it takes hours). In the meantime, the women clean the house of the newcomer. As a thank you, the newcomer will serve tea and a treat after coming back with their belongings (Van Den Berg, 1928).

This old article already shows how modern life in the early 20th century started interfering with the naoberschap, but it seemed to be too strong to be driven away.

> *"So it shows that even though much has been lost of the old peculiarities of the farmers' life, neighbours will always play an important role. Not as humans who coincidentally live next to each other but as members of a community group, who know the group interests and bonds, who need each other daily for big and small things in life..." (Van Den Berg, 1928) translated by author*

In recent years, the decrease in social cohesion has been an agenda point for all planners. However, it seems as if the places that originally lived with the *naoberschap*, are not experiencing this decrease.

This form of reciprocity has gained some significant popularity, also partly because it is now a choice and not a duty. People want to meet and help each other. It is about trust, shared responsibility, equality and reciprocity. Modern technology, like social media, has made it possible to maintain this form of *naoberschap*, without the boundaries of the past. The scale is not as limited as it was and people use social media as an addition to face-to-face contact.

All in all, making the naoberschap a more successful value than it was. However, only if it is organically formed, bottom-up without planners telling people to implement this value (as seems to be a new trend). The tradition itself is an important part (Abbas, 2013).

An example of this new successful form can be found in Roggel (Abbas, 2013). *Naoberzorg*, where cohesion and cooperation are important and where meeting places are the essential key to success. They work with the motto *'gewoon samen doen!'* translated to, just do together.

And this *naoberschap* was also present on site. In Hardenberg visible was the gardening organisation that donated the produce to people in need and a donation closet with essential groceries. In Dalfsen the church was found to be helping with language classes and collecting bicycles for the people in need.

The value is sometimes mentioned explicitly, but you can see how the value implicitly forms the foundation of the communities in these towns.

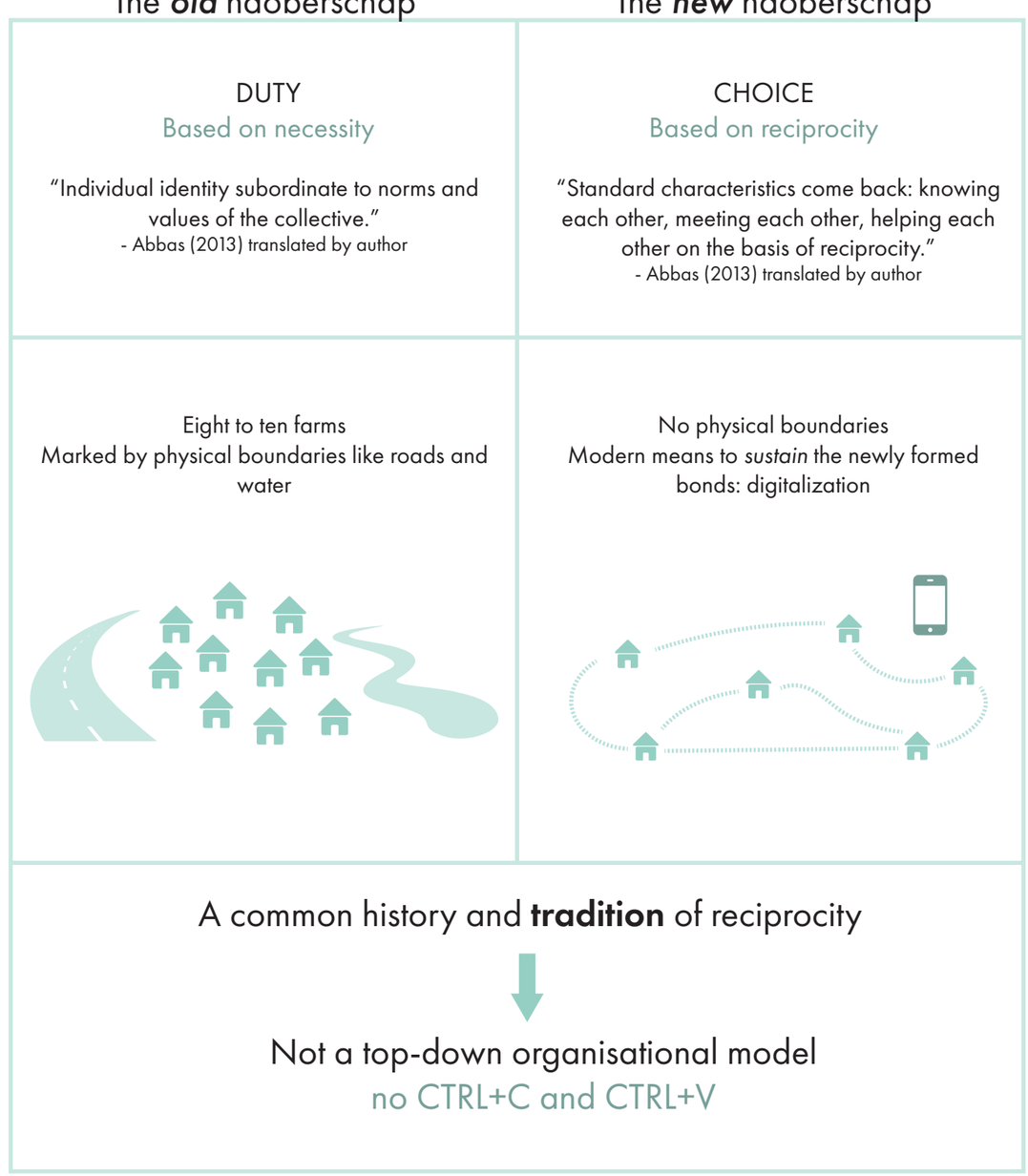


Figure 56: The old versus the new naoberschap

REFLECTION ON FRAMEWORK

In the chapter on the theoretical framework several theories are discussed, based on the conceptual framework formulated after the problem statement. These theories formed a hypothesis before going into the fieldwork. Interestingly, some of the expectations were not confirmed by the fieldwork, which causes some major shifts in the conceptual- and theoretical framework.

In this chapter, these new insights are explained and how they change some of the most fundamental notions in this research. After this, the theory of social capital will be revised as it has turned out to play a very important role in the research. Lastly, a new conceptual framework is proposed that takes into account the new insights the fieldwork has given.

When looking at the initial conceptual framework, three elements have brought major changes.

In the first instance, *brede welvaart*, well-being was proposed for both status holders and locals, based on the hypothesis that these areas need to maintain or improve their functionality to stay attractive to locals. During the fieldwork, I realised that **locals** are already satisfied. They are satisfied with the amenities and with the living environment, especially because of the present social capital in these small towns.

This then relates to the concept of **capacity building**, where the hypothesis was that new people have to be attracted to be able to keep these towns on a certain level in terms of amenities and services. In the interviews, the opposite was confirmed. In Dalfsen, one local reported that only the elite is attracted to the town, driving out the young locals, which is an unwanted development. In Hardenberg, critique was found on all the new building developments diminishing the character of the town. They don't necessarily want to attract new people, they rather travel to another city to have access to specific amenities.

Lastly, there is the notion of **social capital**. The expectation was that social capital would be relatively high in small towns. This was confirmed by the residents who also noted that they rather live in a place with a high social capital with less amenities, than the other way around. The fieldwork has also shown that social capital is in place to help vulnerable groups in society. The social capital is used to compensate for shortcomings in employment and income. Different organisations are fuelled by the reciprocal character of social capital, which is related to the local value of naoberschap: people take care of each other.

These changes have shown that the initial conceptual framework was not necessarily untrue, but not as relevant for the scope selected for this research. In the following sections, the urban network and social capital theory will be revised. Based on the new insights, a new conceptual framework will be formulated.

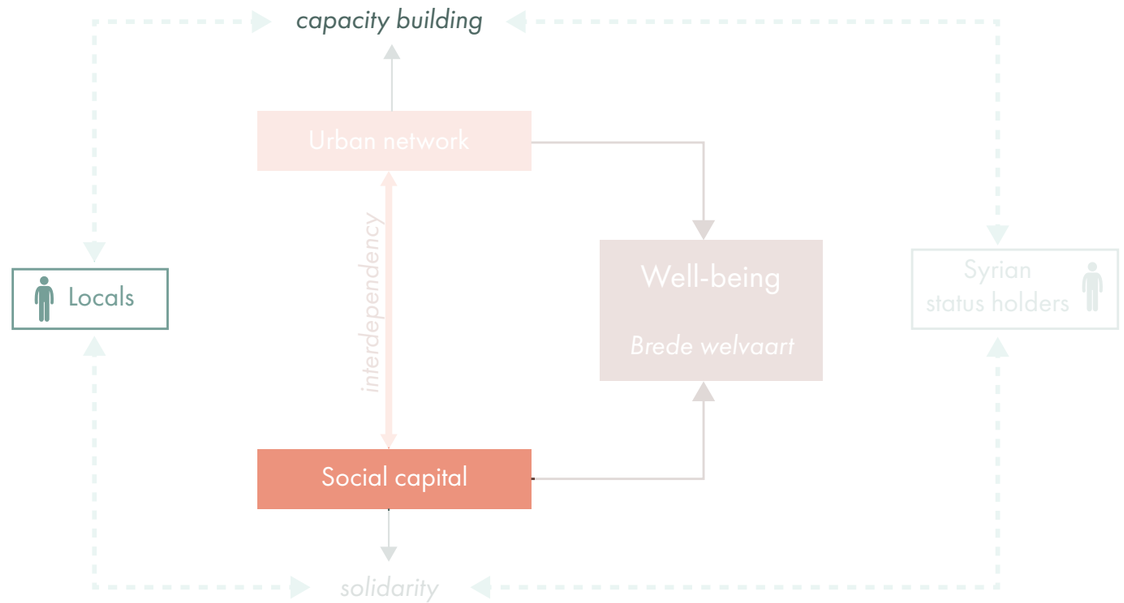


Figure 57: The initial conceptual framework

The fieldwork has shown that the urban network theory can not be applied without considering the negative consequences for the local residents. Even though the urban network theory is put aside for the main course of this research, I think it is still relevant to revise and come up with recommendations for future research.

The first struggle locals noted was the generic developments that are diminishing the historic, cultural and unique identity of the towns. For example, in Hardenberg completely new neighbourhoods are built in a rather generic style (figure 58).

But also in Dalfsen, this is visible. For example in the form of the newly built Trefkoeleplus, a collective building, built in a very modern style, which contrasts with the authentic identity of the towns (figure 59).

The second struggle was the attraction of residents from higher socio-economic brackets, who are moving away from the city. This results in pressure on the housing market for locals.

Altogether, a recommendation for further research would be to look closer at these developments and to research how these towns can be developed differently, respecting their unique identity. This is in line with the urban network theory, to see how the collaboration between towns (and city) can be improved without driving away the current population.

In this research, the main concept of the urban network theory will be put aside. Nonetheless, interdependencies between the towns will be kept in mind. For this research, I will keep asking myself how these towns can create capacity together to realise certain spatial interventions or policies.

Additionally, when formulating recommendations further along in this research, how certain interventions should not only benefit the newcomers, but also the host community, will be considered. In this way, more capacity can be created for change and limit the negative attitudes towards interventions as they are not limited to one target group.

Figure 58: New developments Hardenberg (Google Maps, 2023)

Figure 59: Trefkoele+, Dalfsen (Spring Architecten, n.d.)

In this research:

How can the towns combine their capacity in creating new iniatives and policies?

How do interventions get attractive for both status holders and locals?

In future research:

How do these towns and regions stay liveable and functional without pushing out locals and diminshing the identity of the towns?

Figure 60: Recommendations for future research

In the theoretical framework, the concept of social capital was discussed in much detail. Here, the focus was on the four main problems that status holders can encounter during their integration process.

The first problem was related to the bonding of social capital: the sense of (dis-)belonging. During the conversations with the Syrian women, I noticed that this sense of belonging was not directly related to only the bonding of social capital. I noted that the issues they encountered were not often related to struggling with staying in touch with their own culture or with people with the same cultural background. They didn't feel like they belonged here because they are perceived as *'them'*.

This then shows that the second problem, the bridging of social capital, breaking the cultural walls is more important in the integration process from the perspective of Syrian status holders. The Syrian status holders I have spoken to, but also the literature by Welschen et al. (2020), have shown the importance of integration to the Syrian community: they want to be part of Dutch society as fast as possible and essential for that is the bridging of social capital. To do this, learning the language and finding a job were also very important to them.

The third challenge that was marked was the lack of economic and political power to make changes or to support the creation of social capital. Within this challenge, the site visits were very enlightening. These sites have shown especially how collaboration can play an important role in succeeding in social projects. For example, the Wijkboerderij is a collaboration between different organisations, which all have a certain budget to contribute to the collaboration which leaves only a minimum input to the municipality. Here, the municipality owns the building and the playground, but the rest of the site and the organisation is managed by the various parties involved. The inputs are centralised to create an initiative that could not be realised by the organisations independently. The site visits have consequently shown best practices within this challenge that can be used to make it transferable to other places.

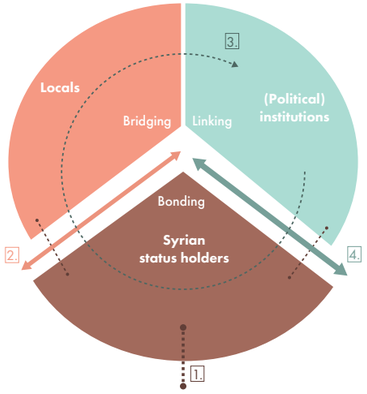


Figure 62: Bonding, bridging and linking social capital

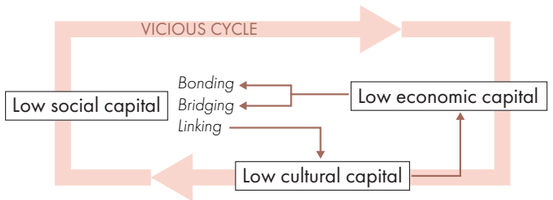


Figure 61: The vicious circle of integration

Lastly, the issue of the vicious circle was highlighted, which was referred to as economic and cultural capital. This vicious circle related to the invalidation of education and previous experience, which led to unemployment (and consequently low economic capital) which then eventually led to a low social capital as Dutch people would see this as profiting from the welfare state.

In essence, the problem marked here was very relevant and also confirmed in the interviews. However, I think this can be explained better based on the new theory found after the fieldwork: the **economic spheres of integration.**

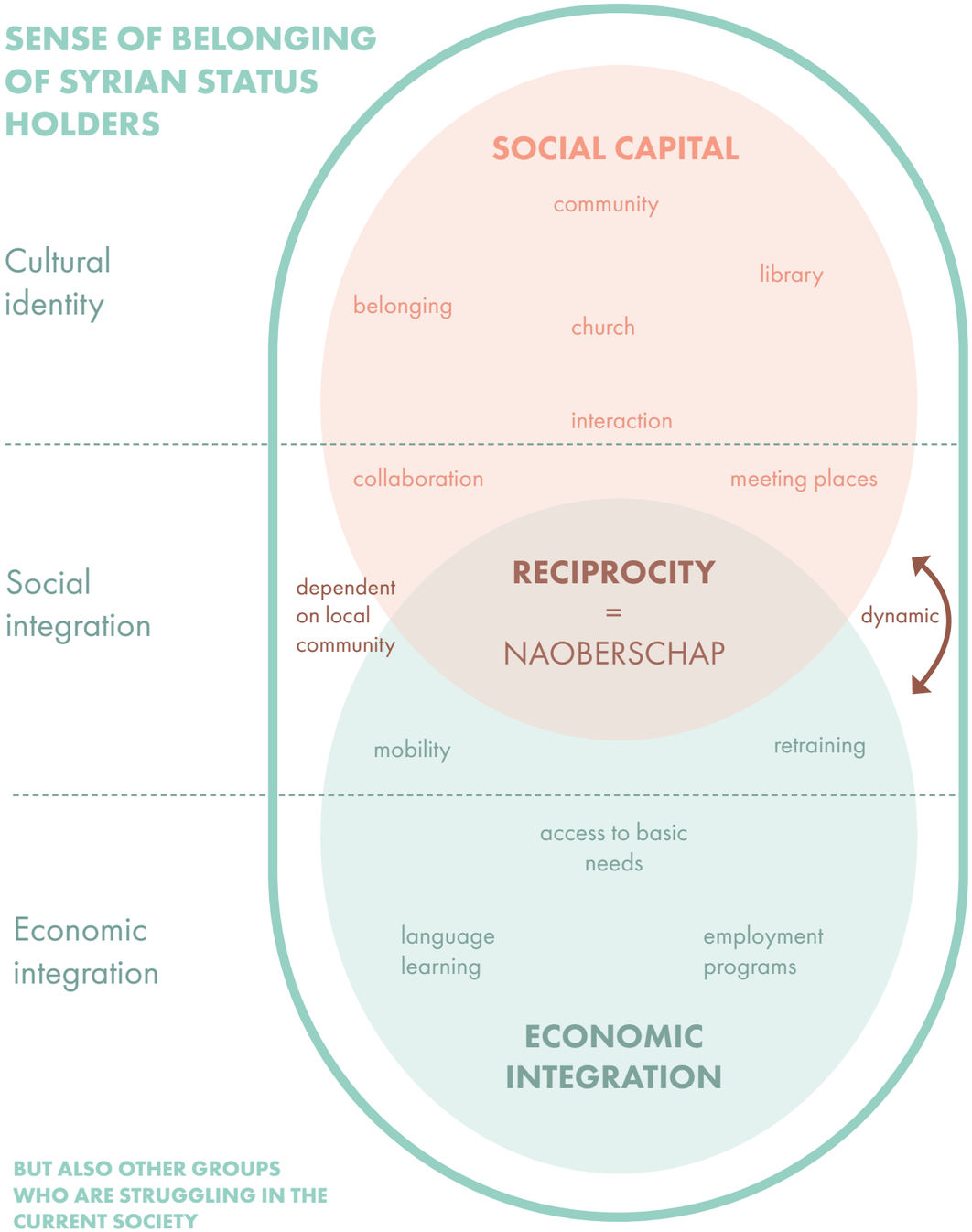


Figure 63: The new conceptual framework

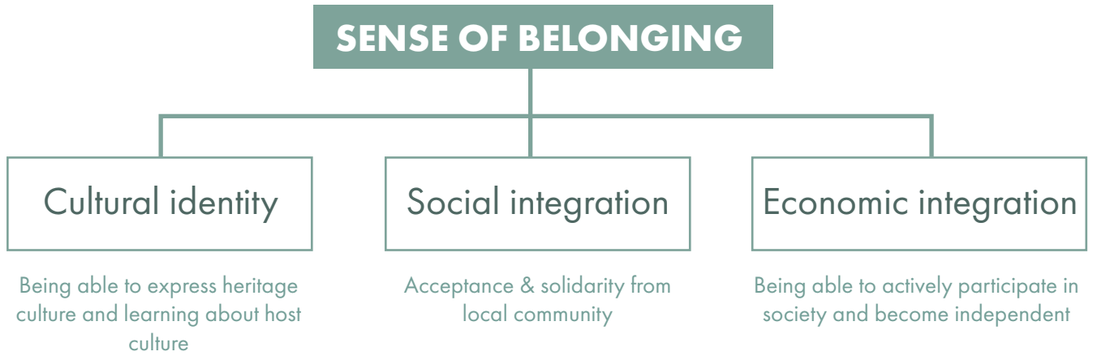


Figure 64: New definition of the sense of belonging

Based on these new insights and the revision of the social capital theory, a new conceptual framework can be developed (figure 63). This framework shifts away from the urban network theory as a main concept, as well as from the idea that these towns need an impulse to stay attractive for the current (and future) inhabitants. The focus of the conceptual framework is now on what is needed to make Syrian status holders feel at home. The focus is thus on Syrian status holders, but this conceptual framework is also very valid for other groups, native or foreign, that struggle to find their place in society.

The main aim is consequently creating a sense of belonging for Syrian status holders. Based on the reflection on the social capital theory, there could be seen that the sense of belonging is not only about bonding with culturally similar people. Syrian status holders value the social integration with Dutch people a lot. They also put a lot of effort into finding a job and becoming independent, which brings a new definition of a sense of belonging (figure 64). In this definition, the new cultural identity of Syrian status holders, where they are able to express their heritage culture and learn about the new culture, is considered. Additionally, the aim is to explore social integration, which is a two-sided interaction, where local residents also play an important role. Lastly, economic integration is looked at, which refers to the ability of status holders to work and earn money.

Looking at these aims, the social capital theory remains highly relevant, as well as, the newly explored spheres of economic integration. These two theories cross each other in the middle, as reciprocity is one of the spheres of economic integration, but is also essential in developing social capital.

Interestingly, reciprocity is reflected in the local value of naoberschap: taking care of your neighbours. The extent to which naoberschap is expressed in reality is dependent on the local community and the ties within a neighbourhood.

The rest of this research will look at how spatial interventions, initiatives and policies can be used to strengthen the sense of belonging of Syrian status holders in small towns in the Netherlands. Here the different values are taken into account: cultural identity, social integration and economic integration.

INTERSCALARITY

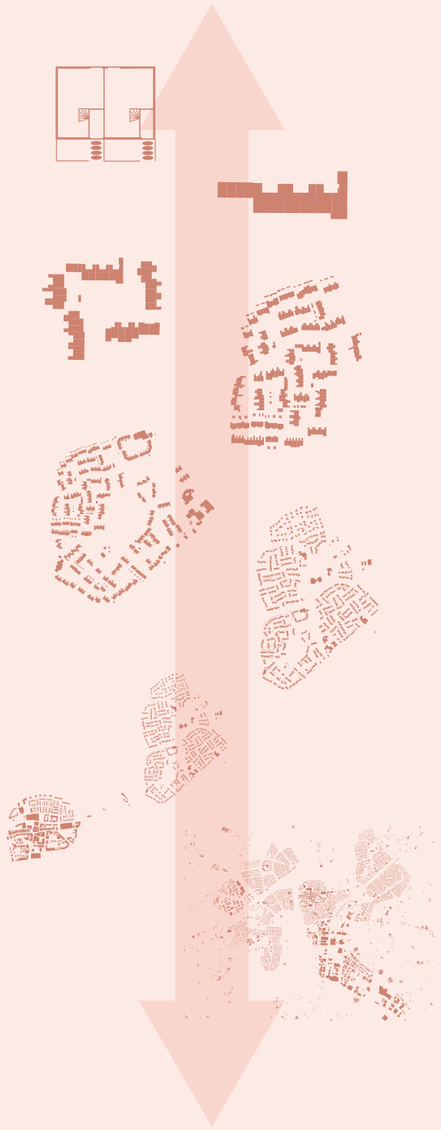


Figure 65: Interscalarity

In order to dive into the spatial dimension of the fieldwork it is important to first look into the scalar approach. Whereas policies and governance are relatively fixed in scale, the social dimension is much more dynamic and therefore this research uses an interscalar approach.

Interscalarity is not defined very strictly in urban planning yet, but in this thesis it is used to describe the fluidity of scales. This research works with the idea of *in-between scales*. Certain processes or places do not act on a scale, but in between scales. Therefore, a spectrum of scales is used which goes from the individual house to the neighbourhood to the town and finally to the region.

This idea is triggered by the influence of mobility, diversity and digitalization on space. So, taking the example of mobility, 'neighbourhood' has a different definition for different people.

Children might be limited to a smaller area as they are not allowed to cross a busy road. Therefore, their interpretation of 'my neighbourhood' is different from what their parents might think. Or for example, elderly who use a walker to get around might also have a different definition of 'their neighbourhood' as they are only able to walk for a few minutes. People with a car have a different consideration of scale than people without a car. Nonetheless, instutional boundaries remain important when considering decision-making and funding in which neighbourhoods are considered seperately.

The same effect can be seen through digitalization. Neighbourhood initiatives, promoted on social media, might attract people that would formally not be part of the neighbourhood. This shows that boundaries are different for every individual depending on their material, physical, digital and mental abilities and resources.

Status holders are then often tied to the smaller scales as their mobility is limited. On top of that, they are also excluded from the digital sphere. This shows that an interscalar approach is needed, to ensure that status holders are either able to reach the higher scales or to bring functionalities to the smaller scales.

If this idea of interscalarity is projected on the economic spheres. In figure 59 there can be seen that each sphere has its own range. Reciprocity is the most personal sphere and is thus present on the smallest scale. Redistribution has a lot of different forms and consequently ranges through various scales, even into the national scale (subsidies and benefits). Lastly, market exchange is something which is especially present within larger scales. In the following chapter, there will be an exploration on how these spheres act through the different scales.

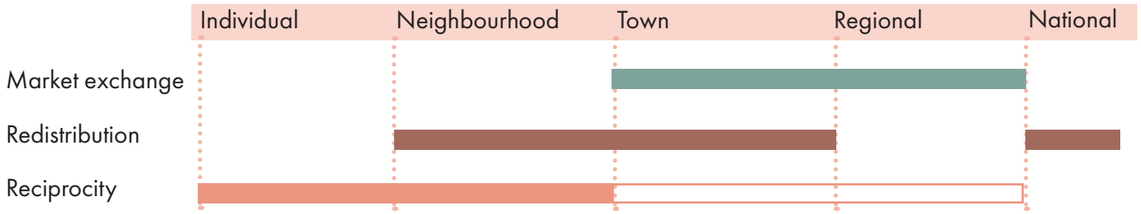


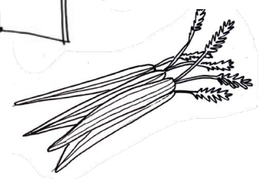
Figure 66: The spheres of economic integration through scales

Borrowing sugar

RECIPROCITY

Figure 67: Home level

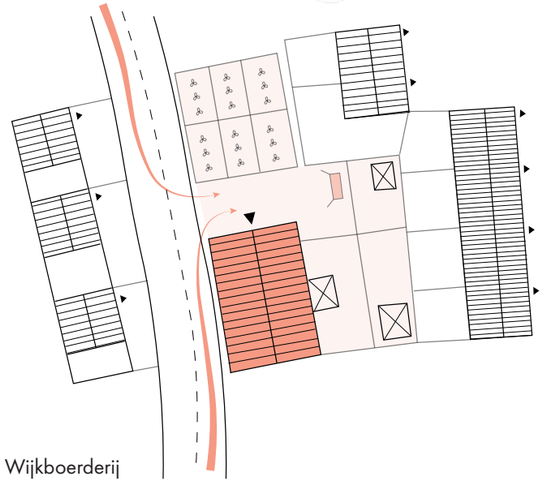
Vegetables from community garden



Donation closet

REDISTRIBUTION

Figure 68: Neighbourhood level



Wijkboerderij

RECIPROCITY

Figure 69: Neighbourhood level

Reciprocity starts at the smallest scale and is often stronger the smaller (or the tighter) the community. Borrowing sugar from a neighbour is one of the best examples of reciprocity. Three months later, the other neighbour comes by to ask for an egg. Another example could be an older lady down the street, watching someone's children in case of an emergency. A couple of weeks later, the lady asks them to help her with setting up her computer.

But this is not only present on the smallest scale, it also feeds into larger parts of the neighbourhood or the neighbourhood as a whole. For this, organisations or specific meeting places are needed. An example of this is the Naoberschap Baalder, a neighbourhood organisation who provide help through volunteers for whoever needs it. The Wijkboerderij offers an anchor in the public space to give this organisation a visual representation. The reciprocity in this case is more in the shape of charity, but that does not mean that the receiving group does not offer anything back to their neighbours, they will once they are able to.

On this scale, with the Wijkboerderij as a central node, the first practices of redistribution can be found. The first example is the produce from the garden that the Naoberschap brings towards the families who need it most. The second example is the donation closet on the Wijkboerderij site, where groceries are collected to be picked up by families who need it most. In Dalfsen, the Fietserieje was found, a central node from which bicycles are redistributed to new owners. Distinguishing reciprocity and redistribution in these areas is quite difficult as they are both based on the principle of charity and naoberschap.

The Wijkboerderij in itself also acts as a stimulator of reciprocity as it connects different people from different parts of the neighbourhood, creating new relationships or even friendships. The church in Dalfsen or other community centres are also stimulators of reciprocity.

Following through the next scale, the interaction between the town core and the neighbourhoods becomes visible. This scale still shows reciprocity, but this is often between culturally-similar groups or within families and friend groups.

Redistribution is present in the material form and in the immaterial form. In the material form, subsidies and benefits from the municipality directed towards groups that qualify for these benefits are found. In the immaterial form, language classes and other services are provided for specific groups.

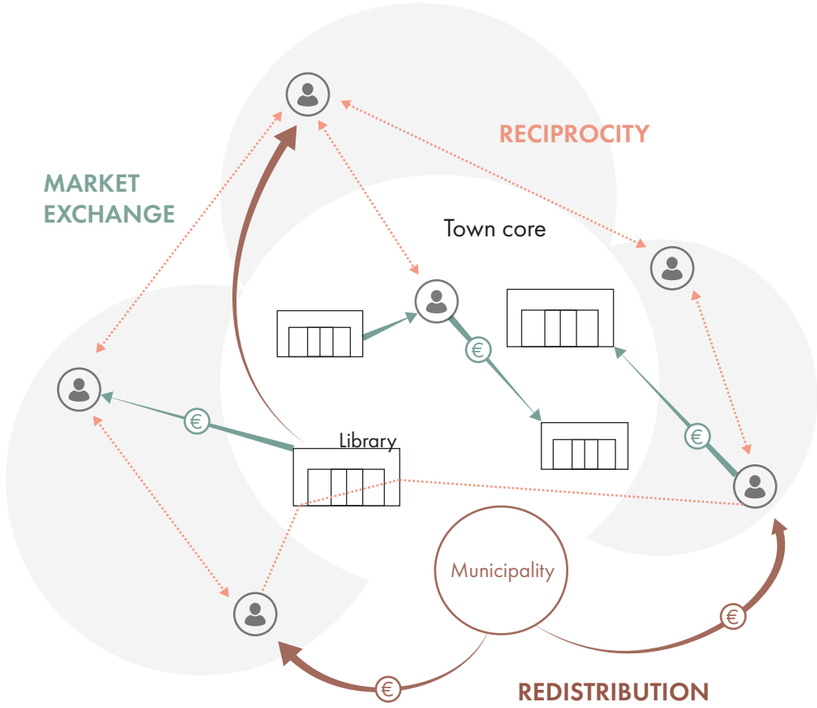
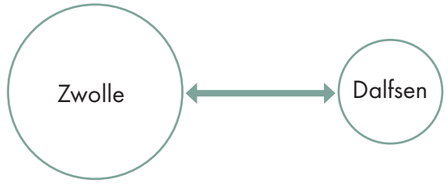


Figure 70: Town level

Market exchange becomes important on this scale in the way businesses interact with the citizens. They provide job opportunities, but also allow citizens to consume. Market exchange could also be found within neighbourhoods, when thinking about local shops or shopping centres, but this was not the case for the areas visited. This decentralised distribution of shops and services is often visible in bigger urban cores and cities, but this was not present on-site.

The library is an interesting place to mention as it is involved in reciprocity, it connects people. It is involved in redistribution through the workshops and language classes provided by the municipality. And for a small group it is important for market exchange, for the people working there.

On the regional scale, two collaborations became visible during the site visit: Zwolle - Dalfsen and Hardenberg - Gramsbergen. On this scale, especially employment and access to amenities was important and thus mostly market exchange.



MARKET EXCHANGE

Interaction between larger and smaller urban cores

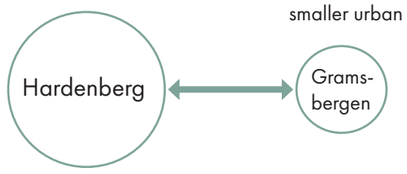


Figure 71: Region level

With the interscalar approach in mind, the question arose: how can this be spatialized? Looking back at the conceptual framework, there were two sides: one more locally-oriented looking at social capital and one on a town-level or higher: the economic spheres. On the higher scales, especially **governance** become important, whereas on the local scale the focus is on the spatial dimension and fitting initiatives to promote interaction within space.

In terms of space, the question is then what role spatial planning can take in designing for social capital? The fieldwork has led to the conclusion that there are a couple of specific places that play a large role in the creation and maintenance of social capital in towns: community centres, churches and libraries.

These **meeting places** cover a range of different functionalities and are meant to be accessible to all. They provide fixed anchors in the spatial dimension and reach out into the neighbourhood. These places often provide a range of services, which makes the place important for different people for different reasons. They are consequently, often considered as carriers of social capital. These specific places contribute to all three factors of a sense of belonging: cultural identity, social integration and economic integration.

These meeting places, however, can also be places of exclusion when applying an intersectional lens. Especially, newcomers might experience unequal power relations in these places or only visit them for the specific services they provide for their group: foreigners. Therefore, in line with the literature by Broto & Alves (2018), I think there is a need to look further than these fixed places of encounter and look at the social life within a city, or in this case town, with a dynamic perspective, within which power relations are in constant negotiation. Thereby, different places of encounter also result in different power relations, and maybe even shift the power relations of exclusion.

With this in mind, I think the individual should be highlighted. Each individual has its own characteristics, capacity and interests. Consequently, each individuals daily routine is based on these variables, bringing people to certain places or spaces. Not every Syrian status holder has the same interests, uses the same amenities or visits the same public spaces. Everyone is unique as are all Dutch people.

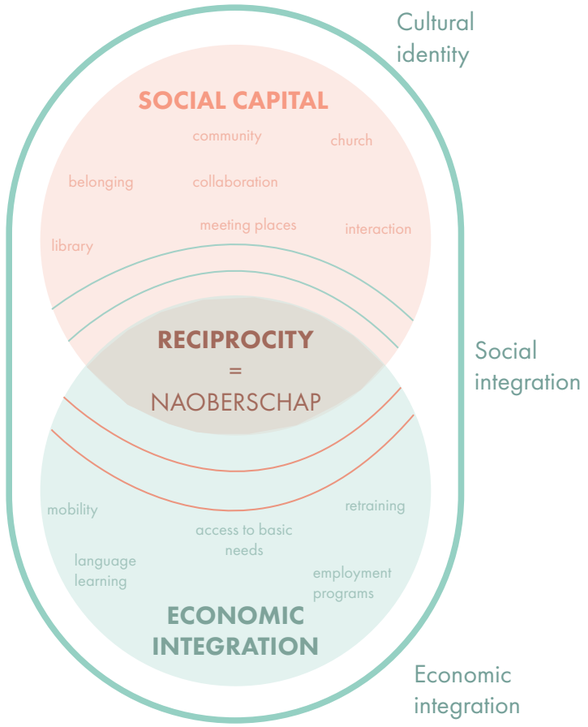


Figure 72: Conceptual framework

This does not mean that there are no commonalities. A Syrian woman who has just arrived in the Netherlands might have the same love for gardening as a 70 year old Dutch woman. These commonalities are exactly what is needed to analyse the different spatial layers within a town and find the spaces that offer potential for encounter and hopefully, eventually, for the building of social capital.

I call these commonalities ***identifications***, ways in which different people are able to identify with each other in space. Based on the fieldwork and literature a couple of these identifications arose: sports & play, gardening, animals, arts & crafts and food.

In figure 73,74 and 75 the difference between the fixed meeting places and the identification layers can be seen. The success of the meeting places can be evaluated on the building and organisation of the place itself, it is more tangible as it is limited to spatial boundaries. The identifications are loose and intersect each other in multiple places. This also shows that some places are important for different activities and can consequently also bring different groups together.

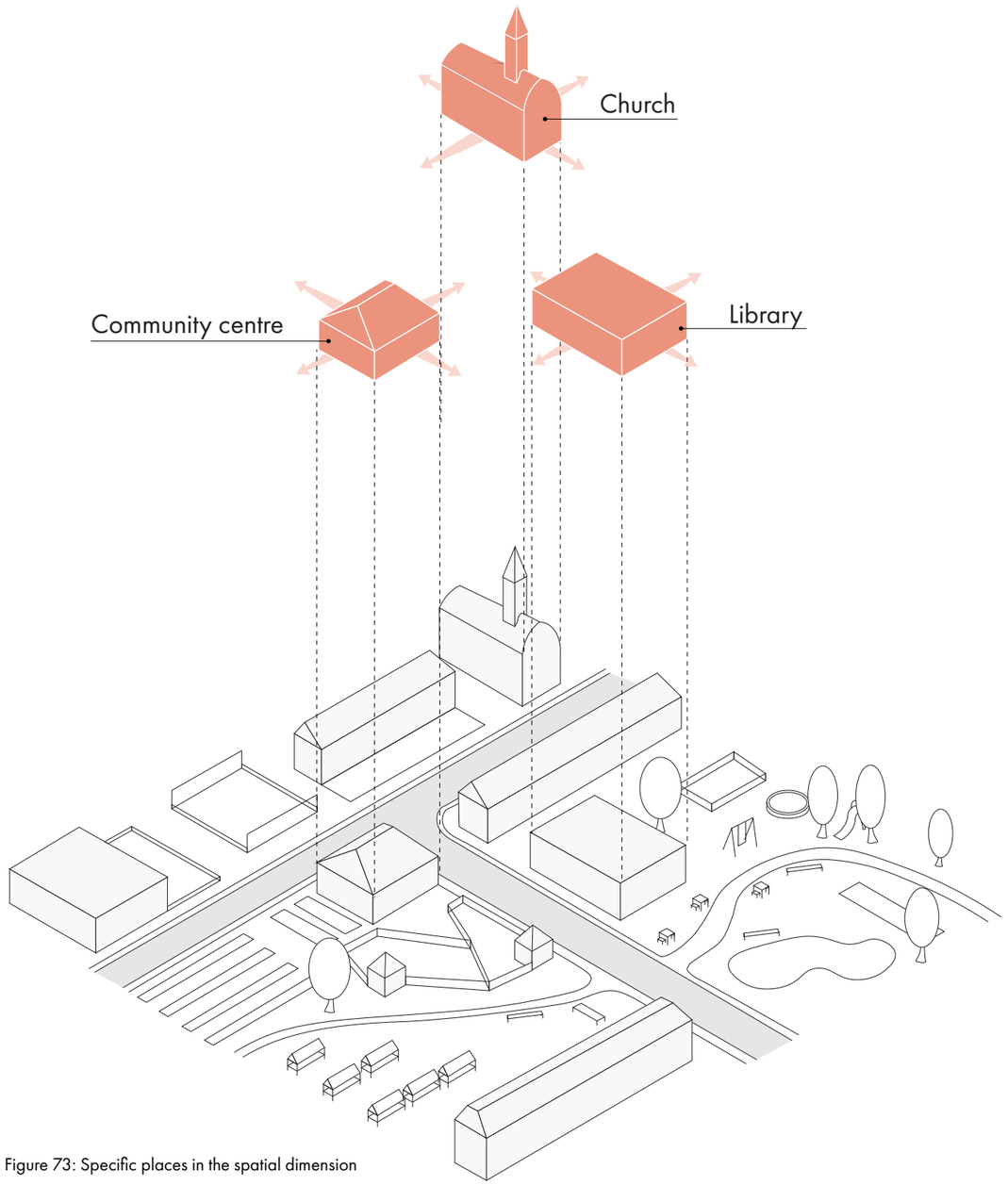


Figure 73: Specific places in the spatial dimension

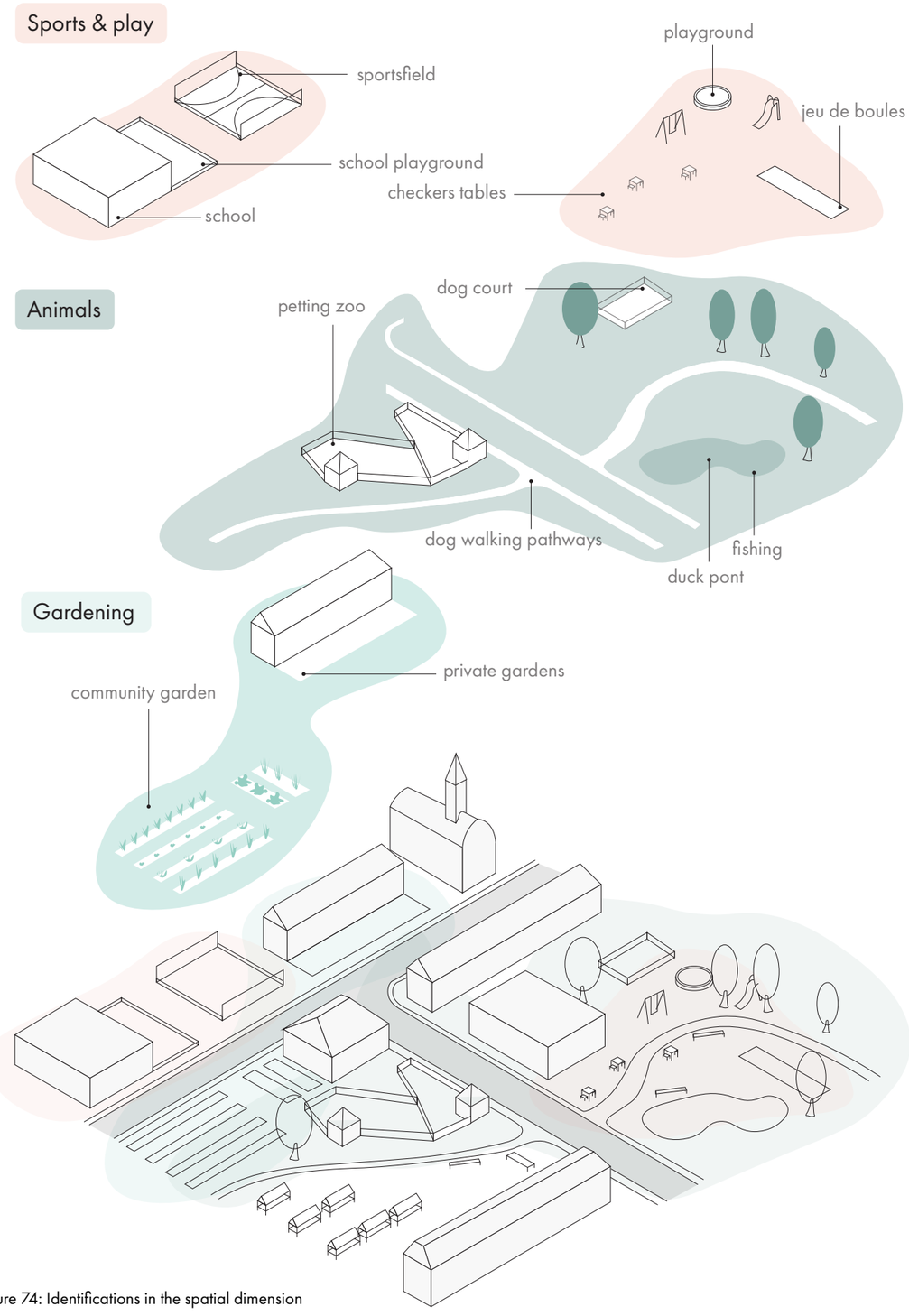


Figure 74: Identifications in the spatial dimension

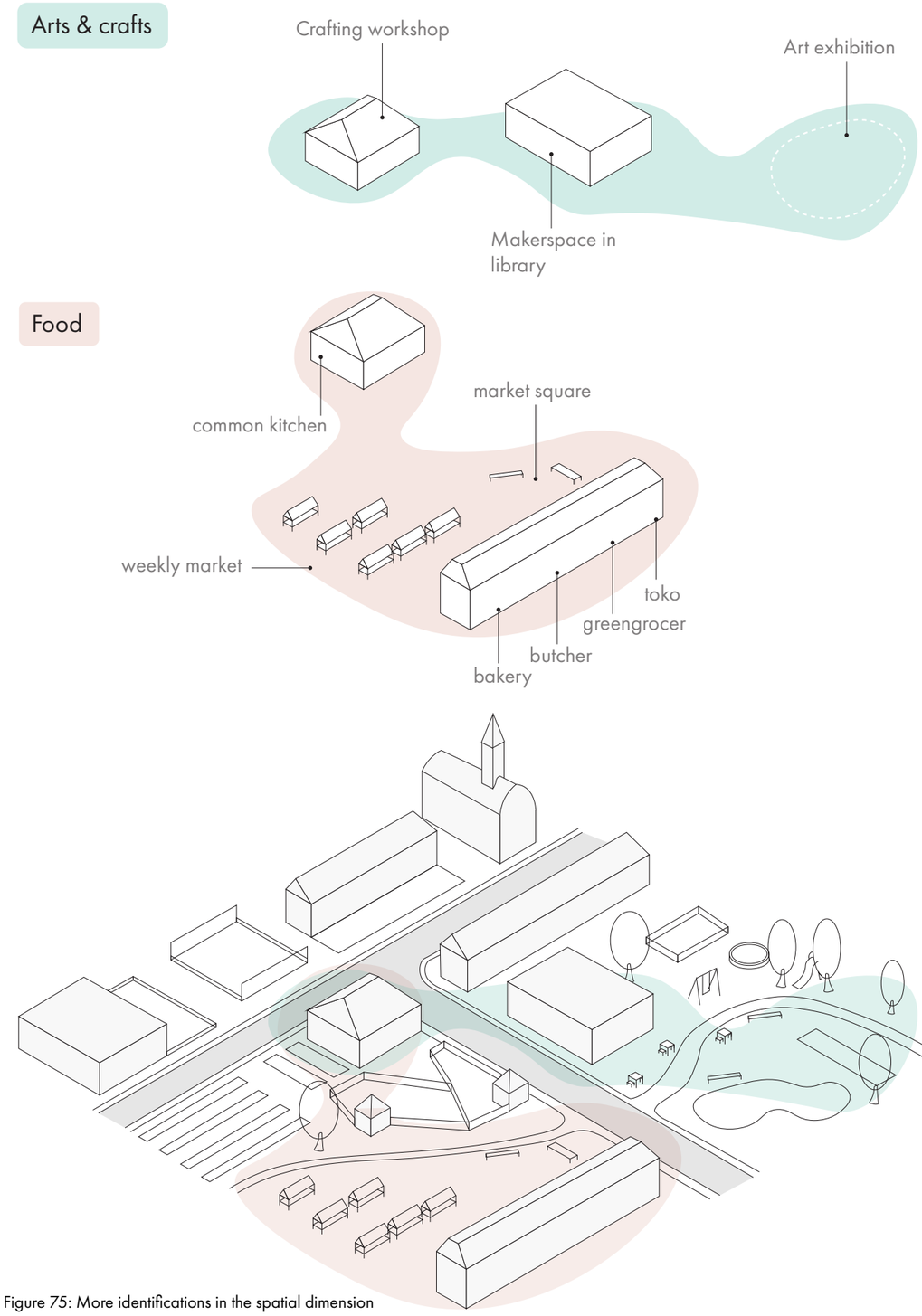


Figure 75: More identifications in the spatial dimension

APPROACH

The new insights on the spatial dimension of this research forms the first step in developing an approach for the rest of this thesis. The approach is used to translate the findings of the fieldwork and literature into tangible recommendations and interventions that will be summarized in a roadmap. The roadmap is the final result of this thesis and proposes a framework and tool for urban planners to use.

The roadmap is built up from different elements. These elements are recommendations and interventions based on the findings from three separate parts: places, identifications and the governance framework. Firstly, a more in-depth study of these three parts is done. Specific places on-site are evaluated in more detail, findings on-site and literature are combined for the identifications and a policy document by the OECD (2018) for local integration is used as a handle for the governance framework. The following sections will explain the different evaluation approaches, as well as, how these evaluation approaches constitute the elements used in the roadmap.

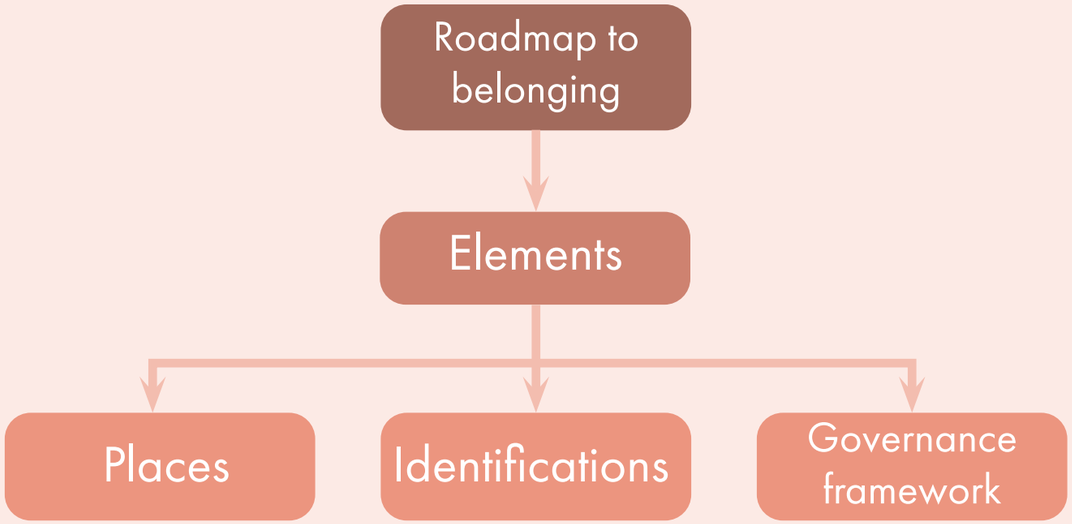


Figure 76: Approach

Specific places found on-site contributed significantly to all three elements of a sense of belonging: cultural identity, social integration and economic integration.

However, these places gave a certain impression related to how welcoming and accessible they felt for an outsider. For instance, why does the library in Hardenberg feel more welcoming than the library in Dalfsen?

The question that arises is what factors are involved in creating welcoming spaces and consequently, what interventions are needed within those factors to improve places or to prevent new developments that are not as welcoming as envisioned?

Literature was used to find the different factors involved in creating meaningful meeting spaces.

These findings will bring certain lessons for designers and planners in creating meaningful meeting places, not only for status holders, but for all different groups to create interaction across cultural, but also socio-economic barriers.

In the literature by (Welschen et al., 2020) the concept of the *'social base'* within a neighbourhood is described. The idea is that neighbourhoods need an accessible and diverse supply of activities organised by, for example, children- and youth workers, but also social workers, volunteers and citizen initiatives. This is called the social base as it ensures that everyone, also weaker residents, is able to participate. Within the idea of the social base, you have several perspectives, which can be projected onto a y- and x-axis (figure 77). The x-axis is used to explain whether a place, activity or service is mainly *functional* or *relational*. Functional means that it primarily targets groups to work on personal struggles. For example, problems related to employment, income or in the case of status holders, language learning. Relational is more about creating meaningful interactions between different population groups.

The y-axis is divided into *particular* and *universal*. In the case of particular, the focus is on one specific group, for example, a group that encounters more struggles. Universal focuses on accessibility for everyone.
One side of these axes is not necessarily better than the other, however, the idea is that neighbourhoods need a combination of spaces with different characteristics to form a strong social base for the community. Here it is important to be aware of the triggers that attract people to these places, but also the barriers people encounter.

Welschen et al. (2020) elaborates on these triggers. In the case of status holders, this could be meeting with a culturally similar group. But because Syrian status holders have a relatively universalistic outlook, they will also be happy to meet natives as it will help them to learn the language and to integrate. As was seen before, Syrians value interaction with locals a lot to feel like they belong in a place. On the other hand, Syrians also encounter barriers when it comes to meeting places. Especially for younger people, it is more difficult to connect within these places as they are often mainly used by either children or older adults. Additionally, the fear of the unknown is a large barrier, as newcomers know no one in these meeting places.

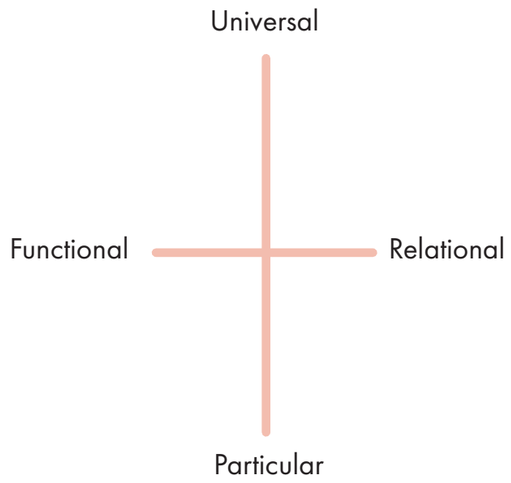


Figure 77: Perspectives on the social base (Welschen et al., 2020)

These barriers and triggers are important to keep in mind when looking at meeting places. But there are more factors involved in creating a welcoming meeting place. Ter Avest (2016) sets out ten factors that play a role in creating a meaningful meeting place (figure 78):

1. Devotion
Succesful meeting places are often driven by a key figure or a core team that puts a lot of devotion into the place, which often leads to a constantly developing place.

2. Identity
A meeting place often has a certain identity related to it. For example, a library is characterised by books and a church by religion, giving the place a specific identity.

3. Accessibility
To create a welcoming space it needs to be accessible for all: both physically, for example for wheelchairs, but also mentally, for people who struggle to feel at home in a place.

4. Interior design
A welcoming space has a welcoming entrance. For example, there is no desk or hall before entering the space. It is best if you can already see from outside what you are walking into.

5. Atmosphere
The atmosphere plays an important role in creating a welcoming space. Often restaurants or café have luxurious furniture, they are organised and all details match. Often, this is not what makes a meeting place welcoming. To make people feel at home it needs different kinds of furniture: a couch from the thrift store, drawings made during a children's workshop, warm colours etc.

6. Location
A meeting place should be accessible and visible. Favourably, at the centre of an area, on the ground floor and with an open character.

7. Collaboration
The place works in collaboration with other, larger organisations. It forms a referral point to other services and organisations.

8. Experimental zone
These places are open to change and fertile places for self-organised initiatives, not limited by rules are bureaucracy.

9. Do what works
There is no masterplan. Social workers and volunteers often see more potential than planners and policymakers.

10. Co-production
These are places of serendipity: dependent on small coincidences that arise from the collaboration between residents, volunteers, professionals and everyone else involved in these projects.

This evaluation diagram functions as a tool to understand what can be improved or what to do (and what not) when designing meeting places. The diagram is used in the roadmap to investigate the different meeting places encountered during the site visits.

Figure 78: Evaluation diagram (based on Ter Avest, 2016)

For the identifications, identifications cards are used to describe the loose spatial elements found in the fieldwork or from literature (figure 79) that contribute to a sense of belonging. The spatial elements are selected because they contribute to one or more of the three factors influencing the sense of belonging: cultural identity, social integration or economic integration.

This card describes the spatial element of the identification and to which identification it belongs: sports & play, gardening, food, animals or arts & crafts. For each card, an idea is given of where this intervention is located in a town, when it is used, whether it costs money and to whom it is accessible. With this method, general interventions are seen, but also less commonly used interventions are brought to the attention.

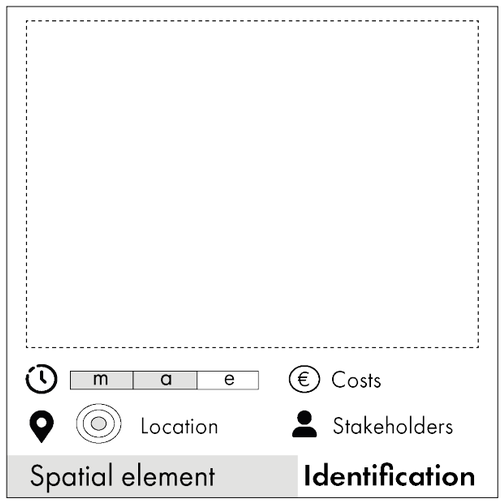


Figure 79: Example of spatial element

Block 1 Multi-level governance: institutional and financial setting

Objective 1 Enhance effectiveness of migrant integration policy through improved vertical co-ordination and implementation at the relevant scale

Objective 2 Seek policy coherence in addressing the multi-dimensional needs of, and opportunities for, migrants at the local level

Objective 3 Ensure access to, and effective use of, financial resources that are adapted to local responsibilities

Block 3 Local capacity for policy formulation and implementation

Objective 6 Build capacity and diversity in civil service, with a view to ensure access to mainstream services for migrants and newcomers

Objective 7 Strengthen cooperation with non-state stakeholders, including through transparent and effective contracts

Objective 8 Intensify the assessment of integration results for migrants and host communities and their use of evidence-based policies.

Block 3 Time and space: keys for migrants & host-communties to live together

Objective 4 Design integration policies that take time into account throughout migrants' lifetimes and evolution of residency status

Objective 5 Create spaces where the interaction brings migrants and native-born communities together

Block 4 Sectoral policies related to integration

Objective 9 Match migrant skills with economic and job opportunities

Objective 10 Secure access to adequate housing

Objective 11 Provide social welfare measures that are aligned with migrant inclusion

Objective 12 Establish education responses to address segregation and provide equitable paths to professional growth

Figure 80: The twelve-point checklist for local integration of migrants and refugees

As mentioned earlier, governance plays an important role in stimulating the economic integration of Syrian status holders, as part of their pathway to a sense of belonging. To investigate this in more detail, the twelve-point checklist by the OECD (2018) for the local integration of migrants and refugees was studied. This document dives into a large share of the problems that came forward in the interviews and gives recommendations on how to deal with these problems, based on a couple of examples of existing initiatives.

They provide 12 objectives within 4 blocks. The first block is about multi-level governance and how cohesion between different layers and sections can be achieved.

The second block looks at time and space, which has mainly already been discussed in the previous chapters.

Block 3 looks at the internal organisation of municipalities and how they can cooperate with other organisations.

Lastly, block 4 looks at sectoral policies that influence other factors of integration like employment, education and housing.

The evaluation of meeting places, the inventorization of identifications and the investigation of best practices within the field of governance form the basis for the elements of the roadmap. Figure 81 shows the elements which will be used later on in the roadmap.

The first two elements are relatively clear and relate directly to the first two parts discussed: places and identifications. Concerning places and identifications, there is a third element added, called social initiatives. Social initiatives are initiatives that might take place within the places or in the spaces developed through the identifications. The social initiatives boost the usage of specific places and invite a wider public to visit these spaces.

Various elements are developed for governance, as governance is not only about policies. Governance is also about establishing collaborations or new organisations where needed. Therefore, each of these elements is marked with a different shape.

In the roadmap, also relationships between the elements will be shown. For example, for developing a place or identification, governance is possibly needed to operationalize the intervention. Likewise, some of the identifications can be developed within the meeting places discussed.

The elements will give an overview of all the research done in this thesis, combining theory and practice in concrete interventions.

Figure 81: Elements within the roadmap

6 ROADMAP

6.1 Elements
6.1.1Places
6.1.2 Identifications
6.1.3 Governance framework

6.2 Roadmap to belonging
6.2.1 General
6.2.2 De Vecht Werkt
6.2.3 Samen Thuis in...
6.2.4 Boeren Markt

6.3 Application on-site
6.3.1 Context
6.3.2 Hardenberg
6.3.3 Dalfsen

6.4 New urban planning approach

6.5 The game

In this chapter, the approach described in the previous chapter will be used and applied to develop the roadmap to belonging. Therefore, this chapter will first dive into the elements. The elements will lead to the overview of the roadmap. The overview gives insights into all elements found in the research, however, this is not a clear tool for urban planners to use, yet.

Therefore, three catalysts are explained. The catalysts are certain initiatives that are based on a step-by-step implementation of specific elements. The catalyst will therefore provide urban planners with a better understanding of the impact the individual elements can have if applied in the right way. To showcase this, the catalysts will be applied on the sites visited during the fieldwork.

The roadmap, together with the lessons learned during this research, are combined into a new urban planning approach.

Lastly, a game is developed to raise awareness for the struggles Syrian status holders encounter on their pathway to belonging in small towns in the Netherlands. Additionally, the game also highlights the opportunities found in this research that can contribute to the sense of belonging of status holders.

ELEMENTS

The first step towards the roadmap is to determine the elements, based on the places, identifications and governance framework. An extensive exploration of all the elements can be found in **Appendix IV**. In this chapter, a couple of examples will be given.

For places, the focus was on community centres, libraries and churches. For each of these meeting places, literature was explored. In this chapter, only the community centres will be compared to explain the evaluation methods used.

For each identification, one example will be given. A deeper exploration of each card and the literature related to it can be found in **Appendix IV**.

For the governance framework, the main findings from the literature will be highlighted. An elaborative study can also be found in **Appendix IV.**

For the places, the specific places found in Hardenberg and Dalfsen are analysed based on the evaluation diagram presented earlier. This gives insights into why one place might feel more welcoming and accessible than the other, providing lessons on how to design a successful meeting place. Additionally, literature is used to elaborate on the importance of community centres, libraries and churches during the integration process of newcomers. In this section, the focus is on community centres. Explanations of the libraries and churches can be found in **Appendix IV.**

Often, urban planning and design use the concept of a community centre quite frequently, however, most planners don't go into the specific characteristics of what this community centre should like. Nonetheless, the design but also the organisational structure of the community centre is essential to consider, when having a specific goal in mind.

To reveal this importance, this section will make a comparison between the Wijkboerderij in Hardenberg and Trefkoele+ in Dalfsen.

Earlier, the diagram on the social base was discussed (figure 82). By using this evaluation scheme, a lot can be said about the intended (or unintended) functionality of a community centre. The Wijkboerderij is present in two quadrants. On one hand, it is a socially important place for a specific group: the people with a mental disability working there. For them, the Wijkboerderij is an important place to interact with the community, which leads to the second quadrant as the place is also open to all for interaction and fun activities. Trefkoele+ is mostly present on the particular side of the diagram, as most visitors come for a certain service or to practice a specific sport. The intention of Trefkoele+ was to be the living room of the town, but this intended functionality is not optimal, it is not very inviting to just go there. *Why is that?*

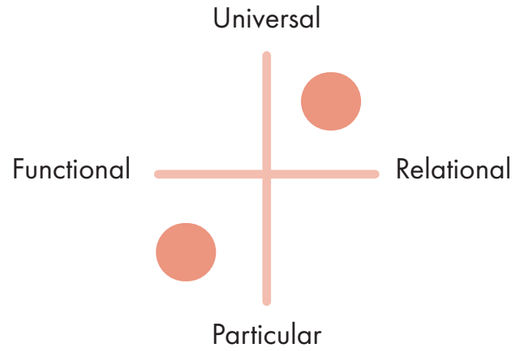


Figure 82: Perspectives on the social base for the Wijkboerderij

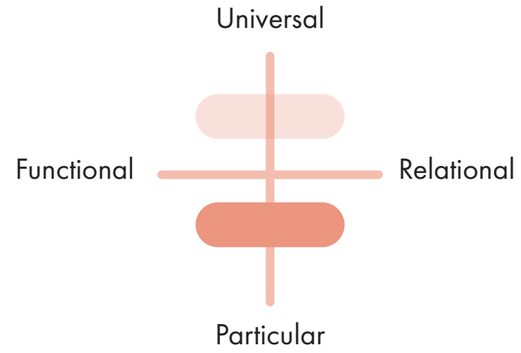


Figure 83: Perspectives on the social base for TrefkoelePlus

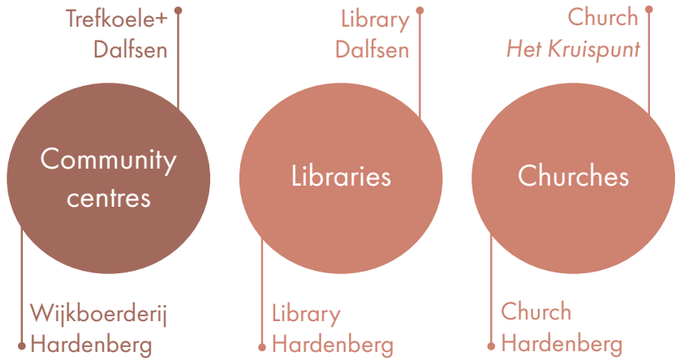


Figure 84: Places explored in this thesis

Looking closer at the evaluation diagrams of the Wijkboerderij and Trefkoele+ (figures 86 and 88), a clear difference can be seen. Whereas, the Wijkboerderij scores rather high in most characteristics, Trefkoele+ does not.

The Wijkboerderij scores high on the organisational dimension. The Wijkboerderij is not based on a masterplan, but a spontaneous and fluid collaboration between a couple of parties. The place can easily accommodate requests from neighbours and organise new activities.

Additionally, the Wijkboerderij also scores high in the spatial dimension as it is positioned in the middle of the neighbourhood, strengthening the historic character of the town and creating a cosy atmosphere.

In the social dimension, the team managing the site plays an important role. The employees are welcoming and non-judgemental and show enthusiasm for their work. This also makes visitors feel welcome.

In this way, the Wijkboerderij is successful as it works according to the intended outcome of the place. For Trefkoele+, this is not entirely the case. As said, when constructing Trefkoele+, the aim was to create a living room in the town, a place where people can meet and interact. Even though, Trefkoele+ is successful in providing space for a wide variety of leisure activities, it does not fulfil its task as an actual community centre.

Figure 85: Wijkboerderij, Hardenberg

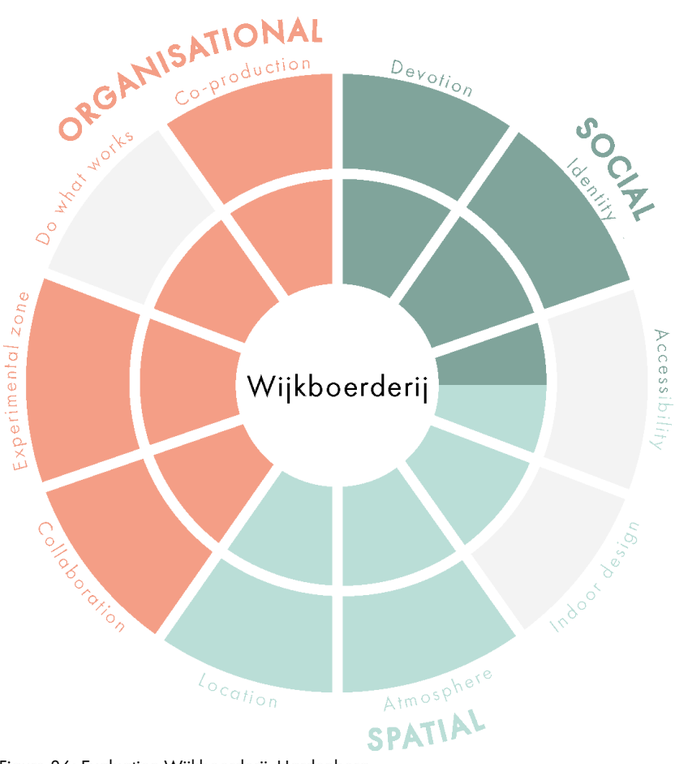


Figure 86: Evaluation Wijkboerderij, Hardenberg

Trefkoele+ was built according to a master plan, with strictly designed spaces, designated to specific activities and organisations. In the organisational dimension, the complexity of Trefkoele+ has resulted in lower scores. There is very little space for changes and experimentation due to the fixed form and complex organisational structure.

Spatially, the building is closed off and difficult to navigate. Even though the position of the building at the centre of the town is ideal, it still doesn't look inviting to just walk in.

In the social dimension, the complex organisation and lack of clear key figures result in a anonymous space, with little identity.

Trefkoele+ can improve its functionality by looking at these factors and analysing how the factors can be improved. Nonetheless, due to the fixed structure of the building, not all problems can be solved. Therefore, these evaluation diagrams should not only be used ***after*** the building of the community centre but also ***before***, to ensure that the envisioned purpose of the building is achieved.

Figure 87: Trefkoele+, Dalfsen (Spring Architecten, n.d.)

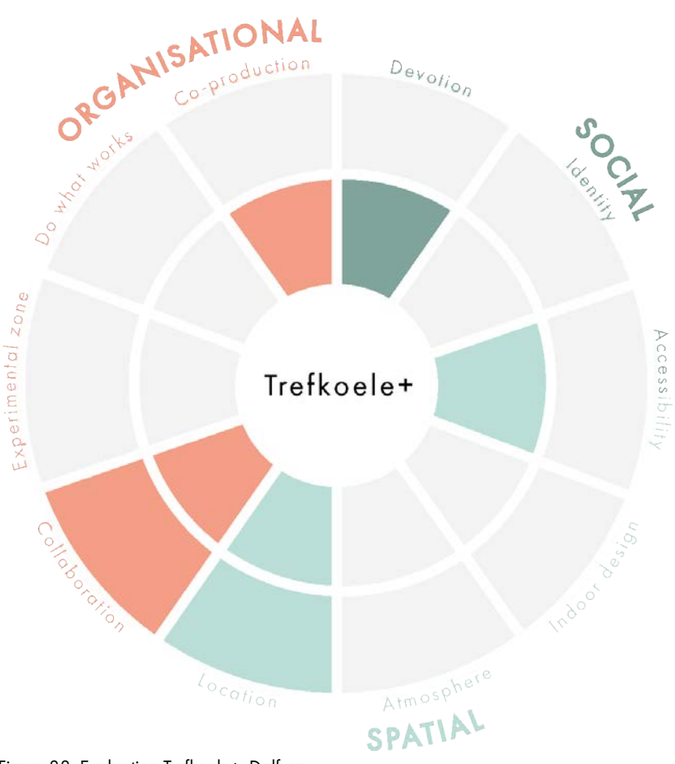


Figure 88: Evaluation Trefkoele+, Dalfsen

For each identification, an example is given to illustrate how the collection of cards was built. An overview of all cards can be found in figure 94.

Sports and playing are universal activities that can bridge cultural boundaries. Sports clubs and playgrounds play important roles in this, but there can be dug deeper to find games that are played in different cultures and can be introduced into public spaces.

But not only the activity itself is important. Children playing in a playground or playing a sport often need supervision from their parents. Parents will sit next to each other in the playground or will stand along the sideline cheering for their children. These encounters can also be important for the building of social capital because these parents are able to identify with each other: they are both parents.

Therefore, one of the identification cards is a playground. A playground is accessible to both children and their parents, can be used at all times, does not cost any money and can easily be placed all throughout town, making it a very versatile tool to create interaction.

The second identification is gardening. Gardening played an important role in the sites visited, but from the literature, it also arose as an important activity for status holders to feel at home in a place and interact with their neighbours. This spatial layer can extend from someone's doorstep to a community or an allotment garden. In **Appendix I** an example of this was shown. In Flanders, where they implemented the Torekes through a community garden, gardening was used to create solidarity between different groups. One of the cards is consequently, a community garden, an accessible place to all, that might cost a little money if not organised as a social initiative.

The third identification is animals. On-site, I encounter lots of people walking their dogs, being the most dominant group of people in public spaces. Bringing along my own dog for a couple of minutes immediately resulted in a conversation with strangers, showing the power of dogs in stimulating interaction. Therefore, one of the cards concerns dog-walking pathways as places of interaction, which are again, accessible to all. But not only dogs can be bonding factors, but also other initiatives or places where animals are involved, like a petting zoo, can be important for realising social capital.

The fourth identification is arts and crafts. Arts and crafts are, again, a cross-cultural activity that might not have appeared as much yet in the site visit. But in the interviews, creative writing was an example of a way to spend time and calm down. In the library in Hardenberg, there was also a maker space, which stimulates the creativity of people. Therefore, one of the cards is on maker spaces, where crafting is stimulated and people can express their own culture.

The fifth identification is food. Cooking is an important element in Syrian culture. There could be said that cooking mainly takes place in someone's kitchen, but that is not necessarily the case. The ingredients are gathered throughout town, maybe at the local market, supermarket or at the butcher, toko, bakery and greengrocer. But there are also other ways in which food can be found in public spaces, think of picnics in the park, neighbourhood barbeques and cooking lessons at the community centre. Food is not only a means to create interaction, but also a way in which different cultures can learn about each other's culture. Consequently, specific food shops like greengrocers, butchers, Toko's and Arabic supermarkets are reflected on one of the identification cards as a place of interaction and exchange of cultural identity.

Each card plays a tiny role in the pathway of status holders towards a sense of belonging, facilitating interaction with the local community, offering a way to express one's cultural identity or offering a step towards economic integration. A complete explanation can be found in **appendix IV**.

Figure 89: The spatial element of playgrounds

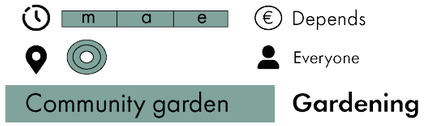


Figure 90: The spatial element of community gardens

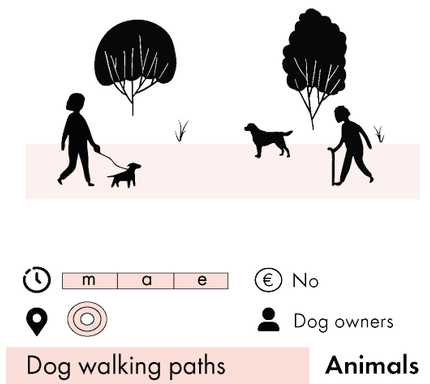


Figure 91: The spatial element of dog walking paths

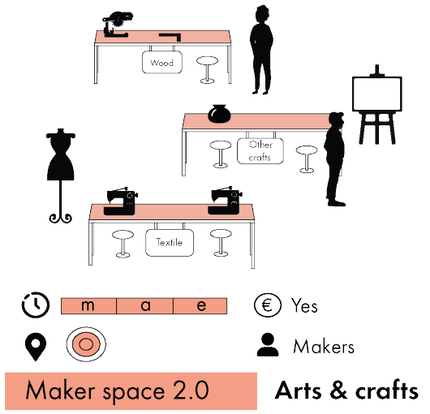
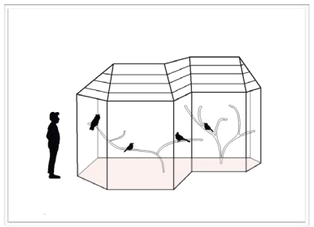


Figure 92: The spatial element of makerspaces (2.0)

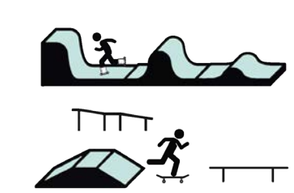
Figure 93: The spatial element of specific food shops

ELEMENTS
Identifications



m a e | € No | Everyone

Bird aviary — **Animals**

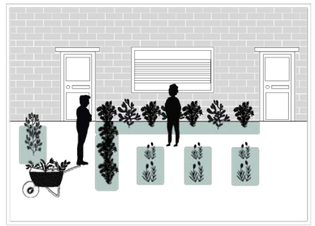


m a e | € No | Youths & parents

Skatepark — **Play & sports**

m a e | € Yes | Everyone

Specific food shops — **Food**

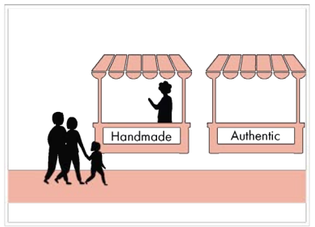


m a e | € Yes | Everyone

Front gardens — **Gardening**

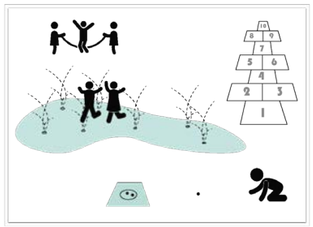
m a e | € Yes | Everyone

Farmer shop — **Food**



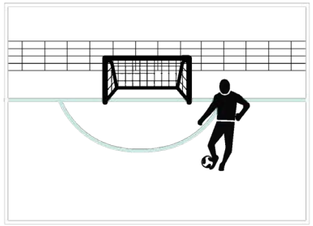
m a e | € Yes | Makers

Selling points — **Arts & crafts**



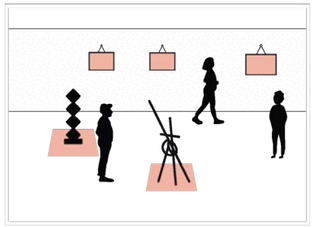
m a e | € No | Children

Tiny interventions — **Play & sports**



m a e | € No | Children & parents

Sport courts — **Play & sports**

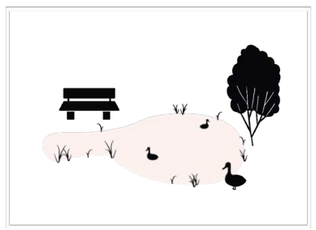


m a e | € Yes | Makers

Exhibition space — **Arts & crafts**

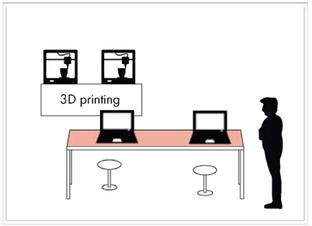
m a e | € No | Children & parents

Playground — **Play & sports**



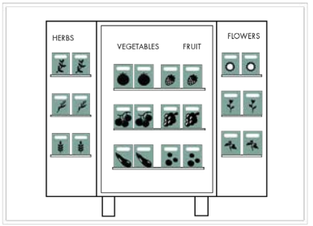
m a e | € No | Everyone

Duck pond — **Animals**



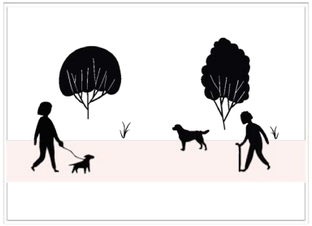
m a e | € Yes | Makers

Maker space 1.0 — **Arts & crafts**



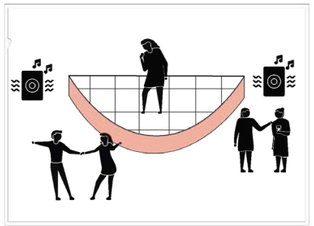
m a e | € No | Everyone

Seed library — **Gardening**



m a e | € No | Dog owners

Dog walking paths — **Animals**

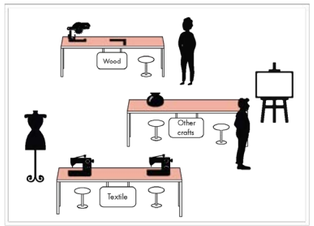


m a e | € Yes | Makers

Outdoor stage — **Arts & crafts**

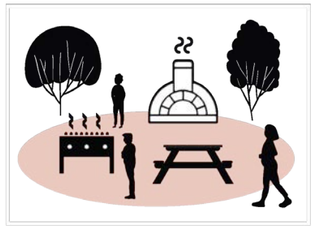
m a e | € No | Everyone

Collective tool shed — **Gardening**



m a e | € Yes | Makers

Maker space 2.0 — **Arts & crafts**

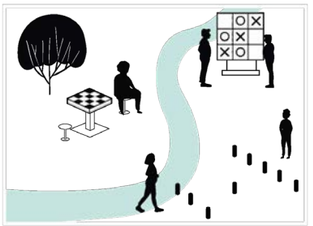


m a e | € No | Everyone

Public outdoor kitchen — **Food**

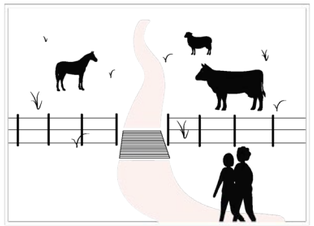
m a e | € Depends | Everyone

Community garden — **Gardening**



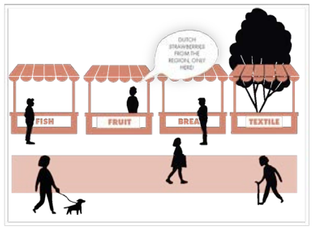
m a e | € No | Everyone

Public games — **Play & sports**



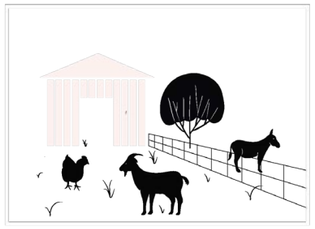
m a e | € No | Walkers

Meadow route — **Animals**



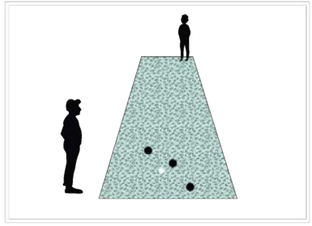
m a e | € Yes | Everyone

Weekly market — **Food**



m a e | € Sometimes | Everyone

Petting zoo — **Animals**

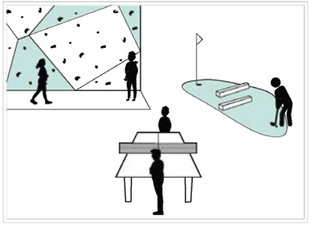


m a e | € No | Elderly

Jeu de boules — **Play & sports**

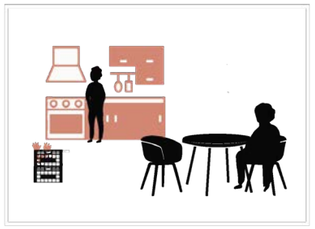
m a e | € Yes | Everyone

Picking garden — **Gardening**



m a e | € No | Everyone

Public activities — **Play & sports**



m a e | € No | Everyone

Collective indoor kitchen — **Food**

Figure 94: Overview of all the identification cards

In terms of governance, the focus was on finding the fundamental problems behind the issues status holders encountered in the Netherlands.

One of the most important findings from the literature was the lack of vertical and horizontal coordination in relation to migrant integration policy-making. Vertically, the main issue is on one hand the lack of an organized national strategy and on the other hand, the lack of capacity on the local, municipal level. The study concluded that generally, the local authority is more qualified to provide migrants with the right services, however, they often lack the resources and money to do so.

In the meantime, on the national level, there are mainly discussions within the government and between Dutch regions. There are some areas in the Netherlands (north-east of the country) which proportionally, take in much more refugees than other areas, for example, the big cities. This results in discussions between municipalities and a NIMBY movement among municipalities. This is partly due to the lack of a national strategy, but another factor plays a role here. In the Netherlands, feedback mechanisms are in place, where municipalities are included to give their opinions on policies. However, the municipalities invited for these feedback mechanisms are from the G4, the four biggest cities in the Netherlands. This results in an unequal representation of what local authorities think of certain policies. Smaller municipalities or municipalities outside the Randstad might have a different view.

Therefore, the current balance between national decision-making and local authority needs to be reevaluated. On a national level, a more structured strategy must be created, including feedback from different regions of the country. The local authorities need more capacity to fill in their task within this national strategy.

Secondly, horizontal coordination should be improved, on all scale levels. Both on the more local level and on the national level, a strict division is made between sectors. For example, there is a ministry for foreign affairs, employment and education. Nonetheless, for migrants, these ministries intersect and thus their policies should adapt to each other. This also happens within municipalities.

Additionally, the coordination between the private and public sectors is often missing. Private parties and NGOs are often very willing and more experienced in providing services the municipality might not be able to provide. However, due to a lack of long-term funding and stability for the private parties and NGOs, this eventually doesn't work out.

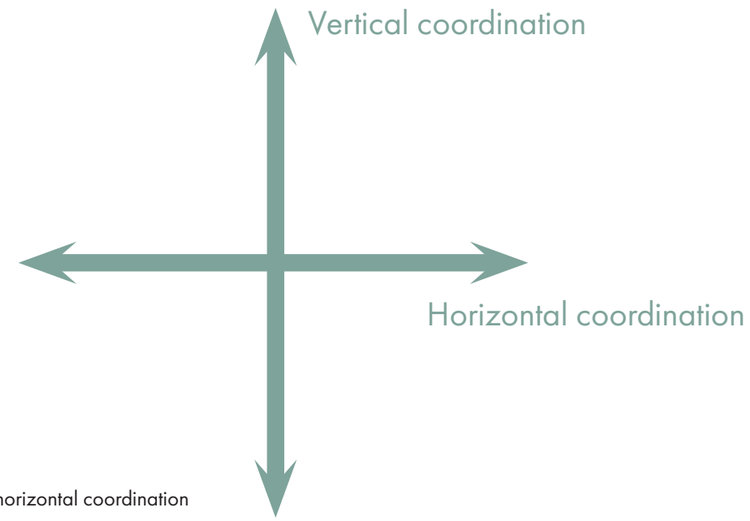


Figure 95: Lack of vertical and horizontal coordination

Therefore, more interaction within governmental bodies, as well as between the public- and private sectors, as well as with civil society, is needed. Additionally, long-term planning is essential to provide stakeholders with the stability they need to establish initiatives and services.

The second main issue found in the literature is the gap between the labour supply, migrants looking for employment and the labour demand, a lot of companies are in desperate need of employees. Status holders in the Netherlands encounter difficulties in getting their education validated, finding jobs that suit their expertise or even getting invited to job interviews. While also, a lot of companies are struggling with high amounts of labour shortages, who would be willing to employ status holders.

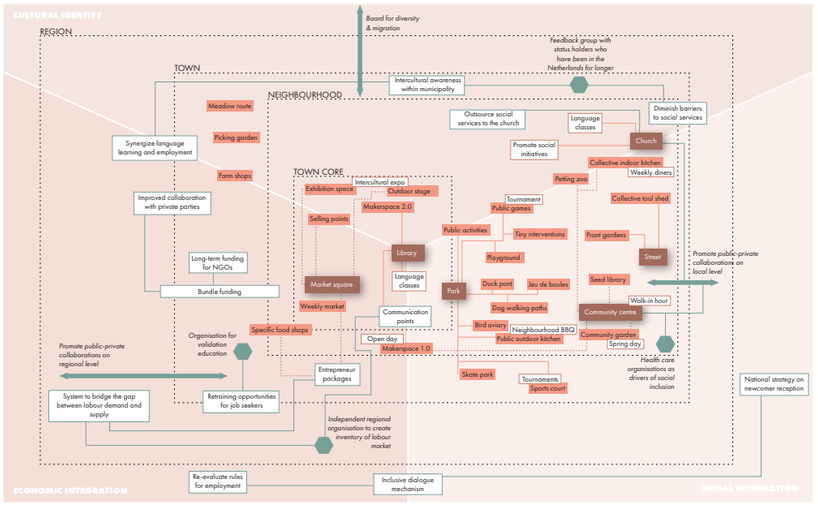
Consequently, the literature has some recommendations for bridging that gap. Firstly, reevaluating the way in which education is currently validated, as through a national organisation. Secondly, the literature presents examples of initiatives in which companies collaborate to create an accessible platform where refugees can go to find suitable jobs. Lastly, the literature speaks of entrepreneur packages, to stimulate status holders to start their own businesses.

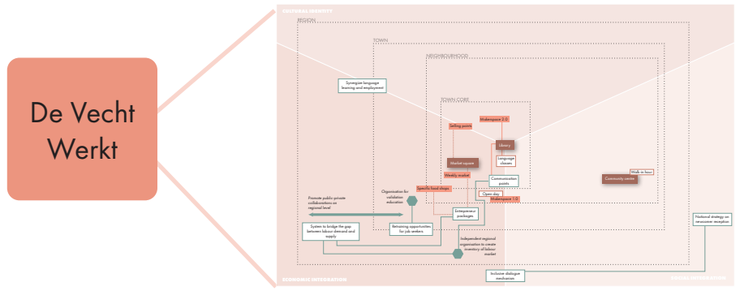
Elaborate explanations on these findings are shown in **Appendix IV**. These findings are used to formulate elements for the roadmap.

Figure 96: Gap labour supply and demand

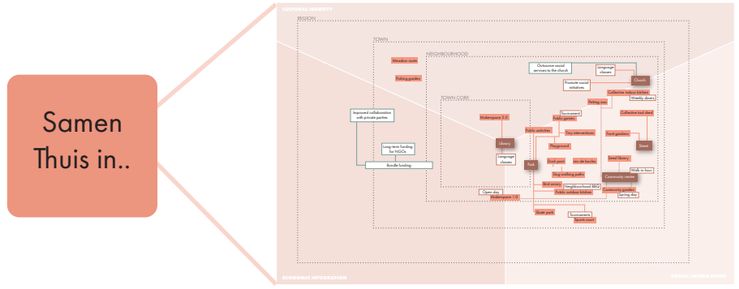
ROADMAP TO BELONGING

The elements combined form the roadmap to belonging. In figure 97 an overview of the roadmap and the corresponding catalysts can be seen. This section goes into the operationalization of the roadmap and the catalysts.

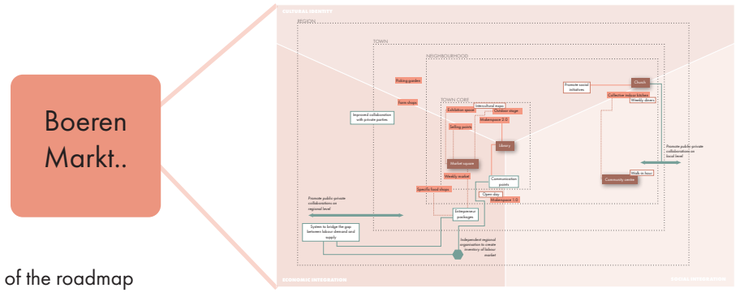




De Vecht Werkt



Samen Thuis in..



Boeren Markt..

Figure 97: Summary of the roadmap

Combining all the elements, the roadmap displays what policies, initiatives, places and spatial elements can be used to facilitate the sense of belonging for Syrian status holders in small towns in the Netherlands. The general roadmap is therefore mainly present to give an overview of all the possibilities. The roadmap does not include the smaller details or order in which the elements should be applied, as this is different for each site and context. Therefore, after explaining the general roadmap, the three catalysts will be explained which can be used to bring larger changes by implementing a set of changes.

The roadmap is organised according to scale and the three dimensions. For the scales, a distinguishment is made between the town core and neighbourhoods to show which functions can serve individual neighbourhoods and which functions serve the whole town. The elements in these scales are mainly spatial. The next scale is the scale of the town. This demonstrates the town as a whole, which is important when considering policy and the influence of the municipality. The next step is the region, which can vary from labour market region to province, but it considers collaborations with stakeholders outside of town. Lastly, the national scale are mentioned as some changes need to take place in national policymaking.

The three dimensions are used in the conceptual framework to define a sense of belonging: cultural identity, social integration and economic integration. All three dimensions should be considered in achieving a sense of belonging and therefore the recommendation is to consider the roadmap as a whole. Some of the recommendations are involved in two dimensions. An example of this is the maker space which was mentioned in the chapter on identifications. The maker space is a place for interaction, influencing social integration. On the other hand, maker spaces can be places where people develop their skills and products to be transformed into an actual business model, which influences economic integration.

In figure 101, the legend used for the roadmap can be found. The spatial elements are subdivided into places and identifications. In relation to policy and governance, there are new collaborations, new organisations and policies. Social initiatives indicate events and activities within certain places. Between the separate elements, there a relations. Some identifications can be placed in a larger place and policies can be related to each other. In the catalysts, an in-depth explanation is given about what the relations between the boxes mean and how they influence each other.

In figure 102 on page 110, the general roadmap can be found, giving an overview of the elements researched in the previous chapters, put together in one diagram.

The three catalysts were inspired by different literature and examples. The first catalyst is mainly based on the recommendations made in the document by OECD (2018). The main aim of this catalyst is to increase the employment rates among status holders and other job seekers. The catalyst is based on the frustrations shown by the women in the interviews of this research, which mostly related to finding a job fitting with their experience and qualifications. The second catalyst was inspired by the Wijkpaleis and related initiatives in Rotterdam, which are used to create social interaction and to offer activities to people from different backgrounds. The last catalyst is inspired by the Oogstmarkt in Rotterdam, a market selling local products produced by local farms and entrepreneurs, stimulating cultural expression, entrepreneurship and interaction.

Figure 98: Three catalysts

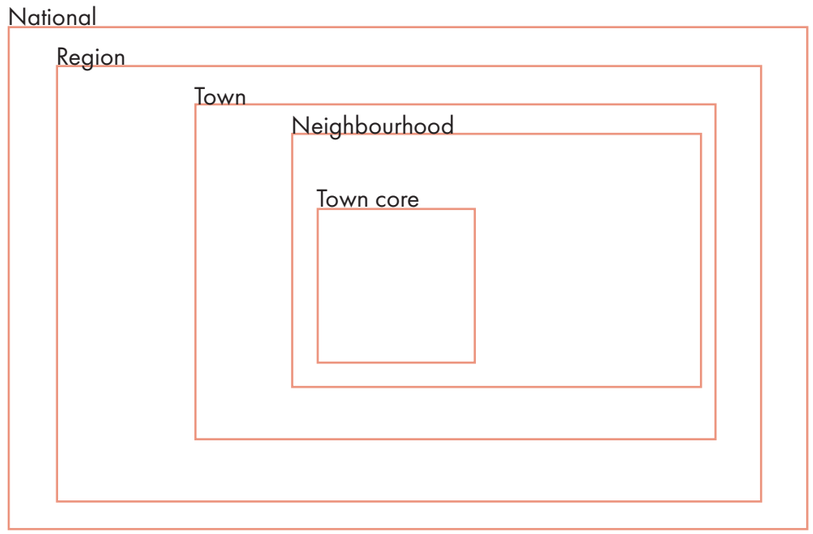


Figure 99: Scales used in roadmap

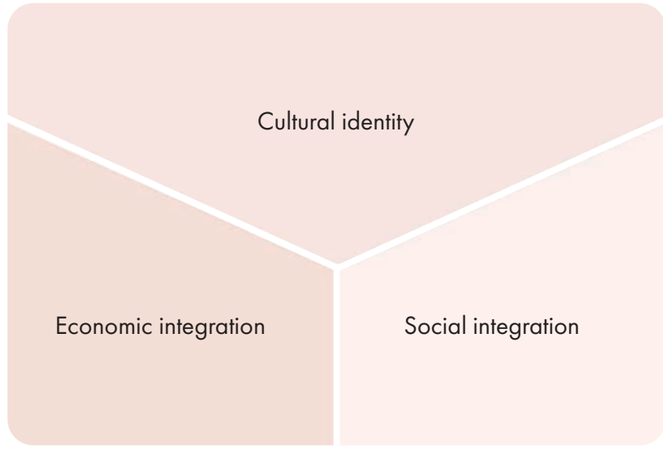


Figure 100: Dimensions used in roadmap

Figure 101: Legend roadmap

ROADMAP TO BELONGING
General

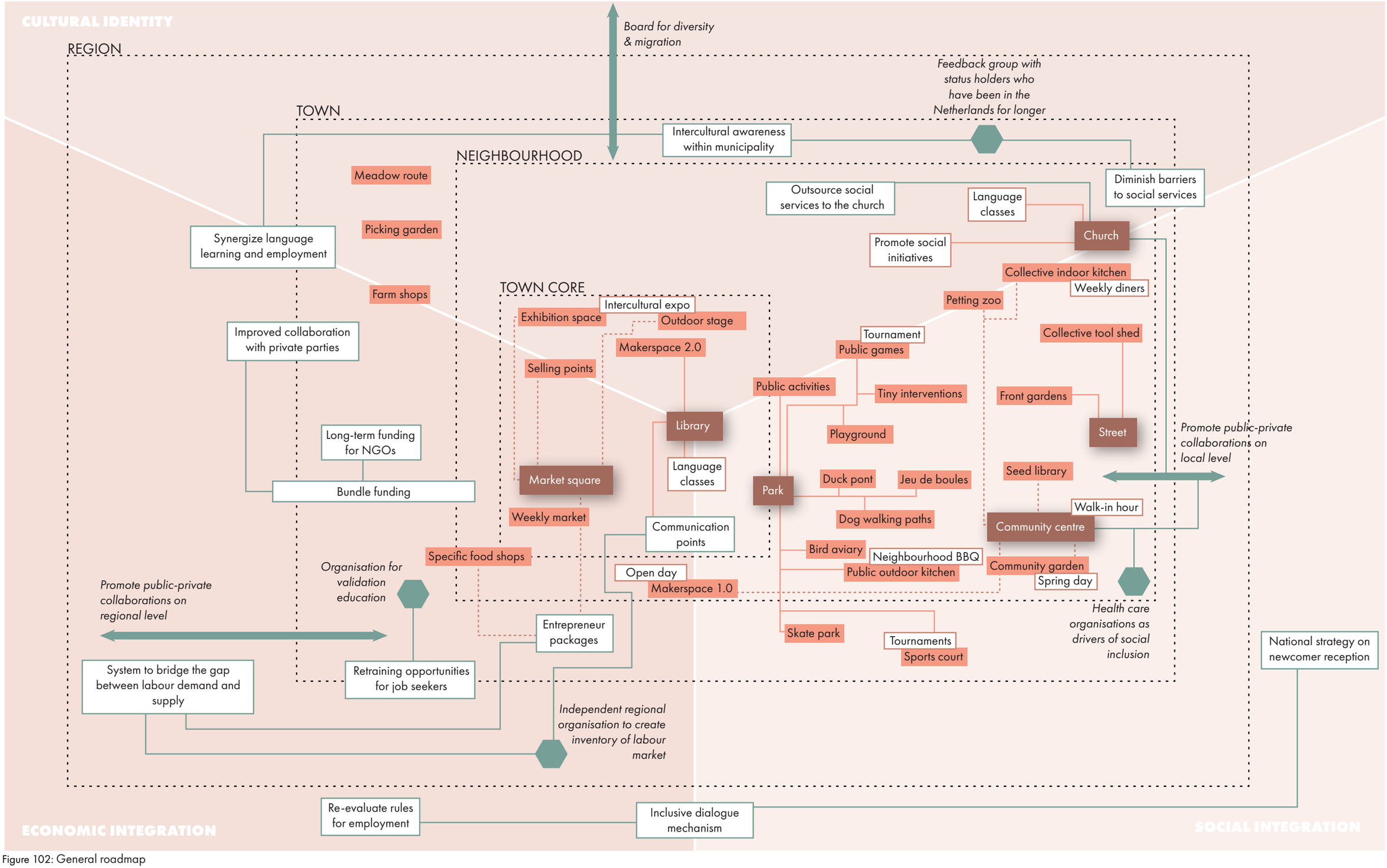


Figure 102: General roadmap

DE VECHT WERKT

The idea behind De Vecht Werkt is to bridge the gap between the local labour market needs and the capabilities of job seekers, diminishing the unemployment rate and labour shortages. A detailed explanation is shown in figure 103.

The first step is to create an inventory: what does the region need and what do the people in the region have to offer? This week, around May 1st 2023, I was watching the news. A new policy was introduced that homeowners could only buy heat pumps or hybrid heat pumps from 2026 onwards. However, to support this policy, the production of heat pumps has to be increased. A journalist was visiting a heat pump producer in Coevorden, which is situated in the Dutch Tech Zone, the business district within this research area. This shows how sustainable transitions influence the production lines in the region and how this can increase labour demand. But also, the healthcare sector needs employees to cope with the ageing population. The goal is to create a collaboration between organisations and develop a new organisation that is able to collect the vacancies in one system. This organisation is also responsible for mapping the capabilities of job seekers dependent on their experience and degrees.

The current problem is that status holders' degrees do not get validated at all: it is a yes or no situation. NUFFIC, a national organisation that is in charge of this, takes an extremely objective position, not looking further than the paperwork itself. By decentralizing the validation of education, a new organisation can take a better look at the actual capabilities and skills of the job seekers and not only base the validation of their education on a piece of paper. Even if the education is not sufficient, their capabilities should be re-evaluated to see whether they need a short retraining, instead of simply being rejected. In this way, people can get to work based on a couple of preconditions or while going through an educational programme. Often, status holders don't mind taking a job which is below their qualifications as long as it is combined with language classes and retraining. Once they reach the needed level, they want to move on to a job that is in line with their experience and qualifications.

A place important in this whole system is the library. The library functions as a registration and education hub, which brings job seekers together with social workers from this newly established organisation. People can get advice on what to do and how they can develop themselves, also people who want to start their own businesses.

In the end, this system provides job seekers with their first step to employment, it is the task of the individual to continue this path forwards.

This initiative can be piloted in the region of this study, therefore the name De Vecht Werkt. The lessons learnt from this project, positive and negative, can be shared in national dialogue mechanisms. In this way, the knowledge can be transferred to other places and maybe even to national policy.

Reflecting on the conceptual framework, there can be seen that this initiative influences the spheres of economic integration. Instead of using redistribution only to redistribute benefits, it uses redistribution as a means to employment: to become active in the sphere of market exchange. Therefore, by effectively using redistribution, eventually, the status holders will be able to earn their own income, not needing the benefits anymore. In the long term, the investment in this initiative might thus be beneficial to all: it needs more investment in the short term but leads to higher benefits in the long term.

In figure 104 on page 114, the roadmap can be found, where only the elements involved in this initiative are shown. The diagram shows how De Vecht Werkt is mainly involved in the dimension of economic integration. On the larger scale, policies are dominant, whereas on the smaller scale also spatial elements become essential.

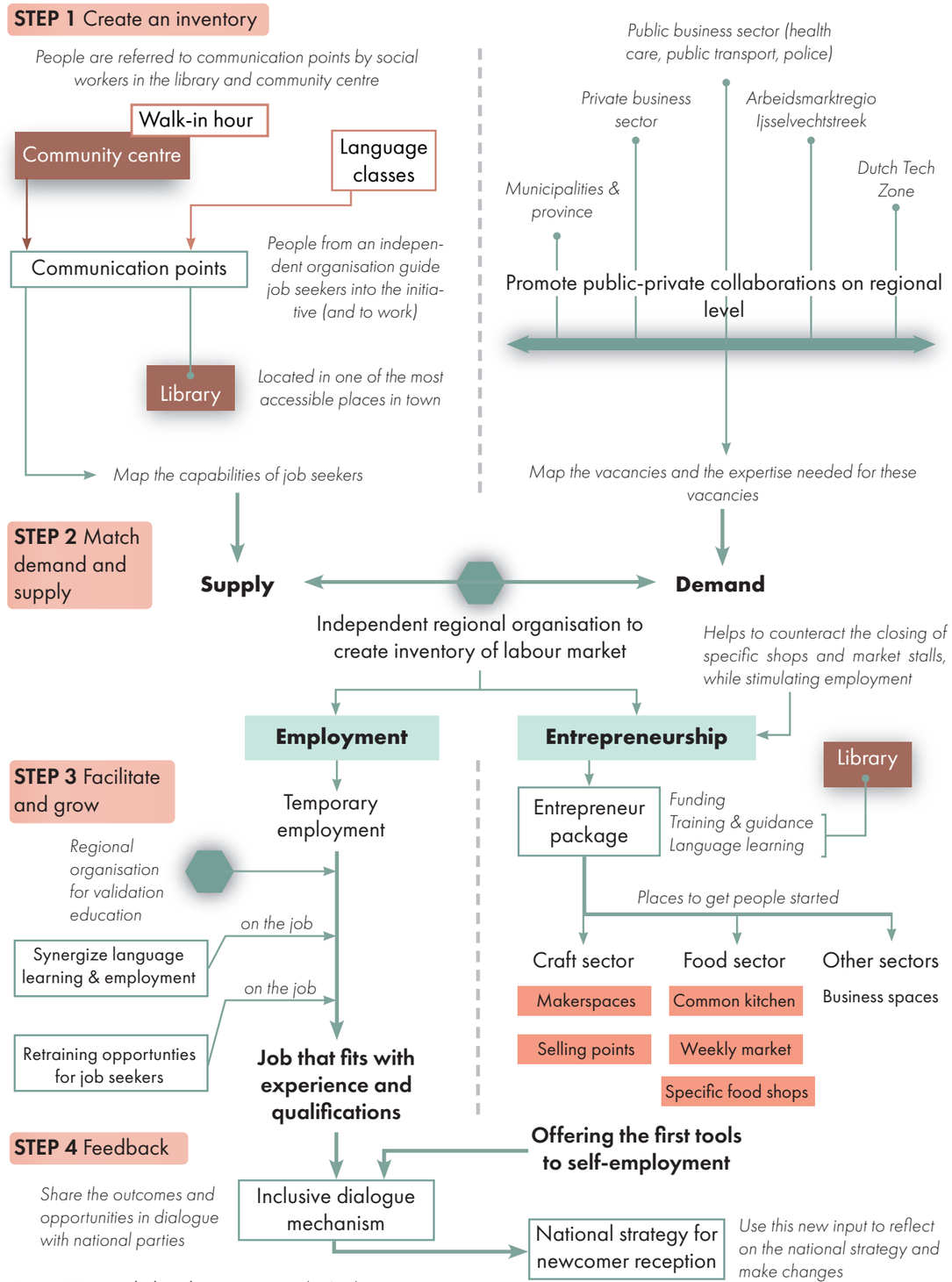


Figure 103: Detailed explanation *De Vecht Werkt*

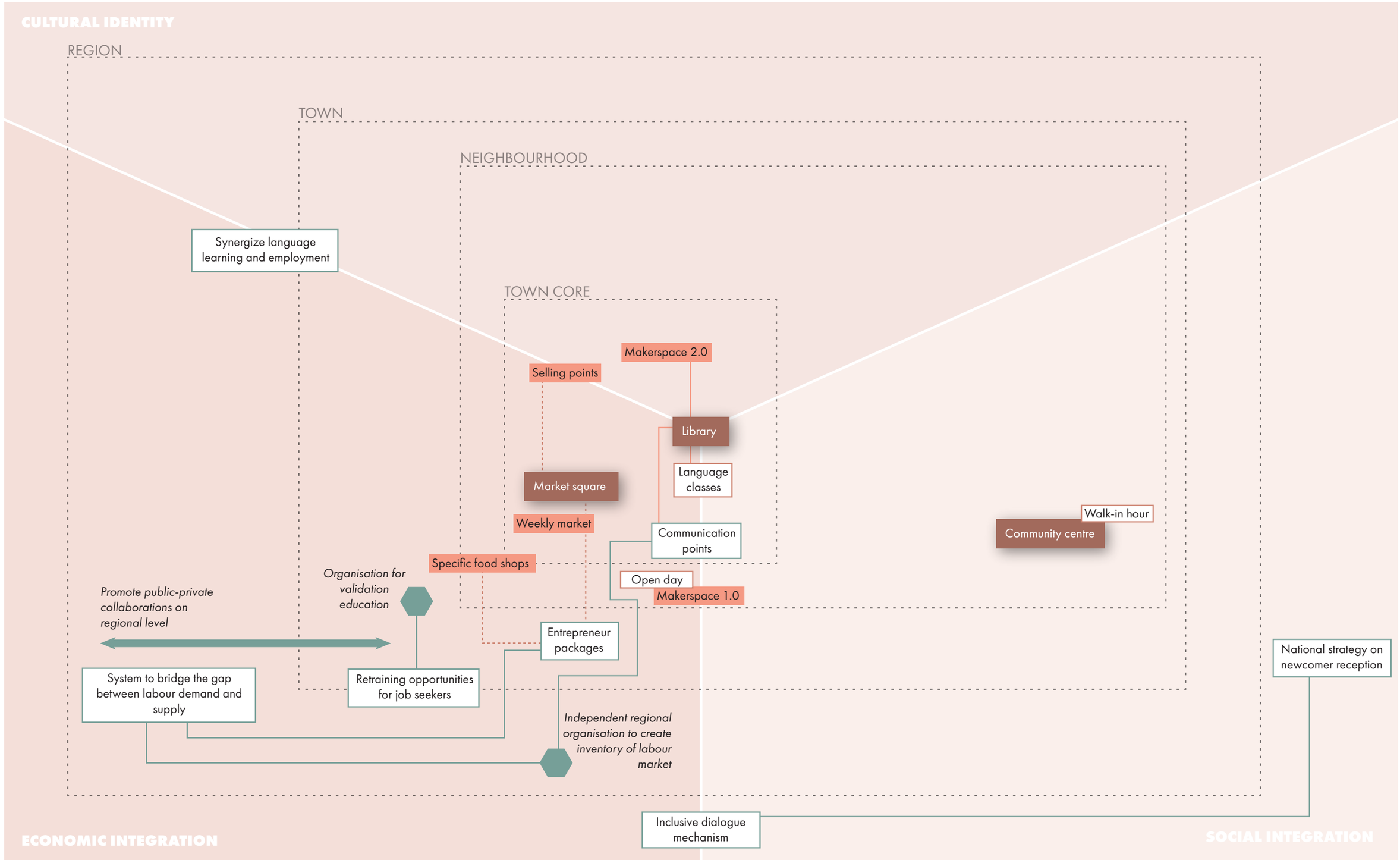


Figure 104: Roadmap *De Vecht Werkt*

SAMEN THUIS IN....

Samen Thuis in... (together at home in...) is an initiative that combines boosting the cultural identity of the town itself, the cultural identity of newcomers and the social integration of newcomers in the host community. This catalyst is inspired by the Wijkpaleis and Singeldingen in Rotterdam, but transformed to fit with the places and identifications explained in previous chapters.

The main idea of this catalyst is that every town is unique and offers different opportunities. Therefore, I can not give a list of interventions that are useful in each town, however, I can give a step-by-step approach to how to evaluate a town and implement the strategy (figure 105).

The first step is to map potential zones in the neighbourhood or town in question. Interesting areas might already have some leisure activities, unused open space or a set of public functions gathered in a small area. Dependent on the characteristics of these zones, a *new identity* can be proposed. An example could be that in a neighbourhood, a couple of primary schools are clustered together. In my mind, primary schools are equal to playing and thus the identity of this place becomes play.

In the next step, suitable interventions can be found from the chapter *identifications* and see which literally fit in the context (based on the available space) and which fit with the local character.

By applying these steps a neighbourhood or town might have multiple zones of intervention, all with a different identity. Here, a little subjective thinking comes in, by determining which of the zones have the largest positive impact on the community. It would be great if this can be done in a co-creation workshop with inhabitants who can give their opinions on what they would like to see most in their town.

Based on the decisions made, a long-term strategy can be made within which the most important interventions are prioritized.

Lastly, to make these new places successful, the aim is to identify kickstarters. Events that can attract people to the place so that they become familiar with the possibilities of the place while interacting in a fun way with their neighbours.

This initiative requires collaboration with other parties. Private businesses or NGOs are needed for funding, organisation and management of the new spaces and places. Therefore, the municipality must reach out to suitable parties to see whether they can contribute to the new initiatives envisioned.

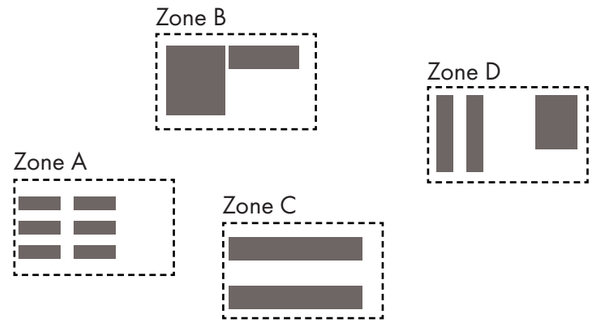
This catalyst mainly contributes to creating places where social capital can be built. Especially, the bridging of social capital between different people, creating reciprocity between neighbours, is stimulated by introducing spaces that are inviting to different kinds of people.

In figure 106 on page 118, there can be seen that this catalyst is mainly active in the local scales and that it is mainly spatial.

STEP 1 Determine potential or already existing leisure zones

Determine potential zones based on the context. For example proximity to:

- *Schools*
- *Open spaces*
- *Elderly housing*
- *Church*
- *Agglomeration of public functions*
- *Exisiting leisure structures*
- *Community centre*



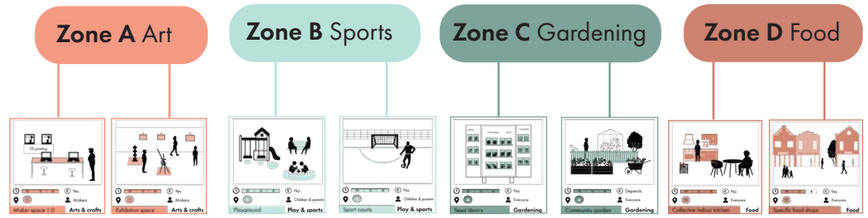
STEP 2 Define the character for each of these zones

Define which new functions fit in a place based on the context.

Zone A Art | **Zone B** Play | **Zone C** Gardening | **Zone D** Food

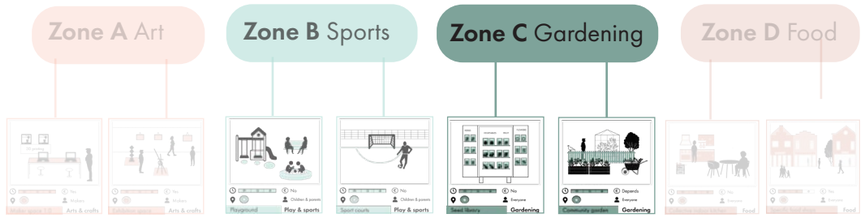
STEP 3 Map possible interventions in each zone

Look into the identifications and places and see what fits with the characteristic and the context



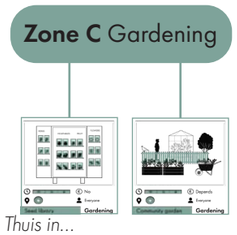
STEP 4 Prioritize critical interventions

Prioritize the zones and interventions that have the biggest impact on the neighbourhood and put this higher on the priority list



STEP 5 Propose kickstarters

Propose events that can help stimulate the use of the new amenities and to create interaction between neighbours.



Spring Day

A neighbourhood event in the beginning of spring where people prepare their garden and the community garden for the new year. Throughout the day neighbours can drink coffee together at the community centre and exchange plants and seeds for their gardens

Figure 105: Detailed explanation *Samen Thuis in...*

ROADMAP TO BELONGING
Samen Thuis in...

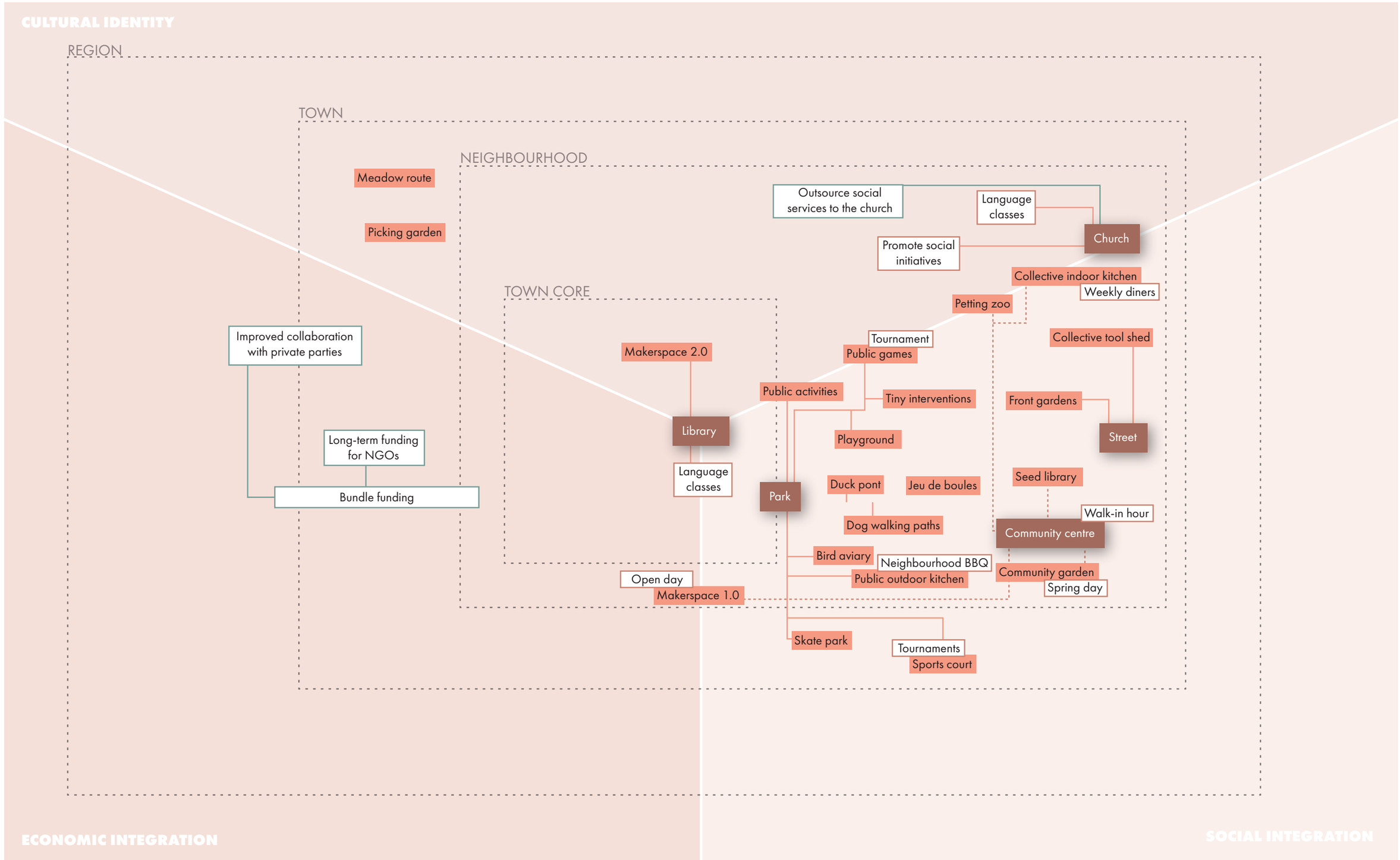


Figure 106: Roadmap *Samen Thuis in...*

The *Boeren Markt* (Farmers Market) is an initiative to stimulate local production and consumption of fresh food and products. The farmers market is not a new concept, but has been used for a long time already in rural areas. However, in the past years local consumption has become more popular again and these markets have developed to fit in present day society. Therefore, the concept is inspired by the Oogstmarkt in Rotterdam; a traditional farmers market with a modern twist (figure 107).

The first step is related to the first catalyst: stimulating local entrepreneurship. *De Vecht Werkt* plays an important role in giving job seekers the tools to start a small business. However, also other entrepreneurs should be motivated and able to develop their businesses. For example, farmers often sell their produce to larger distributors, skipping the step of local consumption. In recent years, the concept of local farmer shops has gained popularity again. In order to stimulate these developments, the municipality should make it easy to make such a step as a farmer.

To organise the *Boeren Markt*, the entrepreneurs above need to be recruited or stimulated to be present at the market. Consequently, the party in charge of the initiative, most likely the municipality or an NGO, must actively visit places where the entrepreneurs are located. These places could be farms in the region, but also makerspaces, neighbourhood kitchens and small shops in town. The initiative should be inclusive to professional business owners, but also recently arrived starters.

Besides entrepreneurs, the initiative offers the opportunity to be more than a market and to become an event. To do so, local artists need to be attracted. These can be musicians, makers, dancers or the local church choir.

By combining food, products, music and art from different people and different cultures a vibrant market is created that subconsciously raises intercultural awareness.

The most suitable location for such a market is often the market square. Saturday seems to be the most suitable day as most people will have Saturday off. Sunday is a less suitable day in small towns as this day is often dedicated to religion.

The *Boeren Markt* combines all three elements that contribute to the sense of belonging for newcomers. First of all, the setting of a market allows interaction between people who might normally not interact, contributing to **social integration**. Secondly, displaying local foods and produce enforces the local **cultural identity**. On top of that, it offers opportunities for residents with a migration background to express and share their cultural identity with fellow townspeople, subtly creating solidarity between different groups. Lastly, by offering spaces for the display and selling of goods and food, the initiative contributes to the **economic integration** of entrepreneurs.

Finally, to ensure that the event attracts enough people to make it a long-lasting project, people from outside of town should also be attracted. Therefore, publicity through social media, flyers, posters and through communication points like community centres and libraries, is essential. Interestingly, this is where the initial **urban network theory** comes back in: the towns on their own do not have enough capacity to make these types of events successful, but the region has. Utilizing the capacity of the region as a whole brings benefits to the smallest scale of the individual, for both locals and newcomers.

In figure 108 on page 122, you can see that the Boeren Markt is mainly active in the town core, but also reaches into the region to attract entrepreneurs and create capacity.

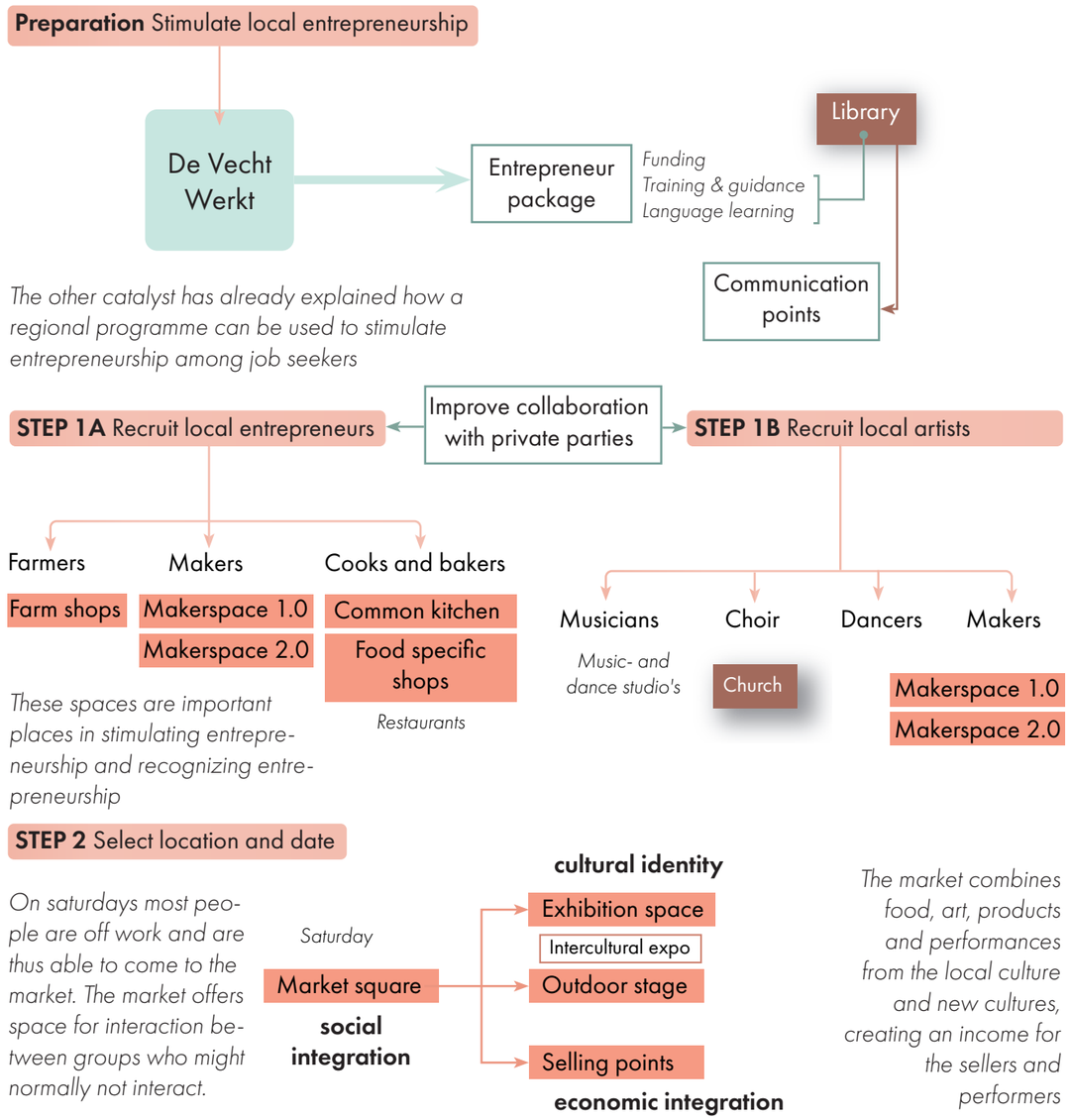


Figure 107: Detailed explanation *Boeren Markt*

ROADMAP TO BELONGING
Boeren Markt

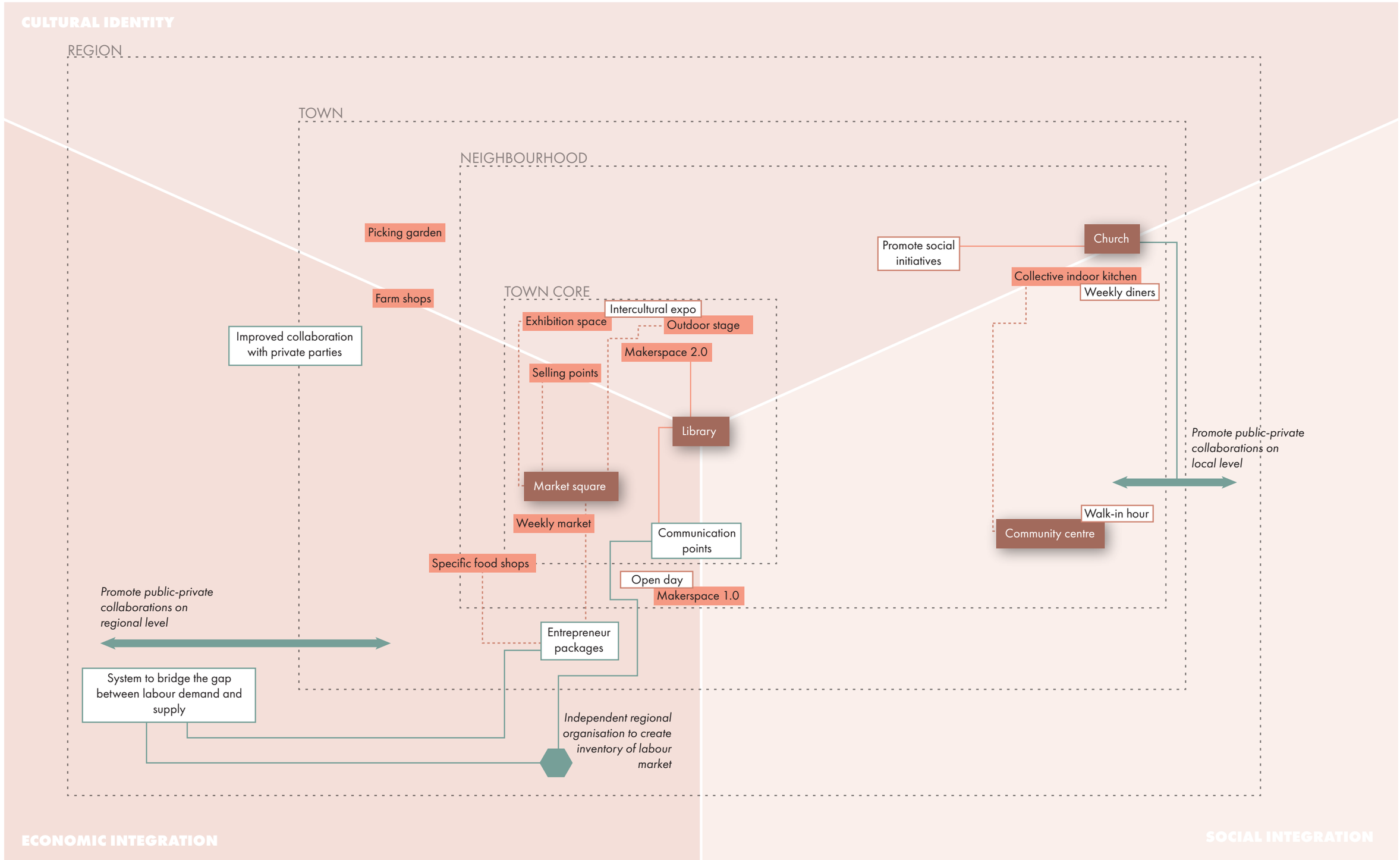


Figure 108: Roadmap *Boeren Markt*

APPLICATION ON-SITE

In this section, the roadmap is explored in more detail, focussing on catalyst 2 and 3. Visible is how these can be applied on the two towns explored during the site visit: Hardenberg & Dalfsen. In this way, it becomes visible how the local context influences the opportunities and possibilities for intervention within a town.

The first catalyst, *De Vecht Werkt*, is a regional initiative that takes into account both Dalfsen and Hardenberg and the region around it.

If looking at catalyst two, *Samen Thuis in...*, the goal is to create more spaces where people can interact and express their identity. In Hardenberg, a lot of parks and community places are already in place. There is a successful library, a community centre the Wijkboerderij, different parks with sports courts, playgrounds, duck ponds, bird aviaries and a skatepark. Consequently, applying catalyst two would result in smaller interventions within the existing structure. On the other hand, in Dalfsen, there was not a lot of public community space yet. The church acted important in this dimension, however, is not accessible to all at all times and the community centre TrefkoelePlus is not neccessarily the place for small neighbourly interactions. In the outdoor public sphere, there is very little to do, yet. Therefore, to showcase the influence of catalyst two, the focus on Dalfsen.

Catalyst three, *the Boeren Markt*, is an initiative that should attract a wider public. Farmers from the region can come in, as can makers, artists and chefs. To make this initiative possible, capacity is needed. This capacity will probably not be found in Dalfsen, as there is only little space for such a market, and relatively fewer entrepreneurs to attract. Therefore, this catalyst will be showcased on Hardenberg. Another reason for this is the complaints about the current market and the recession of diversity within the market. The market will be an initiative for people from the entire region and will be an attraction for people from towns in proximity as well, thus also for inhabitants from Dalfsen.

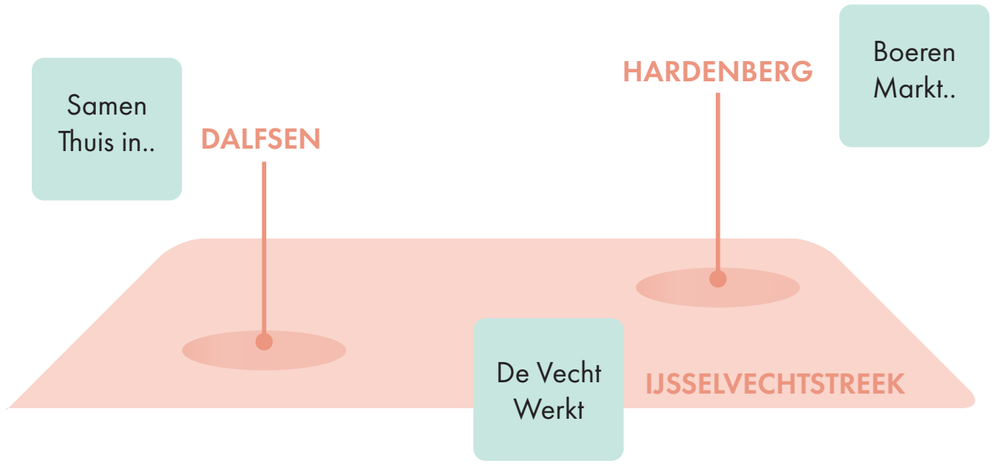


Figure 109: Application on-site

Samen Thuis in Dalfsen is an initiative to promote the development of social capital between locals and between locals and newcomers. The initiative does not only focus on the social integration of newcomers, but on the interaction between all different groups in society. Additionally, it promotes the expression of the local cultural identity, as well as, the expression of new identities, and the exchange between these different identities.

Based on the site visit and spatial analysis, four zones have been identified in the explored area in Dalfsen: gardening & food, cultural get-together, play and sports & nature. Zone A is currently a small area of thick vegetation for dog walking. There is an area of grass with one football goal (without a net), making playing extremely difficult. The site offers lots of spatial potential. Especially, gardening seems to be a suitable occupation in this space. By synergizing this with food, a new community node can be created in the neighbourhood.

Zone B is characterised by a lot of schools, a library and a church. What is missing at the moment is spaces outside to interact. The little area is dominated by cars, forcing interactions to the inside of the church. Additionally, the library is hidden away inside Trefkoeleplus. This zone offers the potential for more outdoor cultural get-togethers.

Zone C is characterised by various playgrounds, though very simplistic, a school and lots of elderly housing. The open spaces or spaces dedicated to the unused playground can be transformed into spaces for intergenerational activities, focussing on playing.

Zone D is situated at the edge of the town, forming a bridge with nature. In this zone, there is already a jeu de boules court and playground. The functionalities here can be expanded to highlight the identity of sports and nature.

Figure 110: Samen Thuis in Dalfsen

APPLICATION ON-SITE
Dalfsen

ZONE A: GARDENING AND FOOD

The open space available in zone A can be transformed into a neighbourhood garden with a community centre. The community centre would be dedicated to making: a maker space and a common kitchen. The food produced in the community garden can be used in the common kitchen to cook dishes together. The centre can organise weekly events to attract people from different backgrounds. By combining indoor and outdoor activities the place remains attractive during summer and winter. During spring, people can work in the garden, and plant new vegetables. During summer, the produce can be used to cook dishes inside or in the outside oven or barbecue. People can sit outside together and enjoy the nice weather. Once the weather turns colder, the people can go inside and work on crafts: build new furniture, knit a new quilt or take a painting class. Techniques and designs from different cultures can be exchanged.

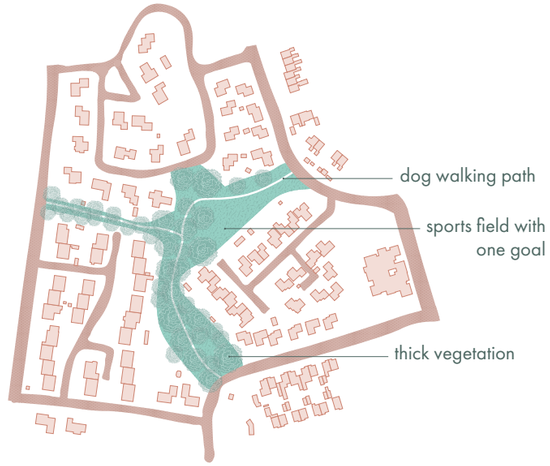


Figure 111: Current situation zone A

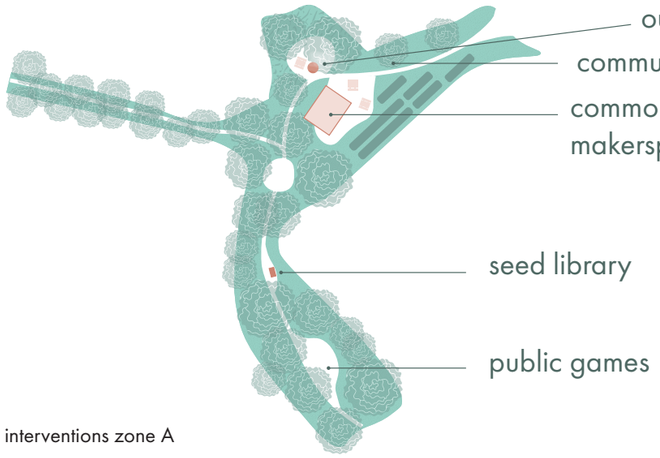


Figure 112: Proposed interventions zone A

The rest of the green structure can still be dedicated to dog walking but can be made more interesting with smaller interventions like games, benches, and a seed library.

The place combines a **place**, the community centre, with different **identifications**: gardening, food, arts & crafts and play. Together, these elements attract different people creating a place of diversity and interaction. Not only valuable to newcomers but to all inhabitants.

In order to make this work, the municipality can look at partnerships and collaborations with local organisations. For example a gardening organisation, but also the church or schools in the area. Another example of a partner could be an organisation as seen in de Wijkboerderij, in which the site offers a daytime occupation for people with a mental disability. In this way, the place is always well-maintained and occupied by a welcoming committee.

Figure 113: Visualisation gardening & food

ZONE B: CULTURAL GET-TOGETHER

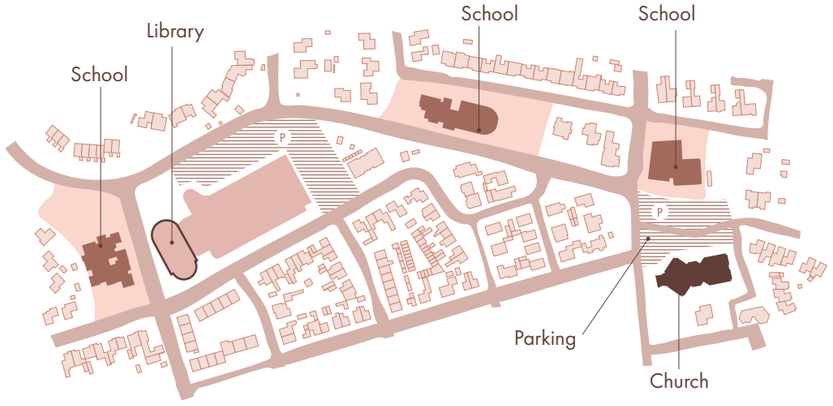


Figure 114: Current situation zone B

The library is currently situated in Trefkoele, quite hidden from the outside. In order to stimulate the use of the library it should be opened up more to the outside, creating a more inviting atmosphere. Additionally, the indoor structure should be altered to accommodate more activities within the library. The library can offer more social services in relation to language learning, employment and the navigation of paperwork.

The space in between one of the schools and the church is currently primarily dedicated to cars. This is quite interesting as the town is very small and thus cycling or walking might be better alternatives. Therefore, here a couple of parking spaces could be removed, some could be moved to the side and the new open space can be used to facilitate cultural get-togethers. This space can be used by churchgoers after the service, but also by parents dropping off or picking up their children from school.

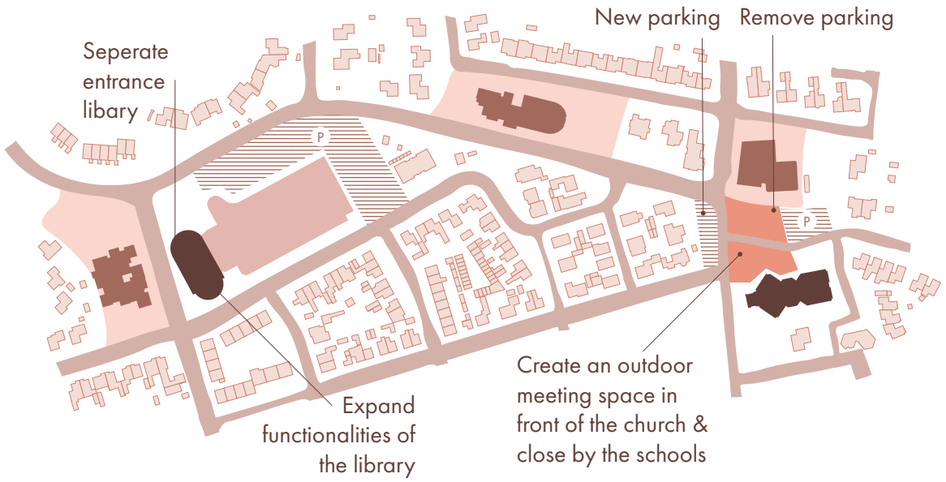


Figure 115: Proposed interventions zone B

The space can also be suitable for outside activities organised by the school.

On Sundays, a table with coffee and a treat can be set up to stimulate chit-chat after church. The playground can entertain children while parents and the elderly have a chat.

The place facilitates interaction between churchgoers, but also between parents. When thinking of newcomer integration, interactions with fellow parents can be a first step in social integration.

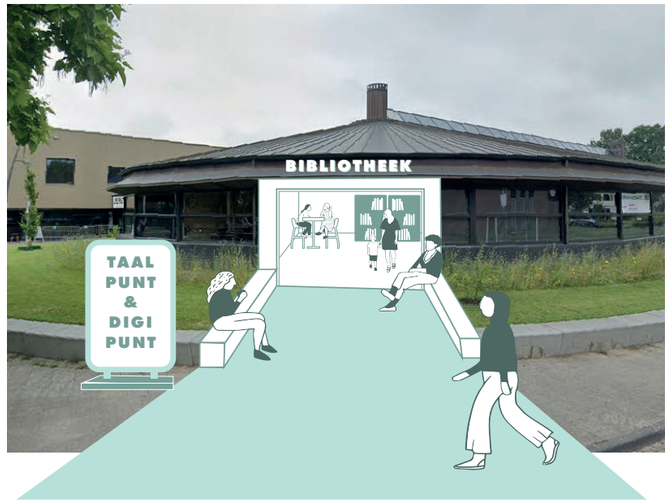


Figure 116: Visualisations cultural get-together

ZONE C: PLAY

The third zone is located closer to the town core and contains a lot of elderly housing, some playgrounds and a school. During the site visit, this was also the main zone where children were cycling around or riding on rollerskates. Around the elderly housing, there was not much to do, especially not for the elderly. Consequently, to add value to this area the aim is to introduce playfulness into the zone.

In a large field of grass, there is currently a small playground, leaving a lot of open space. Here, there is potential for a Cruyff court, a soccer court with artificial grass. In my personal experience, these places are always used either by children, youth or even adults on Sunday mornings. A court like this brings life and playfulness into the neighbourhood, allowing social interaction between different people. The Cruyff foundation offers funding for these courts.

The second opportunity is a skatepark in a currently vacant plot. Skateparks allow children to skate or cycle without the risk of being out on the street. Skateparks bring together children who are learning to skate, their parents, youth and teenagers.

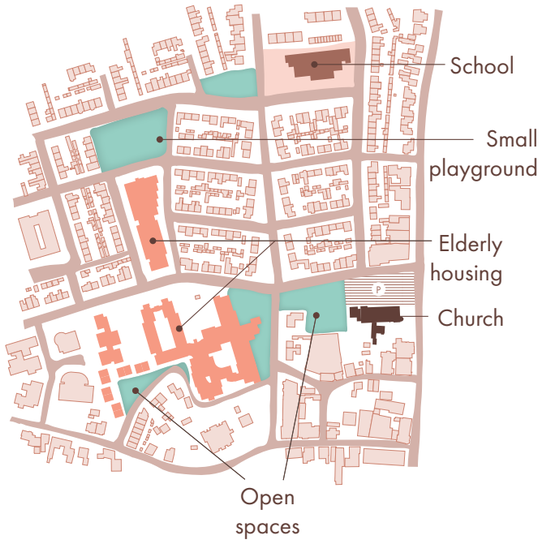


Figure 117: Current situation zone C

The third opportunity is related to the large amount of elderly housing in the area, but the lack of activities for them outside. Therefore, a game park is proposed, with different games for different ages and groups. Games are intergenerational and cross-cultural, allowing interaction between people who might normally not interact.

All-in-all, by bringing back playfulness into the neighbourhood, children and youth have more fun activities to undertake. The elderly have more incentives to go outside, hopefully diminishing the loneliness among them. And for the specific group of newcomers, it allows them to connect to locals by playing games or sports that are close to their own cultural identity.

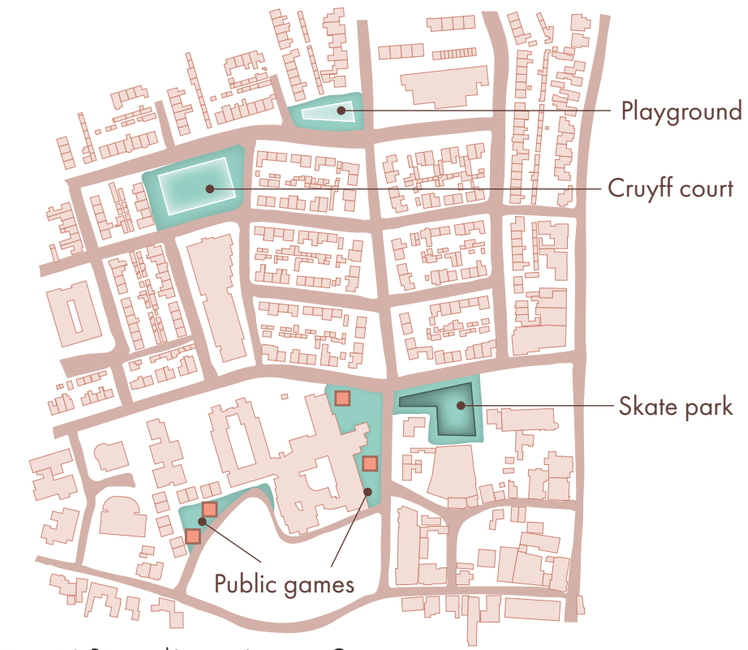


Figure 118: Proposed interventions zone C

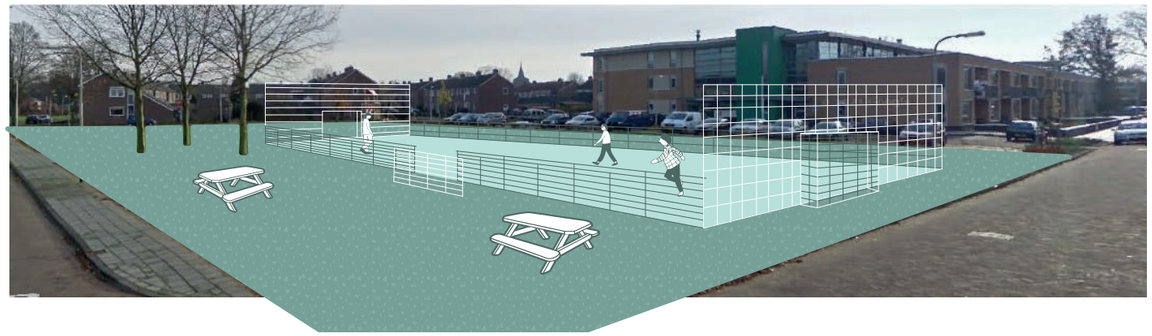


Figure 119: Visualisations play

ZONE D: SPORTS & NATURE

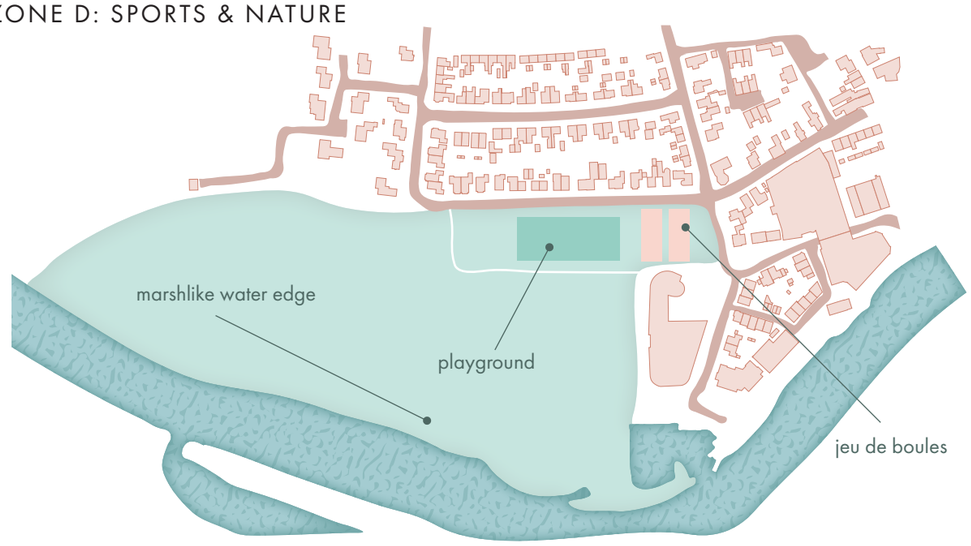


Figure 119: Current situation zone D

In zone D, the dominant identity is nature and sports. To further stimulate this character, activities for all ages need to be added, but especially for adults and young adults.

Suitable interventions are for example outdoor gyms, with outdoor equipment or space for boot camps. Additionally, a new sport which is practised more frequently is bouldering: a climbing sport which can be safely practised without ropes. In this way, not only activities for the younger generation are organised but also for older adults. These activities can stimulate social integration if undertaken by multiple people at the same time.

Therefore, as mentioned, boot camps or specific classes can be organised that attract groups of people at the same time.

The site is currently mostly visited by dog walkers and other leisure walkers, to enjoy nature and the surroundings. To further stimulate this, benches and picnic tables can be added. As well as interventions to stimulate the biodiversity in the area, which will, as a result, have an impact on the attractiveness of the place. Here there can be thought of birdwatching plateaus and bird- and bee-nesting facilities. The natural environment can have a calming effect, which is especially important for newcomers dealing with trauma.

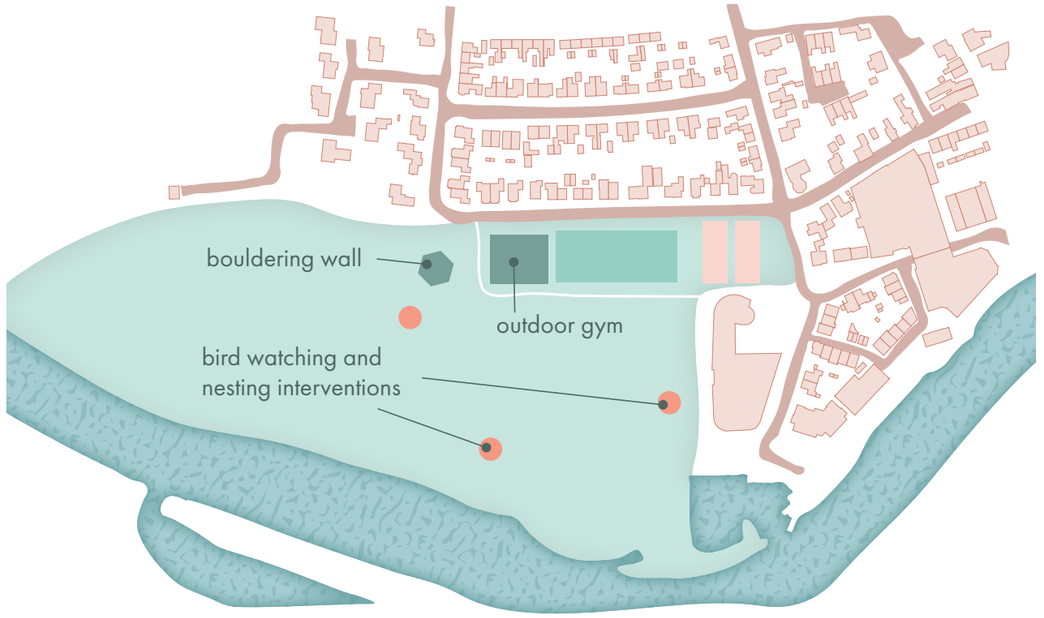


Figure 120: Proposed interventions zone D

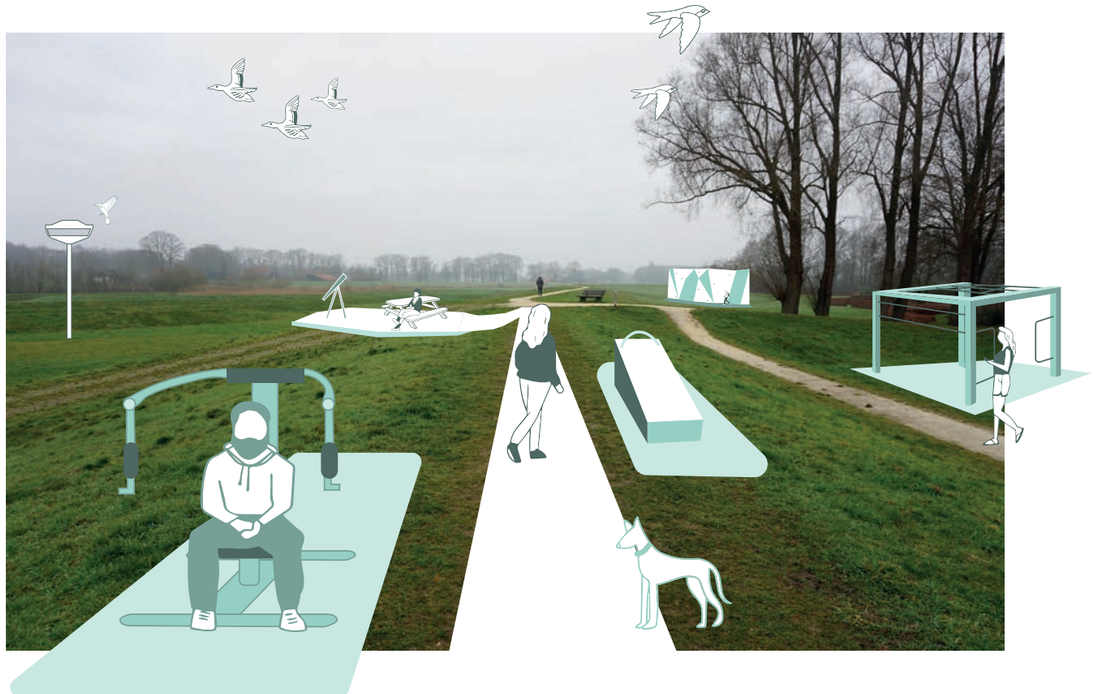


Figure 121: Visualisation sports & nature

The envisioned interventions can not be applied at the same time. Thus, there is a need to prioritise and take into account the time needed to establish collaborations and find funding. In terms of prioritization, the three first zones are all relatively important, however, in each of these zones one of the interventions stands out and can be used as a starting point for change.

In zone A this is the community garden. Gardening was one of the most important values in Dalfsen, plus a community garden is relatively easy to implement. The community garden itself can be phased as well, so that the garden will develop over the years. The common kitchen and maker space need more funding, but also new collaborations and partnerships with other parties and therefore these are placed further along in the planning. The maker space can again be split into several phases. A space for simple crafts like painting, drawing and modelling requires limited resources and tools and can be relatively easy to realize. For a textile- and wood workshop more tools and machines are needed.

In zone B, the development of the library is essential. Again, this is subdivided into several phases to start with the easier changes and end with the changes which require more money and planning.

Figure 123: Phasing for the interventions

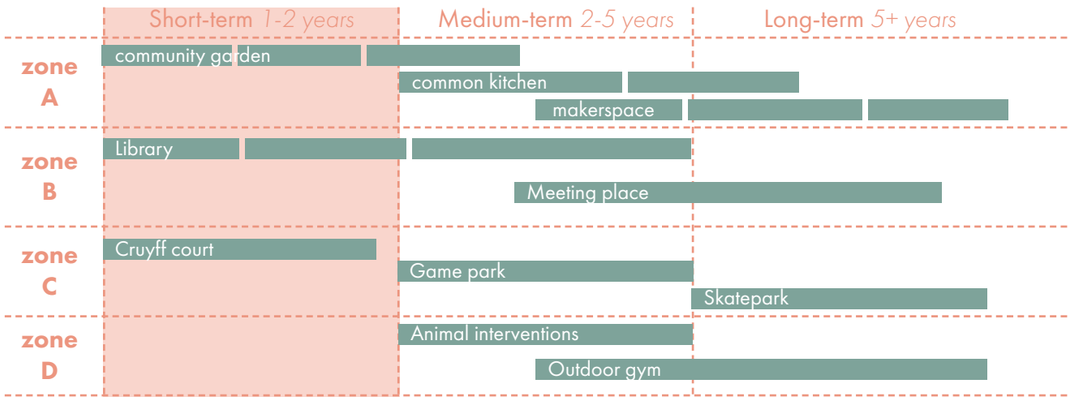


Figure 122: Phasing for the whole project

In zone C the Cruyff court is seen as the essential element, which requires funding (from the Cruyff Foundation), but relatively little planning as it is an intervention widely used already and it requires little maintenance.

The last zone is comparatively less important to change in the short term and is therefore placed further in the future in the planning.

To attract people to the sites, social media and publicity can be used. Facebook and Instagram are already important platforms in the towns to spread information on events. These events can be realized in relation to the sites developed, like a soccer tournament, a recipe exchange day and a game tournament.

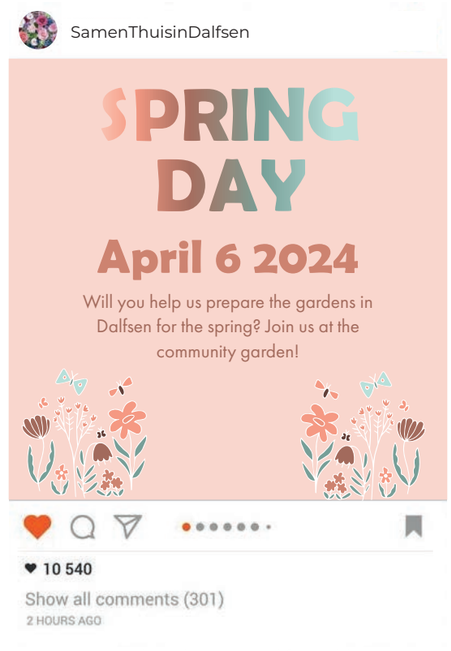


Figure 124: Social media as a tool for publicity

Figure 125: Publicity for events

LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS: FARMERS

To investigate how to apply the third catalyst on Hardenberg, there will first be looked at the entrepreneurs in the region. The first entrepreneurs gathere are farmers.

The local context of small towns is often defined by the presence of agriculture, horticulture and husbandry in the peripheries. A large portion of these farms are not for local consumption like corn, barley and wheat, but there are also farms that have developed a local market for their products. In figure 126 a couple of these farms are displayed. The first group of these farms are plantations, which grow trees, flowers and plants. The plantations mapped in figure 116 do not only sell their products in bulk but also sell to individuals. The second group grows fruits and vegetables which they directly sell in their own shops. This is frequently seen for strawberry, berry and asparagus farms, also in the case of Hardenberg. The next group are the farm shops. In farm shops often one product is produced by the farm, but also other products from colleague farmers or from the wholesale are sold. These farm shops function as small supermarkets for fresh products. The last group is dairy farms. In this case, the dairy farm produces ice cream which is sold on location to people out on a walk or cycling through the nearby nature.

These specific farms and farms in the region with similar shops can be invited to sell their products on the Boeren Markt.

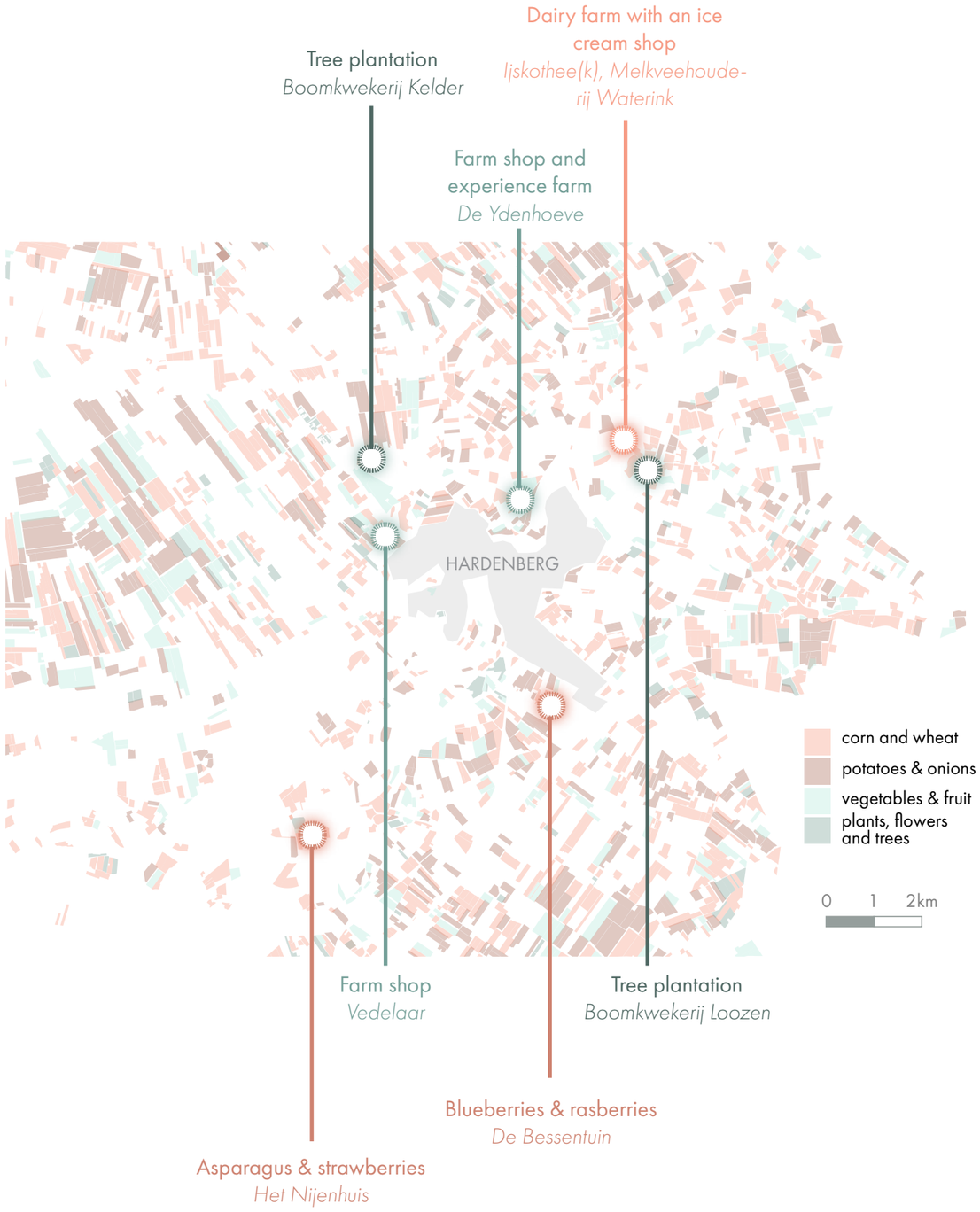


Figure 126: Farms in the region around Hardenberg

LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS: MAKERS, COOKS AND BAKERS

Other entrepreneurs can be found all over town. The first group is mainly present in the town core. Small business owners, like bakers, florists and restaurant owners can be invited to sell their wares on the market.

Besides these business owners, also start-ups and creative businesses are taken into account. One place in Hardenberg that facilitates this is *RUIM vol creatieven*. This facility offers workspaces, conference rooms and events to creative entrepreneurs (RUIM vol creatieven, n.d.). In figure 127 the space is shown.

However, this facility is mainly used by 'new' creatives, who often work with computers, and not for the people working with their hands. To facilitate handcrafting investments in new maker spaces need to be made. One of these can be placed in the park near the town centre. This could be dedicated to larger crafts like furniture building, but can also be used for reparations of appliances and such (with an eye on circularity). The second maker space would be located in the neighbourhood park and would focus more on finer crafts like knitting, sewing and pottery. These places become talent hubs and can be used to recognize new talents.

Lastly, a recommendation is to stimulate the use of existing places. The maker space in the library can be further promoted and utilized. The kitchen in the Wijkboerderij can be expanded and used by neighbours during the evening hours. In this way, cooks and bakers are able to showcase their talent and get the recognition they need. In the end, they might be offered a spot in the Boeren Markt, contributing to the economic integration of individuals with a passion for cooking.

Figure 127: RUIM vol creatieven (RUIM vol creatieven, n.d.)

Library
The library can try to promote the maker space within the building more and connect job seekers with this maker space (De Vecht Werkt)

Market square
The market square will be the location where the market is held. The market square is right at the town core, with plenty of parking facilities in proximity and a train station within walking distance

Specific small shops
Stimulate small shops to participate in the Boeren Markt

OPPORTUNITY

LOCATION

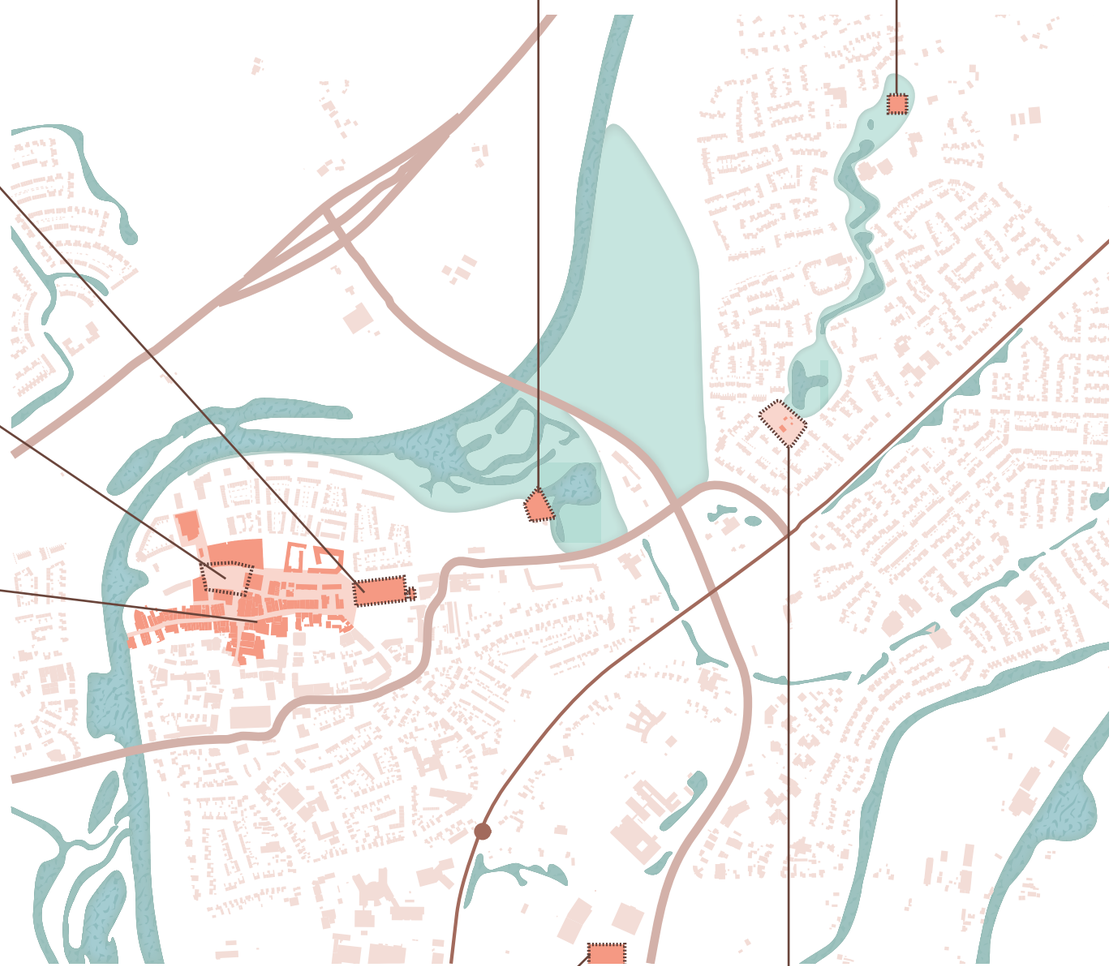
OPPORTUNITY

Maker space 1
Introduce a new maker space for larger products like furniture, but also to repair appliances

NEW

Maker space 2
Introduce a maker space for finer crafts like sewing, knitting, modelling etc.

NEW



COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITY
RUIM vol creatieven
A flexible work space for creative entrepreneurs with a comfortable atmosphere

COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITY
Wijkboerderij
Expand kitchen to become a common kitchen during the evenings & allow room for simple crafting during the day

Figure 128: Entrepreneurs and opportunities in Hardenberg

MARKET ORGANISATION

To represent the different entrepreneurs and artists, the market is divided into different typologies. Each typology should be represented to ensure diversity and a balance between the different types. These typologies are shown in figure 129. Types A, B, C & D are mainly about offering different products: both food and non-food.

Type E offers the opportunity to create publicity for other initiatives in Hardenberg. By reserving stalls for the library, church or Wijkboerderij, these organisations can reach out to a broader audience and raise awareness for the services they have to offer.

Type F and G are mainly to expose different cultures and forms of art, to create an atmosphere that invites people to stay in the market for a longer period of time.

In terms of governance, this initiative is most likely to be kickstarted by the municipality. However, they can outsource the organisation or planning of the event to an NGO or private business. Outsourcing the organisation of the event to local parties has the benefit of knowledge and social networks. Local organisations, like for example the church, have a team of key figures who are probably well-known in town. They are familiar with the more professional entrepreneurs by simply living in the town for a longer period of time and buying their groceries there, but they might also be familiar with the less-known entrepreneurs, located in community centres and maker spaces. They connect the different layers of society. Therefore the recommendation, in this case, is to organise an event like this in collaboration with different organisations.

Combining the knowledge of the church, library, maybe a local farmer's organisation and other parties, the network becomes larger and more opportunities can be utilized to make the event a success.

Figure 129: Market stall typologies

PUBLICITY

Also in the case of Hardenberg publicity is essential. An initiative like the Boeren Markt is dependent on its visitors to define whether it is a success. Do the costs way up against the profits? Thus, attracting enough visitors from all throughout the region is important, which relates back to the **urban network theory** used in the initial theoretical framework. Different organisations in Hardenberg itself, but also from surrounding towns like Gramsbergen, Ommen, Coevorden and Dalfsen, can be stimulated to make advertisements for the event. Additionally, social media plays an important role as it is already used as a main communication means in the towns studied.

Figure 130: Facebook post for publicity

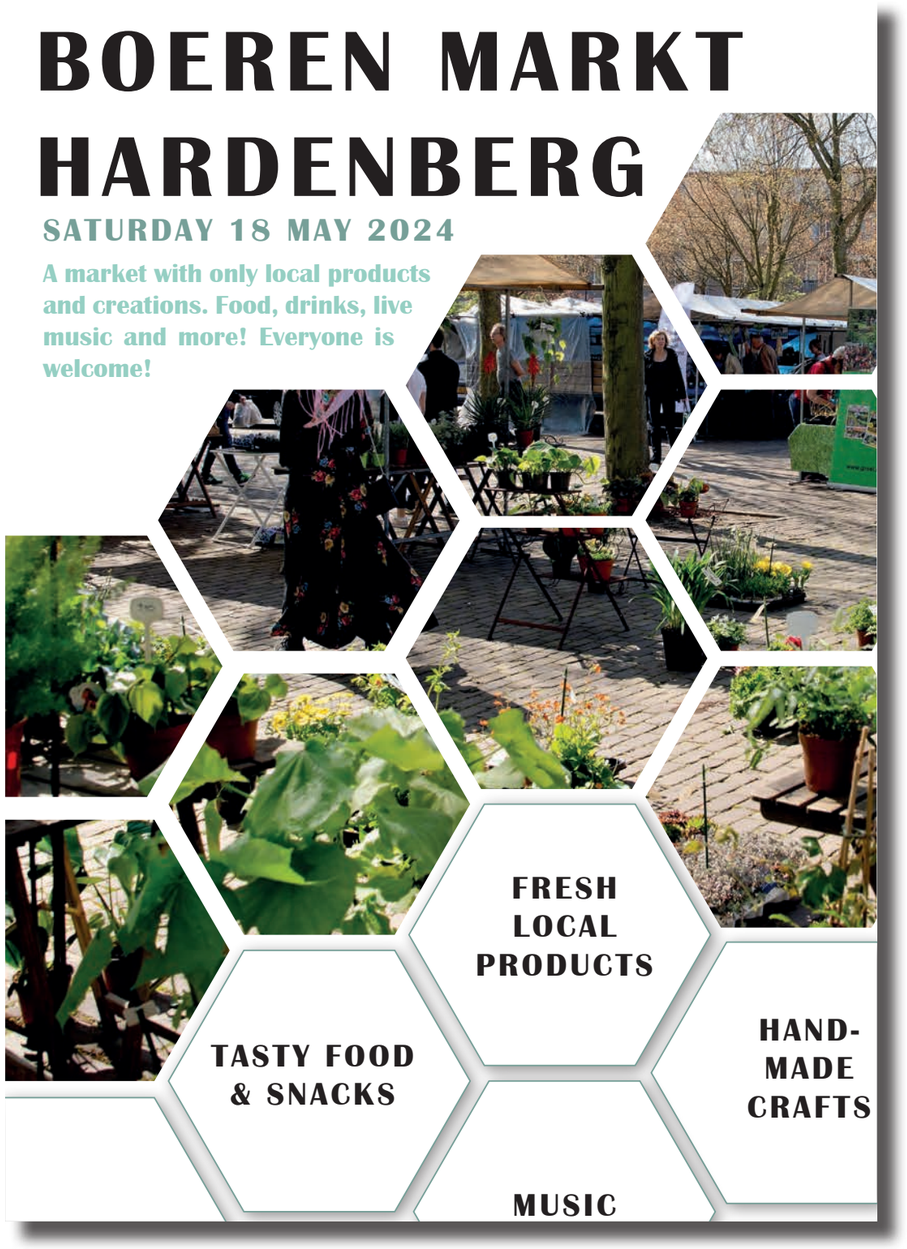


Figure 131: Poster for publicity

APPLICATION ON-SITE
Hardenberg

Figure 132: Visualisation of the Boeren Markt

NEW URBAN PLANNING APPROACH

To conclude, based on all the research done in this thesis, a new approach to urban planning can be developed. In this, a combination is made of the roadmap and realization moments I personally had as an urban planner. These lessons propose a new perspective on the practice of urban planning as an integrative approach. Lastly, a summary of the roadmap is given to discuss the impact of this project when operationalizing it and the pitfalls that might be encountered in doing so.

LESSON 1
The need for a balance between knowledge exchange and storage: **a multi-scalar, cross-sectoral and cross-municipal approach.**

LESSON 2
The interior space of buildings, existing organisations, collaborations and the provided services as a part of urban planning: **urban planning across boundaries.**

LESSON 3
The importance of the mundane, everyday life of different people to urban planning: **nothing is insignificant.**

Figure 133: Lessons learnt

In figure 134 on page 150, the new urban planning approach is shown. The first step in this approach is the development of a frame of reference. An essential step in this research was visiting two sites. The comparison between the two towns showed the elements within each town that stood out: lessons learned in Dalfsen could be applied in Hardenberg and visa versa. This relates to the idea of creating a frame of reference, gathering knowledge from different places. This brings the first lesson of the research: there is a need for a multiscalar, cross-sectoral, but especially, a cross-municipal approach. Municipalities need to find a balance between recruiting long-term employees and short-term employees. Long-term employees ensure the capturing and storage of knowledge, while short-term employees bring new inspiration and knowledge from other contexts.

This frame of reference allows urban planners to take a critical look at the current situation: evaluate. This evaluation happens according to the roadmap discussed in this thesis in which the first step is evaluating the success of meeting places. This step is related to the second lesson of this research: urban planning across boundaries. Urban planning should include the dynamics (visible and invisible) within buildings as they influence the dynamics of the community and also public life outside of these buildings.

Therefore, the results of the evaluation mean something different in the context of the catalysts, as each of them have a separate goal. For instance, for the Vecht Werkt, it means that the visibility of existing meeting places should be highlighted while adding new services to these places to improve the functionality of the place. For Samen Thuis in, improving existing places is not sufficient and new meaningful meeting places might be valuable to consider for a community to promote interaction. The same can be seen in the second part of the evaluation: public life. Here lesson three of this research comes in, where I found that nothing in public life is insignificant. For example, dog walking might seem unimportant at first, but has proven to have a major impact on the dynamics of a neighbourhood.

For the first catalyst, stimulating public life is less important than for the other two catalysts. For the Boeren Markt, developing new spaces for entrepreneurship is essential to take into account.

Nonetheless, all these interventions are dependent on the last factor: the capacity of the municipality and the region. This is also the major bottleneck of the research (or any research for that matter). Finding enough capacity, especially in small towns, can be a barrier towards implementing these catalysts. In De Vecht Werkt, regional collaboration is essential and thus a municipality is not only dependent on its own resources and willingness but also on that of the other towns in the region. This means that this catalyst needs more time to create an impact.

In the beginning, a municipality puts effort into creating collaborations and installing the sub-initiatives to realize this project, without seeing results yet. Once some of these sub-initiatives are in place, results start to show. However, once the whole regional initiative functions, the work will finally pay off and the initiative will make a significant impact. I think, this is where the first lesson comes back, where urban planners should not be fixated on one place for too long, but consider other towns and see the benefits of collaboration and shared capacity. This refers back to the initial idea of the urban network theory.

Fortunately, Samen Thuis In, is relatively easier to implement and doesn't need high effort, before seeing a high impact. Small initiatives will pay off, leading to more capacity for future interventions.

Altogether, this research has been proof of why a multi-scalar, cross-sectoral but also a cross-municipal perspective is an improvement to the current urban planning approach used in most municipalities in the Netherlands. The new generation of planners, including myself, will hopefully be the first step towards this new urban planning approach.

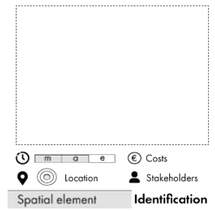
FRAME OF REFERENCE

The role of the urban planner as a carrier of knowledge between different towns — Lesson 1

A balance needs to be found between storing knowledge within a town and exchange between towns. Urban planners play an important role in realising the exchange.

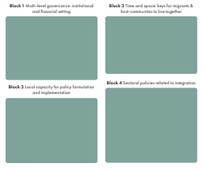
1. Places: the success of meeting places — Lesson 2

Observation
Interviews
Experience
→ Evaluation diagram



2. Identifications: public life and activities — Lesson 3

Observation
Interviews
Experience
→ What is missing?



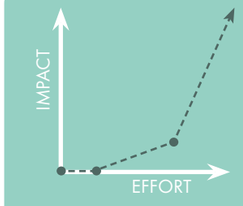
3. Governance: the capacity of the municipality and region — Lesson 1

Dependent on:
Size of town •
Local willingness •
Regional willingness •

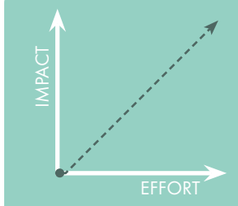
IMPLEMENTATION

	Catalyst A: De Vecht Werkt	Catalyst B: Samen Thuis in...	Catalyst C: Boeren Markt
1. Places: the success of meeting places	Bring new services to existing meeting places and where necessary improve the accessibility of these meeting places.	Improve existing meeting places according to the evaluation diagram or introduce new meeting places, taking into account the evaluation diagram to create succesfull meeting places.	Stimulate entrepreneurship within meeting places by introducing new services (guidance & advice).
2. Identifications: public life and activities	Use public life and activities to stimulate entrepreneurship and to raise awareness for the initiative.	Find areas in town to stimulate public life and interaction between neighbours, taking into account the context and local values and using the identifications.	Stimulate entrepreneurship by introducing spatial opportunities like maker spaces and common kitchens in town while also developing a successful place for the market itself.
3. Governance: the capacity of the municipality and region	Develop municipal and regional capacity and collaborations across sectors to create the regional mechanism that is central to the Vecht Werkt.	Built capacity through showing results: starting with smaller interventions and expanding when developing more capacity within the municipal and in collaboration with private parties.	Develop municipal capacity to create the smaller interventions while also creating regional collaborations with private parties and attracting visitors from the entire region.

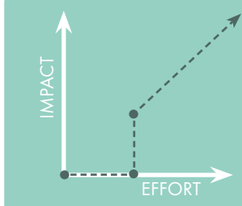
EVALUATION



In the beginning, quite a lot of effort is needed before showing results. Once, individual services like language classes or guidance are in place, the impact increases. Only, once the whole regional system is in place, the impact grows exponentially.



In this catalyst, the impact is relatively proportionate to the effort. This catalyst doesn't need a lot of effort to get started, but can already show results by implementing smaller changes. Therefore, this initiative is the easiest to implement.



The last catalyst needs quite a lot of work before showing results. However, once the Boeren Markt is in place, the impact is really big. This minimal effort needed to realise this initiative is related to the capacity of the hosting town: a minimal capacity and thus size is needed to host this initiative.

IMPACT

Figure 134: New urban planning approach

THE GAME

The purpose of the game is to communicate the findings of this research to a broader audience. The game combines the findings of the site visits, the struggles discussed in the interviews with the Syrian women and the proposals within this thesis.

Players of the game become Syrian status holders for a moment, finding their way to a sense of belonging in a small town in the Netherlands. To achieve this, players have to collect chips, which relate to the definition given to a sense of belonging in this thesis: cultural identity, social integration and economic integration.

The players move along the board to the different places found in the research. In each of these places, a stack of various cards can be found. Each card contains an experience, opportunity or barrier for status holders, paired with a reward concerning the three values of a sense of belonging.

In this way, the game tries to communicate the daily experiences of status holders simplistically, while also showing the potential for improving the conditions for Syrian status holders. The specific rules and game elements can be found in **Appendix V.**

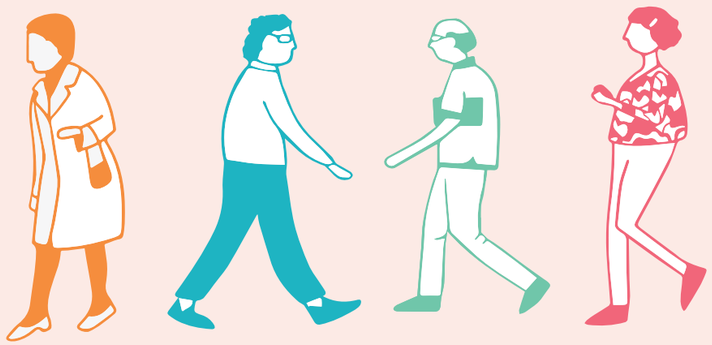


Figure 135: Game players

Below, the game board is shown, to give a first idea of what the game looks like. The gameboard displays the places present in a small town varying from the library, to the playground to the mosque. These places are based on the specific places and identifications found in the research. In **Appendix V** you can find the rulebook, gameboard, game cards and other game elements needed to play the game.

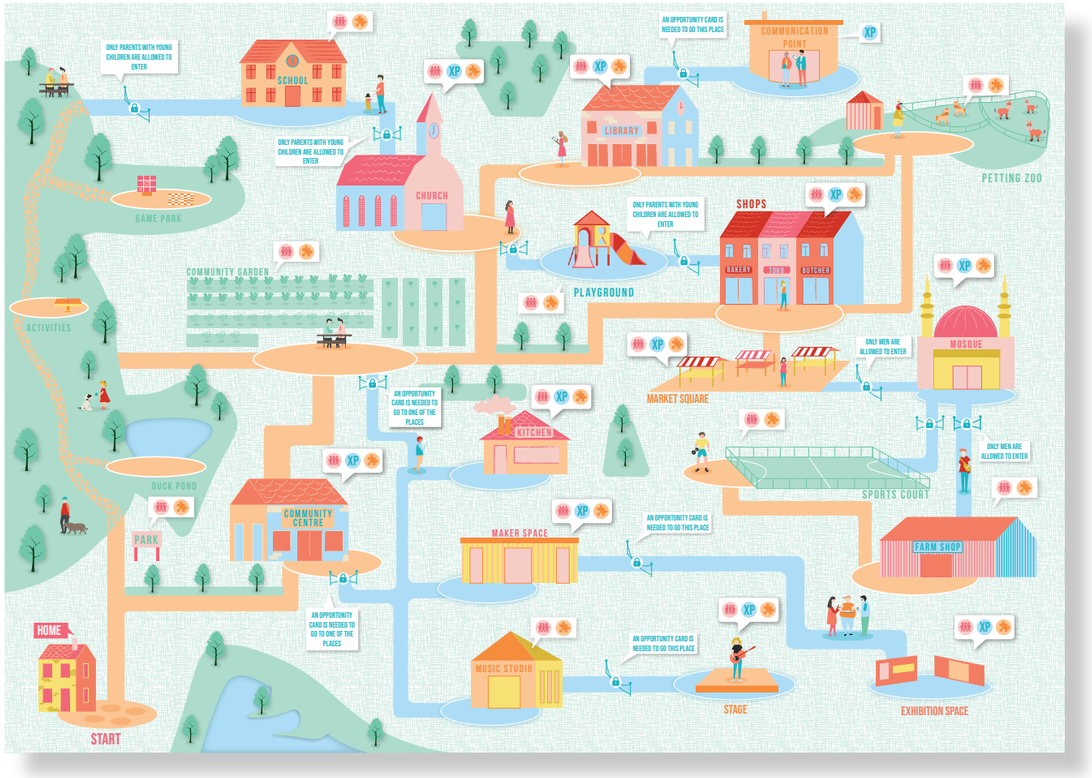


Figure 136: The game board

Scientific relevance
This research has taught me that the constant revision of the theoretical framework, especially through fieldwork, brings along a lot of new ideas and insights. It has learned me to consider the initial research questions and theoretical framework as a hypothesis which is allowed to be altered through fieldwork. This dynamic process has allowed me to rephrase and redefine concepts based on the scope of the project.

In the initial theoretical framework, *brede welvaart* (well-being) was the main goal of the project. Based on theory, well-being is built up from 11 dimensions, like education, safety and social interaction. These concepts were relatively generic and fit well with the hypothesis I had at the time. Through the interviews and the site visits, I started narrowing down the scope and found that the term 'sense of belonging' was more fitting than well-being. I was able to go from 11 dimensions to three criteria: social integration, economic integration and cultural identity. These criteria were more specific and allowed me to dive deeper into the individual elements.

In the end, this iterative process has brought me to a thesis which I believe is unique and well-developed, mainly due to constant iteration and reflection. The lesson I would like to share with others and, consequently, the scientific relevance of this project is that allowing concepts you believed were fundamental for your research, to change brings the opportunity to be more creative and open-minded, which will bring new insights you, but also other researchers, have possible not thought of before, contributing significantly to the scientific field.

Societal relevance
The societal relevance of this project can be mostly found in the location of the project: small towns. My initial motivation was to research small towns as there is often a research gap on the reception of newcomers in contexts outside the big cities. However, my initial expectation was also that due to the polarized landscape in the Netherlands, smaller towns would have a more averse position towards newcomers.

This hypothesis was undermined by the site visits in which the solidarity and sense of community in the small towns stood out immensely. This was proof to me that the research gap between cities and smaller towns, which is not only present in the research topic used for this thesis, is relevant to explore.

Especially, when considering the current political tensions between the big cities and the peripheries. Engaging with cities or towns outside the G4 (Amsterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Rotterdam) will help to prevent political discussions from exploding and gives a better image of the Netherlands as a whole, highlighting the strengths of the country outside the G4. Conducting studies and engaging with private and public stakeholders in different regions of the countries makes them feel heard and appreciated, hopefully diminishing the tensions between the government and the peripheries.

Limitations
A complex project within the short time frame of a year comes with certain limitations. Especially, when working with a specific group of people, in this case, Syrian status holders. The main struggle here was to find people willing to participate in interviews. I contacted the COA, but they were too busy to help me. In the end, I found only three people willing to contribute, through an organisation for women. Therefore, all participants were women and thus the research was not a representation of the population. Additionally, the interviewed women did not live in the researched region and also didn't live in smaller towns.

This resulted in a slight gap between the information I aimed to collect and the information I collected. For instance, the women spoke of intolerance from their neighbours and from local organisations in the cities they live in. However, the locals I encountered in the smaller towns were very open and welcoming to newcomers, creating all kinds of initiatives for them. In this case, I was not able to get the experience of the local newcomers and had to assume that the local community in cities is less tolerant than the local community in the towns I studied.

For further research, the recommendation would be to expand the research group of status holders and find interview participants in the towns studied to bridge the research gap and to see whether the assumptions that have been done in this research are right.

Ethical considerations
First, I wish to acknowledge that within this research, I aimed to be as neutral as possible, however, within this politicised challenge, neutrality is defined differently for different parties involved. Within this paper, I assumed the reception crisis and refugee streams as a given, a result of globalization and instability within other countries. This is something that will happen inevitably and therefore coping with it is not necessarily a choice. Therefore, status holders will always be present in the country.

Nonetheless, to get a full picture of the situation and the scope of the problem an important element is to take these different perspectives into account. Within this research, the reception crisis and the successive housing of status holders are the main problems. This is however not the case for politicians or private parties involved. For these stakeholders, a scala of different problems appear throughout their days and as a consequence, their priorities lie somewhere else. To be as realistic as possible, it is essential to take this into account.

Lastly, I wish to mention that I am not an expert nor am I familiar with Middle-Eastern cultures. Within this research, I aimed to collect information based on their experiences and to prevent making assumptions from their point of view. Thereby, referring to other literature which looked into personal experiences or engaging with these people myself. My aim was to be transparent when mentioning personal experiences and to find sources to back up those assumptions I have with literature or eventually with interviews.

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APPENDIX

Appendix I Exploration of literature on social capital

Appendix II Analysis of the region

Appendix III Summary of the site visit

Appendix IV Elements

Appendix V Game rules and elements

For the sake of clarity and conciseness, some sections have been moved to the appendix. These chapters offer deeper explorations of literature, in-depth analysis and in-depth documentation on the fieldwork. They have been vital for me as a researcher to get a full understanding of the field of study, however, they are not essential in understanding the storyline in itself.

APPENDIX I

EXPLORATION OF LITERATURE ON SOCIAL CAPITAL

I.I. Sense of disbelonging

I.II (In)visible cultural walls

I.III Political and economic capital

I.IV Integration process

Appendix I dives deeper into the theory of social capital. The four different problems with social capital are explored concerning the target group: Syrian status holders. Literature and case studies are combined to create a better understanding of the context and to develop an understanding of the cultural differences and the relationship between newcomers and locals.

SENSE OF DISBELONGING

The sense of belonging can be described as

> *"a desire for attachment in order to negotiate one's identity and to feel part of a larger group" (Huizinga and Hoven, 2018).*

In this definition, there can be referred back to the process of integration as it refers to one's own practices as well as the practices of the host community. This is where the process of *homemaking* comes in, which is defined by Boccagni as

> *"as an active process involving efforts to establish security and familiarity—as well as a sense of control or autonomy in a new place" (van Liempt and Staring, 2020a)*

Nevertheless, this process comes with a lot of difficulties as status holders have to face pre-migrational trauma as well as new post-migration challenges (El-Bialy & Mulay, 2015). It demands physical and emotional energy from status holders as they are expected to learn the language, but in the meantime also have to adapt to the new culture and process their trauma (van Liempt & Staring, 2020a).

Every homemaking experience is a unique one, as all refugees come from different places and face different challenges. Women will face other challenges than men, lower educated people will have different experiences from higher educated people and so on. Therefore, in the following sections, I wish to explore the different experiences of different individuals, gathered mainly from interviews done by other researchers. The aim of this chapter is not to come to a conclusion or to summarize, but to look at different experiences and challenges and how space plays a role in them. The focus of this research is on small towns, so most of the following experiences will be from status holders who live in smaller communities.

The first example arises when just looking at the day-to-day schedule of an individual. Here, van Liempt and Staring (2018) interviewed Syrian status holders in the Netherlands, a man (31) who lived in a smaller town outed one main struggle he faces:

> *"They day in Syria elvolves very differently from here. In Syria, people work hard but in the evening they go out and have fun. And also in between job and your evening out you can do many things. Here, after work there is nothing you can do. Nine o'clock you start work, six o'clock you stop, and then you go home, you eat, you take a shower, you play with your kids for an hour, and then you go to bed. The next day is exactly the same. In Syria, in the evening, friends would always visit us and it was cozier, we went out more. Everything is open. Here, after eight o'clock, the only thing you can do is watch TV. In Syria, in the evening all the neighbors always came to it with my father to talk, to drink, to smoke shisha -it was so cozy and that is what I really miss."(van Liempt & Staring, 2020a)*

The culture in the Netherlands is very much based on a 9-5 schedule and is also quite individualistic, so you won't see neighbours hanging out together on a random weeknight very quickly. This culture shock can be quite difficult for new residents, as it also instigates the feeling of home sickness. Instead of chatting and cooking together in the evenings, he is stuck at home in front of his TV, which will give him a lot (possibly too much) time to long for home, complicating the homemaking process.

Some status holders consequently struggle with the

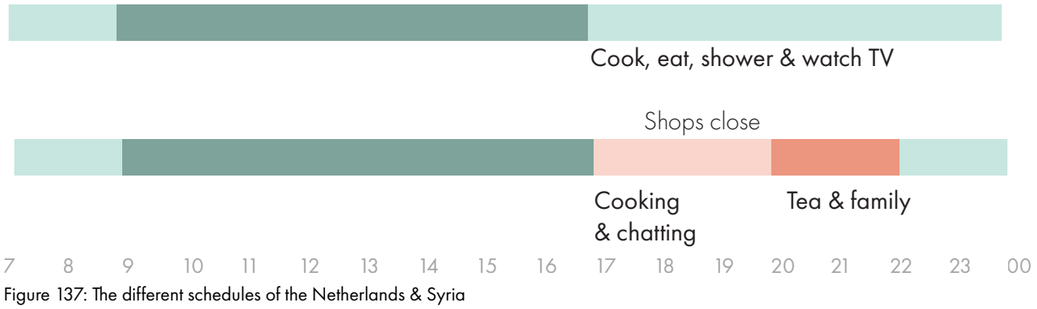


Figure 137: The different schedules of the Netherlands & Syria

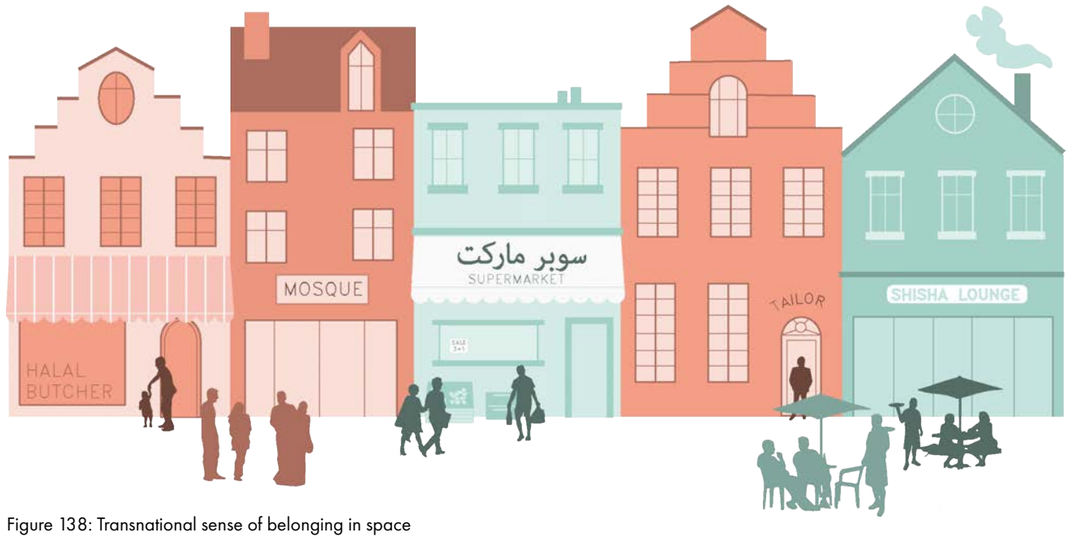


Figure 138: Transnational sense of belonging in space

lack of vibrancy within small towns. The opinions on this differ per individual (even within families). Khaled, Rezan and Yassin (father, mother and 18-year-old son) live in a smaller town. Khaled comments that he likes living in a smaller community. Nonetheless, his wife and son seek more vibrancy in a city like Rotterdam. Rezan says:

> *"It is too quiet here, much too quiet. At six o'clock in the evening, everyone is indoors, and the streets are quiet...The people are nice, but it's too quiet." (van Liempt & Staring, 2020a)*

Syrians are used to spending time with family and friends in the evenings. When Syrians go out at night with friends and family one element is usually at the core: food. Sharing and cooking food is a main part of the culture. Ferhat notes that

> *"By eating together, I kind of get a feeling of home."(Huizinga & Hoven, 2018).*

The beauty of this is that food is not limited to the borders of a country. With this, I refer to the **transnational sense of belonging** which means that people (in this case Syrians) are able to feel as if they are still in their home country without actually being there. Huizinga and Hoven (2018) name a few essential places that can help to establish this transnational sense of belonging: Halal butchers and Arabic supermarkets. Within the Syrian culture, food is used as a social practice and the same can be true for these places as they gather culturally similar people, who might not meet in their daily life, in one place. When looking at social capital this will stimulate the bonding within the Syrian/Middle Eastern culture.

The struggle with these facilities is that they are usually located in bigger cities and transport can be an issue for status holders as the public transport is expensive or not there at all. Mahmoud (30) and his friends share the burden. They alternate each week to go to the butcher, bringing meat for the others, thereby saving money on public transport (Huizinga & Hoven, 2018). This shows that if proximity is an issue the social network is essential to still have access to certain amenities or opportunities.

Another core place that helps with the transnational sense of belonging is the mosque. Sunier (2020) writes about the developments within the Muslim population in the '90s in the city of Rotterdam. The paper presents a discussion between the municipality and the Muslim community. The municipality proposed the idea of one, 'real' mosque, that is aesthetically pleasing and that can be used for large events: however, there were two demands:

- The small 'neighbourhood' mosques

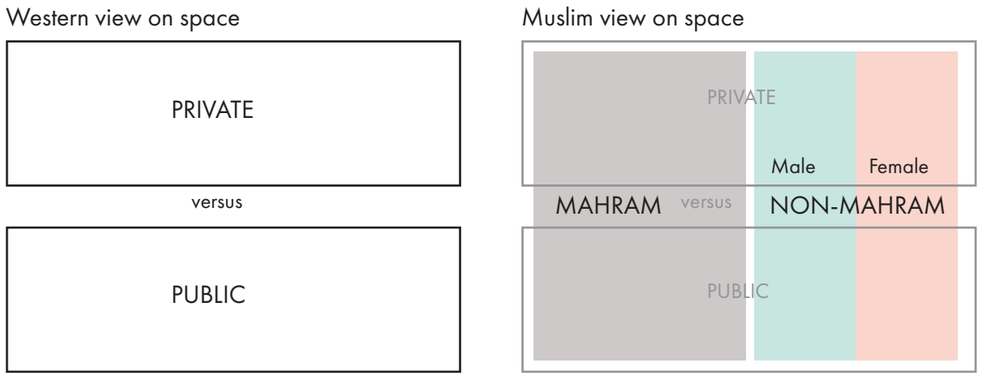


Figure 139: Different ways of perceiving space in different cultures (Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2001)

that were placed in houses and empty buildings across the neighbourhood would be closed.

- The functions of the mosque would be 'unravelled' which meant that the mosque would be solely built for religious practices and it would lose its position as a community house, a social hotspot.

The idea of the municipality was that mosques as social nodes were an attack on the integration process, however many did not agree:

> *"If a Muslim who came here as a migrant worker is not able to meet with similar people every now and then, how would you expect this person to become a local? If you separate all these important functions from a purely religious service as you guys tend to do, it will also take away the opportunity to blend in with the neighbourhood."*

This again highlights the social dimension of these places. Mosques are not necessarily only about religion, it is not about the most aesthetically-pleasing building: it is about being able to meet mutuals on a daily basis in a familiar and informal environment. Therefore, not much is even needed. Plus, religious and cultural practices are not the opposite of integration, in order to become part of a community, one has to feel at home somewhere, within which a cultural network is essential.

This next section will be an exploration of gender roles in public and private spaces from the Muslim perspective. The literature studied here refers to a Muslim lifestyle in the most traditional sense. It does not mean that all Syrian status holders act and live according to these roles, but it is useful to understand what a traditional home would look like and which public spaces are essential (and for whom). Conversely, it offers a perspective on cultural differences, derived from religion, which will be the main theme in the next chapter.

Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2001) identify four main public typologies of space.

1. *Male-dominant spaces* like tea- and coffee rooms and the bazaar.
2. *Family spaces* like parks and gardens that facilitate family activities.
3. *Rule- & time-based* spaces are places that are accessible for women during certain times of the day/week or when accompanied by their husbands or other women like libraries, theatres, public streets and public baths.
4. *Religious spaces* are divided into two categories. Mosques are essentially male-dominated, whereas shrines and altars are predominantly female.

The home of Muslim families is based on the **dichotomy between Mahram and non-Mamahram**. This dichotomy is based on who the women of the house are allowed to marry. So for example someone's husband, father and siblings are Mahram, which means that women are permitted to meet them without a headscarf within their homes and to even hug them. However, when a women's husband invites his friends over these are non-Mahram and women are not invited into the room. This is why most Muslim homes have a *guest room*, which is usually decorated beautifully and only used for gatherings (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2001).

In Western homes, there is no such thing as a guest room. This is why many Muslim families use the living room as a guest room as well. But to maintain this prestige of the room, the couches are covered with plastic when there are no visitors (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2001).

This gender division in space is an element especially important to explore for women. The way in which they use private- and public space is heavily reliant on their conservative or progressive outlook on Islam. Conservative women in the Netherlands will struggle as the opportunities they are offered in Muslim countries, are not offered here. There are no specific only-women times at the theatre, non-Muslim men are not aware of Muslim customs towards women and Dutch houses do not offer the same potentialities as Muslim homes. Literature is not always clear on how women use space and therefore this will be an interesting element to further explore in the fieldwork.

Another home-making practice within the private realm is shown in the literature by Beeckmans et al. (2022) in which the example of Yüksel in Berlin is given. She struggled with the layout of her kitchen as she found the open kitchen, which is found in many Western homes, unsuitable for the strong smells of the Turkish cuisine. So what she did was create a small compartment (the former loggia) for the cooking, an area for the stove that is completely closed off from the rest of the house. The kitchen was used for the rest of the preparation of food and for eating. This shows how small alterations can help people to make their homes their own.

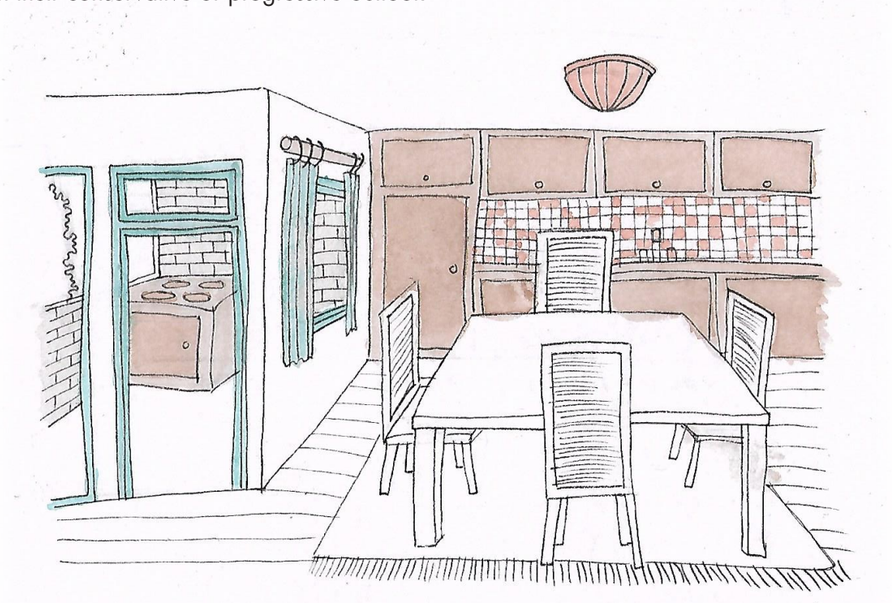


Figure 140: Appropriation of private space: home-making

Lastly, the importance of nature or outdoor environments for the sense of belonging of status holders must be mentioned. The first important factor is trauma. Consequently, interviewees note that natural environments have helped them to cope with the trauma:

> *"Especially if you are homesick or depressed, go to the ocean, waves are helping you, look like they giving you advice. Calming your nerves. Fishing-fishing is good when depressed. Or picking blueberries in the season."(El-Bialy & Mulay, 2015)*

This shows how proximity to natural environments can be helpful in settling into a new environment, which also exposes the advantage of a small town. Living in a city centre limits access to calm and peaceful nature, however, around small towns, there is usually plenty within walking distance.

But besides natural environments, something closer to home seems to help status holders a lot. Van Liempt and Miellet (2020) observed a Syrian family in a small town and the first thing they noted when they arrived was the neatly kept front yard with vegetables and flowers. Something that is usually not possible for status holders in bigger cities as they live in apartments. The owner, Abdo, explained that it had helped him a lot since arriving. The first benefit is the therapeutic character of gardening, allowing status holders to find a calm activity that can help them resolve a tiny bit of the trauma. Secondly, by planting plants from home like tomatoes, jasmine and mint the transnational sense of belonging was instigated again. The last benefit he explained was the 'bridging' with the neighbours. Neighbours appreciated the neatly kept garden in their neighbourhood, but it also allowed Abdo to communicate with his neighbours on a daily basis without really talking yet. This was essential as he didn't know the language yet, but still he became familiar with his neighbours and they became familiar with him. This links to the next chapter where the focus is on the cultural walls between locals and status holders and how space can help to diminish these.

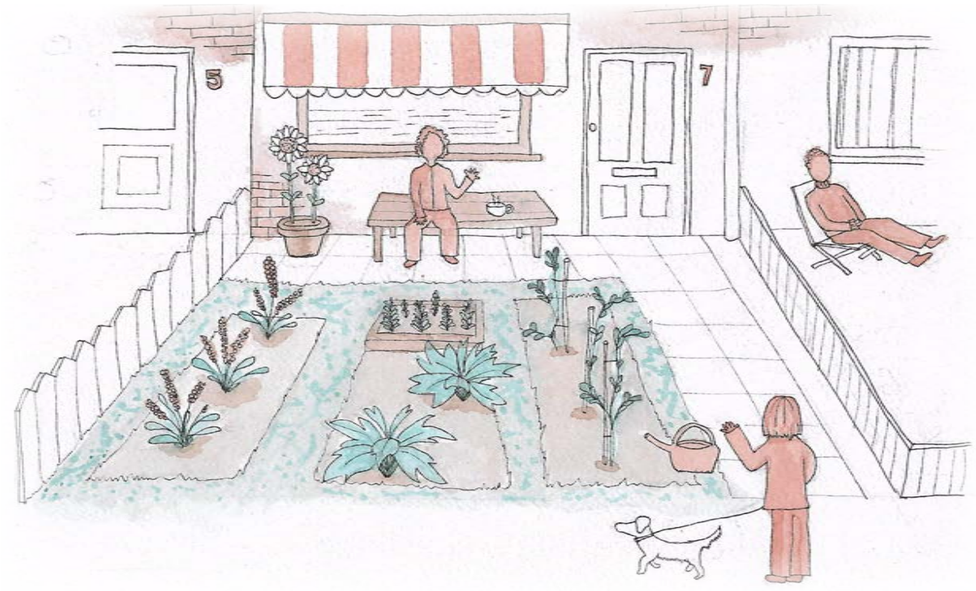


Figure 141: Gardening as a homemaking process

STRENGTHS *built upon and expand*	WEAKNESSES *turn into opportunities*	OPPORTUNITY
Opportunity to have a garden	Lack of vibrancy	
Access to natural environments	Distance to cultural amenities	how?
Acces to a smaller community	Distance to mutuals	

Figure 142: Strengths & weaknesses of small towns for status holders

The key in this chapter is to build an inventory of current home-making processes. Additionally, this chapter has helped to identify the strengths and weaknesses of smaller towns in creating a sense of belonging. The goal throughout this thesis is to built upon these strengths and to turn the current weaknesses into opportunities to provide status holders with the means to belong in Dutch small towns. The image above highlights the main strengths and weaknesses identified, which will grow along the way.

(IN)VISIBLE CULTURAL WALLS

The main theme of this research is the intolerance towards Middle-Eastern groups, in this case specifically Syrian, by native Dutch. The cause of this intolerance is mainly the (in)visibile cultural walls that are in place, differentiating one from the other. These cultural walls can result in misconceptions and prejudices that could be prevented by proper communication between the groups. This is however easier said than done.

An example of such a cultural wall can be found in the literature by Huizinga and Hoven (2018):

> *"A bar is too expensive. Sometimes I go, however I don't drink because I'm Muslim. Still, sometimes you have to pay for entrance, so I don't go. Me and my friends go to the city square. We hang out there." Hevdem, 30*

This example shows how Dutch get-together practices are not the same for Muslims, mainly caused by religious practices, but also by economic limitations. Syrians then shift to another public space, in which they can hang out together without having to pay an entrance fee. The Dutch, however, struggle with these developments as they consider youth on the street as loiterers, drug dealers or delinquents.

Women do not dare to pass by a group of males at night as it feels unsafe. This causes a silent struggle between two culturally different groups. The Dutch don't understand why Syrians have to hang out on the street and Syrians don't see the problem of hanging out on the street.

Another example was already mentioned shortly in the previous chapter. In Muslim culture, the tea or coffee rooms and shisha lounges are male-dominated gathering spaces. For the Dutch, this can come off as intimidating, especially for women as they pass by.

Gender plays an important role in these cultural walls. Another example can be seen in the image on the right. For women in Muslim cultures, a veil or hijab gives them the freedom to go out in public, it provides women with autonomy. From the western perspective, this is perceived as a limitation to women's freedom.

The goal of this chapter is not to solve all these cultural walls between the different groups, but to find a way in which the different groups can come together and bridge those cultural gaps. The theory used for this is 'solidarity in propinquity'.

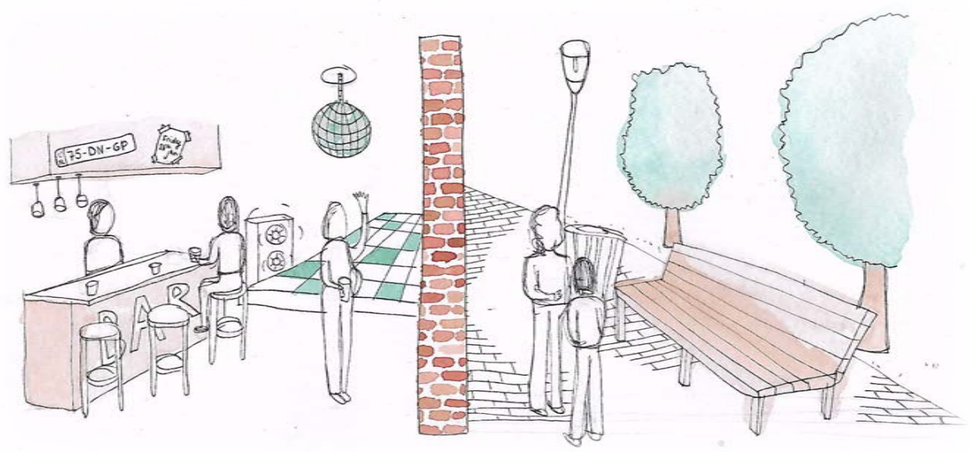


Figure 143: Drinking culture vs. Muslim culture

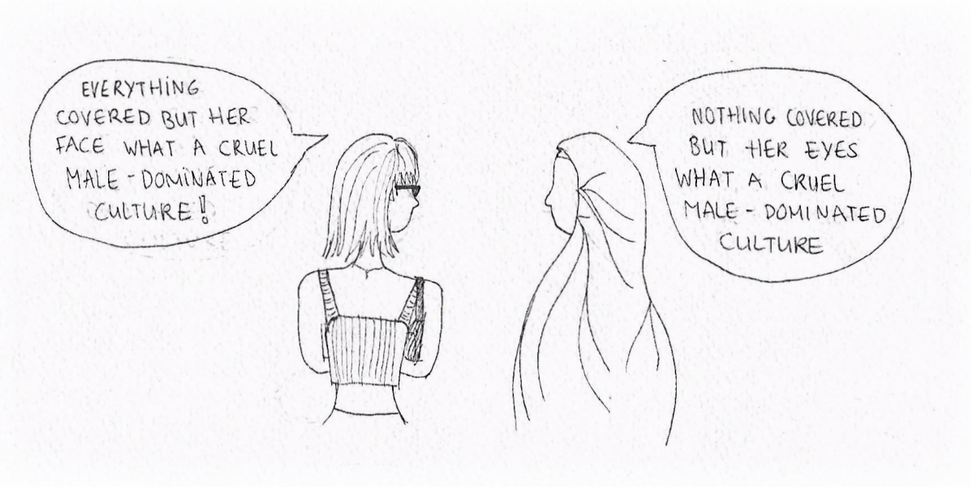


Figure 144: Cultural walls between women (adapted from Muslim Popular Culture, n.d.)

The literature of Oosterlynck et al. (2017) explores the concept of solidarity. They highlight that solidarity, in contrast, to Putnam's theory, is spatial and political: it is not fixed. In past definitions, shared norms and values were the main sources for solidarity (or the lack thereof), but this literature uses four sources for solidarity: **interdependence, struggle, encounter and shared norms & values.** These four sources show that not only shared norms and values (and thus culturally similar groups) can have solidarity. For this type of solidarity the literature refers to Amin's (2004) definition **of solidarity in propinquity:**

> *"solidarity across different communities, cultures and identities in spatial proximity."*

Interdependence is linked to the way people can profit more from complementarity than from duplication. Specialization and social differences contribute to the common good. To put this in perspective , a couple of examples are used:

- Looking at an ageing neighbourhood, loneliness will be one of the main social issues. However, status holders can experience loneliness too, as well as the desire to learn the language. By combining their differences, they create benefits for both groups.
- When looking at mobility, especially poorer and older groups are limited to the locality they are living in: cars and public transportation are expensive. This means that they might need help from people to access things that are further away. If one person who has a car would go out to the mall, they could ask for their neighbours to join.

This also shows that especially within smaller or shrinking areas, interdependence becomes a stronger element and the same goes for struggle.

Struggle is usually described as one group mobilizing against another group because of their differences: creating a common enemy. But in my opinion, the struggle can also be for something good. A neighbourhood is experiencing high energy prices and wants to become independent from market parties. Additionally, they want to participate in the energy transition. Together they decide to build a solar park for the entire neighbourhood, for which they gather funding together. Due to the collective approach, they are able to apply for a subsidy. Altogether, they are able to consume sustainably while profiting from lower energy prices. Therefore, struggle is also linked to a participatory planning approach. By installing participatory approaches,

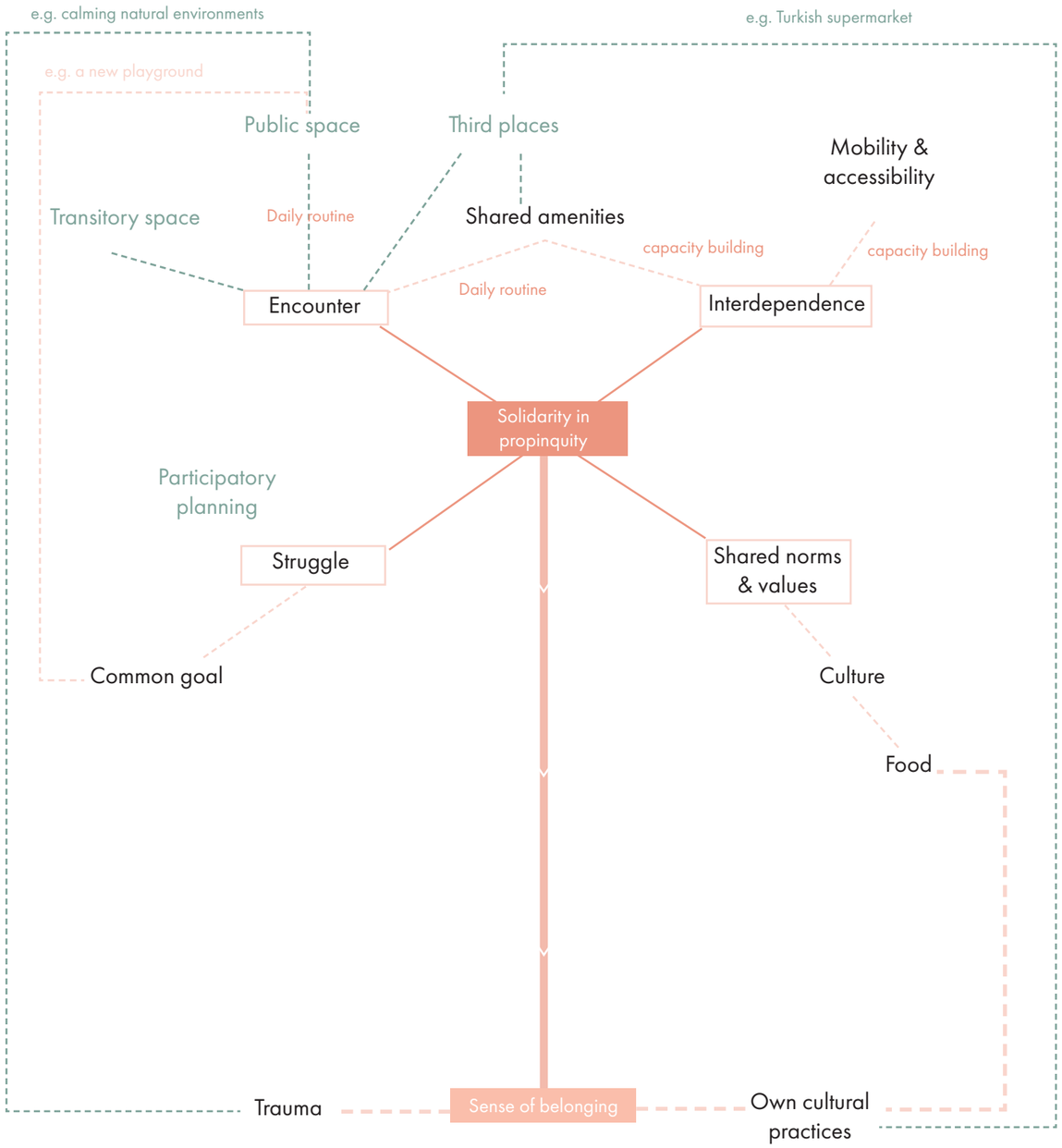


Figure 145: Solidarity in propinquity

the municipality could show that different groups do not always have opposing ideas and that they can also act as one united front.

The third and usually the most discussed source of solidarity is **encounter.** Encounters take place in all kinds of places but also show different results: not all places create meaningful encounters. Some places can even further enforce prejudice against a specific group. Therefore, this research aims to explore what places are useful in creating meaningful encounters. The approach taken here is looking at the different time geographies of the different groups. What do they do in their daily lives? Where do they go? Do they go there because they want to or because they have to? Here it is important to take a relational approach. A territorial approach looks at a neighbourhood as a fixed place with fixed boundaries. But one's life is not limited to their direct surroundings. A person might work or study in a next-door city. The football club might be on the other side of town. Someone might go to a specific church, as they have gone there since childhood.

It is important to see the dynamics of populations but especially to also recognize the overlaps. Where do they meet? This could be in specific public spaces, schools, work or at the bakery, but this could also be different for each neighbourhood. In a small town, everyone might know each other at the bakery, so strangers might be noticed more quickly and can either be rejected by the host population or given extra attention depending on the solidarity in place within a neighbourhood. Additionally, events can be used as catalysts of interaction between different groups as they often reach out to a broader audience.

Eventually, by looking at these aspects of solidarity, people might learn more about each other's **norms and values**, but that doesn't mean that these have to be the same in order to create solidarity. But, inviting people into one's culture might help to create solidarity. If a Syrian family moves into their first Dutch home, they could invite their new neighbours over for dinner. They could cook and share their Syrian delicacies with them, to show that they are willing to connect with the locals. But it also works the other way around. The Dutch neighbours could offer the new neighbours a cup of tea or a tour of the neighbourhood.

The theory of solidarity is put together in figure 145. This theory is essential for the fieldwork. The aim is to identify the overlaps between the pathways of Dutch and Syrian status holders but also to measure the (in)tolerance present in the area chosen. The key here is to also identify the source of this intolerance. The next chapter will discuss the importance of economic and political capital, based on a case study that also explores the sense of belonging and solidarity. It gives an overarching perspective on what planning could do and what kind of interactions can be created.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CAPITAL

In the discussion on social capital a third problem was noted: the need for linking to operationalize the envisioned changes. In order to make changes in the urban realm, investments from private and public parties are needed. Municipalities have to make decisions on whether they want to invest in these changes. A municipality can take a passive role and just distribute money to a project and leave it like that, but a municipality can also take an active role in making changes. To illustrate this an example from Flanders is taken. Van Bouchaute et al. (n.d.) published a paper on solidarity in the Rabot-Blaisantwijk (neighbourhood) in Gent. This neighbourhood is a poor and super-diverse neighbourhood that needed attention. Superdiversity refers to the diverse ethnic backgrounds of the inhabitants. The following sections will explain how the municipality played an active role in the revitalization of the neighbourhood.

The problem the municipality noted was that this neighbourhood lacked a common history and culture as residents come from very different backgrounds. This results in the **us vs. them** discussion as people would rather show solidarity towards poorer or older people than towards immigrants.

This municipality decided to invest in a complementary coin: **Torekes (2010)**. This coin would be the connecting factor between the different groups. The idea of the coin was to stimulate efforts that would improve the neighbourhood's quality. It was not used to replace the normal currency but as an additional stimulant. The Torekes were based on three values:

- Living quality (physical)
- Social cohesion and identity (socio-cultural)
- Boosting the local economy (economic)

For example, Fatima decides to invest in her garden by planting flowers and placing a birdhouse. She will receive Torekes as a reward. These Torekes can then be used in a local shop which sells biological, healthy products. The municipality will pay the shop in euros for the collected Torekes. Below, other examples are shown of how the Torekes can be used.

The interdependence between the citizen's increases, which can be linked back again to the chapter on cultural walls. The Torekes are also used for social activities, stimulating residents to organise and plan those social events, resulting in encounters.

In order to stimulate the use of Torekes even more, two temporary locations were opened: de Site and het Witte Kaproenenplein. These places were fully driven by the Torekes. One of the people working as a representative for the municipality said:

> *"a Turkish retiree who speaks little Dutch, a Belgian homeless, a Nigerian asylum seeker...those different profiles, those weave together on de Site, within which the Torekes functions as the common thread." (translated by author)*

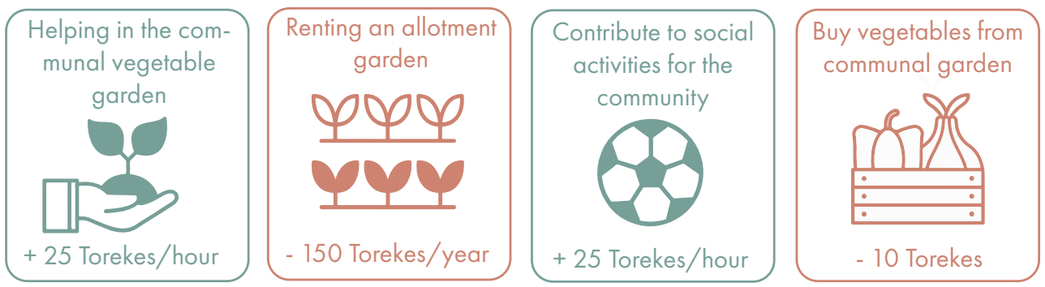


Figure 146: The complementary coin: Torekes

A map of de Site can be seen below. A main part of the area is dedicated to urban farming and sustainable produce: there is a large vegetable garden, allotments gardens, a chicken pen, a greenhouse and a bread oven. But besides these, there is also a football field and a skating rink for the younger visitors. They organise picnics, soccer tournaments and other events that are open to all. If someone can't pay for the picnic, the group will make sure that they can still join. This shows the solidarity that grows within such a space.

Important here is that the goal is not to create close friendships between different people, but to diminish prejudice and break cultural walls. Some friendships might flourish, but it is unrealistic to envision a large friend group: the main target is to respect each other and to be able to live together in one neighbourhood. Part of this is that the perception that immigrants profit from taxes changes as they actively contribute to their shared spaces, they give something back to the neighbourhood. Another representative of the municipality gave an example:

> *"with foreigners that is also the case, there is quite a harsh stigma that illegal dumping is done by foreigners, but if you see that they are also the ones cleaning it up, then you start thinking 'it would be weird if they would first throw it on the street to then come to clean it up themselves later.'" (translated by author)*

Through this system, you can achieve a lot more than by endless discussions and standard participatory approaches in which talking is the main activity. The literature notes four requirements that are important to make something like this work:

- Concrete shared projects: like de Site or het Witte Kaproenenplein
- Collaboration across cultural boundaries
- No hierarchy within the project
- Intermediary organisations and the municipality stimulates collaboration across cultural boundaries actively and with some authority

This project requires significant investment from the municipality to make this work, to pay for the Torekes, but also to employ people to make sure that it remains somewhat organised. Nonetheless, it becomes visible that once such a system is in place,

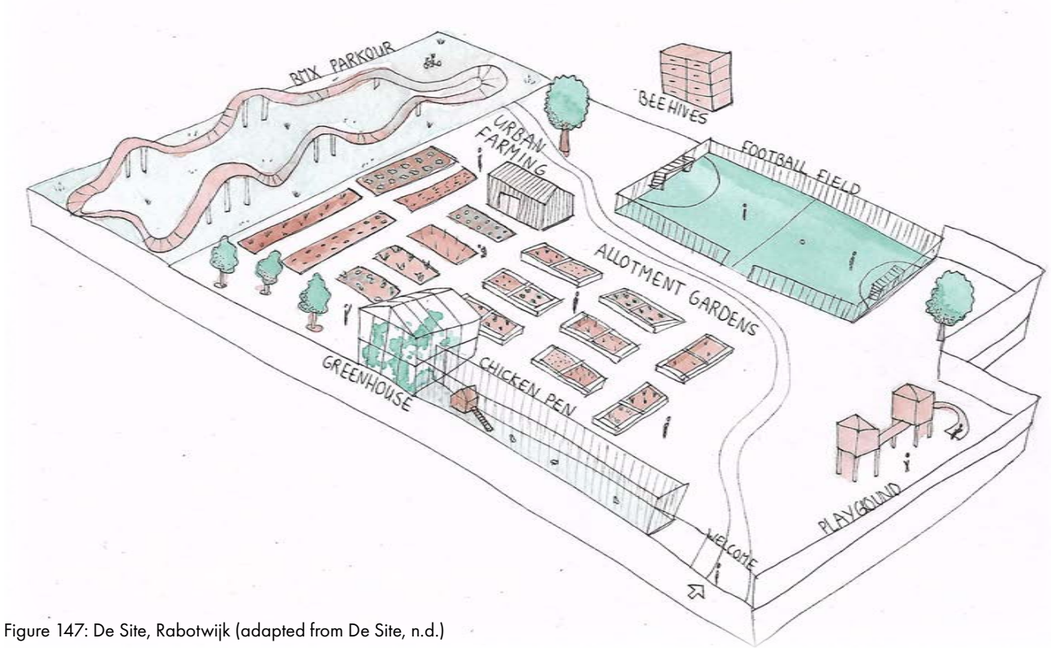


Figure 147: De Site, Rabotwijk (adapted from De Site, n.d.)

the neighbourhood takes over. They decide what de Site needs and what activities are organised. They receive some kind of autonomy also boosting the confidence of the residents, giving immigrants the opportunity to feel at home and to create their own environment.

This shows that by using political and economic capital both the sense of belonging can be stimulated and the cultural walls can slowly be broken down. However, for this to work the project needs to be given to the neighbourhood because they know what's best for them and their neighbours.

Figure 148: An event at *de Site* (Kenniscentrum Vlaamse Steden, 2016)

Figure 149: Citizens working in the vegetable garden (Persruimte Stad Gent, 2017)

INTEGRATION PROCESS

In the research from van Liempt et al. (2020, pp. 6–17) the experiences of Syrian refugees in the Netherlands are documented and summarized to mark the problems they face in their integration process. the research was subdivided into four topics: priorities in participation, information and communication, integration with others and institutions and theory versus practice.

The main priority for status holders is to learn the Dutch language. However, the language learning system is difficult as a lot of responsibility is put on the refugee and the support is quite low. Additionally, when experiencing trauma from the flight, it is even more difficult to not close oneself off from the outside world.

The information and communication within the Dutch integration system are difficult to understand for status holders. The bureaucratic landscape is too fragmented and unclear. This shows in the distribution policy of the Dutch government within which they have little say. The opinions of housing in small towns are diverse as some struggle with the lack of opportunities while others feel like it fits better with their lifestyles and they have more opportunities in opening their own shops. Additionally, there is a higher availability of volunteers in smaller communities.

Interaction with others and institutions is one of the main struggles for status holders. Dutch people tend to think less of Syrians as if they come from a country without cars or phones. Syrians feel invalidated, also by institutions. Former education or work experience is underappreciated which results in highly-educated people getting offered jobs in hospitality. This is very frustrating as they want to make themselves useful again, they want to earn their own money and be independent, and they don't want to profit from taxes. Their work identity is extremely important for their sense of belonging and to feel at home: it is a major part of their lives.

When looking at the contrast between theory and practice the critique is mainly on the fact that Syrians are responsible for their own integration. But the basis offered by the government is not enough to do so. Status holders are required to learn the language quickly, but language learning facilities are lacking. Plus, they struggle with the limitations of the formal education system. They want to get schooled to validate their certificate from home, but this is not possible when they are over 30.

This shows that the status holders struggle with the passive approach from the government. They feel as if they can not live up to their full potential and are therefore subjected to subsidies & benefits for a longer period of time. The system consequently needs alterations to make Syrians part of Dutch society in a more comfortable and faster way. In this way, Syrians can also help to decrease labour shortages in specific sectors.

APPENDIX II

ANALYSIS OF THE REGION

II.I Town identity

II.II Demographics

II.III Labour market

II.IV Public transporation

II.V Religion and culture

II.VI Education

II.VII Leisure

II.VIII Sports and nature

In Appendix II the spatial context of the region is analysed in more detail. The four towns central in the region: Dalfsen, Ommen, Hardenberg and Coevorden are being studied. These towns are well connected through one train line. Various topics will be analysed like demographics, public transport, education, religion, leisure and sports. Recommendations for the fieldwork are noted with each chapter to be able to formulate guidelines for the site visits.

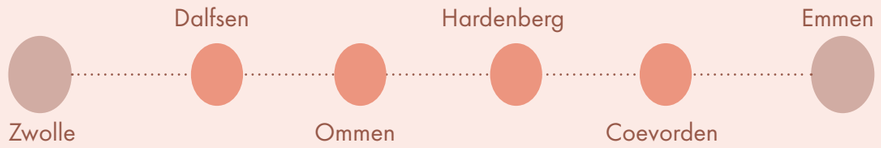


Figure 150: The researched towns

DALFSEN

Dalfsen is a small municipality with 28 499 citizens, located close to Zwolle. The Gemeente Dalfsen (2019) formulated a vision for 2030 together with the citizens, with one central theme: **Dalfsen as a community.** The community feeling is what makes this municipality a special place and therefore maintaining this feeling is on top of the agenda.

Consequently, the main threat acknowledged is a new development, new developments that can threaten the unique character by using a systematic approach. However, that does not mean that they step away from the challenge of maintaining their community character, as they also experiment with projects related to sustainability, biodiversity and social cohesion to prevent loss of character on the other side of the spectrum.

The mission is to stimulate, maintain and use the interconnectedness within the community. The vision that results from that is to use this main strength as a driver for changes. Fundamental to this vision are five values: **'naoberschap', belonging, respect, dynamics and sobriety.**

This first value is not a widely used term but is specifically used in rural communities in this region of the country. It describes the connection between neighbours (approximately 10 of them) and the small community they form together in a predominantly rural area. This shows that neighbours are not just neighbours. Naoberschap is about actively supporting one another on a smaller scale.

The vision can be subdivided into three perspectives:

- Cohabitation
- Co-working
- Co-living

From the perspective of cohabitation, the focus is on the ageing population, sustainability and the town's character. Co-working focuses on stimulating local businesses and bridging the gap between education and labour opportunities. Additionally, they aim to create a dialogue with the agricultural sector, stimulate voluntary work and promote tourism and recreation, related to the beautiful natural environment surrounding the municipality. From the perspective of co-living the municipality explicitly names **status holders and other newcomers who they want to give a warm welcome into their community.** Additionally, the focus is on creating accessible and inclusive (digital) networks for all citizens, as well as stimulating local recreating and attracting people to the town's centre or to public spaces.

In this vision, a lot of what has been discussed in the problem statement and throughout the previous chapters is confirmed. Small towns are characterised by their strong community feeling, however, in order to keep their character and prevent the area from shrinkage they need to find a way to smartly utilize their strengths and prevent standard developments which overshadow their strong identity.

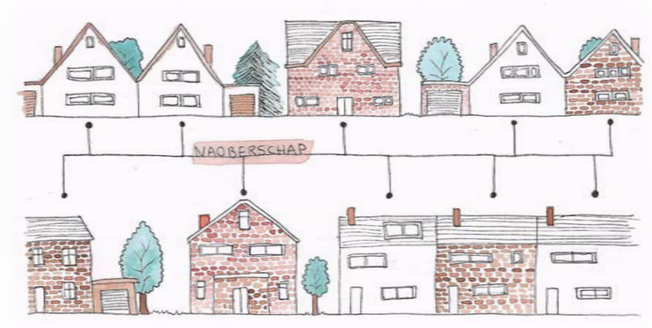


Figure 151: The Dutch concept of *naoberschap*

OMMEN

Ommen is a small municipality with 12.835 inhabitants, next to the previously mentioned Dalfsen. The Gemeente Ommen (2021) published the environmental vision, summarizing the most important goals for the upcoming years for the municipality. The document highlights four main themes:

- A healthy and vital society
- A future-proof economy
- High environmental quality
- Sustainable development

The theme of a healthy and vital society looks at the way in which the city can house all current residents: young and old while retaining the identity of the city. This means that they also look at alternative forms of housing to accommodate the younger generation in the current housing market, but also the ageing population in the region. They aim to stimulate the attractiveness of the region, but also to invest in education, sports and cultural amenities to inspire the younger generation. The goal is that everyone will stay involved in this municipality.

The future-proof economy is mainly based on the strong recreational value of the municipality. The focus is on further developing and stimulating the leisure sector. Additionally, they want to focus on two other important sectors: health care and agro & food. In order to keep this vital economy, collaboration with other municipalities and the region is on top of the agenda: in the form of public transport but also in terms of digital services and information sharing. They want to invest in educational programmes to stimulate the local labour market.

The high environmental quality is an important strength of the region. Therefore, the municipality aims to strengthen and protect the existing quality, through 3 guiding values: vitality, health and liveability. These three values determine the plan of action for the protection of water, nature and biodiversity.

Lastly, Ommen strives to reach the goals set out in the Paris agreement. They aim to do this by taking an active position and through stimulating and rewarding initiators of renewable, sustainable or circular initiatives.

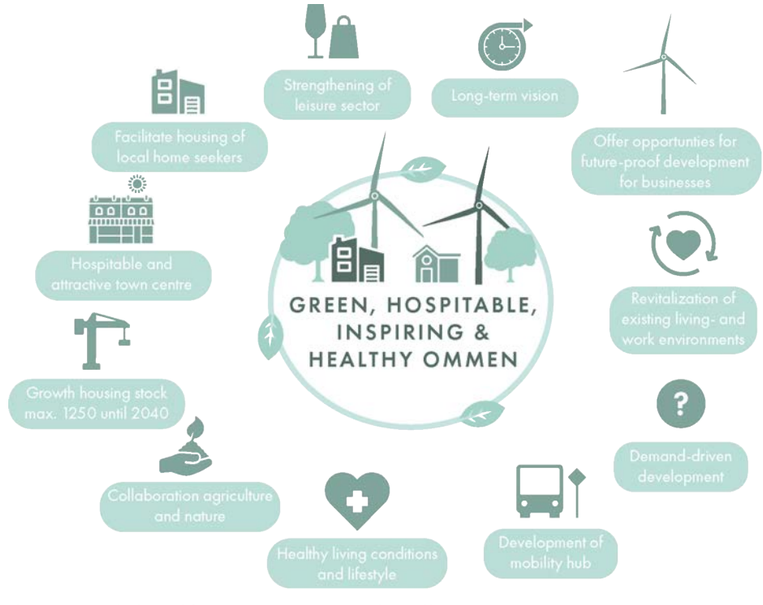


Figure 152: Core values Ommen (adapted from Gemeente Ommen (2021))

HARDENBERG

In 2021 Gemeente Hardenberg , a town with 19.675 inhabitants, published the Omgevingsvisie for the development for the municipality in the upcoming years: Landstad Hardenberg 2040. The report describes four starting points:

- Retain and stimulate growth
- Added value
- Space as a trump card
- Accessibility and collaboration as preconditions

The first starting point focuses on the ideal position of Hardenberg in the region. It is connected to the economy of the region of Zwolle, the region of Twente and the Dutch Techzone, offering labour opportunities that the municipality aims to utilize further. Additionally, the municipality aims to attract younger people and add housing to help with the ageing population.

The second starting point highlights that economic growth is not the sole goal. The main aim is *brede welvaart*, a notion that has been discussed in depth in the conceptual framework.

The third starting point recognizes the strength of the municipality as it still offers high satisfaction in living quality, which is a quality that is lost in a lot of urbanized regions. Therefore, Hardenberg has a lot to offer, for little. The municipality aims to retain this value and use it smartly.

The last starting point looks at accessibility and collaboration as a precondition to prevent shrinkage and stimulate the economy. This requires collaboration with the different economic regions of which Hardenberg is part of, as well as digital collaborations and improved mobility, with a focus on public transportation.

To operationalize these starting points, four themes have been drawn up:

- Hardenberg in equilibrium
- Hardenberg for each other
- Hardenberg as a node
- Sustainable Hardenberg

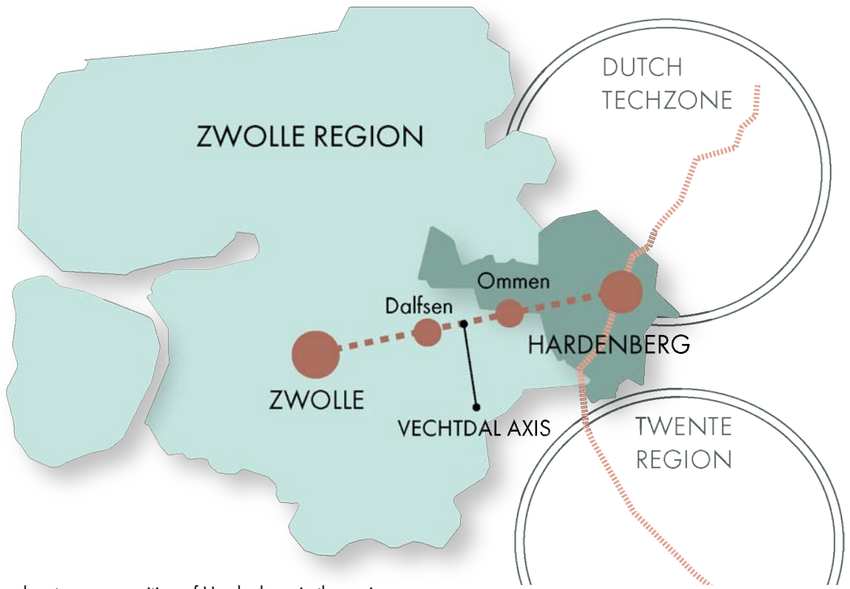


Figure 153: The advantageous position of Hardenberg in the region

COEVORDEN

Gemeente Coevorden (2021), a municipality with 35.741 inhabitants, presented the intermediate environmental vision for the municipality. The presentation distinguished two layers: the regional and the local layer. The regional layer is about boldness and ground-breaking interventions. The regional vision focuses on Coevorden as a node and as an economic driver of the region. They strive to connect economic activity, education and health care. The local layer focuses on the inherent strengths of Coevorden: the quality of the landscape and the history are guiding. Pride, solidarity and independence of citizens and the villages are core values.

Within these dimensions, the municipality drew up five ambitions:

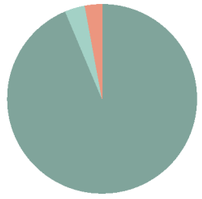
- Together
- Vital
- Buzzing
- Sustainable
- Groundbreaking

Together refers to the uniqueness and independence of the community and how the sum of the separate villages is more than the individual villages. *Vital* focuses on a clean, healthy and safe living environment with enough space for young and old to live. *Buzzing* is used to describe how the municipality aims to stimulate local businesses, initiatives and inhabitants. Additionally, it looks at how the municipality can have something to offer for all. *Sustainable* relates to the Paris climate agreement, as the municipality aims to be energy neutral by 2040, in collaboration with local businesses and inhabitants. *Ground-breaking* refers to the larger ambitions of the municipality to participate on the regional and (inter) national scale as a node, well-connected through the road, water and railway.

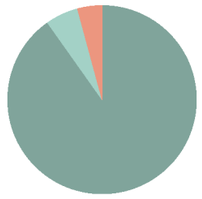
DEMOGRAPHICS

Ethnicity

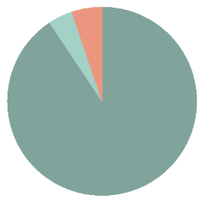
Dalfsen



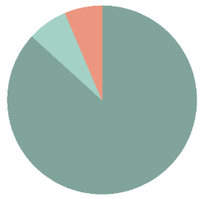
Ommen



Hardenberg



Coevorden



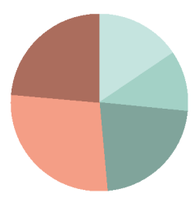
Age

Dalfsen

Ommen

Hardenberg

Coevorden



Native Dutch
Western migrants
Non-western migrants

0-15
15-25
25-45
45-65
65+

Figure 154: Demographic distribution per town (AlleCijfers, 2023a; AlleCijfers, 2023b; AlleCijfers, 2023c; AlleCijfers, 2023d)

To gain insights into who is currently living in these towns, a demographic study was done. The first factor identified was ethnicity. The average of native residents in a town is 75% in the Netherlands. In these towns, all the averages were above 90%, showing that currently, a very low percentage of non-western migrants are living in these areas. Coevorden has slightly more migrant citizens, while Dalfsen has close to none.

The second factor analysed was the age of the population. Here, visible is that in all towns (except Hardenberg) more than half of the population is above the age of 45. Almost a quarter of the population in Ommen and Coevorden is above 65. This shows that these regions are indeed targeted by an ageing population. There are especially very few young adults, aged 15-25 in the towns discussed.

On the following page, the website of Allecijfers (2023) was used. The website summarises the most contrasting characteristics of the town in comparison to the Dutch average. This shows which factors are unique to these areas and which may also show the benefits (or the threats) in these towns.

	Dalfsen	NL
Distance to café	6,9 km	1,3 km
Distance to high school	8,5 km	2,5 km
% of native inhabitants	94%	75%
% locations of agriculture, horticulture and fishing	18%	4%
Density of adresses	580/km²	2039/km²

Table 1: Interesting characteristics Dalfsen (AlleCijfers, 2023b)

For Dalfsen the main characteristics arising are the distances to amenities. Cafés and high schools are located far away. Whereas for the average Dutch both are supposedly within walking distance, in Dalfsen this is not the case. Additionally, here the high percentage of natives arises, as well as, the high share of agricultural businesses in the region. Lastly, an important characteristic is the low building density in the area, which is quite characteristic of a smaller, relatively rural town. This shows the potential for densification.

For Ommen, the same characteristics for density and percentage of native inhabitants arise. But here, also the distance to the general practitioner is extremely long, which can be especially problematic for older people or people with extra medical needs, like refugees. A positive characteristic is the high percentage of retail and hospitality in the area, which indicates that there are a lot of amenities and leisure functions in place.

	Ommen	NL
Distance to GP	16,8 km	6,4 km
Density of adresses	716/km²	2039/km²
% of native inhabitants	90%	75%
% locations of retail and hospitality	23%	17%

Table 2: Interesting characteristics Ommen (AlleCijfers, 2023d)

	Hardenberg	NL
% of native inhabitants	91%	75%
Density of adresses	916/km²	2039/km²
Distance to GP	2,4 km	6,4 km
% of secondary education	49%	41%
% of low income families	4%	7%

Table 3: Interesting characteristics Hardenberg (AlleCijfers, 2023c)

For Hardenberg, the population is higher educated than average. Plus, the percentage of low-income families is lower, indicating that the municipality is generally quite well-off. In Hardenberg, the distance to the general practitioner is lower than average which is very helpful for elderly people or people with additional medical needs.

In Coevorden, the distance to the general practitioner is again very long. The share of retail and hospitality is high. However, the income of the population is lower than the Dutch average and in comparison to the other towns discussed.

	Coevorden	NL
Distance to GP	15,1km	6,4km
% locations of retail and hospitality	29%	17%
Average income per income receiver	€29500	€35800

Table 4: Interesting characteristics Coevorden (AlleCijfers, 2023a)

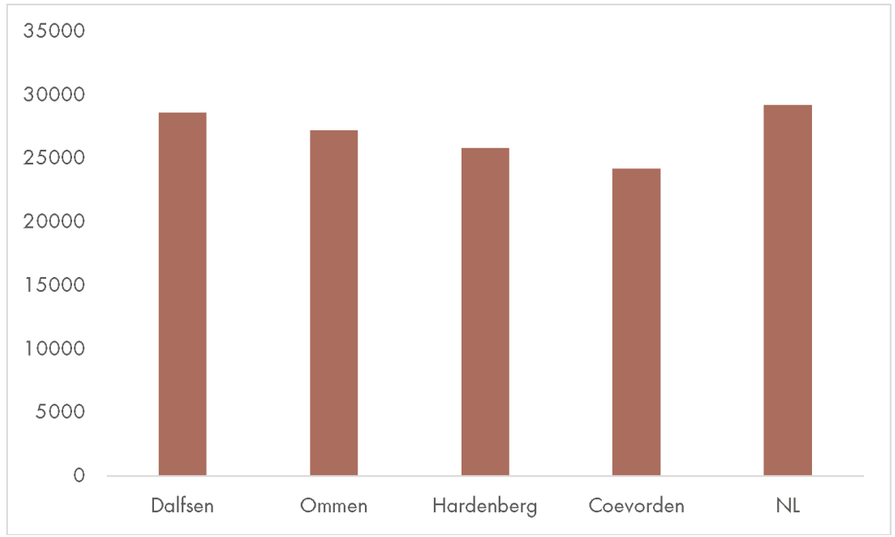


Figure 155: Average income per person AlleCijfers, 2023a; AlleCijfers, 2023b; AlleCijfers, 2023c; AlleCijfers, 2023d)

This lower income is reflected in these two diagrams. Coevorden is on the lowest side of the income spectrum while Dalfsen is on the higher side. The average difference in income is more than €4000,-. This is also seen in the high percentage of social housing in Coevorden. the percentage of social housing decreases respectively to the rise in income. Ommen and Dalfsen are smaller municipalities than Hardenberg and Coevorden, this could indicate that smaller municipalities house wealthier residents.

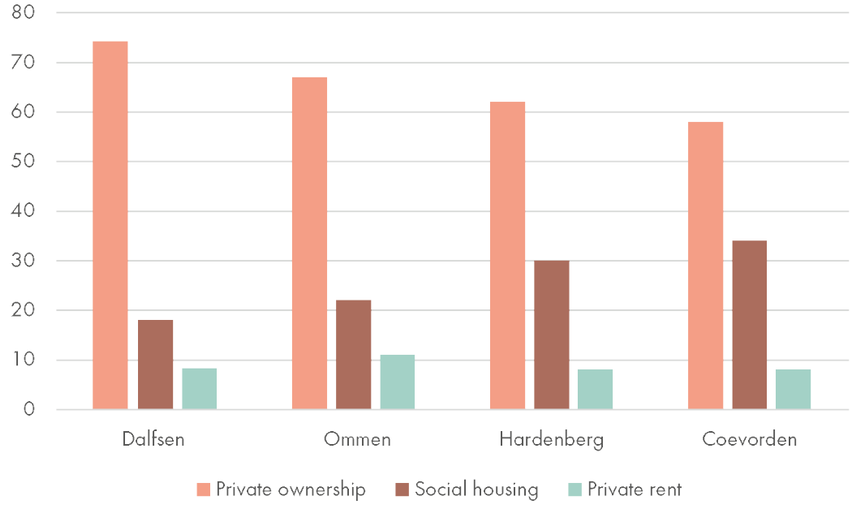


Figure 156: Housing ownership (AlleCijfers, 2023a; AlleCijfers, 2023b; AlleCijfers, 2023c; AlleCijfers, 2023d)

On this page the percentage of 65 plussers per neighbourhood is shown: the darker the grey the higher the percentage. Every municipality has at least one neighbourhood that is significantly targeted by an ageing population. This does not necessarily have to be a problem, but this development can result in a thinning population, with only 1-2 people living in family homes, streets become emptier and there is less liveliness. With that in mind, it is important to identify critical areas.

In all towns, it is very interesting to see that the train station is located near or in a neighbourhood that is targeted by ageing. This shows that the neighbourhood can profit from public transportation, helping people to stay mobile. However, mobility is not all and it is still important to look at how these neighbourhoods can attract younger people again.

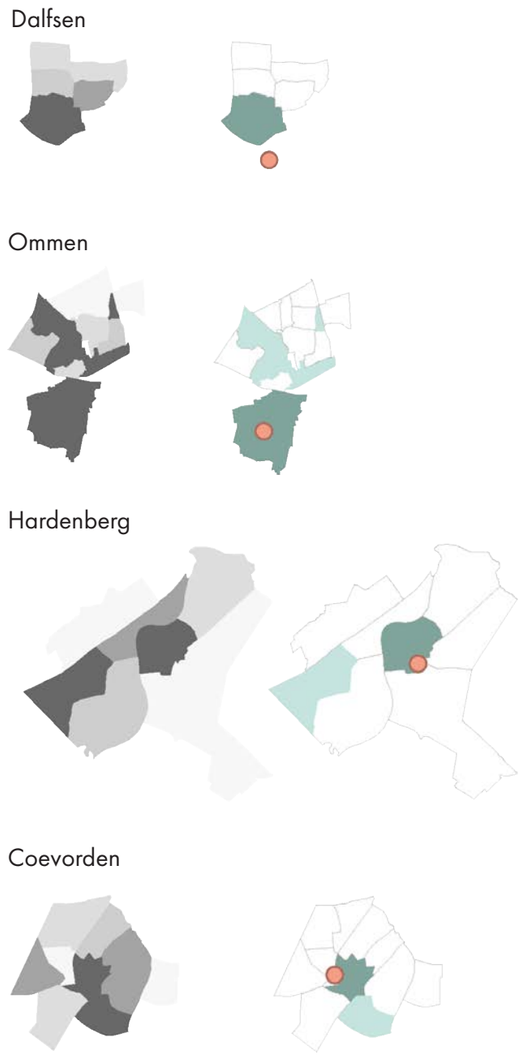


Figure 157: Ageing and public transportation ((Centraal Bureau van Statistiek, 2022)

Reflection

In the fieldwork, it is interesting to look at how these demographical characteristics are reflected in space. Can you see that the average income is lower? Can you see that the population is ageing? If so, what do you see?

But besides observation, these are also things that can be discussed in interviews on the street. For example, in Dalfsen there are supposedly no cafés nearby. The question then is if people indeed miss someplace they can go to in the evenings with friends. Or do they have an alternative? And if not, is there a way this need can be combined with the desire of status holders to socialize at night, with not necessarily alcohol involved? With these questions, the gap between the needs of locals and status holders can be slightly closed and mutual benefits can be established, which are hopefully useful to slowly break down the cultural walls.

LABOUR MARKET

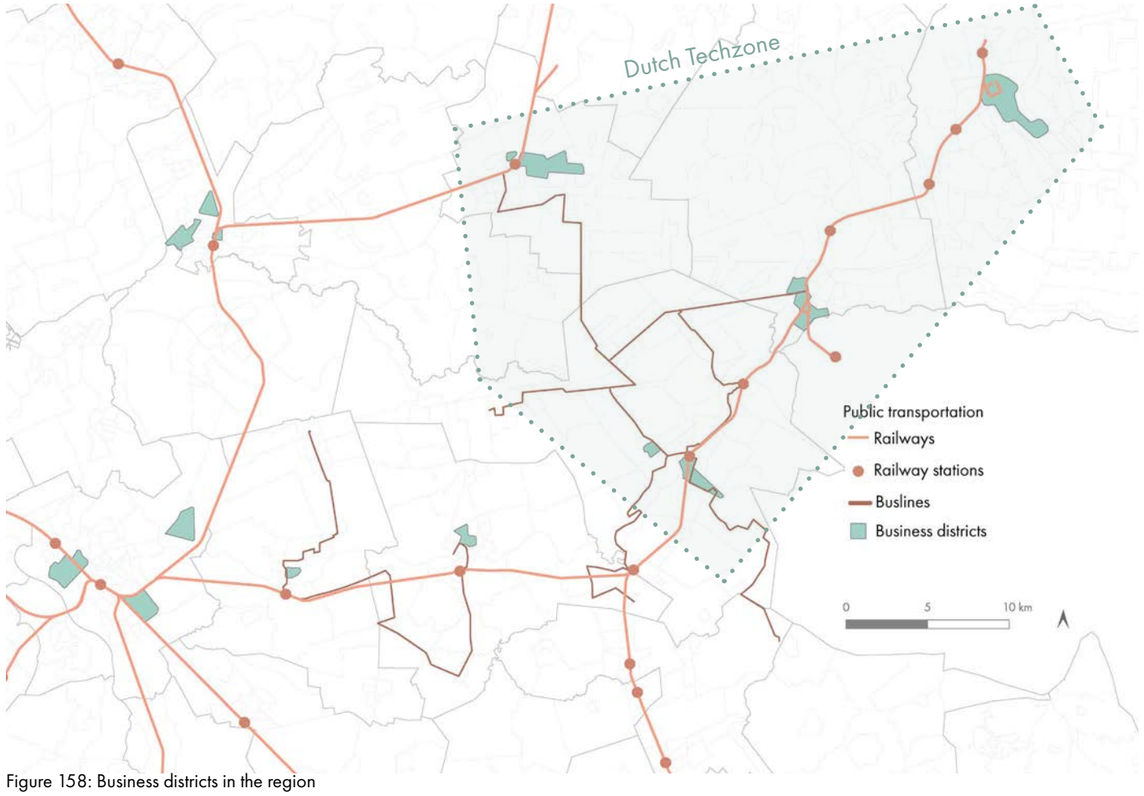


Figure 158: Business districts in the region

The Randstad is usually perceived as the place for innovation and the driver of the economy in the Netherlands. This is not untrue, but there are other regions in the country that cover a specific industry, such as the Dutch Techzone (Dutch Techzone, 2022). The Dutch Techzone is spread over Emmen, Hoogeveen, Hardenberg and Coevorden. The zone is characterised by the maker's industry: high-tech systems & materials, durable energy and green chemistry. The region is well-connected to the Randstad, but also right at the border to Germany and well-connected to Scandinavia.

The ambition of the region is to grow into a successful region with a comfortable living- and working climate. The aim is to develop further, while remaining regionally anchored, to become Smart & Circular and to become more attractive for businesses, students and employees. To do this they have partnered up with governmental- and educational institutions, aiming at further education and specialization of employees.

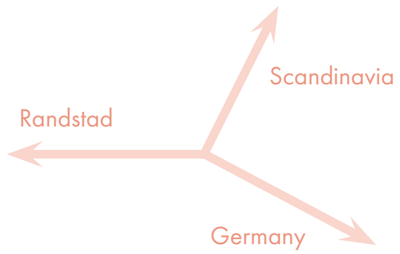


Figure 159: Export regions

	15-24	25-34	35-44	> 45		male	female
Did not finish primary education	8	5	5	6		6	5
Primary education	19	16	27	19		21	17
Lower secondary education	35	12	16	15		19	21
Secondary education and vocational education	35	40	27	30		33	35
Higher education (University)	3	28	25	31		20	22

Table 5: Education levels of Syrian status holders (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2018)

Looking at the new target group that is aimed to be attracted to the region, their qualifications and job experience has to be taken into account. The research by Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (2018) studied the previous qualifications and work experience of Syrian status holders, as well as, the way they (dis)continued their education or employment.

First, the literature looks at the education of Syrian status holders, dividing them into age brackets (table 5). Here, people aged 25-34 are the highest educated and people aged 35-44 are the lowest. Interesting to see is that there is only a very low percentage of higher education in the ages 15-24, but this is because these people were probably not yet at the age to go into higher education or their education was cut short due to the war. There are only minimal differences between women and men.

male	15
female	14
15-17	87
18-22	41
>23	5

Table 6: Percentage of students returning to school (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2018)

Due to the fact that people were not able to finish their education in Syria, some status holders proceed with their studies here. In table 6 the percentages of people studying are shown. Visible is that 15% of the male population and 14% of the female population have continued their education in the Netherlands. Most of the status holders aged 15-17 go back to school (87%), but also students aged 18-22 tend to return to school (41%) as well as a small group older than 23 years old. One out of four of the total students is placed in a transition class, to facilitate the transition towards the Dutch school. One-third of the students attend an MBO school and one-tenth of the students attend higher education.

Syrian status holders were asked what they did before they left Syria, whether they had a job or were intentionally unemployed. Table 7 gives an overview, in which especially the difference between men and women becomes clear. From the female population, 42% said that they were stay-at-home mothers/wives, and 0% of the male population intentionally stayed at home.

The study looks at what type of jobs the Syrian status holders had before coming to the Netherlands. Here they use the ISCO classification system, which is explained in table 8. A remarkable finding here is that there were very few people (2%) who worked at the first level. This is probably due to the fact that people in this working class do not have the me-

	15-24	25-34	35-44	> 45		male	female
Employed	15	59	78	77		68	27
Unemployed	1	1	0	1		1	0
Stay-at-home	4	16	20	17		0	42
Student	80	24	1	0		30	29
Retired	0	0	0	4		1	1
Incapacitated	0	0	0	1		0	0

Table 7: Former occupation in Syria (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2018)

	Employment level ISCO classification
1	(Window)cleaner, kitchen help, warehouse employee etc.
2	Butcher, bus driver, police officer, barber, mechanic etc.
3	IT support, medical lab researcher, construction supervisor etc.
4	Manager, lawyer, doctor, CEO etc.

Table 8: Employment level ISCO (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2018)

ans to seek refuge in another country. Most people worked at the second level (59%), some in the third (16%) and quite a high percentage, almost equal to the Dutch average, worked at the fourth level (23%). Another remarkable finding here is that 51% of the working women, work at the fourth level, indicating that the women that do work, work in higher positions.

The question then is how did these people proceed with their employment in the Netherlands? Most of the Syrian status holders struggle with this, especially as they simultaneously need to learn the language. Figure 161 shows that most of the Syrian status holders want to work, but are limited by the struggles they face with the integration process. Even if they obtain a job, this often doesn't fully comply with their education or previous work experience (figure 160).

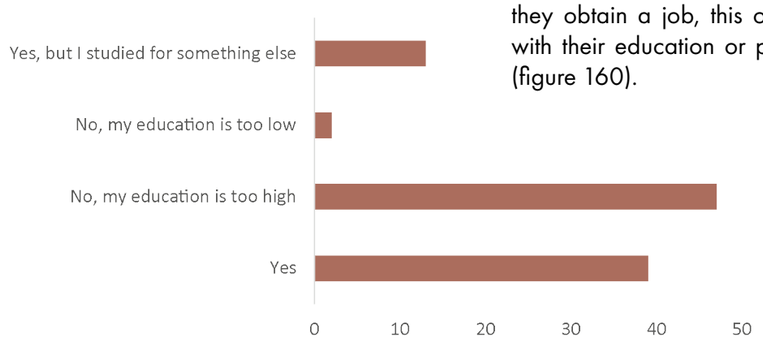


Figure 160: Satisfaction with employment (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2018)

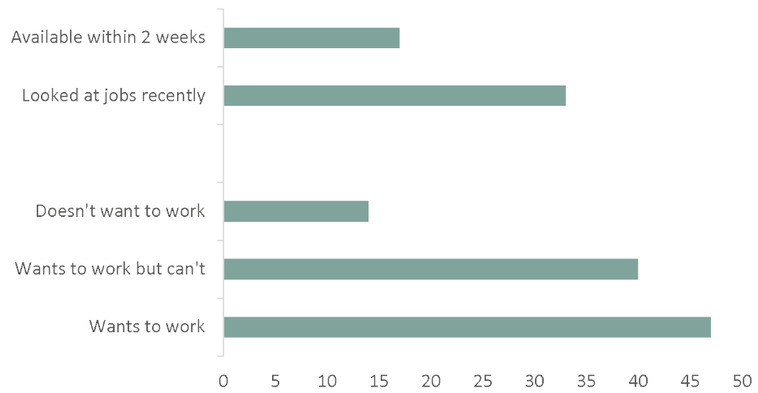


Figure 161: Availability to work (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2018)

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Figure 162: Public transportation system

The public transportation system is relatively extensive in the region. The train line goes through the towns analysed and through the main business district (Dutch Techzone). The bus services are especially extensive around Hardenberg. Ommen and Dalfsen are a little less well-connected, however, within these towns, the most important functions are within walking/cycling distance as is the train station, connecting the towns to other cores in the region.

Reflection

For the labour market and public transportation system, it is especially important to figure out how far away and accessible specific amenities are from the perspective of specific neighbourhoods. Additionally, it is important to look into the desires of Syrian status holders during the interviews. What career do they wish to pursue? Or do they want to go back to school? If so, what do they want to study? Would younger people be open to a new field of expertise?

RELIGION & CULTURE

The site in question is located within the Bible Belt, the Dutch term for the more religious region of the country. The Bible Belt is based on voting behaviour in national elections. The Netherlands has several parties with a Christian motivation: ChristenUnie (CU), SGP and CDA. CDA is one of the bigger parties and has created some distance to the Christian background, but still identifies as a Christian-democratic party. CU and SGP are the more heavily Christian parties that put belief in the foreground. Based on these two parties, Sommer (2017) made a map of the Bible Belt, within which the region discussed leans towards the CU (figure 163).

Religion is consequently still quite present in the region, which is also visible in the churches mapped out on the following two pages in the towns. Simultaneously, religion is intertwined with culture as it is with politics. Religion influences the worldview and the way individuals acts, also towards other.

In the statement of principle of the CU, they refer to 'the good coexistence', referring to the fruitful results of cooperation and coexistence. Within this, the CU doesn't differentiate between religion or background, everyone is welcome (ChristenUnie, 2018).

This view forms the basis for the welcoming environment that is wished for the new group that is aimed to be attracted: Syrian status holders. In 2019, 78% of the Syrian status holders were Muslim, 8% were Christian and 13% were not religious (Damen & Huijnk, 2020). This shows that the majority is indeed Muslim. Nonetheless, whether Muslim or Christian, the whole Syrian culture is significantly different from the Dutch and will ask for adaptation from the status holders as well as from the receiving culture.

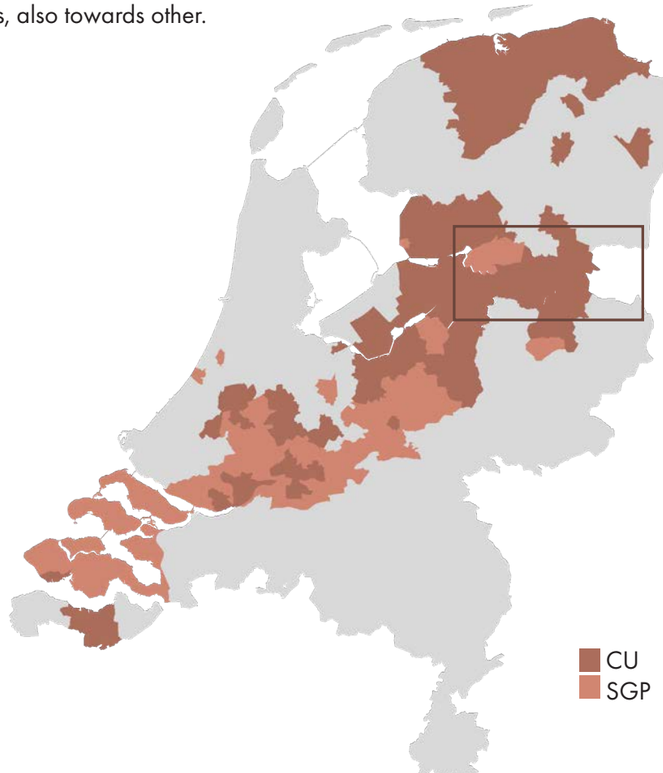


Figure 163: Bible belt according to voting behavious (adapted from Sommer (2017))

Dalfsen

Figure 164: Religious amenities Dalfsen

Ommen

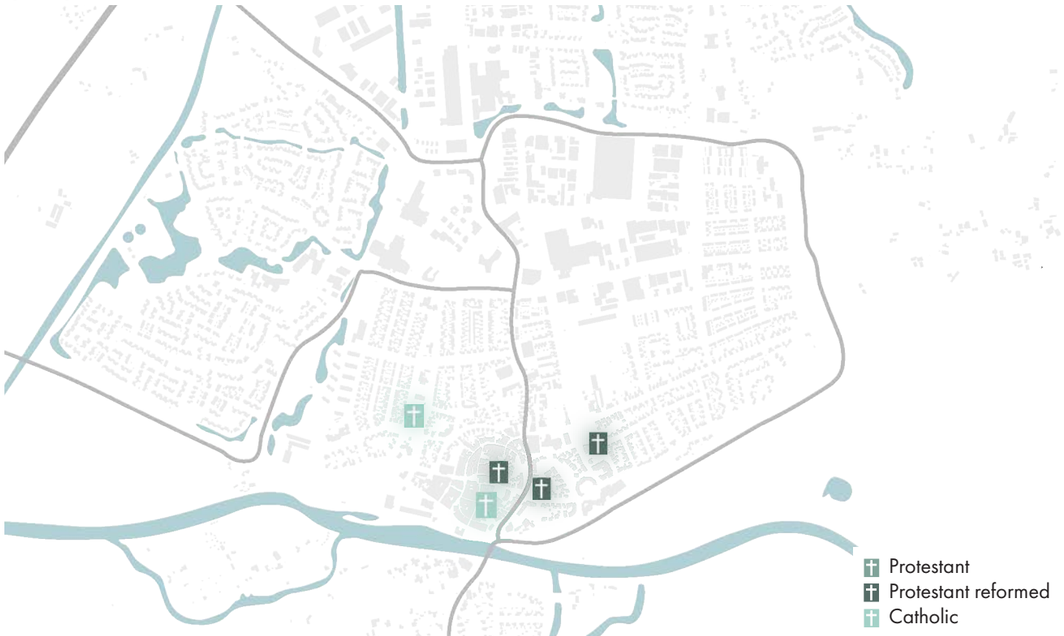


Figure 165: Religious amenities Ommen

Hardenberg

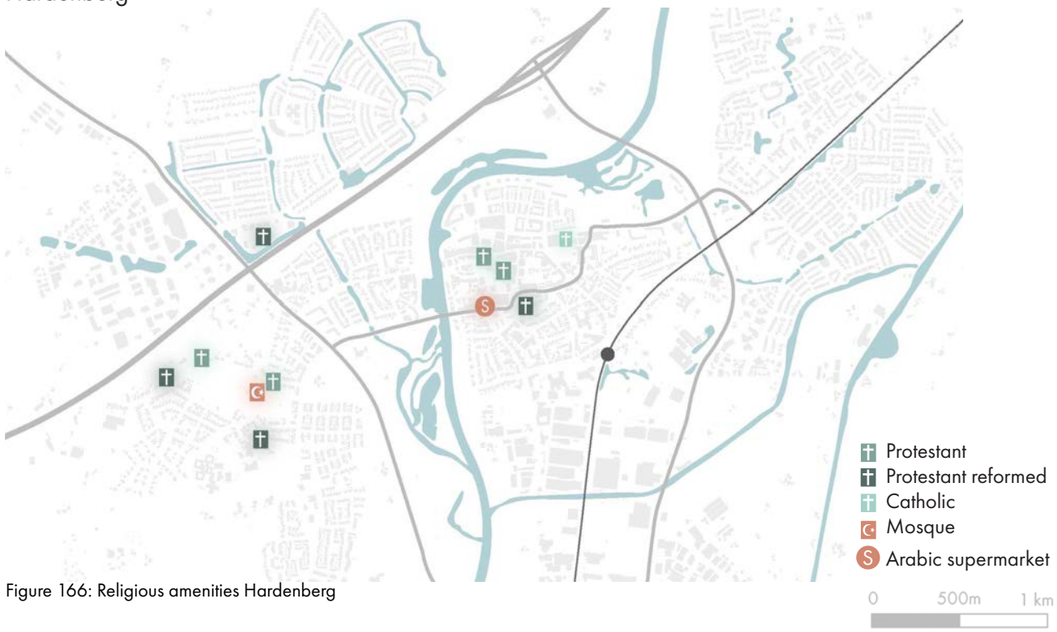


Figure 166: Religious amenities Hardenberg

Coevorden

Figure 167: Religious amenities Coevorden

Looking at the towns, Ommen and Dalfsen do not have any amenities related to the Muslim religion or other amenities that are related to the Syrian culture, like Arabic supermarkets or Halal butchers. Both Hardenberg and Coevorden do have an Arabic supermarket and a mosque, but this is still quite limited for the size of these areas. This means that the religious- and cultural network that was discussed in the theoretical framework related to the sense of belonging is limited. Interaction with culturally similar people is difficult to realize in these small towns.

A challenging quest during the fieldwork is to discover whether there is also an invisible religious- and/or cultural network and what the strength of these Arabic supermarkets is within the Dutch urban fabric.

Reflection

In the interviews with the locals, the aim is to explore what their view is on these Christian values and how the church makes a part (or not) of their daily practices. For the interviews with the status holders, important to investigate is the importance of these religious and cultural amenities and what their perspective is on Christianity and living in such a community.

In the fieldwork, Sunday is an important day to pay extra attention on the street. How many people go to church? And for the religious/cultural amenities; what kind of people visit these places? Are these places important for the visitors to stay in touch with their culture?

EDUCATION

Prejudices and racism is something children learn at a young age, already from the age of 8. This can be learned in their home situation, but also at school. To prevent these prejudices on race, ethnicity and religion to be formed at a young age, various researchers have focused on the contact hypothesis (wij-leren, 2017). The contact hypothesis is based on the assumption that interaction between ethnic- or culturally different groups results in less bias and prejudice. This links back to the theoretical framework within which the focus was on solidarity and how encounter plays an important role within this. This is also important, if not more, for children. But besides the contact hypothesis, the socialisation hypothesis is described, which assumes that positive interethnic or interreligious interactions can be built by building one's own knowledge of other religions, cultures, prejudice, bias and democracy. The last hypothesis used is the social-cognitive development hypothesis. This hypothesis assumes that intercultural interaction can improve the socio-cognitive development of children, resulting in a better understanding of what other people think, feel or do, and increased empathy.

These hypotheses show that encounters and learning about other cultures is not only important for children to diminish prejudices, but also for their socio-cognitive development, which can be very valuable for the rest of their lives. The question that arises from this is then: how does the Dutch school system work? Is there room for interethnic interaction?

Primary schools in the Netherlands are for children aged 4-12, after which they go on to secondary education. Important to note first that the Netherlands does not have a strong distinction between public and private in primary education, all schools are funded by the government and formally accessible to all. However, the Dutch school system does make a religious distinction. Therefore, there are public schools, but also Catholic, Protestant (reformed) and Muslim schools. This does not mean that an atheist can not attend a Catholic school. Even Muslim or Protestant children can attend a Catholic school, however, how acceptable this is, depends on the progressiveness of the school. In order to understand which schools are attended by which children, the research by A. B. Dijkstra et al. (2001) is used which gives a short overview of which children go to which school (table 9).

The study combines Hindi and Islam in one section, but the outcome is still valuable. An interesting observation is that Muslim (and Hindi) students are attending a wide variety of schools. This is probably caused by the lack of Muslim (and Hindi) schools. But still, the students are almost equally distributed over public (30%), Catholic (26%) and Protestant (24%) schools. Whereas Atheist children predominantly go to public schools (55%).

This can partially be traced back towards the way religion is discussed in non-religious or religious schools. On the following page, quotes and a diagram of the perspectives of different schools can be found. Critically here is that public schools tend to take an objective approach towards religion, whereas Christian or Muslim schools focus more on the subjective side and on understanding other religions as well. More time is put into studying religions and finding similarities between different religions. Catholic schools are the most inclusive in this approach, reformed schools are the least, they mainly focus on their own religion.

Religion parents	None	Catholic	Protestant	Reformed	Other Christian	Islam/Hindu
Religion school						
Public	55	13	23	5	15	30
Catholic	23	76	9	6	20	26
Protestant	18	7	61	66	51	24
Protestant reformed	0	0	5	21	11	0
Islam/Hindu	0	0	0	0	0	13
Special	5	4	1	1	3	7

Table 9: Distribution of students per school (A. B. Dijkstra et al., 2001)

This information is valuable when looking at the context of this thesis. The region selected for this study is positioned in the Bible Belt, a more religious part of the country. In bigger cities, there are usually still plenty of public schools or even a Muslim primary school. But in small towns this is different. In figure 168, an inventory of schools per town can be found. This shows that the smaller towns generally have a higher share of Christian and, in this case, Protestant schools.

Expectedly, the maps nor the websites of the school will tell whether they are tolerant and welcoming to religiously different groups. Therefore, this will be an important element to uncover during the fieldwork. Intercultural interaction can be stimulating for the development of a child, however, the conditions at hand in these regions have to allow for that. The threat can be that the public schools in these towns are mainly attended by non-Dutch students resulting in segregation between schools and within the small towns, only further fueling the intolerance.

Public
'[I think it is important that education in religion] should be given within the subject of world orientation to show the diversity of religion worldwide. Parents have to discuss this with their children in more depth in relation to their own world view.' (Beemsterboer, 2011) *translated by author*

Catholic
'[I think it is important] that children learn about different religions so that they can make their own choices and [I think it is important] that rituals and customs from our own religion are passed on and celebrated.' (Beemsterboer, 2011) *translated by author*

Protestant
'In the first place we focus on our own religion, but simultaneosly we learn the children to respect other religions and make as many connections as possible.' (Beemsterboer, 2011) *translated by author*

Reformed
'It is Gods Word that is passed on to the children in the first place. We also discuss the other religions, but only Christianity is the true religion. We reject other religions.' (Beemsterboer, 2011) *translated by author*

Islam
'I think it is important that children learn about their own religion. They have to know who they are and who they want to be. Besides that, I also think it is important that children learn about other religions. In this way, they learn to respect other religons. I think that when you are strong in your own belief, you will be stronger in society.' (Beemsterboer, 2011) *translated by author*

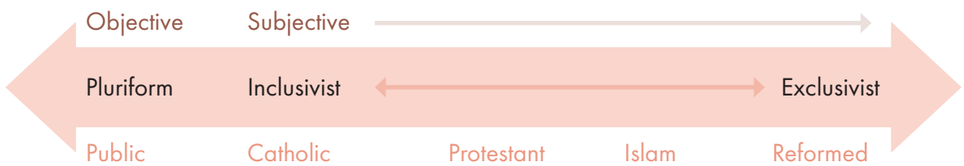


Figure 168: The approach of different religions in education on religion (adapted from (Beemsterboer, 2011))

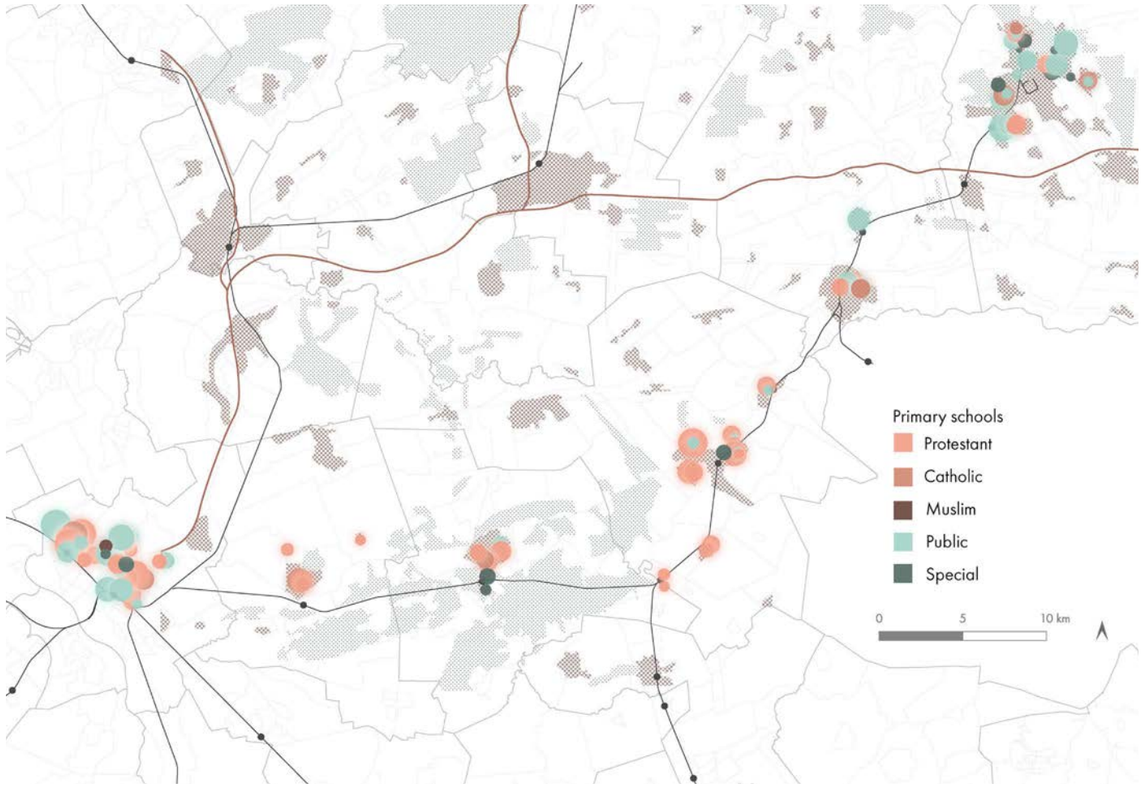


Figure 169: Distribution of primary schools (data adapted from Scholen op de kaart, 2022)

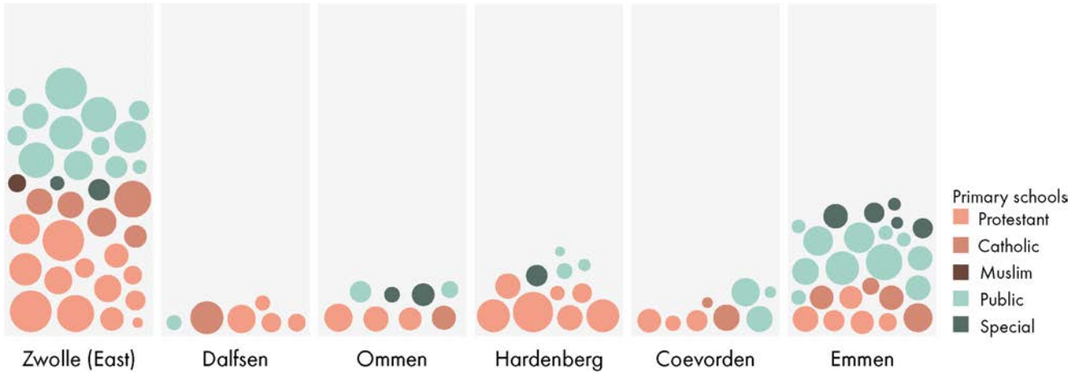


Figure 170: Inventory of schools per town (data adapted from Scholen op de kaart, 2022)

Figure 171: Simplified visualisation of secondary and tertiary education in the region (data adapted from Scholen op de kaart, 2022)

Secondary and tertiary education is mainly clustered in the bigger cores: Emmen and Zwolle. Dalfsen doesn't have any education above primary, which means that young people in these areas have to cycle far towards their secondary school. Important here is to see how youth experiences this and whether they still enjoy living in these towns or whether this is considered a burden. This also explains why there are few young adults in the area because they tend to move out once they start college.

Reflection

In the fieldwork, it is therefore important to uncover how primary schools are organised and how tolerant and inclusive those schools are. Additionally, it is important to see what the view of living in these small towns is from the perspective of teenagers and young-adults. Is there something keeping them there? Or do they want to move away as quickly as possible? These are important elements to study when looking at the sense of belonging for younger status holders.

LEISURE

In the theoretical framework, the concept of the urban network was described, which suggests that it is a strength for towns to have complementary functions. In this chapter, the focus is on a couple of leisure activities like theatres, cinemas, weekly markets and libraries.

From this analysis, there can be concluded that all towns have most of these functions, which shows the duplication of functions. However, the size of these functions differs substantially. In Dalfsen there is a theatre, however, this theatre is very small in comparison to bigger cities which showcase large productions, for this, the people have to travel to larger cities like Zwolle.

The question is whether current- and future residents find these amenities important. The fieldwork is then essential in creating an overview of what the people are missing or what they would like to have in their neighbourhood or town when it comes to leisure activities.

Additionally, these maps show the community centres in the areas. The difficulty with community centres is that they are not easily found online. There is never one name for community centres and therefore the possibility exists that not all of them are shown in these maps. This is then also a key element for the fieldwork, to discover whether there are more community centres in the chosen sites.

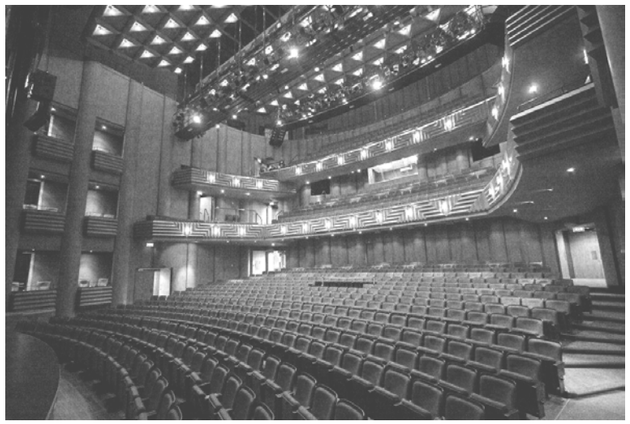


Figure 172: Theater Zwolle (Zwolse theaters, n.d.)

Figure 173: Theater Dalfsen (Vechtdal Overijssel, n.d.)

Dalfsen

Figure 174: Leisure functions Dalfsen

Ommen

Figure 175: Leisure functions Ommen

Hardenberg

Figure 176: Leisure functions Hardenberg

Coevorden

Figure 177: Leisure functions Coevorden

Community centres are important when looking at the Syrian status holders, as it is a place that organises events closer to home. The question that remains is then how accessible (read tolerant) are these places? Additionally, community centres are important for the older generation, but also for kids as a lot of these centres organise events and workshops for these target groups.

An important observation to highlight is a place in Hardenberg called 'de Boerderij', which is a community garden and petting zoo which is maintained by a group of people who can not perform normal employment. The site is managed by volunteers and the neighbourhood organisation de Baalder (Wijkvereniging Baalder, n.d.). These types of places form the heart of neighbourhoods from where important events are organised like bingo, workshops in partnership with primary schools and flea markets. Therefore, these places are essential to visit and discover when going out into the field, as these places could be important for the integration of status holders. In the case of the example above, they could for example help a day a week by pouring coffee at the community centre or participating in a workshop with their neighbours.

Reflection

In the fieldwork, it is important to explore what the current residents are missing in their surroundings and whether they go out to other places to visit certain amenities. This will give an overview of what investments are needed within the different municipalities to keep the residents satisfied with their living environment.

Besides that, the aim is to study the community centres and how they operate within the neighbourhood. How many people participate in events? Additionally, from the perspective of the status holders, there is a need to identify the level of (in)tolerance and whether these organisations (and the visitors of these community centres) would be open to status holders. Would they actively include them in the activities? On the other side, is it important to also take this into account in the interviews with the status holders? Would they be open to participating in these community centres?

Figure 178: De Boerderij, Baalder Hardenberg (Wijkvereniging Baalder, n.d.)

SPORTS & NATURE

In the theoretical framework, the importance of encounters was highlighted. This chapter looks at places that can facilitate encounters in a playful manner: sports. Most sports (on an amateur level) do not even require much verbal interaction, making it ideal in the first phases of integration. But also after that, a consistent meeting place with the same people. Additionally, the sideline plays an important role: the parents drink coffee and share weekly gossip alongside the field. A place where different kinds of people meet.

So, with this in mind, all the sports facilities are mapped out in the different towns. Ommen and Hardenberg offer the most diverse opportunities when it comes to sports, but also Dalfsen and Coevorden have quite some options.

Besides encounters, sports, but also nature, can be very helpful in processing trauma. The United Nations even established the office on Sport for Development and Peace in 2001, with the statement that sports have

> *"an almost unmatched role to play in promoting understanding, healing wounds, mobilising support for social causes, and breaking down barriers" (Thorpe & Ahmad, 2019).*

Therefore, sports and recreational outdoor spaces can be the first step for newcomers to participate and at the same time process their trauma. The benefit of these towns is the peaceful nature (as far as the Netherlands has nature) around. A relief from the pressure of integration.

Dalfsen

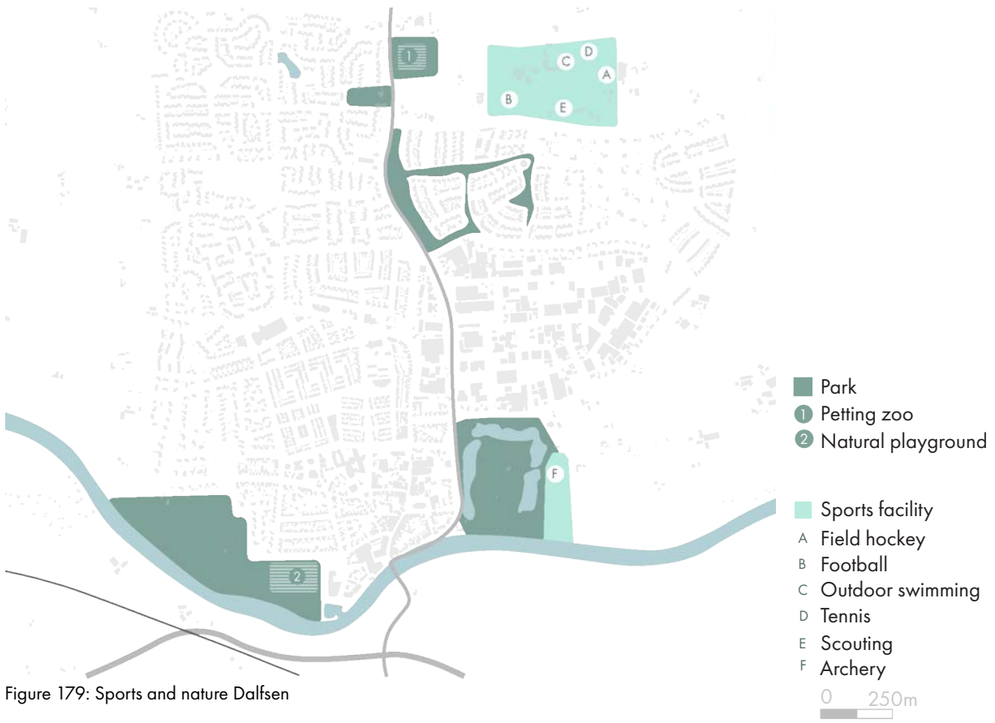


Figure 179: Sports and nature Dalfsen

Ommen

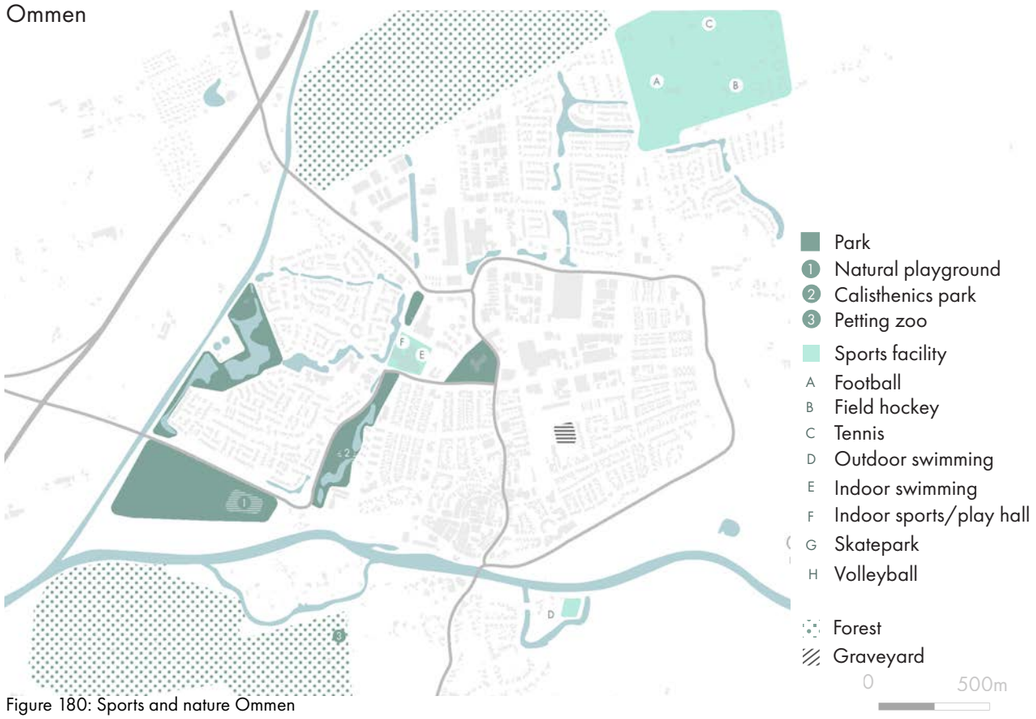


Figure 180: Sports and nature Ommen

Hardenberg

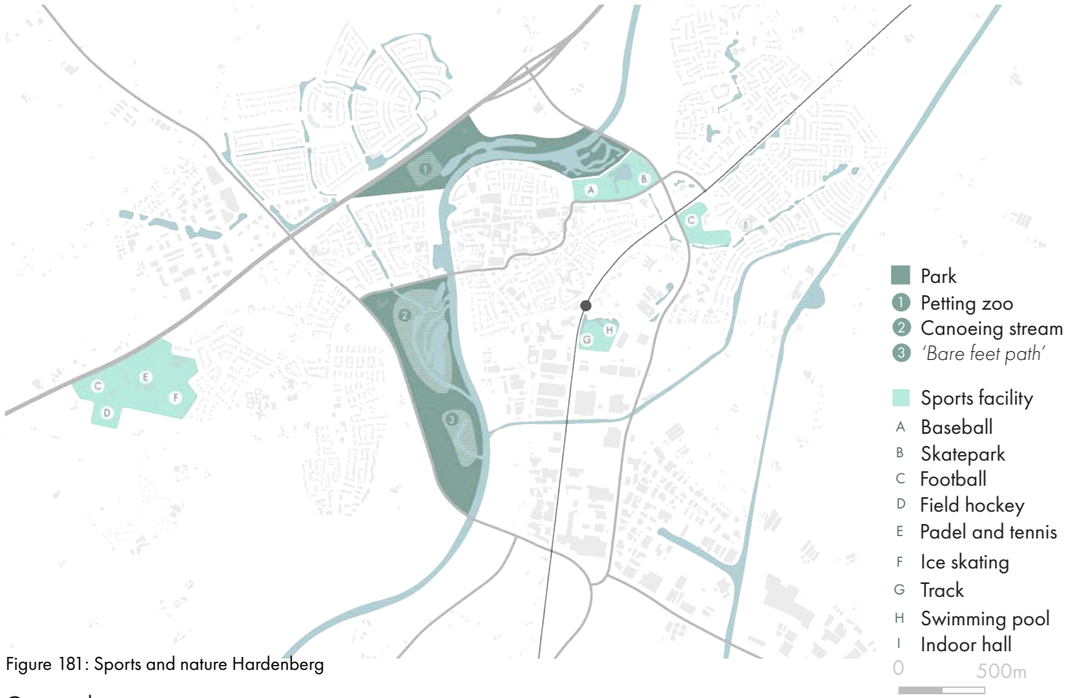


Figure 181: Sports and nature Hardenberg

Coevorden

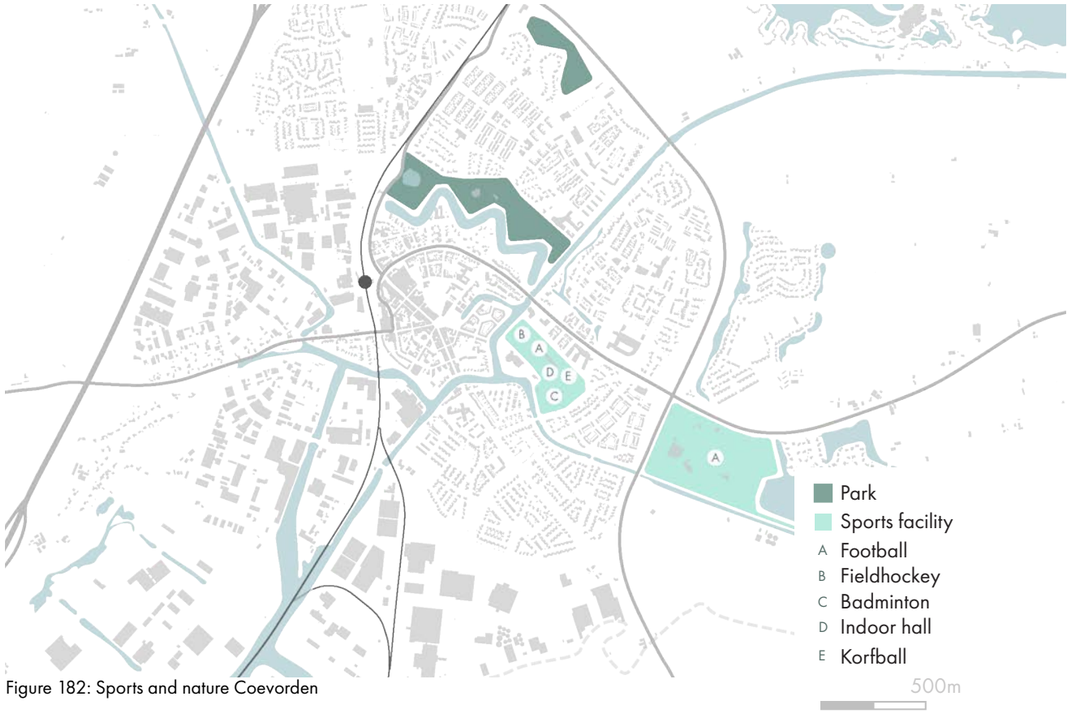


Figure 182: Sports and nature Coevorden

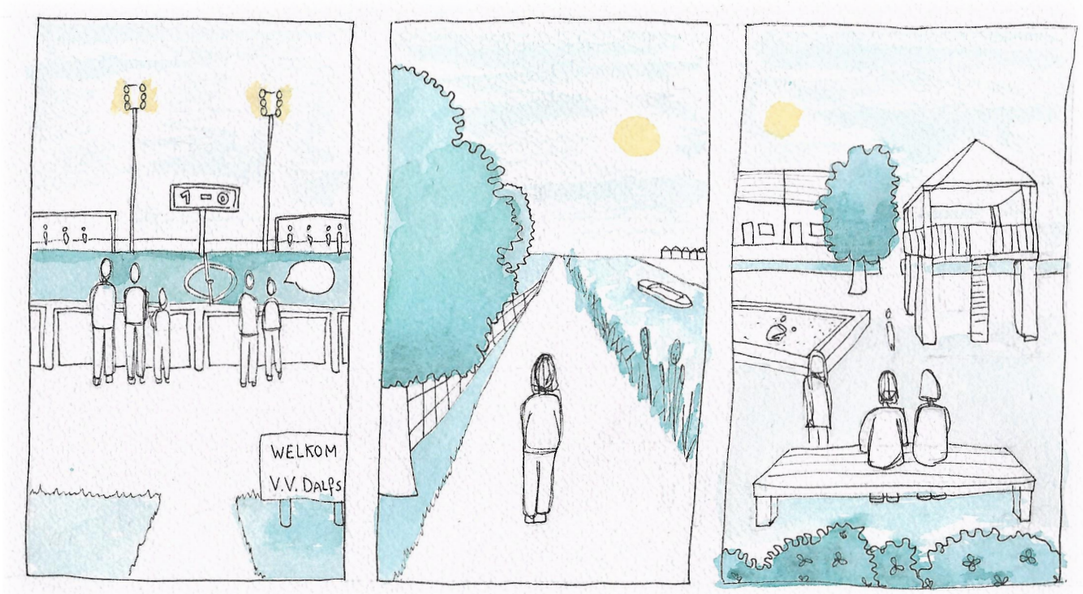


Figure 183: Sports, nature and play

Reflection

The interviews on site will be used to investigate what the favourite or best sports facilities are and to see if a specific facility or sport is missing. For example, recently sports like bouldering, skating and padel are upcoming sports that might interest the citizens. The question for status holders is to see what sports they practised or would like to practice in the future. The fieldwork will be used to see if these places are used as meeting places, at what time and what kind of people are present there.

APPENDIX III

SUMMARY OF THE SITE VISIT

III.I Hardenberg
- III.I.I Approach
- III.I.II Market square
- III.I.III Library
- III.I.IV The Vecht park
- III.I.V Gardens and neighbours
- III.I.VI The Wijkboerderij

III.II Dalfsen
- III.II.I Approach
- III.II.II Trefkoeleplus and schools
- III.II.III Church: Het Kruispunt
- III.II.IV Town core
- III.II.V Town edge
- III.II.VI Other places

Appendix III gives a detailed summary of the site visits. The observations and interviews are collected for the most important spaces in the towns.

HARDENBERG

The site visit in Hardenberg was split over two days, with one day in between. During the site visit the main activity was observing people in public and semi-public spaces. This gave insights into who and when spaces and places are visited, and the most important factor, how the spaces are used. During the site visit, residents were interviewed in a semi-structured way. Usually, the conversations started with the residents' views on Hardenberg. The second part of the conversation was about status holders. The conversations went in very different directions offering different insights into Hardenberg.

Figure 184: The Wijkboerderij

Figure 185: Street structure in Hardenberg

Figure 186: Park structure in Hardenberg

MARKET SQUARE

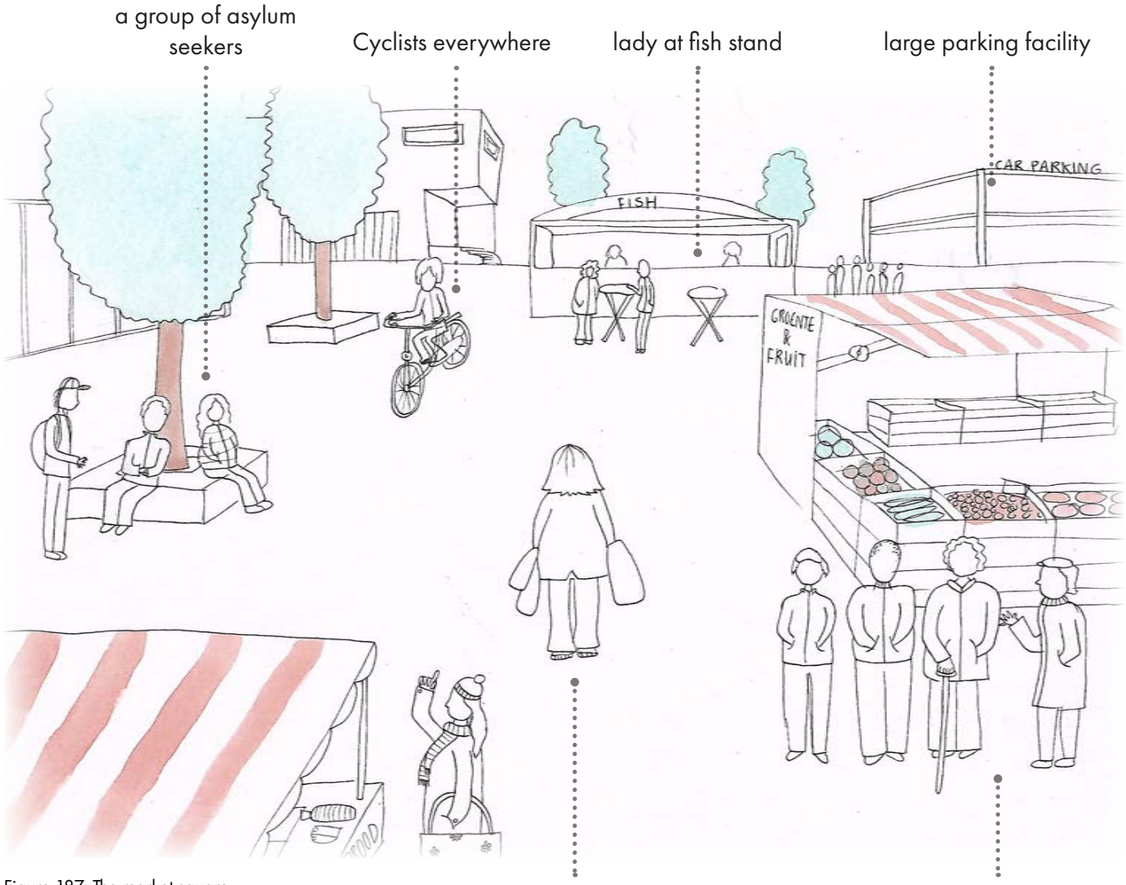


Figure 187: The market square

The central node of Hardenberg is the market square in the town core. A market square is a place where different groups of people come, but not necessarily together. On the day of the market, a group of four elderly men were standing at the side of the market, observing the crowd, and chatting with each other, for a relatively long time. I approach them, thinking they would be happy to have a chat. However, when I asked them questions about Hardenberg and what they liked about it the only thing that came out was 'the football club'. They complained about the market shrinking and when I asked them about status holders, they barely answered at all.

They were not the only ones complaining about the market. I overheard others saying: *"Ooit was deze markt nog vol."* which means, at some point this market used to be full. Although the market is shrinking, I observed people (especially older ones) going from one market stall to the next to get their weekly groceries.

Besides the elderly men, I found a group of people observing the crowd on the other side of the market square. I approached them and quickly found out they were asylum seekers, staying in AZC Hardenberg, a relatively large reception centre. Communication was quite difficult as their knowledge of English was very limited. I asked what they thought of Hardenberg and they answered positively, however, it was hard to determine whether they meant it as they could not express themselves very well in English. Later that day I saw another group passing through the square who seemed to be asylum seekers, a large group of women with hijabs, guided by two Dutch women. They seemed very excited to be there and smiled at everyone passing by, which was very nice to encounter.

I lastly spoke to a woman who was waiting for her husband to get a typically Dutch fried fish dish at the fish stand. She grew up in Hardenberg but recently moved to a small neighbouring village, Gramsbergen. Nonetheless, she has always enjoyed living in Hardenberg. Especially, the value of ***ons-kent-ons*** (everyone knows each other) was important to her. In the last years, however, she felt like Hardenberg was losing part of its identity due to all the new, rather generic, building developments that overshadow the character of Hardenberg.

I moved on to the subject of status holders, where she immediately wanted to clarify that she was not trying to be racist, but that in the past months, the criminality rates went up quite quickly in Hardenberg and most of these crimes were committed by residents of the reception centre. She clarified that she knew not all foreigners are criminals, but that in this case most criminals were foreign and that was something she struggled with. Especially with the ***gelukszoekers*** or ***veilige landers*** as people call them in the Netherlands, the people who are not fleeing persecution or war. In the past, she had very positive experiences with status holders as she lived next door to a Bosnian family with whom she could get along really well. I think generally she found it difficult to define her opinion as she had positive experiences with refugees and negative ones. I valued her honesty because it explained the fundamental dilemma of the (anti-)immigrant discussion.

Interesting to note is that cycling was allowed in the town core, which meant bikes were rushing through the shopping streets, which made me feel quite uncomfortable.

On the last day in Hardenberg, I had my dog with me for 15 minutes in the town core, having lunch. I had spent the past days trying to talk to people, literally pursuing conversations. In those 15 minutes, people immediately started talking to me, petting my dog and asking questions about him. Dogs are a better conversation opener than I had expected beforehand.

Figure 188: The dog-effect

LIBRARY

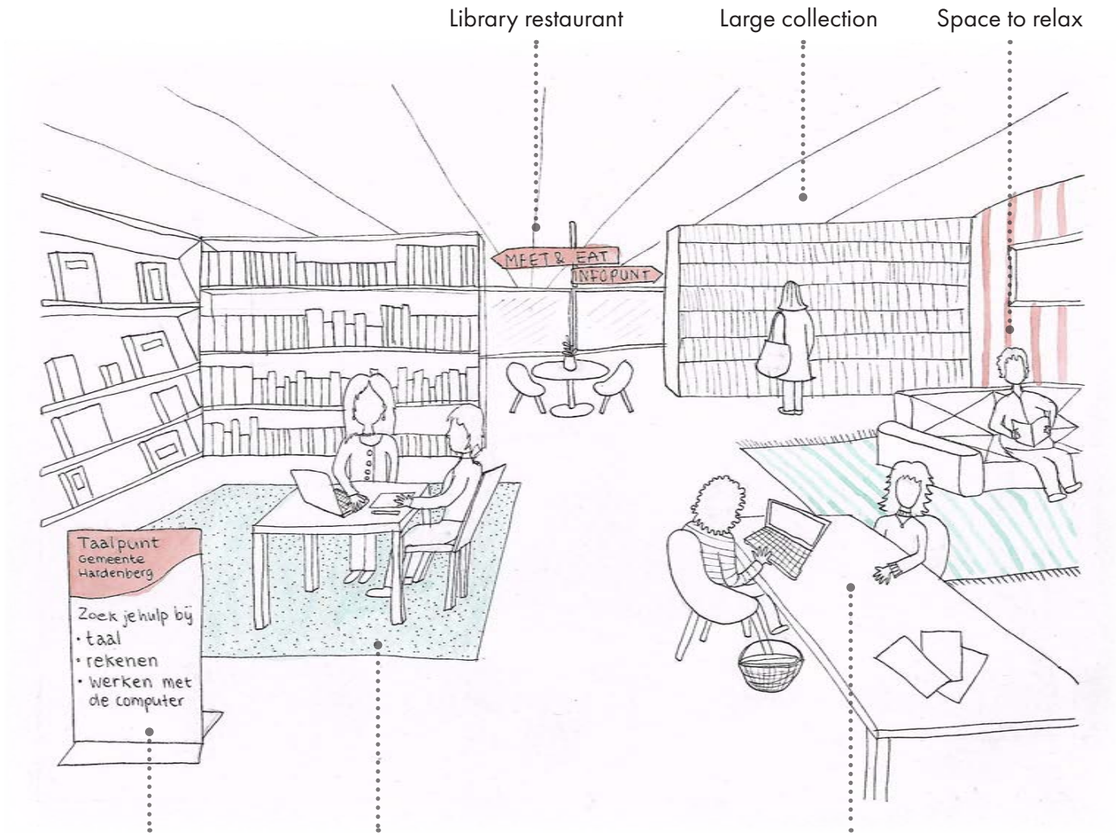


Figure 189: The library

The library is placed in a shared building at the edge of the town core. However, once you enter the building, the attention is drawn to the library and the neighbouring Fablab as other functionalities are on higher floors. Both times I entered the library the place was rather crowded, there were always people, young and old, either walking around or sitting somewhere, which gave it a very lively impression. The library does not only offer the service of borrowing books, but it is also a meeting place. When I entered, a couple of elderly people were hanging around the entrance with the librarians chatting with each other.

Further, into the library, you can find a *Taalpunt*. Taalpunt is a service provided by the library for people learning or improving their Dutch language skills. But it is also offered to improve your math skills and to learn to work with a computer. I saw a Middle-Eastern man and a younger Dutch woman working together at the table.

Besides a Taalpunt, there is also a *Digipunt*. Digipunt is a service primarily focussed on everything related to computers. As a lot of services shift towards digital forms, applications and registrations, especially elderly people struggle to find their way.

For them, this service is created to stay independent. In the library, I found an elderly man and a younger woman sitting around a laptop. The woman told the man that he had passed the course. I assumed that this was related to a course provided by Digipunt.

Besides these arranged meetings, lots of people were just hanging out in the library. An elderly man reading the newspaper, a woman reading a book, teenagers doing their homework and students studying for their exams. There are seating areas dedicated to more relaxed hanging out, like couches, but also small nooks that block out noise suitable for studying.

Through the library, you can also walk to the library restaurant, meet & eat. Here I saw a large group of youths, seemingly with a non-western background, hanging around together.

The library is actively trying to engage various groups by organising specific events, which are posted on its Facebook page. Here, there are two examples from the past month. In the first one, they organised a gardening workshop for anyone interested (and able to pay the fee) (figure 190). But there are also events which are free. An example of this is the multicultural event: the day of the mother tongue (figure 191). During this event, people of different nationalities came together and read to the others in their mother tongue.

In this way, the library aims to attract different groups and provide more services than just lending books.

Figure 190: Facebookpost on gardening (Bibliotheek Hardenberg, 2023b)

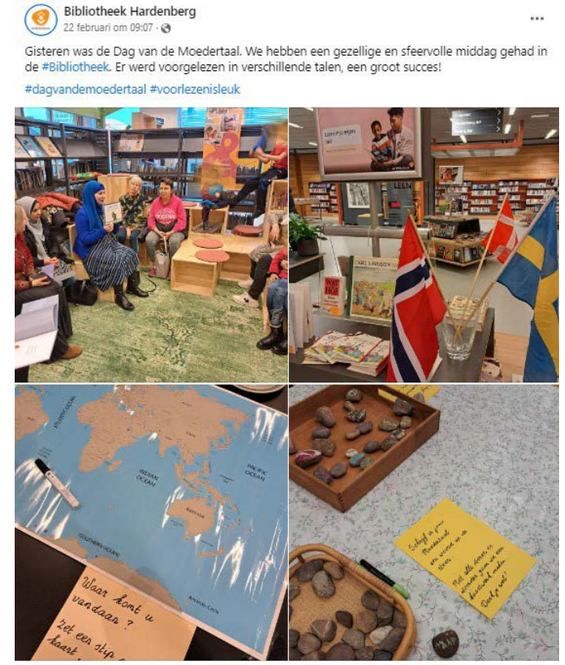


Figure 191: Facebookpost on Day of the Mother Tongue (Bibliotheek Hardenberg, 2023a)

THE *VECHT* PARK

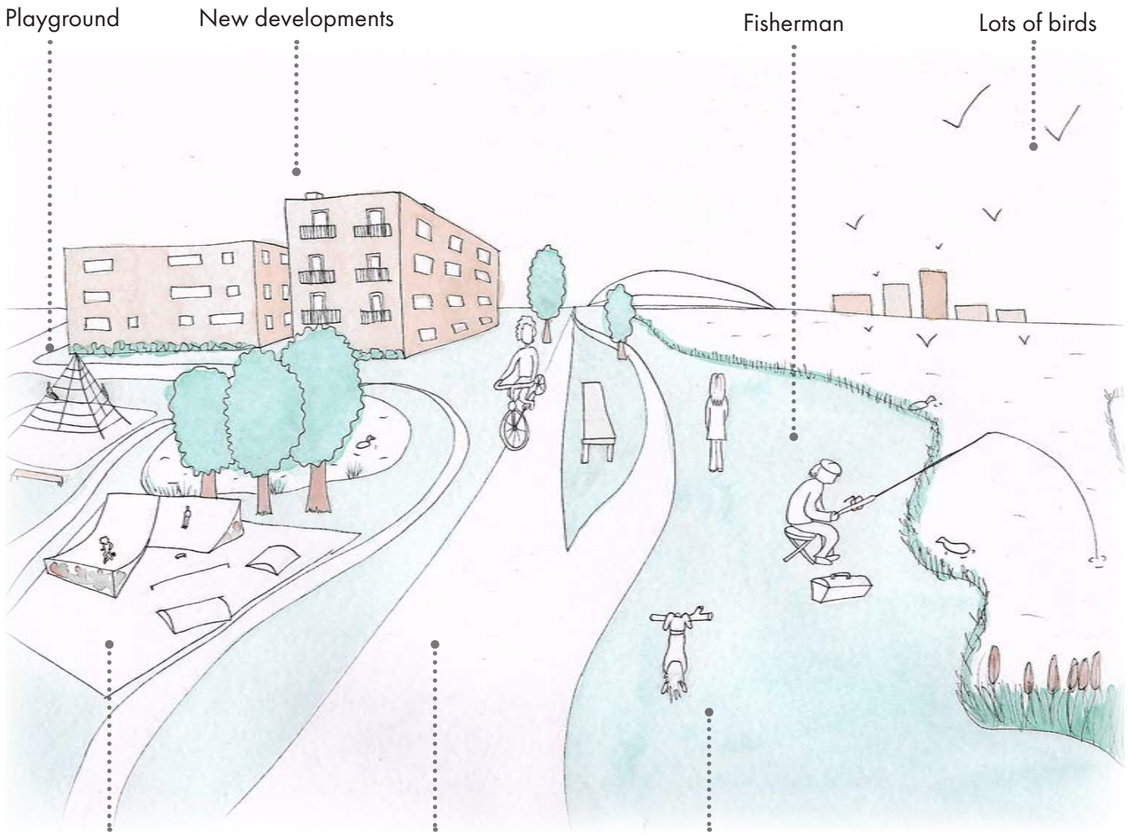


Figure 193: The Vecht park

The Vecht park as I call it follows along the waterbody the Vecht, a proud characteristic of the region. At the end of the park, closer to the neighbourhood Baalder, the park ends in a collection of outdoor activities. In this area, the new developments the woman I spoke to in the market square talked about, stand out. Right along the pathway, there are a lot of new apartment complexes, built in a similar style. Across the water, there is a newer neighbourhood, Marslanden. Along the water, I saw people walking their dogs, fishermen and people out on a leisure stroll.

I spoke to an elderly man, who was very happy to have a conversation with me. I later found out that he was a (very vital) 82-year-old man who had lived in Hardenberg for more than 50 years. He used to work for the municipality in the housing and permits department before retirement.

His pride in Hardenberg was quite contagious as he was speaking about the Vecht and the nature the area had to offer. He told me that chatting with strangers on his stroll was something he really loved and felt like was part of the identity of Hardenberg. He liked watching the birds (there were a lot of them) and seeing other people enjoy nature as well, for example, children feeding the ducks.

His children lived in the neighbouring town of Gramsbergen, where he cycled whenever the weather allowed it.

When I spoke about the topic of status holders, he told me that they live alongside each other, but not together. Something that frustrated him and his neighbours was how the status holders on his street kept the curtains closed and neglected their gardens. For the neighbours, who all spent a lot of time in their gardens, this was very difficult because they wanted to keep their neighbourhood neat and these gardens disturbed that image. Communicating with them was not really a solution because the language barrier, between the elderly and status holders, is very difficult to overcome.

In the park further along the water, there was a pond with lots of geese, ducks and other birds. There was also an aviary with more 'exotic' birds like budgies. Besides that, there was a small playground and a skatepark. During lunch, I found a father with two children playing in the playground and some teenagers with their skateboards and scooter riding towards the skatepark. Throughout the week I encountered people going on a stroll or run through the park.

Figure 194: The duck pond

GARDENS & NEIGHBOURS

Figure 195: A street in Baalder

Baalder is a relatively standard neighbourhood built according to the cauliflower structures seen often in the 80s'. This results in courtyard-structured building blocks. Remarkable were the well-kept gardens almost everywhere you went.

The first time I visited, it was a Saturday morning around 9 'o clock. At that time, the only people I encountered in the neighbourhood were joggers and people walking their dogs. I also saw some people cycling or walking towards the town centre and people unloading the groceries from their car.

Interestingly, there were a lot of cars in the streets, but also a lot of empty parking spaces (which is quite strange on a Saturday morning at 9). As an urban planner, there seemed to be an opportunity there.

I spoke to a lady just before entering the neighbourhood, she shared some interesting views, as she was originally not from this region, but from Zeeland and she had quite the travelling history. She sometimes felt homesick. She, therefore, thought her opinion on Hardenberg didn't matter, but it was even more important as she could help me understand how it felt to be a 'newcomer' in Hardenberg.

She explained to me the tiny differences she noticed between people from her home province and the ones in Hardenberg. How people in Hardenberg sometimes didn't understand her when she spoke in-between the lines. She also still struggled with the dialect, whenever she was tired and someone spoke to her in a dialect she sometimes struggled to follow along. I thought it was really interesting that even Dutch people, all from rural regions of the country, encounter some struggles in communication. Then how is that for people from a country halfway across the world?

I moved on to the topic of status holders, where she told me about some encounters in her apartment building. She had two status holder families living in the building. One who integrated rather well and didn't cause any nuisance. But the other family was known in the building for littering and playing loud music. Interestingly, she suggested a civil approach to tackling these issues, a speed tutorial on how to be Dutch. Instead of fighting and getting angry at these people, try to explain to them that this is not the usual way to go about things in the Netherlands. From experience, she noticed that people will listen if you ask them nicely.

She also told me about a possibly Syrian mom and daughter, she wasn't entirely sure about their nationality, going on a stroll along the Vecht. They often had small talk, which made the women very happy.

But on the other hand, she also had some negative experiences with refugees or as she also called them *veilige-landers*, people from safe countries. She often travelled by train and had encountered harassment by young men when she wanted to get on the train late at night. She also highlighted that these men ruin the image of all the other refugees who are behaving properly and who are willing to integrate.

The woman was very passionate about some questions and I could tell that she had some strong values, but also the capacity to listen to others and discuss opinions in a civilized manner. Nonetheless, I think the last thing she told me was something I see happening often in the Netherlands. She told me that she is very passionate about gender equality and that this can cause a clash with more traditional groups, also Muslim groups. She explained that she is not against Islam and she will always respect other religions, but she does struggle with the more traditional gender roles in Islam.

Figure 196: The dominance of cars in streets

DE WIJKBOERDERIJ

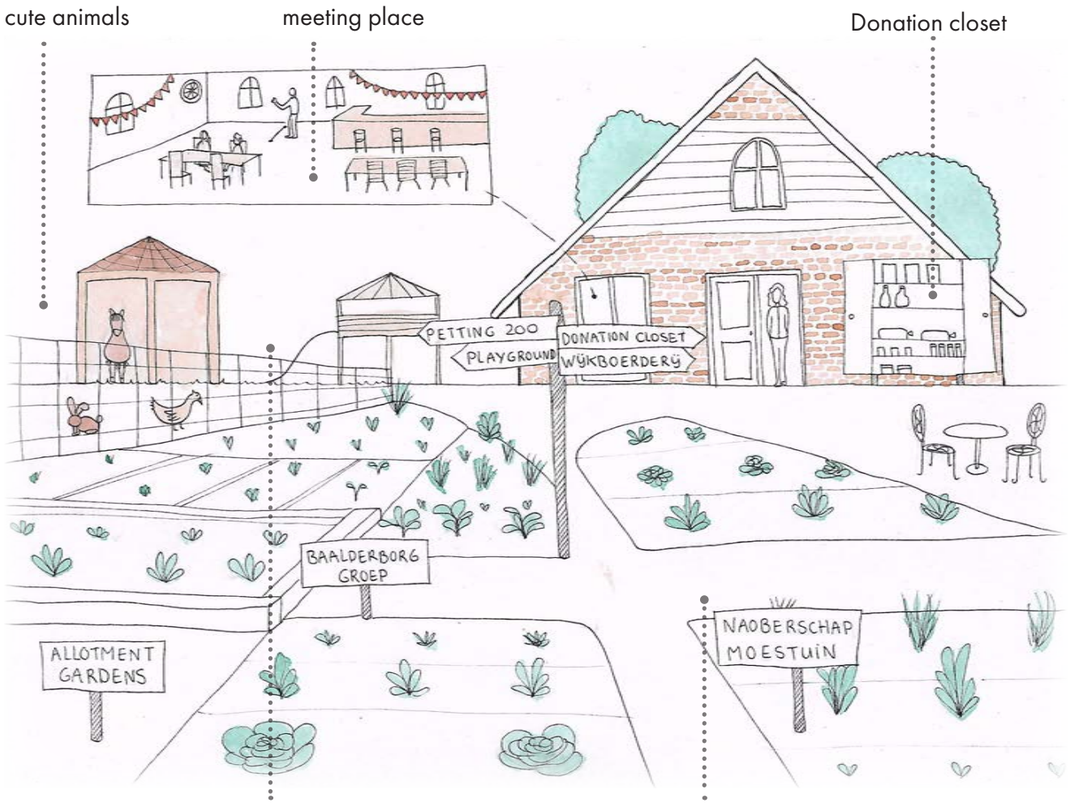


Figure 197: The functionalities of the Wijkboerderij

De Wijkboerderij lies at the neighbourhood's core and can literally be translated as the neighbourhood farm. I visited the Wijkboerderij on the last day of the site visit and was warmly welcomed by the staff. The staff consisted of clients and supervisors. One of the supervisors was very enthusiastic to tell me all about the Wijkboerderij over tea.

The Wijkboerderij is part of an organisation called Baalderborg Groep, through which housing and employment for people with mental disabilities are organised. The Wijkboerderij is one of the places where the clients of the organisation work. Their work has everything to do with the Wijkboerderij.

The Wijkboerderij consists of the building itself, from which events are organised, usually in the evening, by another organisation: Wijkvereniging Baalder. They organise party nights, like a Valentine's disco that happened during the weekend I was there, darts nights and watching Formula 1 together.

During the day the building was open for all the residents who just wanted to enjoy a cup of coffee and talk to the people. The woman explained that there are some people in the neighbourhood who are unemployed or struggle with other problems and for whom a cup of coffee and a chat can be the highlight of the day. These people often have a strong relationship with the clients. She also knew that some status holders came by sometimes, but she wasn't sure if they also joined events in the evenings as she wasn't there then.

Besides the building in itself, there is also a petting zoo. The animals in the petting zoo belong to one of the schools in Hardenberg, but the staff on-site is responsible for taking care of them: feeding them, cleaning the enclosures and also giving them some love.

One of the clients gave us a guided tour through the petting zoo telling us the names of the animals and explaining some fun facts about them. He guided us along the chicken, goats, birds, pigs, donkeys, bunnies and guinea pigs. I felt very welcome and happy when I walked through the place (might be helpful that I am an animal lover myself).

Another part of the site is a playground, within which the clients take care of the weeds and keep the place clean.

Lastly, there was the community garden, which can be subdivided into three sections. One part is for private use, in form of allotment gardens. Another part was managed by the clients and a school (if I understood that correctly) and the last part is managed by Baalder Naoberschap. This organisation donates the produce of the garden to a couple of families in the neighbourhood who are known to need it the most. On top of that, there is a donation closet on site where groceries are stored that people in need can pick up.

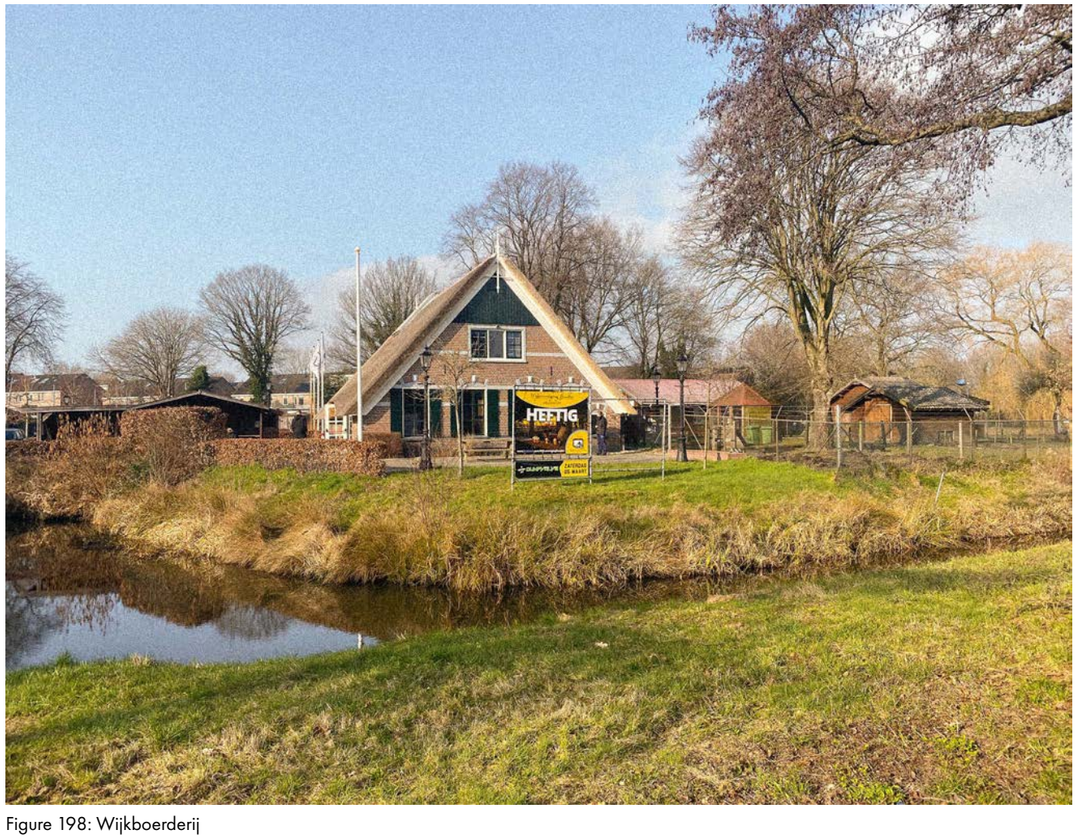


Figure 198: Wijkboerderij

The Baalder Naoberschap is involved in more initiatives in the neighbourhood and will be explored in more depth in the upcoming weeks.

The collaboration of the different organisations on this side really seems to work. Even though the ownership might be more complex, there is a standard team that takes care of the place and that is always there for a chat and a cup of coffee. It is not only a community centre, but the organisations that work here know the people in the neighbourhood.

Figure 199: Donation closet

Figure 200: Petting zoo

The supervisor was very happy to help me and told me some other things. For example, how Hardenberg once won a prize called 'Appeltje van Oranje' in 2020, which is a prize dedicated to voluntary initiatives, in this case in the category 'diversity'. The project that won was the Buddy Project, a project where local inhabitants are connected to a buddy from the reception centre or a status holder. With this project, the locals help the newcomers to integrate.

On the website of the Buddy Project (Buddy Project Hardenberg, n.d.), there is a sentence that is very relevant to this thesis:

integratie moet óók van ons komen

meaning '*integration should also come from us*', in which us is defined as the inhabitants and the municipality of Hardenberg.

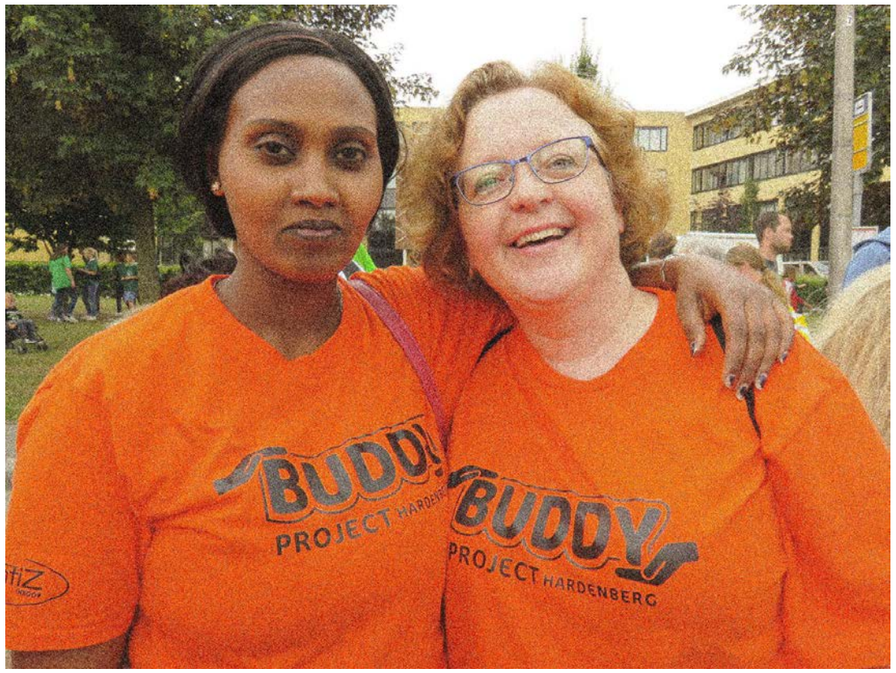


Figure 201: Buddy project Hardenberg (Buddy Project Hardenberg, n.d.)

DALFSEN

For Dalfsen the same approach was used as in Hardenberg. Two days were dedicated to fieldwork. Here, the main focus was also on observing people in public and semi-public spaces. The first site visit day was planned on a Sunday as the community in Dalfsen is relatively religious and it would be interesting to see how this was displayed in space. Residents were interviewed along the way focussing on their opinion on Dalfsen in itself and their view on status holders. Here, the following section is also not organised chronologically but according to the section discussed on the next page.

Figure 202: Town core

Figure 203: Natural playground

Figure 204: Fietserieje Dalfsen

DALFSEN
TrefkoelePlus and school

TREFKOELEPLUS AND SCHOOL

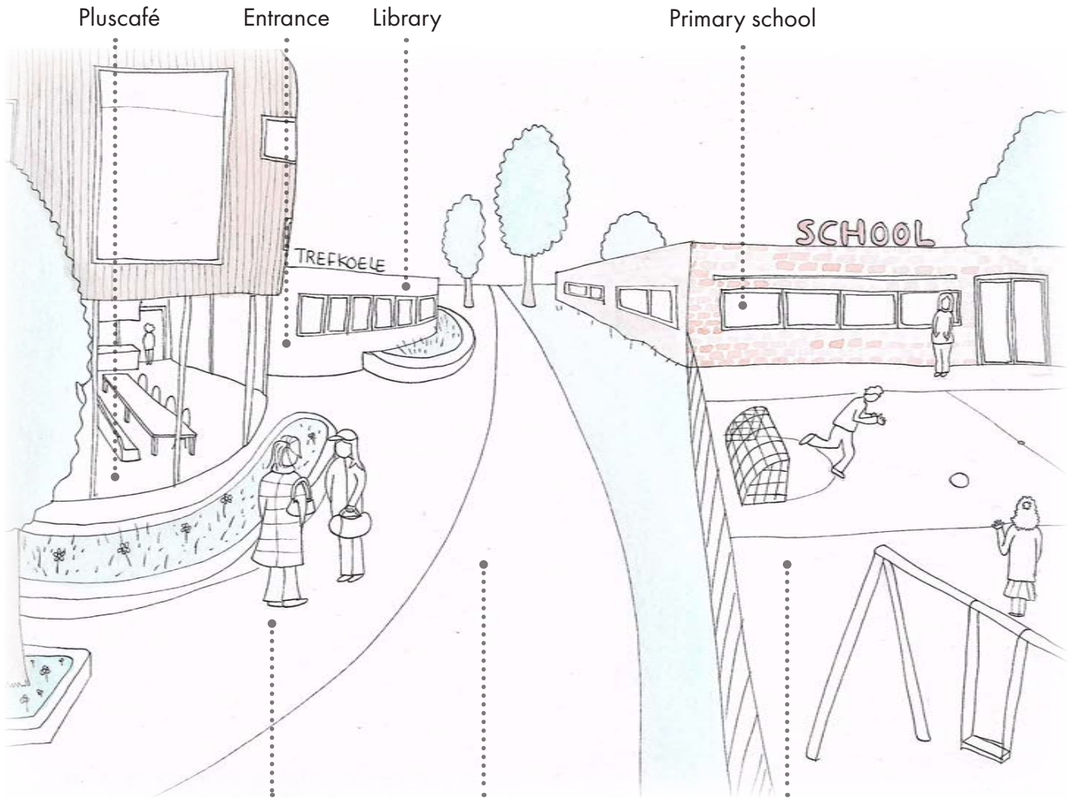


Figure 205 : Central node Dalfsen

The central node is characterised by the leisure centre: TrefkoelePlus. Trefkoele is a large collective building with a lot of organisations and clubs involved, organising weekly events. The library is also located within the building as well as multiple gymnasiums. Next to the entrance, there is a café.

There were a lot of people going in and coming out in sports clothing.

The library looked very different from the one in Hardenberg and you could see that the functionalities here are mostly reduced to borrowing books. It was a rather dark place and there were not many people around, nor was there a lot of staff present. I did find someone however to speak to.

The middle-aged woman I spoke to was originally not from Dalfsen, but from The Hague. I asked her about initiatives for status holders by the library. She wasn't really sure as she was not involved in that section of the library, but was very willing to share her personal opinion with me.

She was one of the last people I spoke to during the site visits and she was the first one who took a more adverse position towards status holders. She often told me ***'ze worden teveel gepamperd',*** which translates into *'they are pampered too much'*: the balance was gone.

She used to be a nurse in the Hague and experienced friends and acquaintances struggling with money. They tried to make it work on their own and didn't seek help. Therefore, she thought the distribution of help for natives and newcomers was uneven. Vluchtelingenwerk was also inside the building and she complained that status holders went there for every little question.

When she arrived in Dalfsen there was no welcoming committee with flowers on her doorstep either.

Around Trefkoele there are multiple schools and playgrounds. On Sunday the whole area was quite deserted. There were some kids cycling around, playing together or out on their roller skates. I also saw a couple of kids cycling with their fishing rods, but generally, the place was quite empty. On Tuesday however, all through the neighbourhood, you could hear children playing outside. The weather was way better, which also made a difference, but the whole town was more lively. Children were playing in the school playgrounds, as I passed by a boy politely asked me to get the ball they accidentally shot over the fence.

Within the whole neighbourhood, there are lots of tiny playgrounds, which do need seem to be used very frequently.

CHURCH: *HET KRUISPUNT*

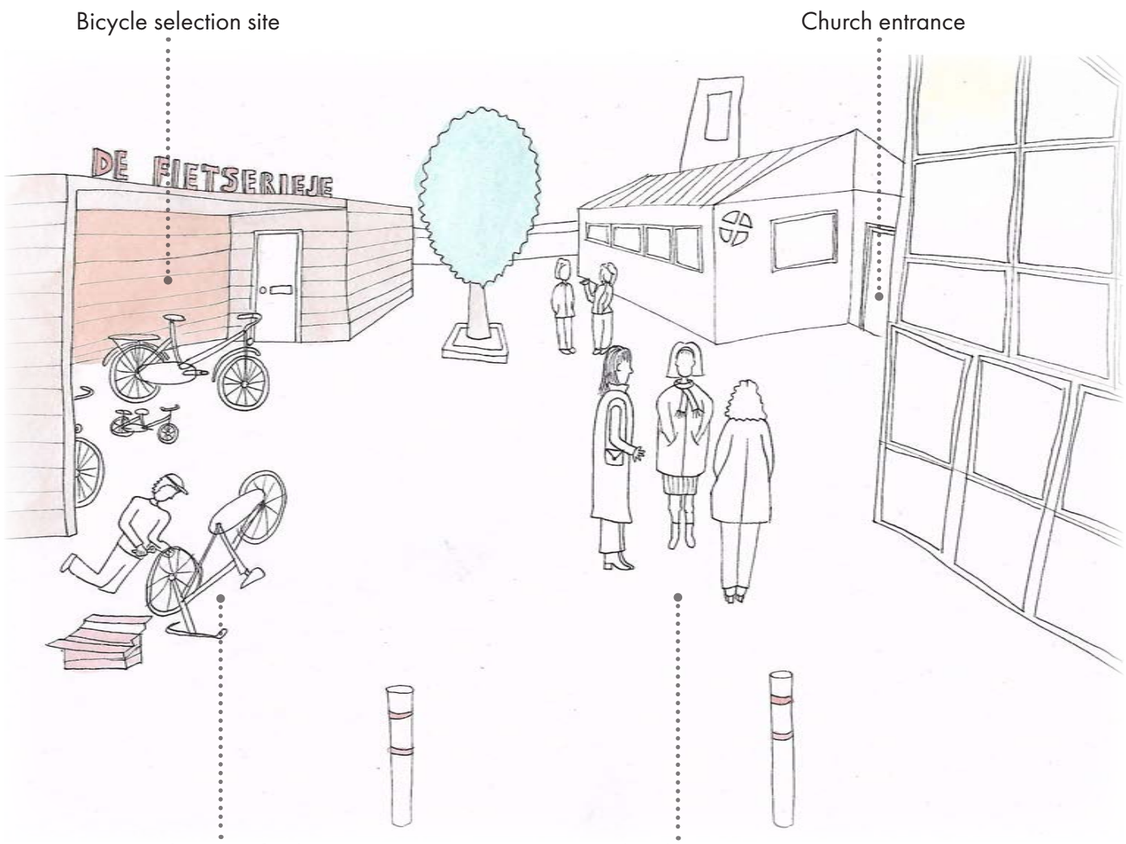


Figure 206: Church

Close to Trefkoele there is one of the town's churches: het Kruispunt. On Sunday you could peek through the blinds and see a lot of people inside. I didn't feel comfortable entering as I am not religious myself and it would feel like a disturbance.

Later, I spoke to an elderly couple around 65 years old who were out on a stroll. I asked them what they thought of Dalfsen and they answered very positively. They liked the calm, peaceful and quiet atmosphere.

I followed by asking about status holders and whether they ever came in contact with them. I quickly learned that they were active members of the church and that the church was very active in helping status holders.

The first initiative they spoke about was the Fietserieje. The Fietserieje is placed directly next to the church and immediately jumps out because of the red colour. When I initially passed the place I thought it was just a plain roofed bicycle parking, but that was not the case. The initiative was made for people who don't have a lot of money to spend, which also included status holders. The idea is that

people drop off their old bicycles in the shed and put their keys into the mailbox. The bikes are then checked by the volunteers to make sure that the lights, the lock and the tires are in good condition. Anyone in need of a bike, who cannot afford a new one can come by and find a bike that suits their size and requirements, paying only a very small fee.

When many Ukrainian refugees arrived in Dalfsen, they could be given a bike through this initiative, which improved their mobility and access to other services a lot.

Another initiative was the language classes offered by the church for status holders and immigrants. Besides the language classes, they offered tutoring for children in need, which were often also refugee children who needed extra help to catch up with other kids in school.

She told me about another initiative which was not directly related to the church, but which was set up for a good cause. A charity shop, managed by volunteers of which the profit is donated to charity in Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East: Dorcas. Dorcas is a larger organisation, but has a location in Dalfsen and is based on Christian values of solidarity. The woman also thought that there were status holders who volunteered at the shop.

Lastly, the church offers translation possibilities for the church services, making them accessible to all.

The woman also told me that the people she has worked with through the church, the status holders, are very happy to be greeted on the street and to be recognized.

Figure 207: Fietserieje

Figure 208: Dorcas (Willy, 2022)

TOWN CORE

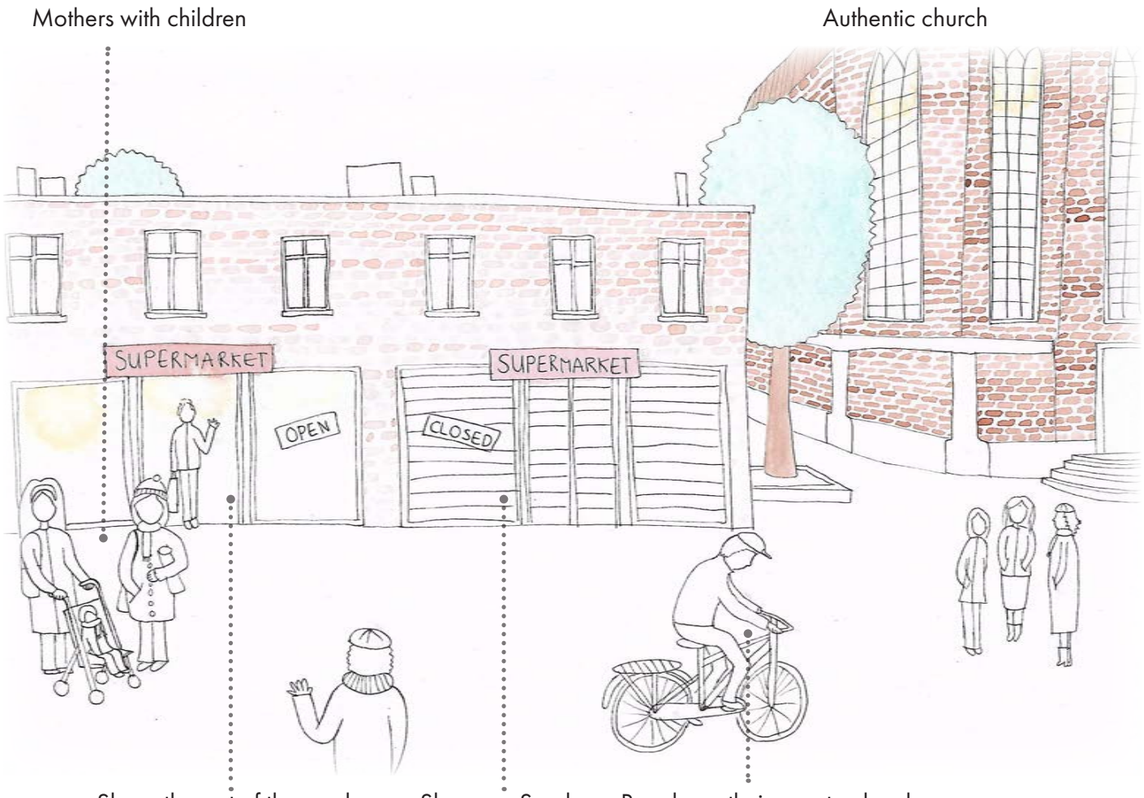


Figure 209: Town core

The town core's first impression differed from what was expected beforehand. It was 9:30 on a Sunday, which might also be an early time for a weekend day to go to the town core. At 9:45 the church bells of the church at the heart of the town core started chiming. A rush of people in Sunday attire passed by, mainly on bikes, but also by car. At 10 o'clock the streets were empty again.

All the shops were closed on Sunday, which is something I was not used to anymore coming from a bigger city. The only shop that opened was one of the grocery stores, but that was only in the afternoon.

On Tuesday, the town core was very vibrant compared to Sunday. Lots of people were out shopping and doing their groceries. You could hear the grocery carts clattering on the street from quite far away. Interesting to see here was the demographic representation on a Tuesday morning. There were mostly older people out, grandparents with grandchildren (that were probably too young to go to school) and also mothers with children (also too young to go to school). I didn't encounter many other kinds of people in the town core.

A little bit further from the town core, on Sunday, I spoke to a couple who were walking their dog. They confirmed what the elderly couple told me that

Dalfsen is a very peaceful and quiet place to live in. It had all the basic amenities and for other shops, they went to the neighbouring city of Zwolle. The man also worked in Zwolle and when the weather was alright he took his racing bike to commute.

He did have some comments on a trend he has seen in the past few years. He noted that there was an influx of city people into Dalfsen, who were looking for a more peaceful place to live in. In a sense that was not necessarily the problem, but they were often the more upper-class residents and this resulted in Dalfsen becoming more and more elitist and less accessible for the younger generation who have always lived in Dalfsen. This new dynamic and the idea of Dalfsen being more for the elites scared him a little bit.

I also asked them about how the youth enjoyed living in Dalfsen and he immediately answered with ***'keet'***. A keet is often a container, as seen in construction where constructors eat their lunch, placed on a lot of a farm or a lot further outside of town. This keet is then furnished to cater as a hang-out spot for youth, who go there in their free time and in the evenings. Young adults often go to Zwolle for a night out.

They didn't know much about status holders and didn't really encounter them in their daily lives.

TOWN EDGE

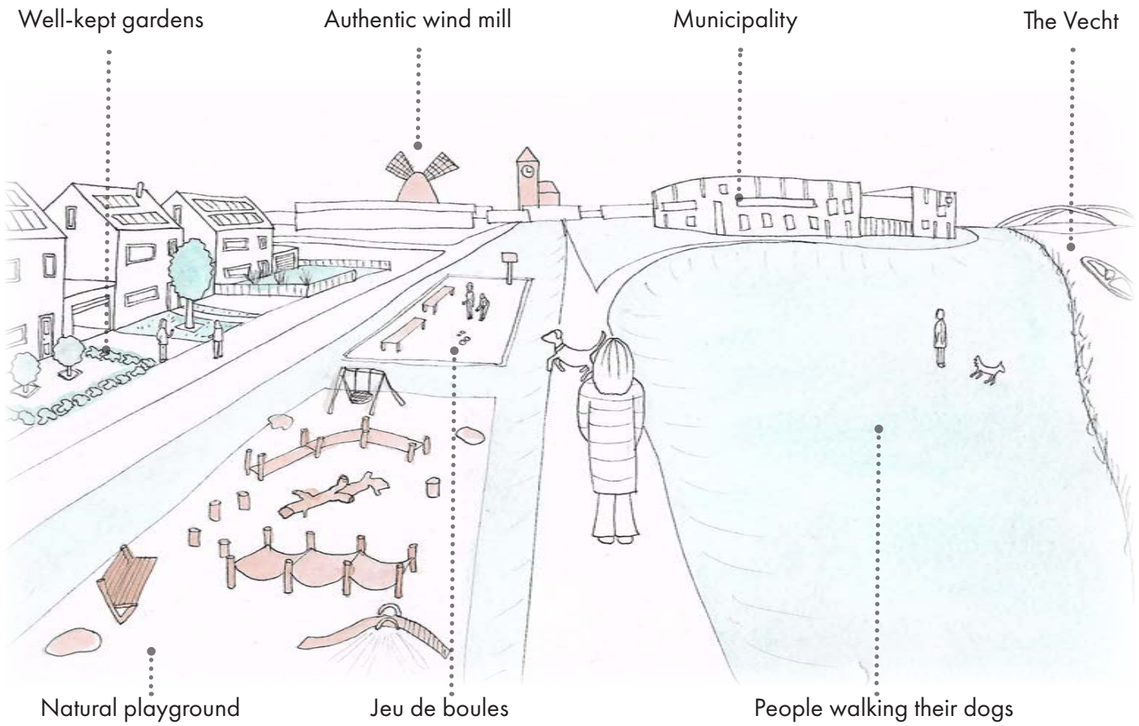


Figure 210: Town edge

One step away from the town core, you reach the town edge by first passing by the municipality building. You pass by an old windmill before reaching the relatively new and large municipality building, which forms a statement in the street image. Along the building, there is a path on a dyke that runs parallel to the Vecht. On the other side of the dyke, there is a natural playground and a jeu de boules court. Adjacent is the first street of the neighbourhood Baalder.

In the morning I saw a couple of people walking their dogs in the natural area. I also saw a young family coming to the natural playground.

I was walking on the dyke when I ran into a woman walking her dog. She was born and raised in Dalfsen and lived in a rental house a street down. She was very satisfied with her living environment and proudly told me that the housing corporation installed solar panels on her roof.

She was especially proud of the historical and cultural value of Dalfsen. She referred to the windmill that you could see from the dyke. She was also satisfied with the amenities present in Dalfsen. She didn't need to go to Zwolle very often, but she did work in Zwolle.

She didn't encounter status holders very often. She was aware that the church often does charity work for good causes, but she wasn't religious herself so she didn't know the details.

On Tuesday, it felt like it was the first day of spring, and the weather was really nice. It was still quite cold, but the sun was out and you could actually see flowers come out from the sidewalks. As a consequence, a lot of people were working in their gardens and preparing the garden for spring. I saw a pregnant woman working her garden, while her dog was taking a nap in the sun. A neighbour passed by with her dog and they started chatting. On the next street, I found another lady working in her garden.

She got very excited when I told her about urbanism as her daughter had studied landscape architecture. Her daughter was also the reason why she now loved gardening. She told me that this was the first day the weather was indeed good enough to prepare her garden for spring. Gardening was a calming activity for her, it made her relax. She preferred normal plants over vegetable plants.

She thought participation in the neighbourhood was important. She also participated in neighbourhood events whenever she could. For example, around Kingsday (a celebration of the Dutch king's birthday), the street is completely decorated with orange flags and decorations. She always liked contributing to these neighbourhood interactions.

I think partially because of that she knew quite a lot about her neighbours. I asked her about allotment gardens in proximity and she told me that a lady who lives a few houses around the corner, has one just outside Dalfsen and that she too loved the calming nature of gardening. As a response to my question whether gardening was also important for them, she noted that it was nice that everyone kept their garden neatly, but for example, her direct neighbour was too old to be working in her garden and that was fine too.

She also told me about other gardening-related initiatives around Dalfsen, which will be discussed on the following page.

OTHER PLACES

Figure 211: Lindehoeve Dalfsen (Bijzonder Leuke Plekken, n.d.)

In the conversations with the residents of Dalfsen, several other initiatives in and around town popped up that are relevant to this research, especially those related to gardening.

The first initiative is something that is quite similar to the Wijkboerderij in Hardenberg: de Lindehoeve. This farm is located on the edge of town and consists of a petting zoo, vegetable garden, herb garden, orchard and a wild garden. The organisational structure is similar to the Wijkboerderij as the team consists of clients, with mental disabilities and supervisors. However, collaboration with other organisations is less present on this site.

I visited the place with the expectation that there was a space where you could get a cup of coffee, but this was not the case. However, the clients were really excited about a visitor so they brought me a cup of tea and gave me a tour of what they were currently doing. During winter, they resort to arts and crafts inside the farm, which are then sold to local shops. In spring and summer, the activities are mostly outside.

The place felt very welcoming, however, there are fewer activities for visitors and the main function of the place is gardening.

The second initiative is a neighbourhood garden which opened just a couple of days before I arrived, so there was not much to see yet. The idea of the neighbourhood garden is that it is kept and managed by residents and all the produce is also going to the residents.

The last initiative is an allotment garden site just outside Dalfsen, a collection of 70 plots, available to residents to be maintained. The decision of what to grow on your plot is completely up to the gardener.

Figure 212: Neighbourhood garden (DalfsenNet, 2023)

Figure 213: Allotment gardens (Willy, 2017)

APPENDIX IV

ELEMENTS

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Appendix IV gives a detailed explanation of the elements used in the roadmap: places, identifications and governance framework.

PLACES

In this section, various places visited during the site visits are analysed, based on the evaluation diagram developed. Literature is used to explain the importance of these places in helping newcomers integrate.

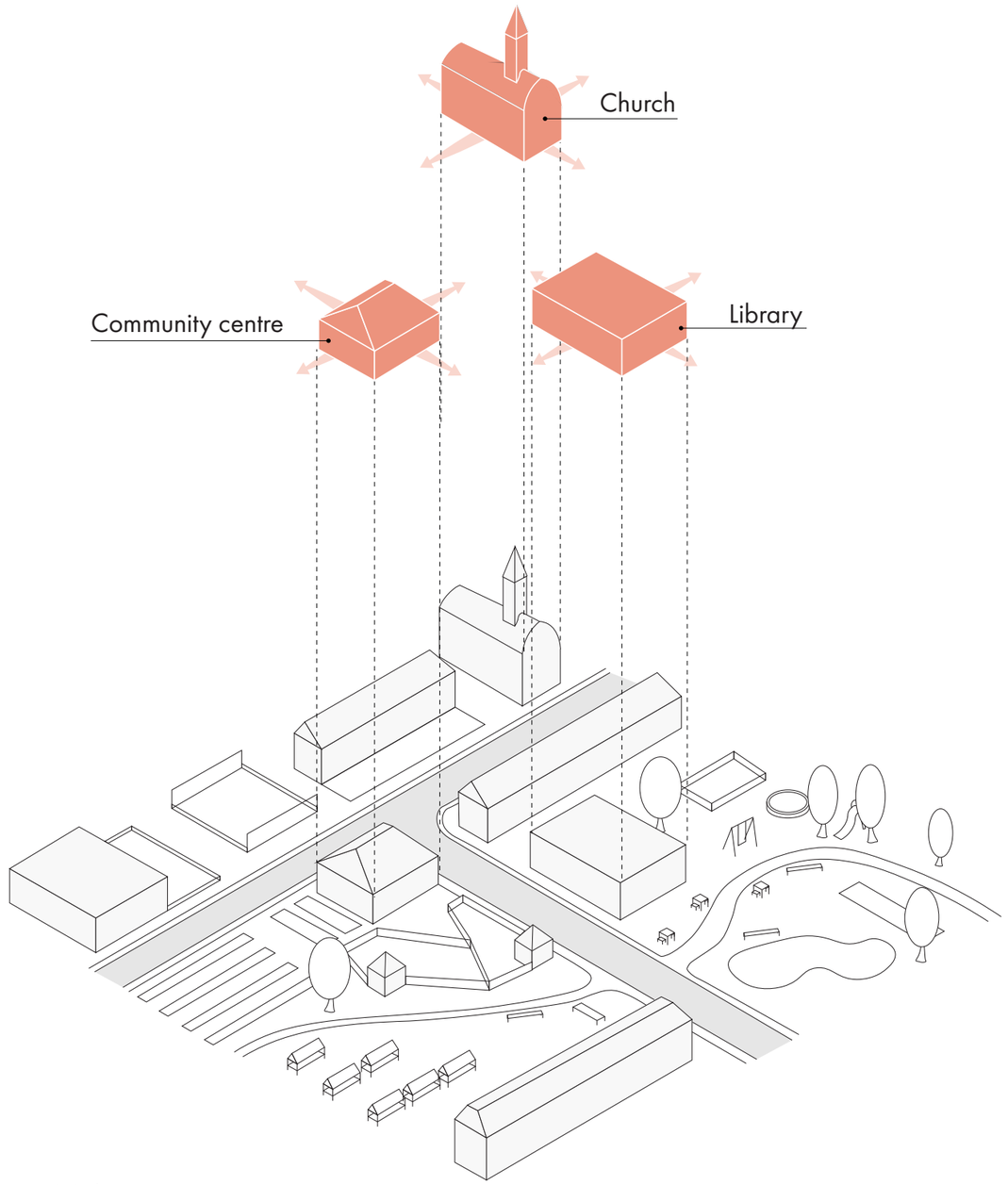


Figure 214: Places

In the main text differentiation between relational and functional meeting places was introduced. In this sense, community centres are often defined as *relational* places, with specific events or hours dedicated to the *functional* aspect. A lot of community centres offer walk-in hours for questions related to for example subsidies, ideas for initiatives or language classes. These are often organised through collaborations with the municipality, NGOs and care facilities.

Nonetheless, professionals are not only active in providing services, they also play an important role in facilitating diversity and interaction in community centres. This relates to the *social integration* used in the conceptual framework: *bridging social capital* between different groups. This often results in a challenge for professionals in finding the right balance between control and spontaneity. In Welschen et al. (2020) they highlight this struggle, but also offer four opportunities and approaches in bridging social capital within a comunnity centre.

1. Smartly use time and space
The first aim of professionals is to make residents feel at ease, at home in the community centre, which is often done through activities with (culturally) similar people. However, by planning different activities for different groups at the same time and offering a coffee table afterwards could be a smart way to create familiarity between the two groups, without forcing interaction.

2. Recognize potential interaction moments
Community centres can use international- or local events as catalysts of interaction between different groups. For example, International Womens' Day can be a moment where women from different cultural backgrounds could make a schedule for the day together, organising activities for different groups, bringing different cultures together.

These type of events are not only useful for social interaction, but also in expressing the different *cultural identities* and learning about other cultural activities.

3. Shared activities
In line with the previous point, cultural specific events like Ramadam and Christmas can also be used as moments of interaction. Here, the expression of cultural identity is even more prevalent and it allows different groups to interchange customs, food and stories. In these events often key figures play an important role. If the key figures of the mosque and church decide to organise an event together, others are often more inclined to follow.

4. Cooperation with key figures
This cooperation with key figures can extend further into the daily activities of a community centre. The different cultures start to recognize each other, as the key figures give an example. There is no need for intens interaction between the groups, but acknowledging each other and respecting each other can lead to a certain level of *reciprocity*.

The professionals interviewed in the research by Welschen et al., (2020) all noted that these type of approaches can be used, but forcing interaction between groups is often a key to a bigger gap between culturally dissimilar groups. This is also confirmed by the research of Van Bochove (2014) who also highlight the importance of bringing in different socio-economic groups, as now community centres are often used mainly by more vulnerable groups in society.

An example used in the literature is that of a playground. A group of Turkish women is often present together with their children, chatting and hanging out. Career women, as they call them, often only come by for an hour to let the children play and leave. This also happens in community centre, as higher income groups are often dual earners and have other priorities over visiting the community centre.

Additionally, they note that there are more problems in community centres like the appropriation by one specific group and cliques, that can claim the space as their own, making it less attractive for others.

All together, planning a community centre is not an easy job and is often not even planable It is very dependent on spontaneity and the context of the neighbourhood it is positioned in. However, there are spatial and organisational preconditions and opportunities that can help to reach these goals and formulate the right basis for a successful community centre. In the following pages, the focus will be on two community centres: the Wijkboerderij in Hardenberg and TrekfkoelePlus in Dalfsen.

Figure 215: Wijkboerderij, Hardenberg

Figure 216: Wijkboerderij, Hardenberg (Wijkvereniging Baalder Hardenberg, 2016)

Figure 217: Trefkoele+, Dalfsen (Trefkoele Plus, 2022)

Figure 218: Trefkoele+, Dalfsen (Spring Architecten, n.d.)

WIJKBOERDERIJ, HARDENBERG

In the Wijkboerderij I felt comfortable, welcome and not an outsider. Interestingly, the evaluation diagram confirms this feeling as it scores high in most of the aspects. The Wijkboerderij acts in different quadrants of the social base diagram. On one hand, it is a particular and functional place as it offers employment to the clients of the Baalderborg Groep. People with mental disabilities are able to participate actively in society. On the other hand, the place is universal and relational as all people in the neighbourhood can visit for a cup of coffee (figure 219).

Part of the success of this place is a result of the cooperation between different parties, the organisational side of the evaluation chart. Different organisations combine their expertise, funds and other resources to create something useful for all parties involved, including residents of the neighbourhood. However, the overview of the collaboration between the organisations is still relatively simple (figure 220).

The municipality is mainly a passive owner of the building and the playground but outsources the maintenance and management to the other parties. Consequently, the Baalderborg Groep and the neighbourhood organisation are mainly in charge of arranging activities and taking care of the site. Other main actors are the residents, the practical school and the Naoberschap Baalder. Together, they have coproduced a place that works in their neighbourhood, by experimenting with different activities.

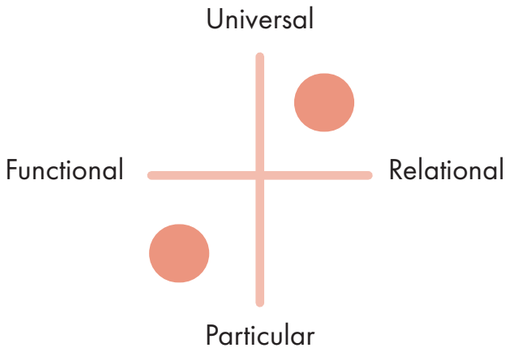


Figure 219: Perspectives on the social base for the Wijkboerderij

Spatially, the location of the place is ideal and the atmosphere is very attractive as it forms a historical anchor in the neighbourhood. The interior could use some more self-made decorations or homely furniture but is in general very informal which offers a homely feeling. The accessibility is rather good, although as an outsider you might not know that you can go in for a cup of coffee.

Lastly, in my opinion, the social side is what makes this place the most successful. The staff plays an important role in this as this relatively fixed group is always present on-site, with familiar faces. What makes it even better is the neutral position of this staff and their non-judging character: people with a mental disability are often not judgemental towards 'different' people. This means that there might be one dominant group present, but they are not exclusive towards visitors from another background.

But besides the team on site, this place also reflects the reciprocity of the residents of the neighbourhood and the organisations involved. There is a donation closet on site, but also the vegetables from Naoberschap Baalder which are donated to residents. This organisation also offers social services through volunteers from the neighbourhood. If someone needs help with moving, gardening or with paperwork they can contact the organisation and they will find a suitable volunteer to help.

Together with the unique historical value of the building, this offers a strong identity of the place, which reflects the strength of the neighbourhood Baalder.

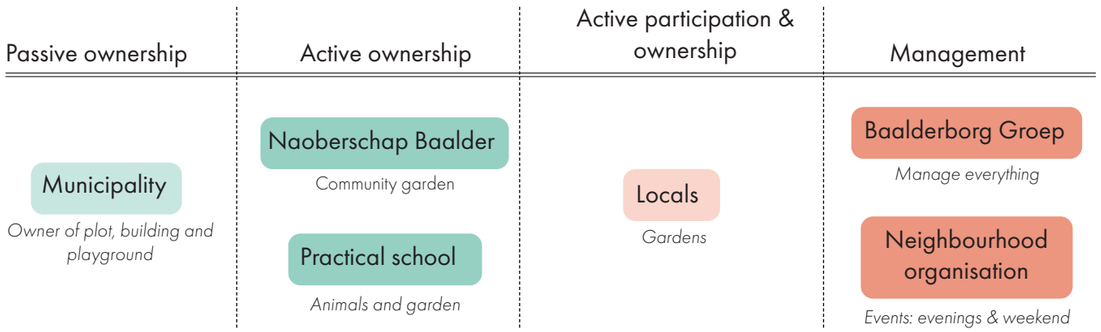


Figure 220: Collaboration scheme Wijkboerderij

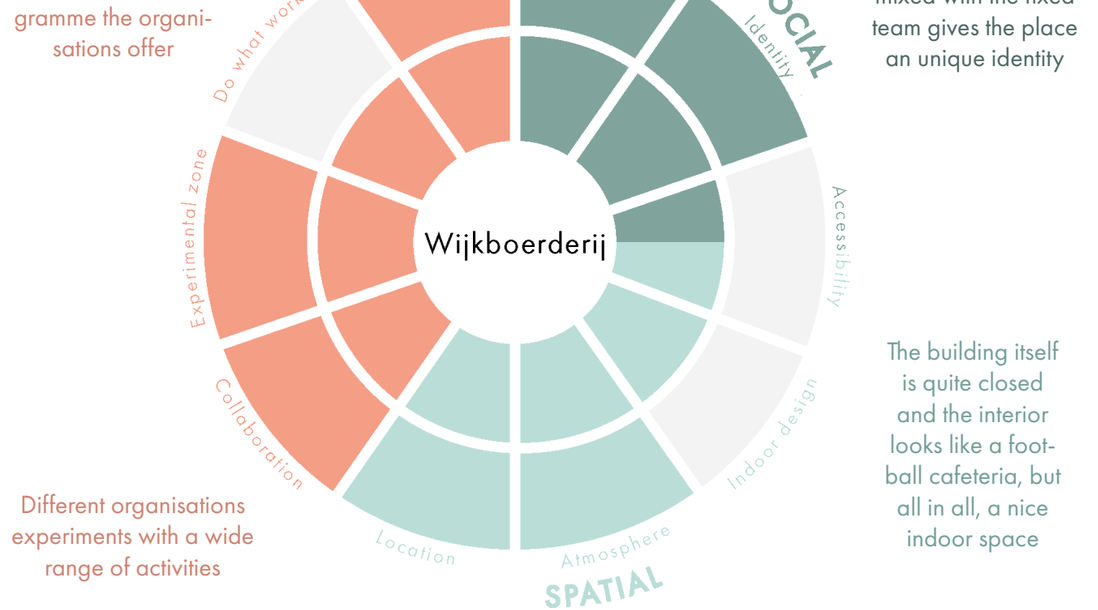


Figure 221: Evaluation of the Wijkboerderij

TREFKOELEPLUS, DALFSEN

Arriving at Trefkoele+, I felt very overwhelmed and lost as I entered the building as it was complex and big. Trefkoele+ was opened in 2014 and in the past years, the first evaluations from the organisations themselves arrived. The main points of improvement are related to the uninviting entrance, lack of meeting spaces on ground level, the troubles with navigating through the building and the lack of cooperation between the different organisations (de Dalfser Marskramer, 2021). This conclusion is in line with what I felt and what I expected.

In general, I think Trefkoele is a great place for leisure activities and as a home base for organisations, but it is not as effective as a casual meeting place. This is partly because I think the place is mainly particular. The different functions in the building are all targeted at a specific group. If you consider the building as a whole, it might be universal, but I think in practice this is not realistic. There is a café, but this looks way more formal than a homely community centre.

The social and organisational dimensions both score relatively low. The main problem here is the use of a master plan. The use of a master plan limits the spontaneity, but also the coproduction opportunities. Additionally, there is a collaboration between organisations (figure 223) but because there are so many different organisations involved, they don't really mix or help each other. This has negative

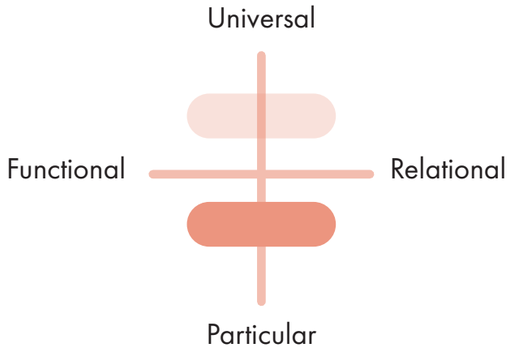


Figure 222: Perspectives on the social base for TrefkoelePlus

consequences for the identity of the place, as the character (and the development of it) is not really there. The devotion of key figures, that are accessible to visitors, is also limited.

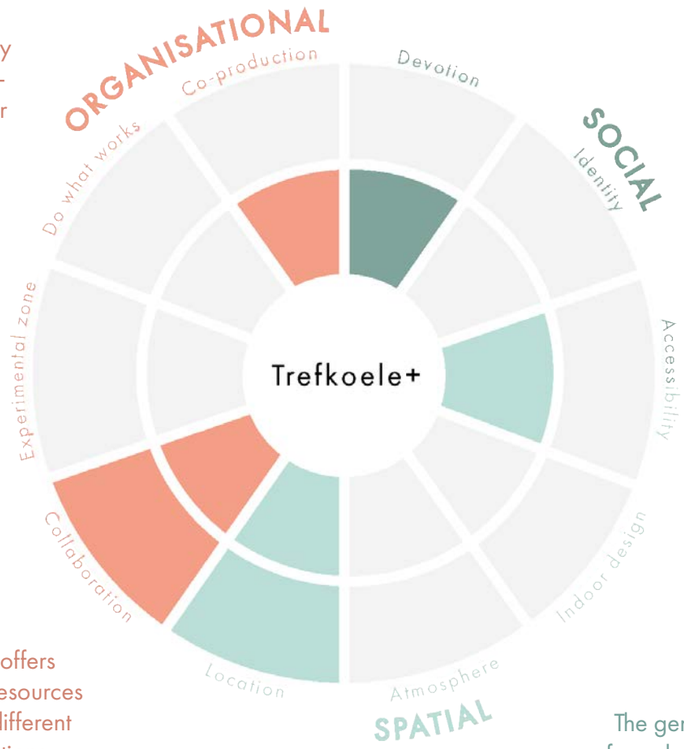
All in all, resulting in a successful leisure facility, but a less successful meeting place, where different groups cannot mingle and bond social capital. Especially, for people who struggle with going somewhere new, like status holders, the barriers in this place are quite difficult to overcome, limiting the social integration of newcomers within this facility.

- ASC Gym & Dance
- Athom Art of Life
- Balans Fysiotherapie
- BC Trefzeker
- De Bibliotheek
- Biljartvereniging de Trefkoele
- Bridge Sociëteit Dalfsen
- Cultureel Café Dalfsen
- De Kern
- Doomijn
- EHBO vereniging Hoonhorst-Dalfsen
- Gastouderbureau Dalfsen
- GGD Ijsselland
- Saam Welzijn
- Historische Kring Dalfsen
- Hockeyclub Zwolle
- Humanitas
- Infopunt
- Interakt Contour
- Judokwai Dalfsen
- Karatevereniging Wado Ryu
- Kinderyoga
- Klarinetlessen A. Eek
- Landstede
- Logopedie Pluspunt
- MHC Dalfsen
- Mindfit
- Mixfit
- Muziekschool Pianoforte
- Sylvia Kogelman
- Speelotheek Dalfsen
- Sporten zonder Ballast
- Sportjemee
- Studio SES
- SV Dalfsen Handbal
- SV Dalfsen voetbal
- Vechtstroom Gemeente
- VluchtelingenWerk Nederland
- Volleybalvereniging Dalvo
- Volleybalvereniging Hands Up
- Vrijwilligerspunt Dalfsen
- Vrouwen van nu
- Zero free running

Figure 223: Organisations involved in TrefkoelePlus (Trefkoele+, 2022)

Due to the use of a masterplan and the complexity of the project, there is very little room for change, coproduction or experimentation

The complexity of the problem also results in the lack of key figures and devotion towards the place as a whole



The generic design, lack of key figures and the complexity of the building diminishes the identity of the place

The social accessibility is relatively low as the barriers to entering the building are quite high

Trefkoele offers space and resources to a lot of different organisations

The generic design and formal character diminished the inviting atmosphere

Figure 224: Evaluation of TrefkoelePlus

"Libraries, in their extended definition, as flexible centres or hubs for lifelong learning, culture and recreation, appear as a central component in many learning city plans,..." (Volkmann, 2018)

This quote highlights the position of a library in the urban context. It connects to all three dimensions in the conceptual framework: lifelong learning contributes to economic integration, but also cultural identity and social integration are important elements in libraries.

As Audunson et al. (2011) argue that libraries are places to facilitate the bonding of social capital with culturally alike people, but also to bridge social capital across cultural boundaries.

The importance of libraries was also brought up in the interviews with Syrian status holders in this research and how it played a role as a 'second home'. All-in-all, marking the importance of libraries in facilitating the sense of belonging for Syrian status holders.

The question that arises is what factors and services are then essential in libraries to provide this sense of belonging. In what ways does the library contribute to economic integration, cultural identity and social integration?

Based on interviews with refugees, Audunson et al. (2011) found five ways in which libraries help newcomers to feel at home:

1. Libraries as an attractive place
However, most newcomers were unaware of the opportunities and services the library provides. These services can be language classes or any other guidance services, which are often provided through municipalities.

2. Libraries as a place of consolation
Libraries offer a certain comfort that newcomers seek upon their arrival in a new and strange place.

"...the library was my best buddy, particularly in the first difficult period when I was completely new in Norway." (Audunson et al., 2011)

This also related to the various concepts explained by Soenen (2020) where the library functions as the *living room* of a town. Soenen highlights the importance of the *home feeling* in libraries and the concept of *being apart-together*, where people do their own thing, while in the presence of strangers. These concepts all contribute to this feeling of consolation.

But additionally, librarians play an important role in this. As newcomers often trust these key figures and approach them with highly personal questions (Audunson et al., 2011). This was also confirmed in the interviews in this research, where the Dutch librarian was the first friend the Syrian woman made. Soenen (2020) also confirms this importance where librarians play a role as hosts and where the smallest efforts from their side can play a huge role for visitors, and in this case, newcomers.

3. Libraries as places to learn about the new country
Libraries play an important role in especially language learning. Earlier, it became apparant that the library provided language learning services to newcomers: Taalpunt. But besides that, newcomers also take action in borrowing children's books and trying to get to more difficult books over time.

Language learning is an essential element in social integration, but also in economic integration as language barriers are often seen as the most significant struggles for status holders in finding a job.

Besides language learning, newcomers borrow books that talk about the customs of the host country. This is related to the cultural boundaries refugees encounter when coming to a new country. In a way, newcomers develop a new cultural identity which is built of parts from their culture of origin and from the new culture. An example is a mother whose child is invited to a party. She reads a book on children's birthdays to see what kind of present she should buy and how to organise a party herself in the future. Besides learning through reading, newcomers also highlight observation as a learning source. The idea of being apart-together takes on an additional benefit. Observing how the host community acts in public spaces can teach newcomers a lot about unwritten rules in a new country.

4. Libraries as meeting places
Librarians in the research by Audunson et al. (2011) shared that especially for immigrant women the library plays an important role. Especially, for those whose freedom of movement is quite limited due to rules connected to religion. For example in Muslim culture, a library is regarded as a safe and acceptable place to visit for Muslim women and it is thus on of the few places where these women can connect with peers, but also experience the host culture.

The bridging between the host community and the newcomers often happens with elderly native men, who often spend quite a lot of time in the library. In the literature, an example is given of a man who had seen a lady quite often in the newspaper section. He asked her where she came from and they started a conversation. Now, they greet each other and have a bit of small talk when they run into each other.

This is related to the idea of Blokland and Nast (2014) of *public familiarity*: recognizing others and being recognized in public spaces. This plays an important role in the social integration of status holders in a new town.

5. Libraries as a place to bridge the culture of origin
Lastly, libraries contribute to cultural identification as they form a connection to the culture and country of origin. Some libraries offer news articles from the home country, which is very important to refugees as they often flee from a country at war. This enables them to stay up to date with the developments happening in their home country. Some libraries also offer movies and books from their home countries which softens the homesickness and also offers the opportunity to parents to teach their children about their cultural heritage.
In short, libraries thus play a role in all dimensions that influence the sense of belonging of Syrian status holders. However, this is very dependent on the services a library provides, the solidarity of librarians and other library visitors and the way in which a library is organised and used. These differences will be highlighted in the upcoming section, where the libraries of Hardenberg and Dalfsen as meeting places are discussed. These places will be evaluated in the same way as the community centres, but also according to the findings above. By combining these factors, it became visible that libraries can become more than just a library when organised in the right way.

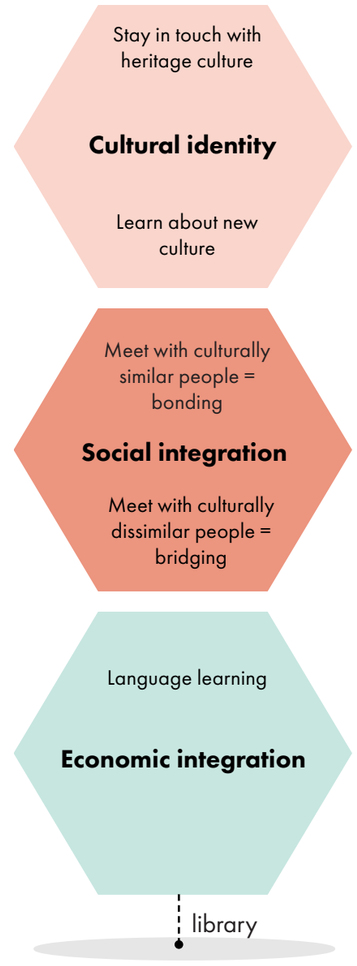


Figure 225: Libraries as nodes for a sense of belonging

LIBRARY HARDENBERG

The library in Hardenberg is both functional, providing services and relational, offering places for interaction. The library offers services like the Taalpunt and Digipunt, but also workshops and events, for example, farming workshops or cultural events. The library is universal as everyone is allowed to enter, even people without a membership can go in and sit around and read books (you just can't take them home).

Consequently, I felt very welcome when entering the library. I visited multiple times and each time, the library was crowded and many librarians walked around. There were lots of seating opportunities and also different kinds of people around: students, elderly people, children and people visiting Taalpunt and Digipunt.

The services provided a stepping stone towards economic integration and the organised events also help with the understanding of the cultural identity of the town. When I was at the library I saw a Middle-Eastern man and a Dutch woman sitting around a table together at the Taalpunt to study together.

Especially the idea of *being apart-together* and *public familiarity* was something noticeable in this place. Someone can choose a cosy spot, pick up a newspaper or book and sit around and observe people, say hello to people passing, without being out of place. The bustling identity of the library allows people to just be there.

The library also offers opportunities to meet other people through reading clubs, but also besides arranged meetings, there is a library cafeteria open to all.

In terms of connecting to the host culture, the supply of Arabic books seems to be quite limited. Most of these books are Western children's books translated into Arabic.

All-in-all, I think the library Hardenberg is a welcoming space for Syrian status holders that will facilitate their sense of belonging in multiple ways. It is a safe space to learn about the local culture and to possibly connect to local residents while also learning the language.

Figure 226: Public familiarity and being apart-together

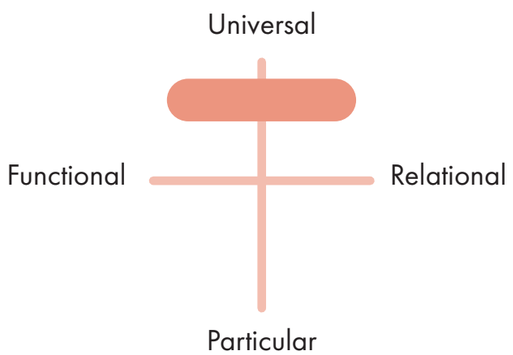
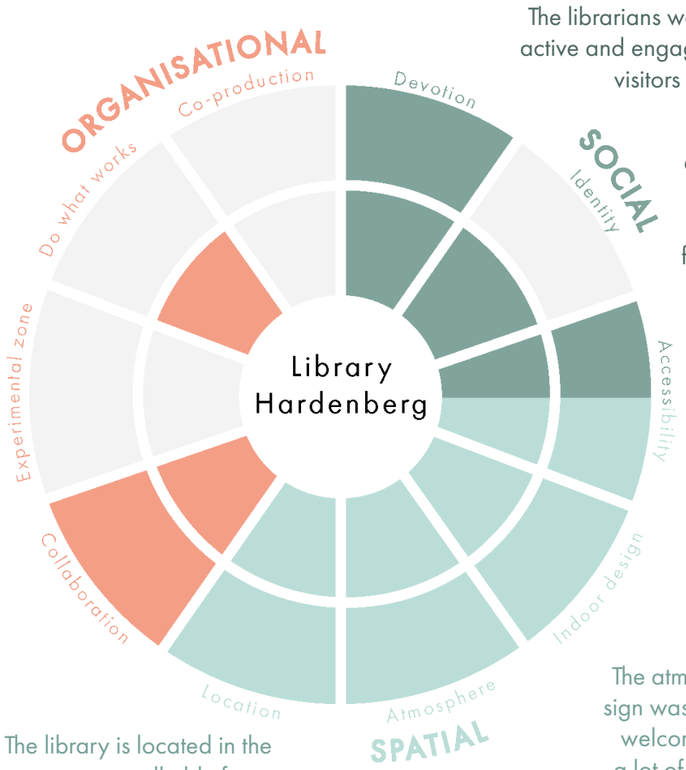


Figure 227: Perspectives on the social base for the library Hardenberg

A library remains a library, which means that experimentation and co-production is quite difficult. However, the library collaborates with different organisation and tries to organise different events for different groups



The librarians were very active and engaging with visitors

The library has as an unique identity, but this remains limited due to the functionalities attached to a library

Both socially and spatially accessible to all

The atmosphere and design was very homely and welcoming, there were a lot of different kinds of seats: small tables, study corners and couches

The library is located in the town core, walkable from the different neighbourhoods

Figure 228: Evaluation Library Hardenberg

Figure 229: Library Hardenberg (Bibliotheek Hardenberg, 2022)

LIBRARY DALFSEN

In Dalfsen, my experience of the library was very different. At first, I was already overwhelmed by the size of the building, but as you enter the building you also immediately enter the library.

However, in this library, I did not see any librarians in the short time I was present. I also didn't want to stay for much longer, because I felt uncomfortable as I was the only visitor present. The bustling identity seen in the previous library was not present at all in Dalfsen. Here, there were also not a lot of seating options and most of the space was simply dedicated to books. There was also very little sunlight and low ceilings which made the space crammed. The place did not feel like a place where you stay to read a book or to study.

This library also has a Digipunt and Taalpunt, but here it was less present or visible than in Hardenberg.

The library was simply just a library and thus there was also not a lot of room for collaboration, coproduction and experimentation: the main function was borrowing books and therefore the place is mostly functional.

However, in Dalfsen, I felt like the church has a more active position in providing opportunities as they offer comparable services like language classes. Thus, in the following chapter, the foucs will be on the role of faith-based organisations and their physical representatives: churches.

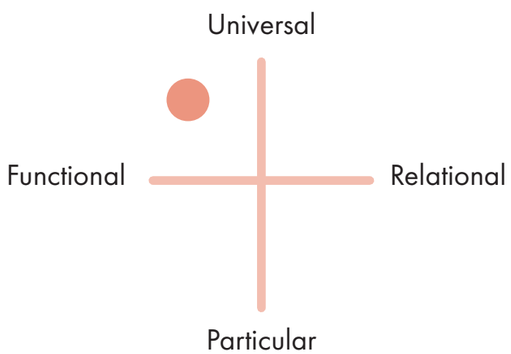


Figure 230: Perspectives on the social base for the library Dalfsen

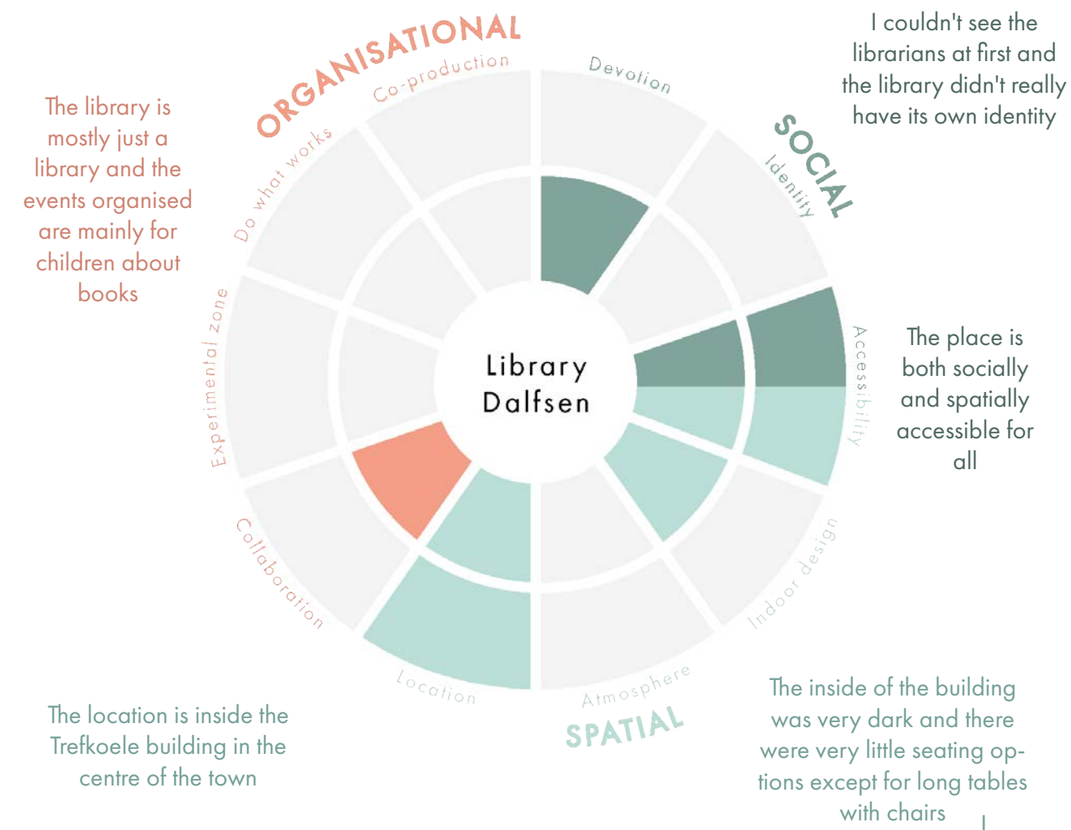


Figure 231: Evaluation library Dalfsen

Figure 232: Library Dalfsen (Brillux, n.d.)

In the sites visited, the church, and faith-based organisations (FBOs), played an important role in providing services to newcomers, especially in facilitating social- and economic integration. In terms of religion, mosques are also essential elements in maintaining one's cultural identity, as a high percentage of Syrian status holders are Muslim. Nonetheless, these are not very present in these areas and thus their capacity is quite low. So for mosques, the main aim is that the formation of mosques should be motivated and facilitated. However, the aim of this chapter is to look at how the powerful churches in this region provide services to newcomers, regardless of their religious background.

In the literature by Davelaar et al. (2011), the role of FBOs in providing social welfare services is explored. Their hypothesis is that the retreating welfare state in the Netherlands has left gaps that are currently being filled by FBOs, as the literature states, *'helping there where is no helper'*.

FBOs take on a multifaceted role in helping people living at the fringe of society. On one hand, they provide services like food, clothes and shelter to people in need, often people who are excluded from the welfare system like homeless people or undocumented people. And on the other hand, they provide services in terms of language classes, information, tutoring or help with navigating through the bureaucratic landscape (Davelaar et al., 2011).

Nonetheless, the aim is not only to provide services for these marginalized groups but also to empower them, as the literature states: *"We develop people."*

A minister of a migrant church also highlights that the empowerment of individuals at a distance from society can actually benefit society as a whole. This also shows the expected reciprocity within these FBOs. People that are offered help by the church are also expected to provide help to others once they are able. People are empowered to develop from visitors, someone in need of help, to a volunteer, someone who provides help. This process was clearly shown by one of the Syrian women in the interviews of this research. She felt welcome and appreciated in the church and liked going there for help, in return, now that she has learned the Dutch language, she helps others by offering translation services.

In my opinion, this also shows how in the current individualistic society, voluntary work is seen as *'profiting off the taxpaying citizens'*, while in religious spheres, individuals are appreciated and praised for their solidarity towards others.

Therefore, churches play an important role in providing newcomers with services at the beginning of their arrival, as do they provide a safe space where one is not judged for being in need of help. To highlight the multifaceted identity of FBOs, the literature sets out seven functions churches are able to fulfil (figure 233).

The focus of this research is mainly on functions 3-7 as these are more informal practices, that seemed to be more present in the locations visited. I think this is mainly due to the size of marginalized communities in these towns, as these are relatively small in comparison to large cities. Therefore, these churches work less with large-scale, governmentally-funded initiatives. Additionally, these towns often don't have a lot of inhabitants who are outside the welfare system: status holders are officially residents and are provided with social welfare benefits. In the following sections, there will be investigated how these small-scale, informal initiatives mainly based on the solidarity of the local community, can have a significant effect on the sense of belonging of Syrian status holders and how they contribute to both the social- and economic integration.

1. The provision of professional social services, for which state funding is provided
2. The provision of social services to groups who have been excluded from the welfare system
3. Informal care and mutual support, reciprocity, often provided 'in silence'
4. Stimulation of volunteering within specific target groups
5. Community building & empowerment
6. Political advocacy for the rights of the people without a voice
7. Bridging demand and supply between individuals and professional organisations

Figure 233: The seven functions of churches

CHURCH HARDENBERG

In Hardenberg, the church itself wasn't very present in urban life (or in the neighbourhood where I focussed on). However, when exploring the neighbourhood, various social initiatives that came up are driven by the church.

The first one is related to number three of the functions named in the previous chapter: informal care and mutual support. It has been mentioned a couple of times already, but the Naoberschap Baalder organisation is about providing services to people in need through volunteers. The organisation started in 2013 and is an initiative from two neighbourhood diaconates: G.K.V. and P.K.N. Baalder: a Protestant and a Reformed diaconate (Naoberschap Baalder, 2019).

This organisation contributes to decreasing the burden of asking for help. Normally, you might ask your neighbours for help if you can't pick up your kids from school. However, newcomers or people who do not have a direct relationship with their neighbours might struggle to do so. In this case, it is easy to contact the organisation and ask for help. For status holders, navigating through all the (Dutch) paperwork can be extremely difficult. This also came forward in the interviews, where the Syrian woman was not helped by her neighbours. It is important to make newcomers aware of the organisation, but also show the possibilities of how status holders might be able to help others too. It instigates the act of reciprocity between new neighbours and local residents.

The second initiative is the buddy project in Hardenberg, which relates to functions five and seven. The Buddy Project offers a buddy for asylum seekers and status holders in Hardenberg. A buddy is a native Dutch resident who will help newcomers in finding their way in the Netherlands. The project is again an initiative from the collaboration of the local churches. Together these churches form the diaconal platform, with which they also organise events at the local reception centre.

The buddy project can help status holders in multiple ways. On one hand, the native Dutch empower the status holders by helping them learn the language and the customs of the Netherlands and creating their first social ties in the Netherlands. This first step of development is important to eventually find their way to employment and independence, but also in integration socially in the town (function 5). On the other hand, the native Dutch can help the status holders in navigating through the paperwork and finding the right professional organisations needed with more complex problems (function 7).

An additional factor that plays an important role in the buddy project is match-making. If you look at figure 234, you can see how the organisation tries to link people of the same age or gender together. In this way, young newcomers are also appropriately introduced to the town from the perspective of young people. In the same way, a local family with young children is matched with a foreign family. In this way, the parents get specific help surrounding the education of their children and in the meantime, children are able to play together. In this way, the social integration aspect is highlighted further, to bring the interests of the groups closer together. In this way, even friendships become possible between the different groups.

This shows how the buddy project contributes to the sense of belonging by providing the first, often most difficult steps, in the social and economic integration of status holders in small towns.

Figure 234: Matchmaking within the Buddy Project (Buddy Project Hardenberg, 2023)

CHURCH DALFSEN

In Dalfsen the church does play a physical role in the urban context (figure 236). Within the church, there is also an informal meeting space and therefore the evaluation scheme can be used. This evaluation scheme shows that the church scores relatively high. However, the most important challenge with the church is that it might not be or feel welcoming towards people with another religion or no religion. For this, I speak from personal experience as I did not dare to enter as the building was relatively closed (and I am an atheist). However, in hindsight, I found out about this meeting place through social media.

In terms of services, the church is mainly active in functionality 5: community building and empowerment. The church provides language classes and tutoring for newcomers. This is especially helpful for economic integration.

The Fietserieje (discussed in Appendix III) also contributes to economic integration as it improves the mobility of status holders. In this way, they become more independent and their working and living range becomes bigger. A job at a distance of 10 kilometres is simply not walkable every day, but by bike, with a little practice, this is very doable.

In the town core, there is a charity shop which is part of an international religious organisation: Dorcas. The organisation is built on Christian principles and donates the revenues to countries in Africa and the Middle East in need of help. The place is also welcoming towards status holders who want to make themselves useful as volunteers within the shop, an act of reciprocity. This is then also linked to function 4: stimulation of volunteering within specific target groups.

Additionally, the initiatives contribute to social integration as status holders meet locals through the church. For example, one of the local interviewees mentioned that the status holders were very happy when greeted on the street by familiar faces of the church.

Figure 235: Het Kruispunt (GKV Dalfsen, n.d.)

The place is unique in its form, but also due to the solidarity the church shows to others and each other

The church adapts to the needs of the town by experimenting with new iniatives that might work for the current situation

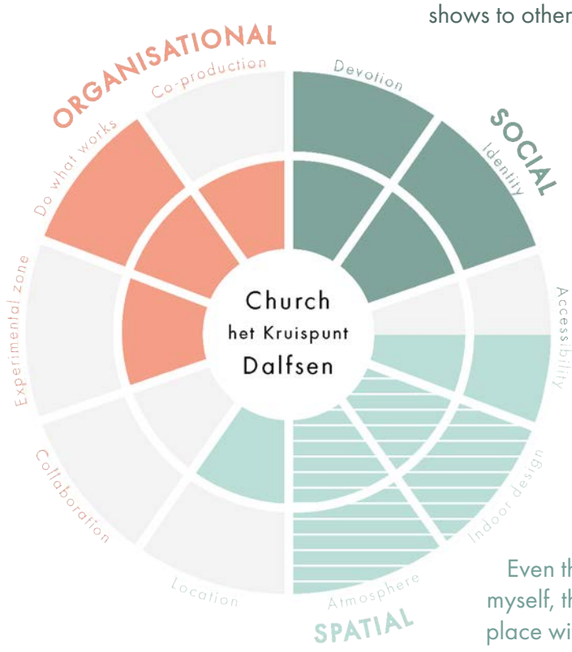


Figure 236: Evaluation of church Dalfsen

The place is spatially accessible, but socially it is difficult to enter a church if you have a different religion

Even though I haven't seen it myself, the church has a meeting place with cosy decorations and a very homely feel. On friday nights there is a youth night for teenager aged 12-18

Figure 237: Fietserieje

Figure 238: Meeting place SOOS within the church (GKV Dalfsen, n.d.)

IDENTIFICATIONS

Here, the different identifications mentioned earlier are explored in more depth: animals, arts & crafts, sports & play, food and gardening. For each of these identifications, there will be looked at how they contribute to creating a sense of belonging and what other benefits or opportunities they create. Within each identification, there is a set of spatial elements that reflect these identifications in space. For each of these spatial elements, there will be desribed when they are used, by whom, where they are located and whether it costs money to visit or participate. In this way, an inventory of spatial elements is created that can contribute to a sense of belonging, if selected critically. Therefore, there will be looked at how these individual spatial aspects contribute to a sense of belonging.

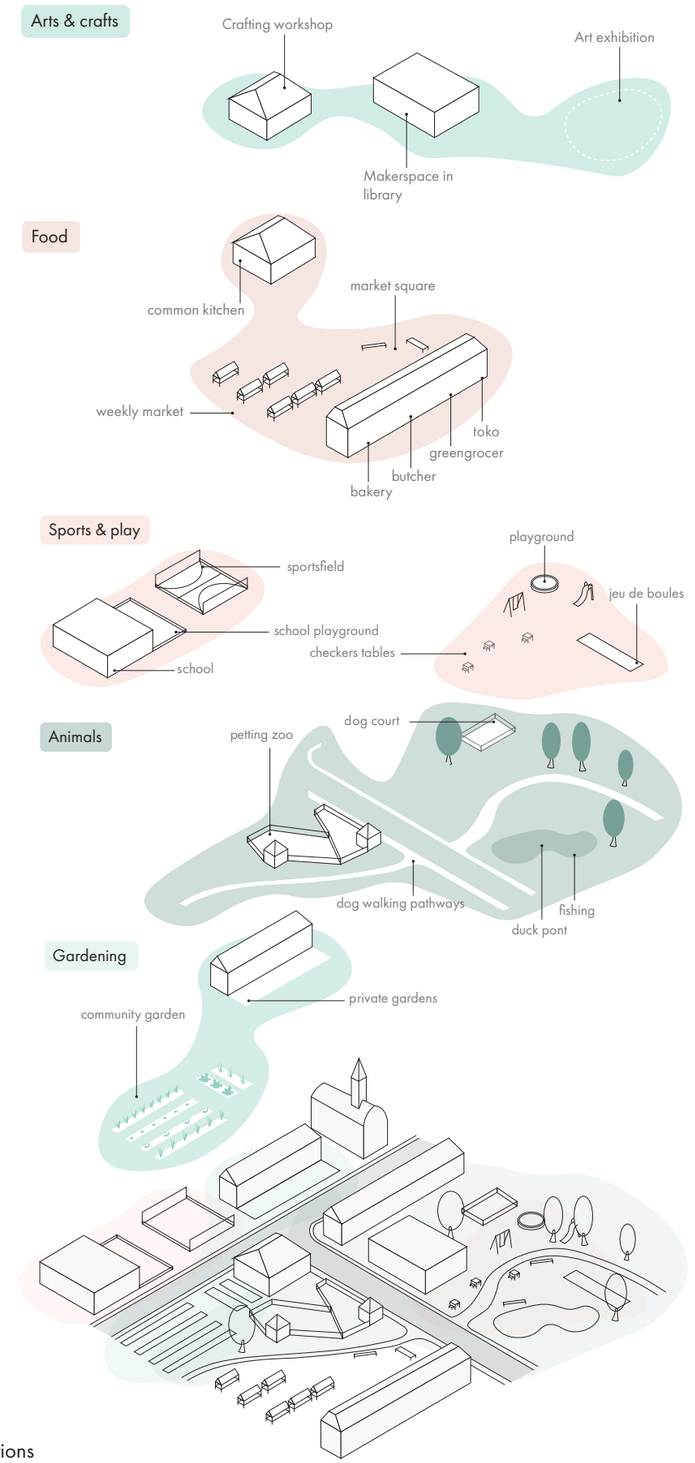


Figure 239: Identifications

ANIMALS

During the site visit, the presence of dogs in the neighbourhood was very recognisable. In moments of quiet in the neighbourhood, you would still find dog owners out on a stroll, chatting with fellow dog owners, creating short, but pleasant interactions.

In the literature by Wood et al. (2015), the effect of companion animals, especially dogs, was investigated. The literature explores how companion animals not only create interactions but can expand towards a network of social support between dog owners: social capital.

The research found that pet owners were significantly more likely to know neighbours.

"I tend to talk to people who I wouldn't normally talk to. Without the dog, I wouldn't speak to them."

This shows how people who would normally not communicate are more prone to communicate with people who are different from themselves in a friendly manner. But besides simply communicating, the research looks at how relationships between fellow pet owners develop into friendships. These friendships come hand-in-hand with social support. The study described four types of support, organised based on their frequency:

- **Informational support**: asking less personal questions, often related to services, for example, a recommendation on a hairdresser to go to
- **Instrumental support**: asking for practical help, for example, a ride or borrowing something
- **Appraisal support**: asking for advice
- **Emotional support:** talking about something that is bothering or worrying you

All of these forms of support were present in the research, some to a higher extent than others. Nonetheless, this shows how pet ownership can be a means to create social capital in a neighbourhood, which can lead to the social integration of vulnerable groups.

So the first thing to uncover in the identification of animals is **dog walking pathways.** This is not

CULTURAL IDENTITY

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

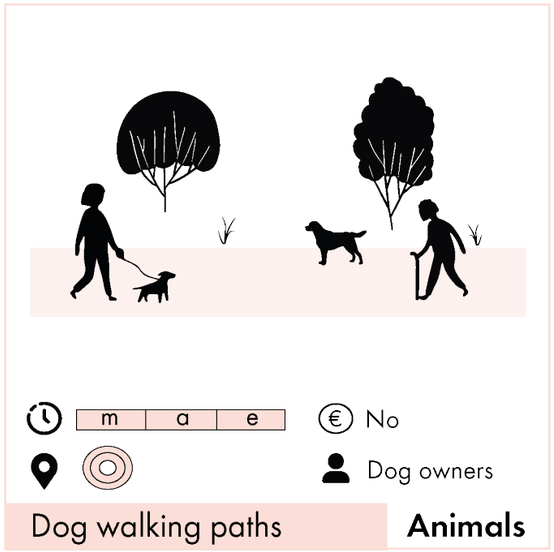


Figure 240: The spatial element of dog walking paths

Figure 241: Dog walking pathways in Hardenberg

something that can be done based on the places marked by the municipality as *'dog walking zones'*, it is something that should be specifically analysed for neighbourhoods by being inside a neighbourhood. Often neighbourhoods have specific streets or nodes where lots of dog owners come together, this was also seen in Hardenberg, which is shown in figure 241. The literature by Wood et al. (2015) confirms this experience:

"There is a path in our neighbourhood that people walk along with their dogs. When you walk that path at the same time every day you run into the same people and start conversations and make friends."

Nonetheless, dogs are not the only animals that should be taken into consideration. In non-Western settings, having a pet dog or cat might be less common and welcome. However, this does not mean refugees do not show or feel any affection towards animals, they simply prefer other animals, showing the differences in the cultural identities of the countries. The research by Every et al. (2017) goes deeper into trying to understand the importance of animals for refugee reception, with a focus on using animals for therapy. For example, a young boy in the research asked *"How can my donkey fly on the plane?"*

The importance is to acknowledge this difference and see if you can somehow incorporate other domesticated animals in urban planning strategies. The most standard example is a **petting zoo**, where you might find this donkey, chickens and goats. The research highlights, that connections with animals can help, especially children, with becoming calmer and opening up to teachers and others. Petting zoos can be fun little safe havens for refugee children and their parents, during times of struggle.

Petting zoos, however, need some planning and organisation to function properly. Nonetheless, there are other forms of incorporating animals into urban planning for example through a duck pond or bird aviary. Every et al. (2017) also note that for example, people from Iran and Afghanisation, Middle Eastern cultures, have a fondness for birds.

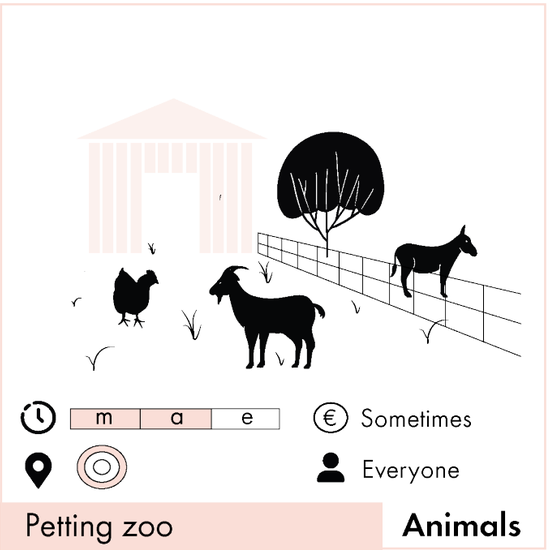


Figure 242: The spatial element of petting zoos

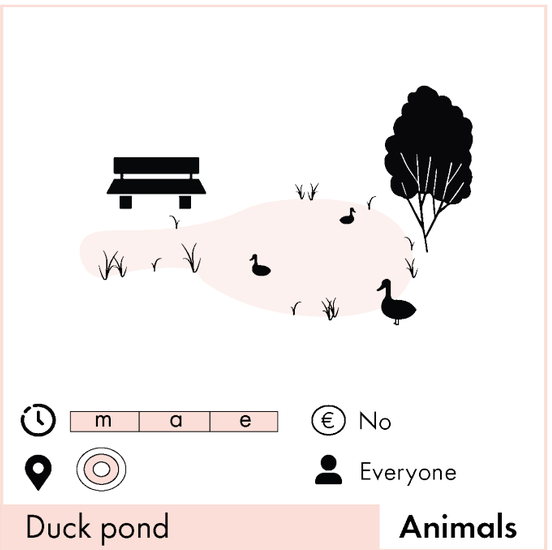


Figure 243: The spatial element of duck ponds

They kept ducks, pigeons and chickens as pets back in their home country. They take good care of them and raise the chicks when they hatch. In this way, duck ponds and bird aviaries can be reminders of home and places of peace.

Respecting the differences between cultural identities is important and should be taken into account in urban planning. Especially as newcomers often don't have the means and capacity to have companion animals of their own.

A last way of looking at offering this diversity is through meadow routes. Routes through the rural areas of the Netherlands, where you will find cows, horses and sheep. As an adult, I will still call out "Look, sheep!" whenever I pass by a meadow, immediately getting a surge of serotonin (especially if there are lambs). This might not be the case for everyone but certainly is for a lot of people.

In this way, a combination can be made of forming a connection with the new Dutch landscape with animal interactions. Offering a relaxing and calming activity for newcomers who are going through an immensely difficult period.

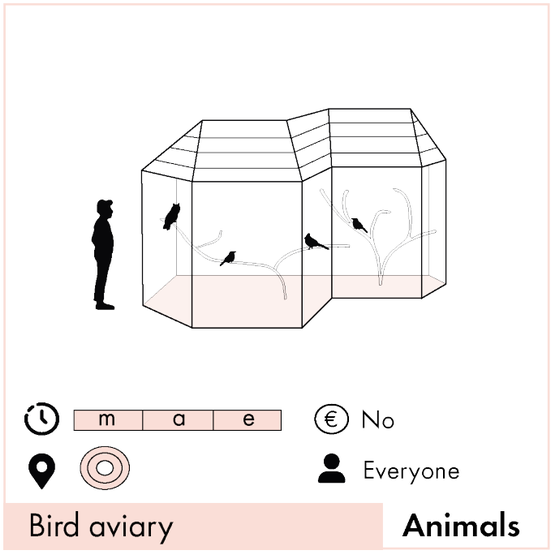


Figure 244: The spatial element of bird aviaries

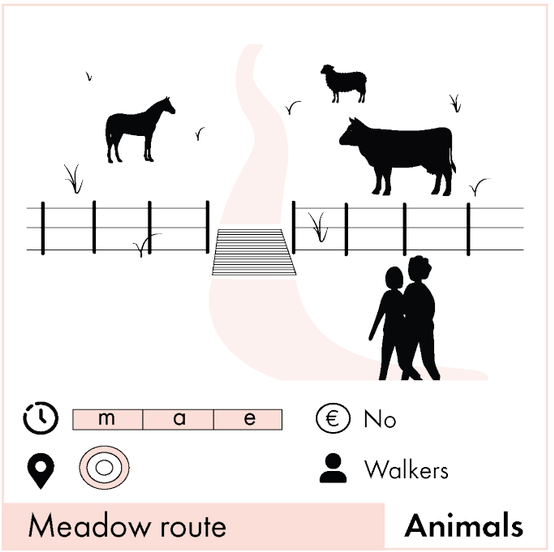


Figure 245: The spatial element of meadow routes

ARTS & CRAFTS

CULTURAL IDENTITY

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

"Art offers a flexible arena and instrument to set up non-hierarchical 'safe shared space' for practising intercultural dialogue, especially through its wordless mode of expression that crosses language barriers and enables creativity that can enhance empathy." (Lähdesmäki & Koistinen, 2021)

Thus, art can be used as a means to bridge social capital between different groups and to improve the social integration of Syrian status holders. In the literature by Lähdesmäki & Koistinen (2021) the concept of '*safe shared space*' is highlighted as a prerequisite for this intercultural interaction: maker spaces. Currently, there is development ongoing in the Netherlands with maker spaces in libraries that stimulate more technological 'making' with computers and 3D printing.

However, there are more opportunities in creating maker spaces, especially for groups who express art through more traditional means. An example of such a maker space is the Wijkpaleis in Rotterdam (figure 247). The Wijkpaleis is a community centre for meeting and interaction, however, there is more to it. The maker space is divided into four sections: a kitchen, a textile studio, a woodworking studio and a more general maker space. The organisation sti-

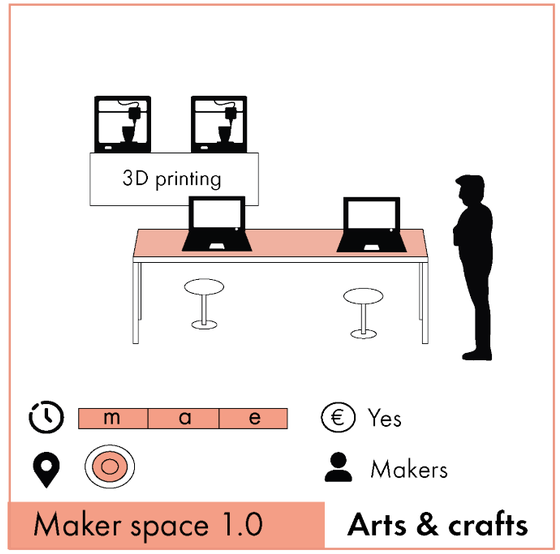


Figure 246: The spatial element of makerspaces (1.0)

Figure 247: The Wijkpaleis in Rotterdam (Wonen in Rotterdam, 2020)

mulates exchanges between creative minds and offers opportunities for people who just want to do something creative one time, but they also offer space to people who want to start their own businesses in the creative industry. For these entrepreneurs, there are also affordable workplaces available in the building (Wijkpaleis, n.d.).

In a conference, Hillen (2023), one of the organisers of the initiative, told a story about a migrant visiting the Wijkpaleis. He didn't have any knowledge of the Dutch or English language, so communication was an issue. When he saw the textile studio, he just stood up and got to work, visibly enjoying being able to do something he was good at and loved to do.

This shows that maker spaces are not only important for the social integration of migrants but also for establishing and maintaining their cultural identity. It gives them a way to express their cultural identity without having to use words. This is also something Lähdesmäki & Koistinen (2021) note:

> *"Art is used to teach cultural literacy defined as an individual's competence and skill to encounter cultural differences with an open mind, to become tolerant, empathic, and inclusive of other positions and perspectives, and to gain awareness of one's own cultural identity and the identities of others."*

Through art, Dutch people can also learn more about other cultures, building their knowledge and solidarity towards groups that might seem very different at first. In this, maker spaces can play a role in negotiating between different cultures, in a civilized and creative way.

Another way to build this cultural literacy can be done by actively exposing different cultures through exhibition spaces. These can be outdoor or indoor, within community centres or libraries, monthly or weekly, depending on what works in a community. Besides physical art, this can also be done through music, by building an outdoor multifunctional stage and organising music events or incorporating music into other events. Exhibiting art can help to create a

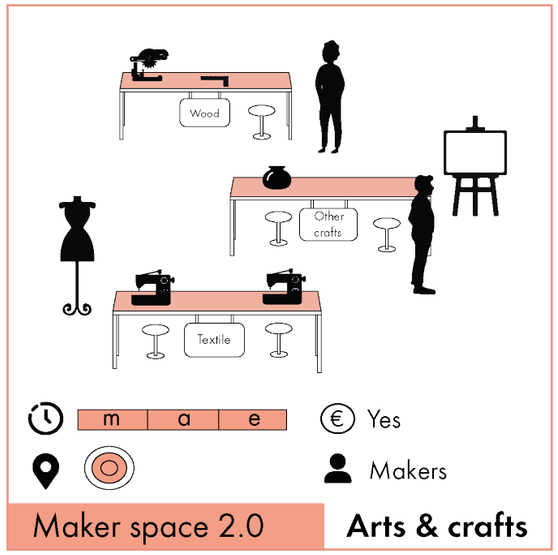


Figure 248: The spatial element of makerspaces (2.0)

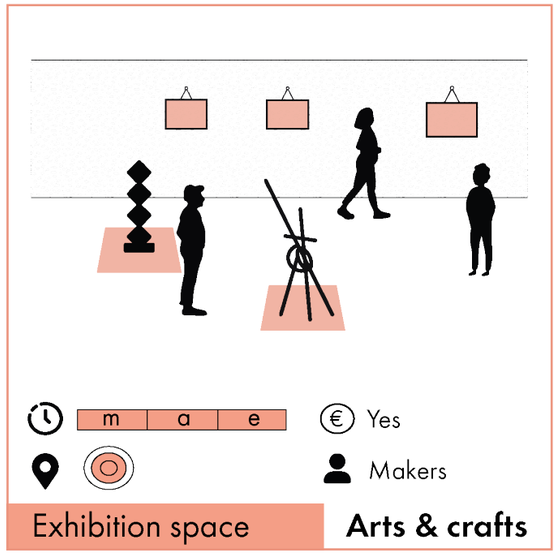


Figure 249: The spatial element of exhibition spaces

better understanding of different cultures in an enjoyable way.

Furthermore, art can also play a role in the economic integration of Syrian status holders, as seen in the Wijkpaleis. For example, the man working the sewing machine at the Wijkpaleis can develop himself, improve his Dutch language skills and start his own tailoring business. This can be done through all different kinds of art forms like furniture, painting or pottery.

Though, only if they are offered the right incentives by municipalities to develop themselves as entrepreneurs. Here, room for improvement can be found, but the governance chapter will dive deeper into that.

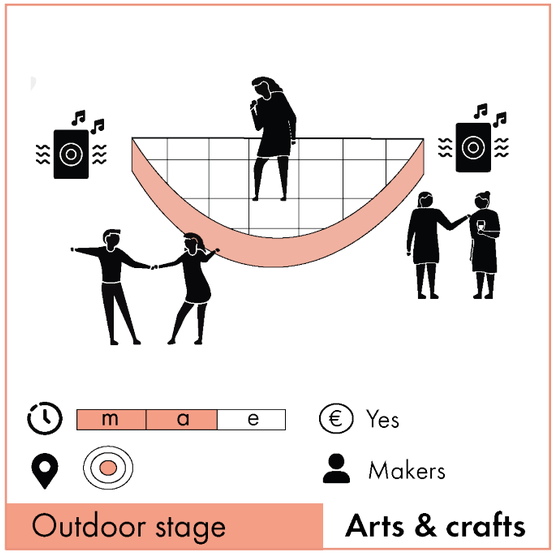


Figure 250: The spatial element of outdoor stages

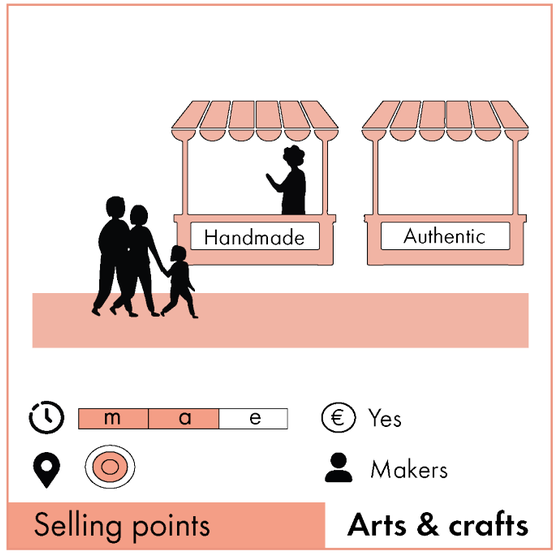


Figure 251: The spatial element of selling points

Sports and play are essential leisure activities in everyone's life. As Sanyal (2021) states, leisure and play have become less prevalent in cities and are now seen as a luxury. However, to live a long and healthy life, even adults, need playfulness in their lives.

Sports are one way of fulfilling the desire to play. Spaaij et al. (2019) highlight that for newcomers sports can be important in promoting health and in facilitating the integration process. Research has shown to have a positive impact on physical health, but also on mental health. Sports can help newcomers to learn about the culture of the new country, and also connect to Dutch people, through which they can improve their language skills. All in all, sports allow newcomers to practice something they like, contributing to their cultural identity, but it also allows them to socially integrate into the new society.

However, as Spaaij et al. (2019) state, there are some barriers that might limit access to sports facilities for newcomers, especially with structured, club-based sports. Newcomers have limited knowledge of these clubs and not enough money to pay for the annual contribution. Consequently, there are two ways to decrease these barriers. The first one is related to governance, within which municipalities can actively involve newcomers in sports and supply them with funds if they are not able to pay the yearly fee. Additionally, the municipality should invest in publicly accessible sports accommodations like soccer courts or basketball courts. But another possibility could be to invest in skateparks, benefiting the community as a whole.

Besides sports, playing in itself is essential to discuss. Playgrounds are good places that allow playing among children, while parents can have a chat with each other. This contributes to the social integration of the children, but it also allows bonding between parents.

Nevertheless, playing should not only be possible for children. Adults and the elderly should also be

CULTURAL IDENTITY

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

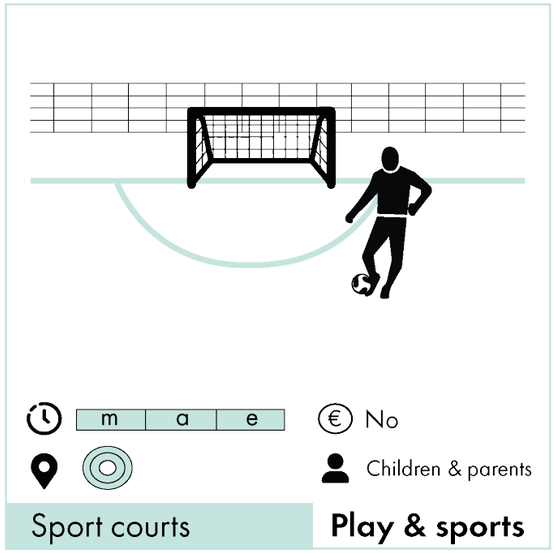


Figure 252: The spatial element of sport courts

Figure 253: The spatial element of skateparks

considered. An example for them, which was also seen in Dalfsen during the field trip, is a jeu de boules court, an activity that is usually done by elderly people.

Besides jeu de boules, less frequently seen games can also be introduced in parks and public spaces. For example chess and checkers tables, large tic-tac-toe and four-in-a-row boards and Kubb. These games are accessible to all age groups and different cultural groups allowing interaction between different demographics. The games are simple and don't need explanation, making intercultural exchanges easier. On top of public games, other activities like bouldering, table tennis and mini golf as activities in public spaces that allow playfulness for all different kinds of groups can be introduced.

By implementing these courts, games and activities, public spaces become attractive and can facilitate bustling moments of social interaction between residents of the neighbourhood or town.

Figure 255: The spatial element of playgrounds

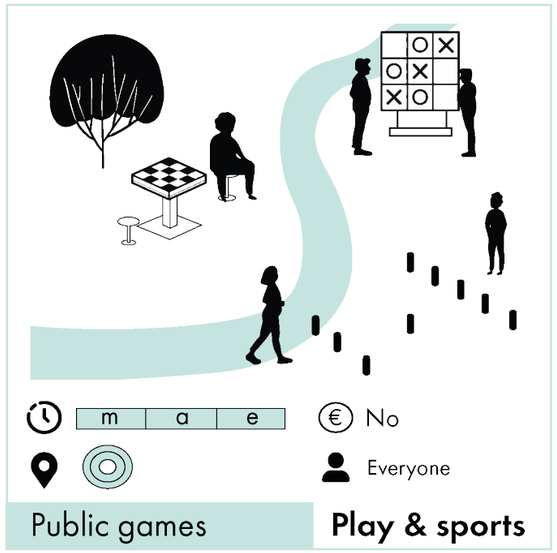


Figure 254: The spatial element of public games

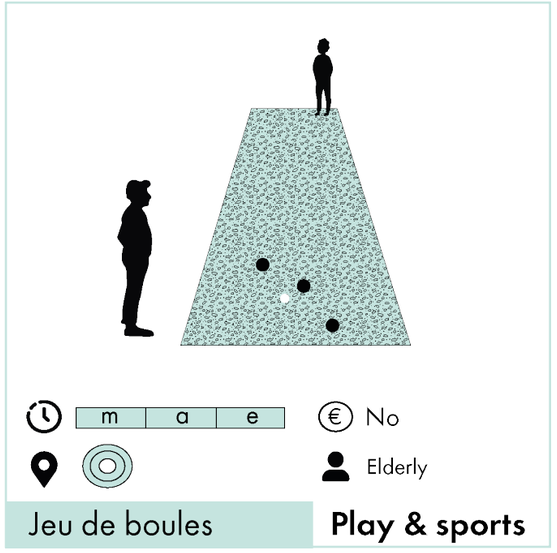


Figure 256: The spatial element of jeu de boules

Lastly, there are some tiny interventions that are even easier to implement, which can be used to activate specific places in a simple way. For example, water fountains in a square can result in a water paradise for children during summer. A game of marbling can be stimulated by simply replacing a street tile with a tile that has a hole at the centre. Hopscotch can be easily stimulated by painting or chalking a path on the street.

Altogether, playfulness in towns can create small spaces of diversity, allowing everyone to express their own cultural identity. The games and activities will create moments of interaction between different groups, resulting in the social integration of Syrian status holders.

Figure 258: An outdoor chess game (Root, 2020)

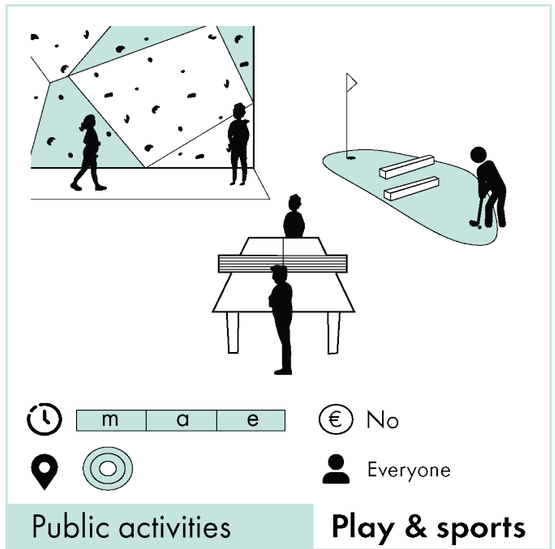


Figure 257: The spatial element of public activities

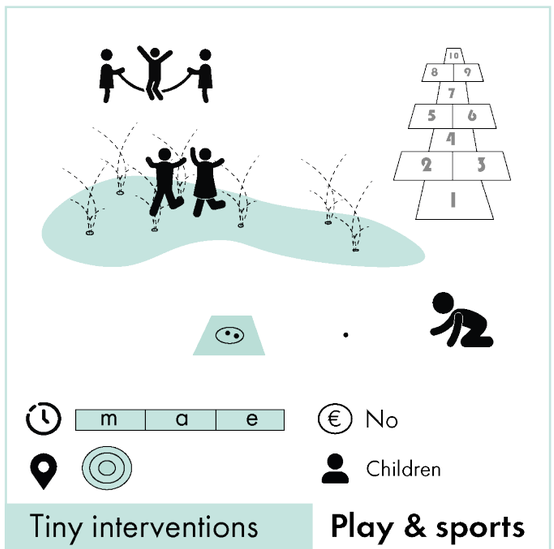


Figure 259: The spatial element of tiny interventions

Food is an important element in Syrian culture. Preparing and sharing food is important within families and between friends and is seen as a social activity. Spatially, food is not just limited to the boundaries of a house but extends into the public realm.

Therefore, there should be thought of ways in which Syrians can be offered opportunities to practice their culture and share their culture with others in public spaces. For example, in the Wijkpaleis in Rotterdam, there was a collective kitchen that could be used by visitors to share recipes and cook together. This is a beautiful initiative that allows status holders to come together, but also to share the food with Dutch people. In the case of Rotterdam, it was an indoor kitchen, but this could also be brought outside. An outdoor bread oven and grill for communal use could be introduced for cooking during group gatherings. Altogether, these initiatives contribute to both the expression of cultural identity and the social integration of Syrian status holders.

Besides the places where the food is prepared, collecting the ingredients is another activity that can be found in the spatial dimension. Supermarkets are the standard go-to place for groceries, however, these places are often not suitable for interaction between people who don't know each other yet. In a supermarket, people rush through and with the introduction of self-checkout, the interaction within supermarkets becomes even more limited.

Specific food shops however, like bakeries, butchers, Toko's, greengrocers and cheesemongers, are places where this interaction is stimulated more. From personal experience, working at a bakery for four years, I found that the waiting time in these shops stimulates interaction between customers. But also the interaction between servers and customers are important moments of interaction. In small towns, I noticed that on Saturday it is still common to visit each of these shops to get specific wares for the weekend, like fresh bread, vegetables and some cheese for a cheese platter. Regular visits can result in familiarization with the employees, which are often locals, contributing to the social integrati-

CULTURAL IDENTITY

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

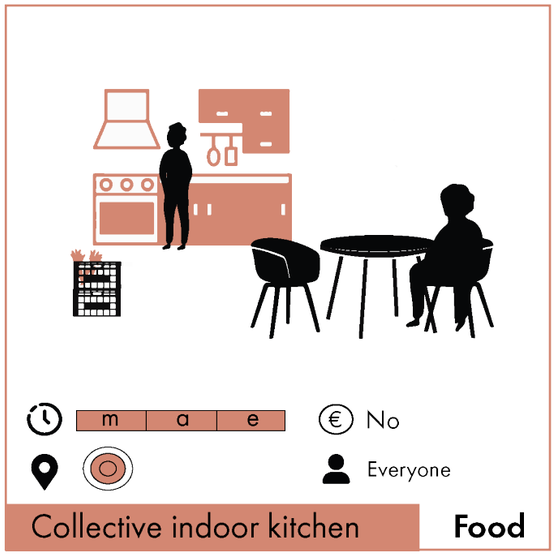


Figure 260: The spatial element of collective indoor kitchens

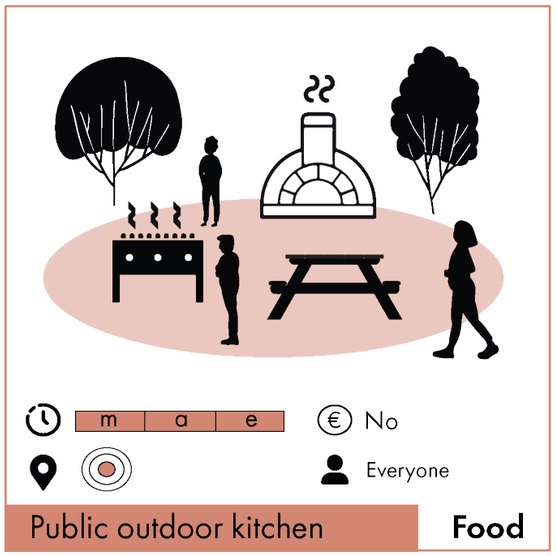


Figure 261: The spatial element of public outdoor kitchens

on of status holders.

Other specific shops, specific to rural regions, are farmer shops. Farmers construct a shop in their barn to sell their own products and products from colleague farmers. This is also something I have encountered in my personal life, working in one of these shops for two summers, where I saw a lot of people coming in to buy vegetables (and in my case strawberries), but also mainly to have a chat. Especially elderly people, who are often more prone to feel lonely, came to visit the shop. These places allow status holders to learn about the local Dutch culture, get fresh products for their cooking and interact with local people.

The same can also be seen in weekly markets. Here, Rhys-Taylor (2013) also states that:

> *"a very minimal connection, such as a greeting between acquaintances or between shoppers and traders, to extended conversations between those who have met up in the market, or extended interactions between stallholders and the customers they serve."*

Markets offer the same diversity and personal connection between customers and stallholders as the specific shops. As Hiebert et al. (2015) mention, markets configure social life as they bring together different people, that would not meet in their normal daily lives. Together, with room for encounter, this will result in the social integration of Syrian status holders, but it will also contribute to the cultural identity. Especially, as markets offer entrepreneurial opportunities for status holders to share their wares and food with the local community.

However, only if they are given opportunities to become an entrepreneur, which is currently difficult. Markets are currently shrinking in towns, which was also explicitly mentioned in Hardenberg. This is caused by various reasons, but one of the main ones I have seen is the lack of successors, children who like to take over their parents' businesses: retiring entrepreneurs have to close down their stalls.

Syrians are very proud of their culture and would often love to share that with others, together with

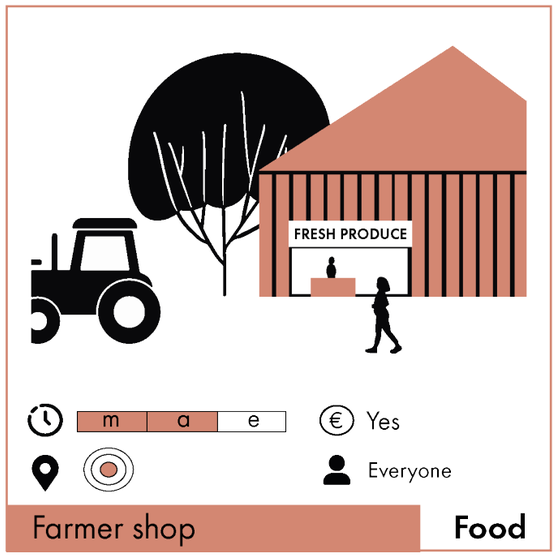


Figure 262: The spatial element of the the farmer shop

Figure 263: The spatial element of specific food shops

their motivation to economically integrate into the Dutch society, markets offer great opportunities. This win-win situation offers opportunities to revitalize the markets, learn Dutch people about other cultures and supply Syrian status holders with economic opportunities. In order to stimulate this, incentives and policies are needed, which will be discussed in the governance chapter.

An interesting combination of the places above was found in Rotterdam: the Oogst Markt. A weekly market on Saturday that focuses on local and sustainable products, found in a range of less than 50km from the marketplace. This initiative combines local farmers, cooks and creators to come together, without needing your own fixed stall. On the market, you can also find food and products from other cultures. This market combines the local identity of farming and the identity of any other culture in town.

In short, food is an essential element that contributes to all facets that influence the sense of belonging of Syrian status holders in small towns, if stimulated and incentivized spatially and economically.

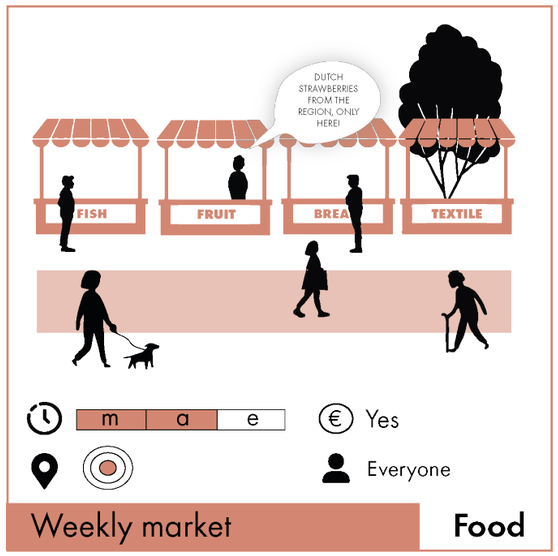


Figure 264: The spatial element of the weekly market

Figure 265: Oogstmarkt Rotterdam (OPEN Rotterdam, 2015)

Figure 266: Oogstmarkt Rotterdam (Het Oude Noorden, 2022)

Gardening is an activity that takes place at the smallest scale, within the boundaries of one's own home. Front yards act as a threshold from public to private space. When front yards are used accordingly, they can become places of interaction. As seen earlier, Van Liempt and Miellet (2020) explained how the garden allowed a Syrian status holder to communicate with his neighbours, without even using language at first. They became familiar with each other in a positive way.

The active maintenance of gardens is dependent on the effort and devotion put into it. The time spent in the maintenance of one's garden is often appreciated by neighbours as it keeps the neighbourhood neat. A problem noted during the interviews on-site was that the status holders in the local's neighbourhood did not take care of the garden properly. Often, this problem is caused by lack of time, but also partly due to lack of resources. Status holders often don't have a lot of money to spend and will therefore focus on only the necessary amenities, gardening tools and materials are not essentials.

As a response to this problem, within a neighbourhood a seed library could be placed that allows neighbours (or organisations) to share leftover seeds with their neighbours. These seeds can be used in everyone's own garden. This idea is based on reciprocity as you expect your neighbours to put something back (if they can) and that they don't grab too much. These concepts will thus also only work in neighbourhoods where the amount of social capital is already high.

The same can be said for collective toolsheds. Gardening tools can be expensive and inaccessible for people with a limited budget, especially the more expensive materials like lawnmowers and hedge trimmers. However, also when you add all the costs of smaller tools like brooms, rakes and gloves the costs will be too high for low-income families. In this way, lack of money is not a barrier anymore in gardening. The shed can also function as an intermediary to connect neighbours and stimulate interaction when they visit at the same time.

CULTURAL IDENTITY

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

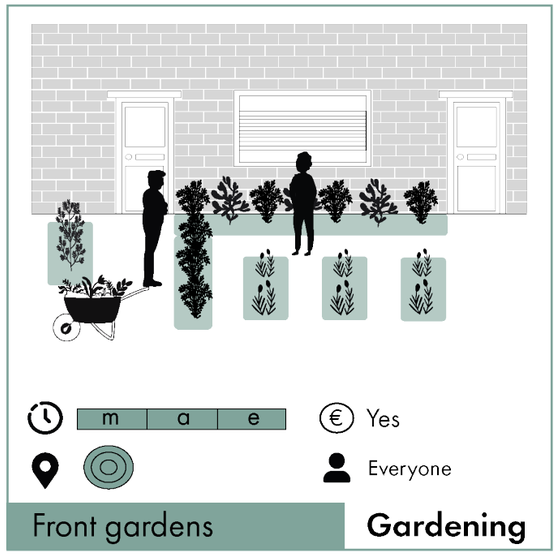


Figure 267: The spatial element of front gardens

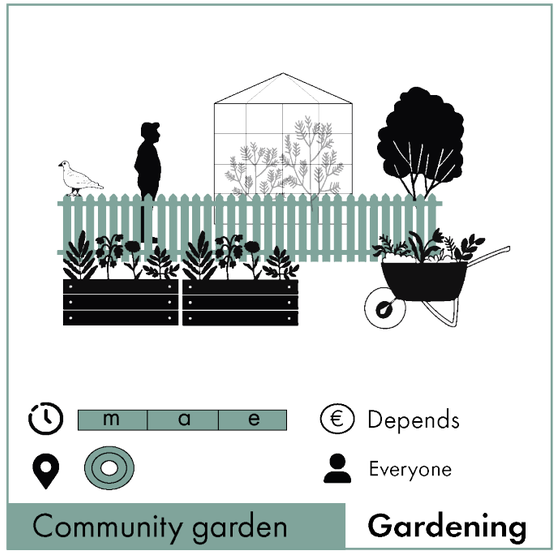


Figure 268: The spatial element of community gardens

Van Liempt and Miellet (2020) also explained how planting your own garden can be a connection to the country of origin as you plant, plants that remind you of, in this case, Syria. This contributes to maintaining one's cultural identity in a new place.

Another spatial element that contributes to the social integration of status holders is the community garden. The Wijkboerderij in Hardenberg was a great example of such a community garden, within which people can contribute to gardening and take the produce home. Another example was found in Dalfsen, where they recently placed a neighbourhood garden. Community gardens allow interaction between different demographics, within a calm environment.

A last way in which gardening can be applied is through picking gardens. Picking gardens are places where you can pick your own flowers, pumpkins and fruits, in return for a price. Therefore, this activity does cost money, but it is a fun way of learning about the Dutch farming environment and a fun activity, especially for children.

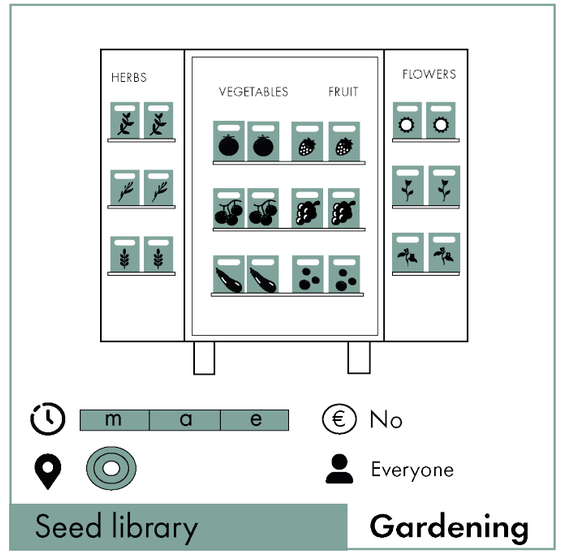


Figure 270: The spatial element of a seed library

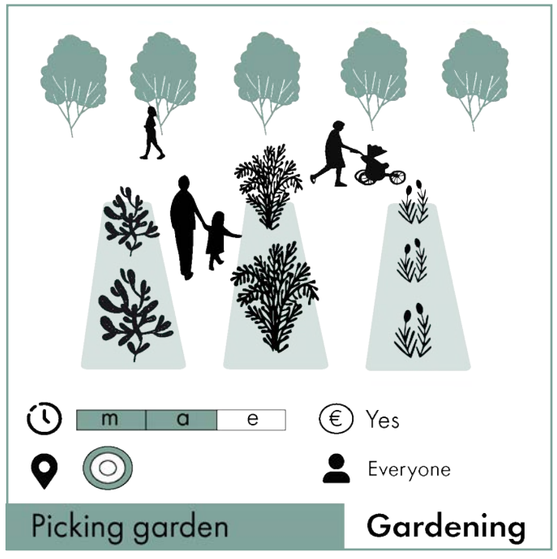


Figure 269: The spatial element of a picking garden

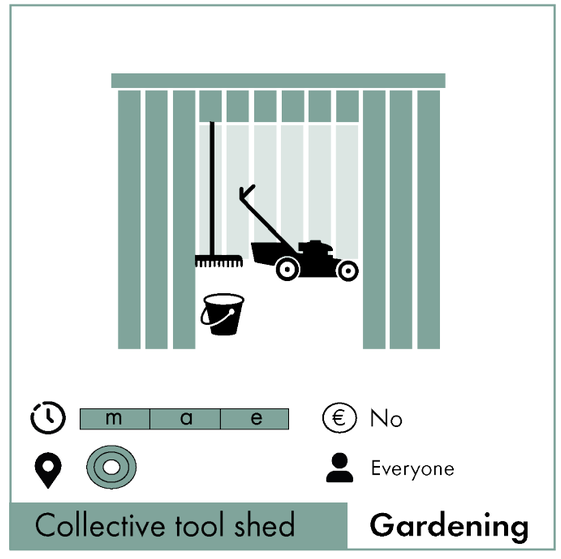


Figure 271: The spatial element of a collective tool shed

GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

This section explores the systemic problems related to governance and fitting recommendations to tackle these problems.

The twelve-point checklist was developed by the OECD (2018). The idea of the checklist is that:

> *"any city in Europe or beyond can use in their efforts to promote more effective integration of migrants".*

They provide 12 objectives within 4 blocks. The first block is about multi-level governance and how cohesion between different layers and sections can be achieved.

The second block looks at time and space, which has mainly already been discussed in the previous chapters.

Block 3 looks at the internal organisation of municipalities and how they can cooperate with other organisations.

Lastly, block 4 looks at sectoral policies that have an influence on other factors of integration like employment, education and housing.

Block 1 Multi-level governance: institutional and financial setting

Objective 1 Enhance effectiveness of migrant integration policy through improved vertical co-ordination and implementation at the relevant scale

Objective 2 Seek policy coherence in addressing the multi-dimensional needs of, and opportunities for, migrants at the local level

Objective 3 Ensure access to, and effective use of, financial resources that are adapted to local responsibilities

Block 3 Local capacity for policy formulation and implementation

Objective 6 Build capacity and diversity in civil service, with a view to ensure access to mainstream services for migrants and newcomers

Objective 7 Strengthen cooperation with non-state stakeholders, including through transparent and effective contracts

Objective 8 Intensify the assessment of integration results for migrants and host communities and their use of evidence-based policies.

Block 3 Time and space: keys for migrants & host-communties to live together

Objective 4 Design integration policies that take time into account throughout migrants' lifetimes and evolution of residency status

Objective 5 Create spaces where the interaction brings migrants and native-born communities together

Block 4 Sectoral policies related to integration

Objective 9 Match migrant skills with economic and job opportunities

Objective 10 Secure access to adequate housing

Objective 11 Provide social welfare measures that are aligned with migrant inclusion

Objective 12 Establish education responses to address segregation and provide equitable paths to professional growth

Figure 272: The twelve-point checklist for local integration of migrants and refugees

Objective 1 Enhance effectiveness of migrant integration policy through improved vertical co-ordination and implementation at the relevant scale

The current integration system in the Netherlands is relatively fragmented. What is happening in the Netherlands is that in general there is a lack of a national plan. Especially, in terms of refugee reception, there is a strong imbalance between the northeast and the southwest of the country. In a lecture, Kremer (2023) spoke about this imbalance and how this results in tensions between municipalities, as some take on a larger number of refugees than others. This tension is especially strong between the rural and urban provinces. Rural provinces have become more frustrated with this over the past years as they feel underappreciated and unheard.

Interestingly, this is also visible in how dialogue mechanisms are installed in the Netherlands. The document by the OECD (2018) presents a mechanism in the Netherlands as a good practice, but when looking critically at it, it is not as good as it seems. The dialogue mechanism is used to discuss the implementation of specific new policies. For this mechanism, several parties are invited: relevant national ministries to the topic, social partners (like trade unions) and local representatives, often from the G4.

G4 is used to describe the four largest cities in the Netherlands: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht: all in the Randstad. This means that for the implementation of new policies, only the large cities are consulted This is a.) not fair, as the other parts of the country are left out of the conversation and b.) a wrong representation of how this policy would be implemented. Smaller municipalities and more rural regions take a different approach and might have added value in these dialogue sessions, as they bring a fresh view on the policy discussed.

The different capabilities of municipalities and their different approaches are currently utilized by making municipalities responsible for integration. This is partly because there is not a cohesive national approach, but also because municipalities have more knowledge on the topic. Nonetheless, currently, most municipalities are not able to use that knowledge as they lack capacity and resources.

The recommendation for this objective is then to formulate a national plan on refugee integration, that gives specific tasks and resources to municipalities. This will decrease the tensions between and within municipalities as they now have the means to tackle the issues at hand. Additionally, the dialogue mechanisms should be reviewed and become more inclusive to the whole country. This allows rural provinces to become more proactive in decision-making, decreases tensions between urban and rural and might bring new information and knowledge from rural provinces to the Randstad. This is especially interesting in integration policymaking as rural provinces have more experience and knowledge on refugee reception and integration. This research is proof of how smaller municipalities take control of integration through different collaborations, providing lessons for other smaller towns or even for larger cities.

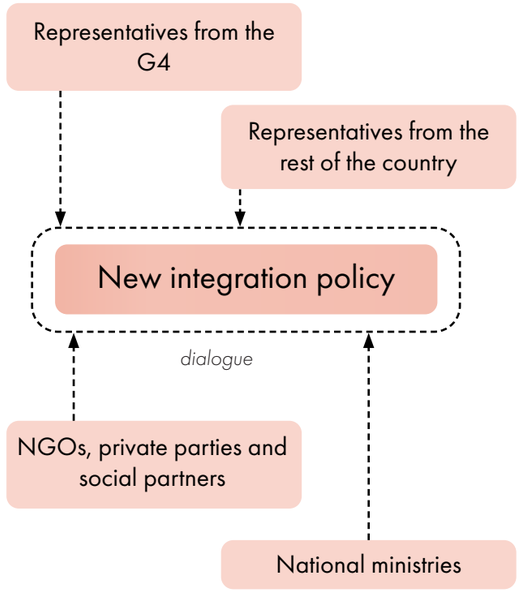


Figure 273: Improved dialogue mechanism

Objective 2 Seek policy coherence in addressing the multi-dimensional needs of, and opportunities for, migrants at the local level

In objective 1 the vertical fragmentation between governmental bodies was shown, but this is also present in the horizontal governmental structure. In figure 274 on page 282, an institutional map of Hardenberg and Dalfsen is shown.

On the national level, there are mainly three ministries involved in refugee integration: the *Ministry of Security and Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs & Employment* and the *Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.* Each of these ministries has its own responsibilities. The Ministry of Security and Justice is mainly active in the reception centres. The IND and COA are under the responsibility of the ministry and are in charge of handling the documentation and housing of the asylum procedure.

Once asylum seekers receive their status and become status holders, this ministry steps down. The housing responsibility is given to the local government and the Ministry of Social Affairs & Employment becomes responsible for the welfare of status holders. This ministry is advised by two boards: KWI, Knowledge Platform Employment and Income and the KIS, knowledge platform Integration and Society. This ministry is responsible for finding suitable jobs for all people, especially for people who cannot do that on their own or have physical or mental limitations: the Participatiewet. The second part of this law is for people who are not able to work at all and who receive a benefit. Municipalities are responsible for executing this law.

In terms of status holders, another ministry is responsible, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. An organisation that works for them is the NUFFIC, the organisation that is in charge of (in) validating previous degrees, often obtained in other countries.

Each of these departments holds a piece of the puzzle towards integration of status holders, especially economic integration. However, taking care of status holders is not at the top of the list of each of these ministries and exchanges between the ministries are limited. An example of a problem arising is that the Participatiewet, employment for everyone, is a responsibility of the municipality. However, the validation of degrees from other countries is done by a national organisation, NUFFIC. This means, even if a municipality wanted to find suitable employment for status holders in their town, they are still dependent on the national government.

The same is seen on the local level, within municipalities where the interaction between departments is limited. But also interaction with organisations outside the municipality is limited. Thus, information exchange is limited. For example, COA, an organisation operational on the national level has a lot of knowledge on common health issues among refugees. Often, this information is not exchanged with other organisations or governmental levels. Local social workers do, consequently, not have the knowledge to help the status holders in their town.

The OECD (2018) makes a recommendation for introducing independent representative boards for refugees on all governmental levels. These boards will not be directly subjected to critique and influence from the outside and can operate subtly. A recommendation could be to extend the KIS, a knowledge platform for Integration and Society to other ministries and to implement these boards on a local scale. They can conduct research and advice in policymaking, give a voice to refugees and make knowledge exchange between government bodies and organisations more efficient. In this way, policies within different levels or departments of the government can become more cohesive, limiting the barriers for status holders to economically integrate into society.

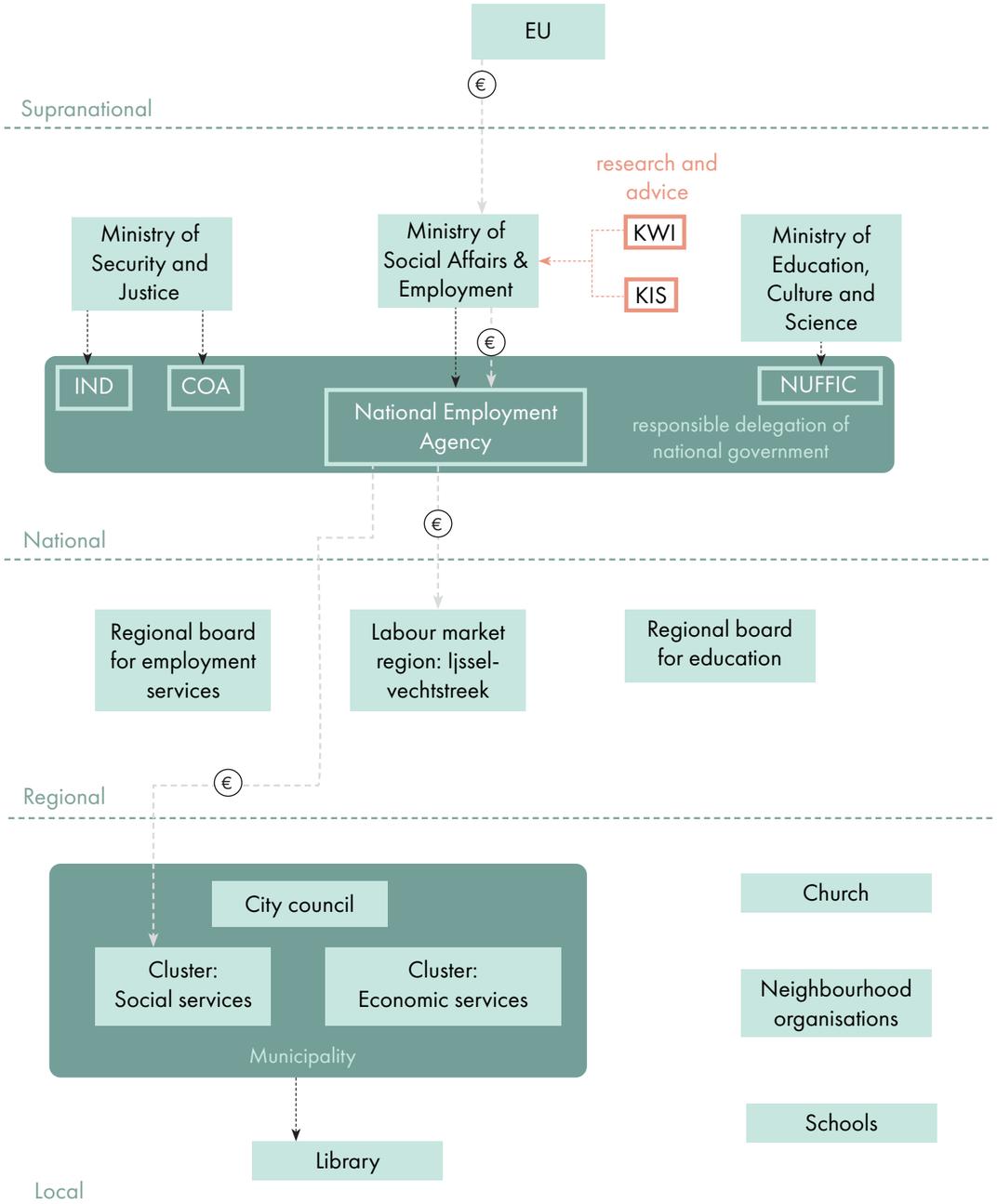


Figure 274: Institutional map for Hardenberg and Dalfsen (adapted from OECD (2018))

Objective 3 Ensure access to, and effective use of, financial resources that are adapted to local responsibilities

A major challenge in the integration of status holders is the lack of funding. Individually, status holders receive benefits to provide them with their basic needs. However, the services and guidance needed through the integration process are equally important and often lack funding. This often forces status holders to navigate the complicated bureaucratic landscape, with minimal guidance, resulting in unemployment and long processes.

Something which is often seen is that organisations, like NGOs, do not receive stable funding. The lack of stable funding limits NGOs in their ability to train staff in the long-term and built their abilities and network as their future as an organisation is uncertain. This leads to a limited capacity to help status holders, undermining their integration process. On-site I found that most initiatives by NGOs (often the church) were completely based on voluntary input from key figures from the church and citizens. The minimal funding needed is provided through the church. An example is the buddy project in Hardenberg, but also the language classes in Dalfsen.

Here, they are thus not directly dependent on the municipality for funds. When looking at the spheres of economic integration, reciprocity from the locals is used to compensate for the lack of redistribution by the government.

Another lesson learnt on-site was the Wijkboerderij Hardenberg. An initiative where funding from various (semi-)private organisations is combined to create a successful community centre. In figure 2745 on page 284, the funding bundle for the site is shown. It is interesting to see how certain parts of each organisation's budget are utilized to create something the organisations are not able to do on their own.

The challenge is to scale these collaborations up to target more systemic problems and to utilise the power of private parties. Especially problems related to education and employment should be tackled on a more regional scale.

An example of such an initiative is seen in Amsterdam, the Refugee Talent Hub. This initiative is used to bridge the demand and supply of employees. Forty private parties in Amsterdam are involved, who would love to employ status holders, but don't have the network to do so. Status holders who would love to work, but don't know how to get into contact with businesses, are brought into the picture. The initiative connects supply with demand, benefiting both the local economy and the economic integration of status holders. Private businesses invest in the recruitment of new employees, contributing to the social service provision.

A comparable initiative could be implemented in regions with smaller towns. However, here, not one municipality should be involved but multiple. In the region investigated, the Dutch Techzone was found, a large business district involved in the technological sector of the maker industry. This area covers Hardenberg, Coevorden, Hoogeveen and Emmen. These municipalities can work together with the Dutch Techzone to find a similar solution as in Amsterdam.

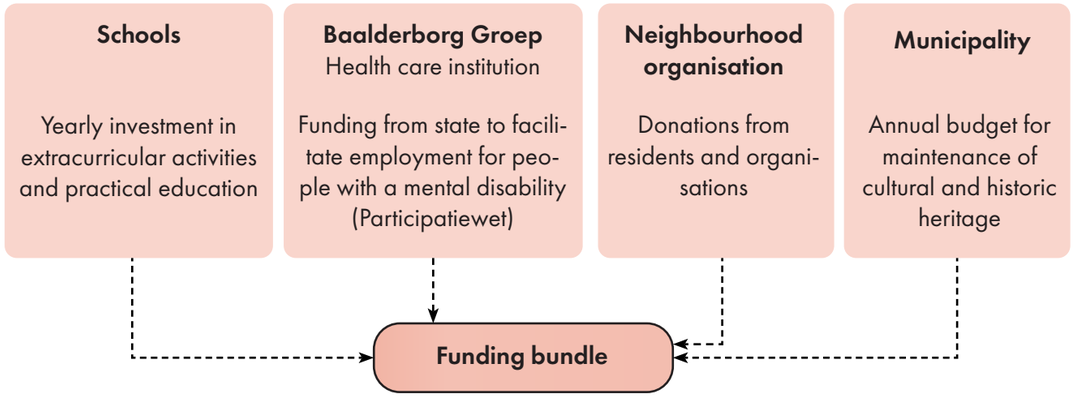


Figure 275: The subconscious bundling of funding in the Wijkboerderij in Hardenberg

Objective 4 Design integration policies that take time into account throughout migrants' lifetimes and evolution of residency status

Status holders are currently subjected to long periods of inactivity followed by intensive moments of administrative processes. On one hand, they need better guidance through these intensive moments and on the other hand, the long periods of inactivity could be used much more efficiently. This is partly caused by the lack of service, but also because of the lack of knowledge on what status holders need in certain moments of their integration process.

A great opportunity here is to use lessons learnt from status holders who have been in the Netherlands for a while already. In this research, I interviewed three Syrian women and learned a lot more than I learned from literature. A large group of refugees entered the country around 2015-2016 and all encountered problems and challenges during their integration process and are often still struggling with issues even though they have been here for more than 5 years.

By building a network with status holders who have been through part of the process already, you can gather knowledge and also discuss with these people where the opportunities lie and what they would have liked to do in the periods of inactivity.

In this way a more fitting approach can be implemented, that starts from the moment refugees enter an asylum seeker centre. Especially, as all interviewed Syrian women struggled with the transition from being an asylum seeker to being a status holder.

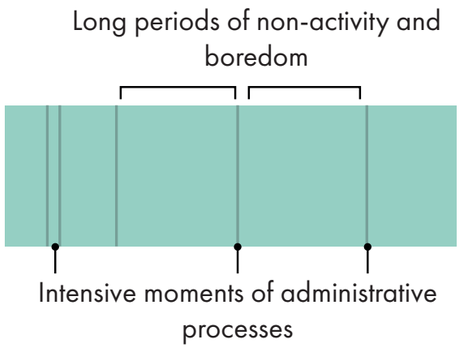


Figure 276: The imbalance in the integration process

Objective 5 Create spaces where the interaction brings migrants and native-born communities together

The OECD (2018) report discussed this objective very minimally, but the answer to this objective has been explained in the previous chapters in much depth. The places and identifications mark the areas that are essential in creating interaction between locals and status holders, but also the places where specific services are provided and how they play a role in creating a sense of belonging.

When looking from the perspective of governance, it is essential to realize that in order to make changes in the spatial dimension, awareness needs to be created among stakeholders, while utilizing the means they have in an efficient way. As mentioned in the previous chapters, partnerships with (semi-) private partners are needed to create successful meeting places. But there is also a need for bringing awareness to policymakers and the municipality in how specific places play a more important role in the integration than normally thought.

In this way, the stakeholders should collaborate: exchange knowledge, co-fund and utilise the solidarity present to make changes in the spatial dimension.

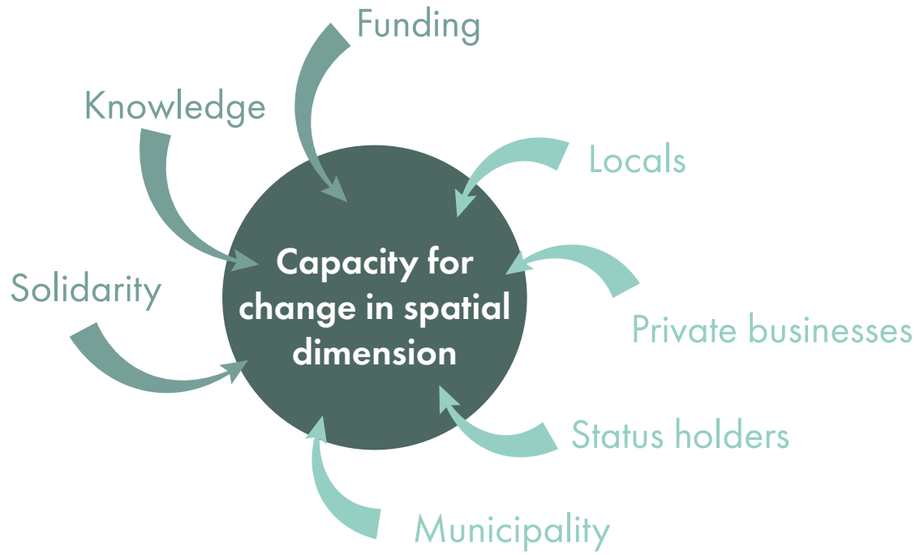


Figure 277: Capacity for change in the spatial dimension

Objective 6 Build capacity and diversity in civil service, with a view to ensure access to mainstream services for migrants and newcomers

Intercultural awareness among policymakers and civil servants is a value that is essential in improving the integration process. To do this, diversity and awareness within municipalities and organisations should be actively stimulated.

From the interviews, I noted that a substantial struggle among status holders was being able to volunteer for NGOs, but not being offered a paying job despite having the right qualifications and knowledge of the cultural barriers encountered in the integration process. This is also seen in municipalities, where there is little representation for status holders from various cultural backgrounds.

An example of a barrier that could be limited through more awareness is the fact that paperwork from institutions is in Dutch. Of course, it is important for status holders to learn the Dutch language, however, it is simply not feasible to expect that within the first months after gaining their residency, status holders are able to read official documents in a completely foreign language.

By increasing the diversity within civil services and NGOs, this knowledge becomes transferable and the policymakers become more aware of decisions they make and what impact they might have on status holders.

Objective 7 Strengthen cooperation with non-state stakeholders, including through transparent and effective contracts

This objective covers the elements discussed above. First of all, also in NGOs, more diversity should be promoted among staff. Status holders should be able to receive paying contracts.

In order to do so, the municipality should offer stable and transparent contracts to NGOs to make them able to hire and train people in the long-term. NGOs have limited capacity in hiring full-time, paid workers if they don't have a stable income. By setting up long-term agreements, NGOs have more capacity to train their staff, including status holders who are very willing to work for the organisation and share their knowledge.

Objective 8 Intensify the assessment of integration results for migrants and host communities and their use of evidence-based policies.

Data collection, especially qualitative data collection, within the topic of integration is limited. This is an issue I also encountered during this research. Knowledge of the problems status holders, and specifically Syrian status holders, encounter during their integration is extremely difficult to find. In this research, I thus contacted Syrian people myself to get the data I needed.

If wanting to create policies based on evidence, on the experiences of status holders in the Netherlands, this is almost impossible as there is no evidence. For policymakers, setting up extensive research on Syrian status holders to make a small change in policy is not feasible. Therefore, I think there should be a structural change in the documentation and exchange of data and information, enabling evidence-based policymaking. Especially, in collecting qualitative data.

Throughout this research, I have seen a lot of news articles and statistics that state, for example, that less than half of the status holders work after 5 years since their arrival. This is a problem, but the information is based on statistics and does not offer insights into why status holders are not able to find a job in these 5 years. This could be because of discriminatory practices of businesses, the lack of validation of their degree or many other reasons.

Without finding the reasons behind the statistics, it becomes very difficult to change the policies behind the problems. This results in politics circling around the same problem over and over, without being able to make changes based on facts.

Objective 9 Match migrant skills with economic and job opportunities

Employment is one of the main struggles the interviewed Syrian status holders encountered and as mentioned in the previous objective, the employment gap between natives and newcomers is large.

From the interviews, the conclusion could be drawn that the validation of previous education is a main issue for Syrian status holders in the Netherlands. A valid degree is seen as the only way to measure one's competencies, which limits the possibilities for status holders, but also the opportunities for the local labour market. In objective three, the example of the Refugee Talent Hub in Amsterdam was already discussed, where private parties collaborate to bridge the employment gap.

This could be extended to the Dutch Tech Zone in the region discussed, but it could also become an even bigger initiative, that covers the entire labour market region: Ijsselvechtstreek. The initiative should not only be driven by the demand of the private parties, but it should also have a registration system, which sets out the competencies of status holders (and other job seekers) besides their educational background. The municipalities and the labour market region can collaborate and establish an organisation to fulfil that role.

In this system, it is important to take language learning into account. Often, status holders don't mind getting a job that is slightly below their competencies, as long as it helps them to learn the Dutch language. However, once they know the language, they desire upward mobility in the labour market. In order to do so, there needs to be some changes in the validation of degrees.

The validation of degrees is now done by a national organisation called NUFFIC. The validation is mainly based on comparing the education levels of the different countries, without looking at the practical capabilities of the people in question. One of the interviewed Syrian women also told me that her degree was not validated and if she wanted to regain that level, she had to redo a multi-year education programme which is extremely expensive as adults don't receive funding for this education. A shift is needed to validate the capabilities not just based on a piece of paper. This could mean that the organisation should be decentralised.

By combining all the things above, you can create labour market regions, that are much more efficient in utilizing the competencies and capabilities of job seekers, while in the meantime also improving their language and professional skills, stimulating the regional economy and also diminishing the labour shortages in the region.

Often, due to the fact that education and previous experience is not validated, status holders choose to become entrepreneurs. I believe this is due to the fact that through becoming an entrepreneur status holders can put as much effort in as they want, ensuring their own success whereas in regular employment they are dependent on waitlists and rules.

This is also seen in Sweden (OECD, 2018) where only 4,8% of the native inhabitants are self-employed and 11,4% of the Syrian community. This is an interesting observation as there is also the trend in the Netherlands where the younger generations

NIEUWS

Weer sluit een uniek winkeltje bij gebrek aan een opvolger

Menno Provoost 11 februari 2020, 18:00 • 3 minuten leestijd

Figure 278: Newsarticle closing shops (Provoost, 2020)

Groentefamilie zet streep onder 37 jaar Cuijkse markt

Figure 279: Newsarticle closing marketseller(Peeters, 2017)

prefer 9-5 jobs over becoming an entrepreneur. Especially, in marketplaces, but also in specialized shops like bakeries, butchers, restaurants and flower shops. In my personal experience, working on a street with multiple of these shops, this was also the case. The butcher had to close because there were no successors, the bakery I worked at was sold to a larger chain of bakeries because there were no successors and the chicken poulterer was already worrying about having to do the same.

Therefore, to retain the small business and the identity of especially smaller towns, entrepreneurship should be stimulated. This can be done through entrepreneurship packages that combine financing, coaching and networking to provide future entrepreneurs with all the tools they need to start. Again in Amsterdam, such an initiative is already in place called Eigen Werk. They provide these packages to people who are currently unemployed and dependent on social benefits. In the case of Eigen Werk, the applicants need to be proficient in either Dutch or English, but I think there is an opportunity to include Dutch classes as the first phase of the entrepreneurship trajectory. In this way, people are stimulated more in learning the language, plus the language learning is based on what they want to achieve.

In my opinion, it is important to make these initiatives inclusive for all unemployed. First of all, to create enough capacity to realise these initiatives but also to prevent competition between locals and newcomers. In a sense, the urban network theory comes back, as you combine the capacity of the region with the capacity of locals and newcomers into new initiatives that benefit society as a whole.

Objective 10 Secure access to adequate housing
In terms of housing, there are some benefits arising in the context of smaller towns. Especially the fact that concentration neighbourhoods, as seen in big cities, are not seen in small towns like this. There might be neighbourhoods with a lower socio-economic profile, but the contrast with the rest of the town is less stark than in big cities. This means that newcomers will not be placed in a neighbourhood with a lot of people with a migration background. This makes it more difficult to connect to fellow migrants but makes it easier to form relations with the locals.

In Hardenberg, there is a valid note to make. Status holders receive housing from the municipality, resulting in them being able to get a social security number. A social security number is needed to work. Therefore, people without a social security number, especially asylum seekers or status holders waiting for housing, are not able to find work. Here, there is an opportunity to create possibilities to work without a social security number. Especially, when looking at the seasonal farming character of the region. Asylum seekers have to cope with a lot of boredom and waiting in the asylum centre and are often willing to take on a job at for example a local strawberry farm to pick strawberries. One of the interviewed Syrian women noted that she felt worthless in the reception centre as they were treated as such. By, at least, giving asylum seekers the opportunity to participate this feeling might be diminished, as well as the labour shortages in the seasonal farming sector.

Objective 11 Provide social welfare measures that are aligned with migrant inclusion
Access to social services is something dependent on both physical and social accessibility. Physical is related to mobility or the lack of mobility of newcomers. Upon arrival status holders are often limited to do everything by foot. In the case of Dalfsen, the inhabitants showed their reciprocity by donating bikes to people in need, like status holders. This means that social services should be within walking distance. The benefit of small towns, like Hardenberg and Dalfsen, is that this is usually the case. Only if social services would not provided in the town itself, issues will arise. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that all basic services needed for migrants is present in all towns to a basic extent and if this is not the case, the services themselves should be mobile, travelling to the status holder in need.

Social accessibility is determined by barriers like language, but also by digitalization. As mentioned earlier, the paperwork is in Dutch, which makes the legal and official side of integration extremely difficult. But also, not all status holders have direct access to mobile phones or the internet. Therefore, social services should look at these barriers and try to limit them as much as possible.

An interesting initiative is the provision of additional benefits status holders can apply for based on their efforts in finding a job. On one hand, it is a motivation to find a job and on the other hand, it rewards the hard work put into integration by status holders. Nonetheless, the efforts put into finding a job are hard to measure. A suggestion here is to match this system with the proposal made in objective 9. In this way, creating a possibly complex system which evaluates the capabilities of status holders, makes an inventory of the local labour market needs and tries to bridge the gap between those. This system can be used to measure the efforts of status holders, even if they do not find a job immediately yet.

Objective 12 Establish education responses to address segregation and provide equitable paths to professional growth
Education is not as much of a problem as it would be in larger cities. In larger cities, concentration neighbourhoods result in large differences in the level of education. A specific demographic group, concentrated in one neighbourhood, attends the same school. The differences between a school in the wealthy part of a city and in the less well-off part are significant. Therefore, as children with a migrational background often live in these concentration neighbourhoods, they end up with a lower level of education. The towns in this research, however, are small enough to not have schools situated in specific neighbourhoods and thus the different schools attract children from all over town, preventing the concentration of specific groups in the same school. Additionally, I could not see a lot of differences between schools: public and catholic or protestant schools all looked the same.

Therefore, I believe the benefit of a small town is that children are integrated more easily among natives, due to the lack of concentration of children and there is no need for quotas on how many children from a migrational background every school should accommodate. However, I do believe it is an interesting topic that can be explored in more depth in future research, in which the differences in the performance of children with a migrational background are explored between cities and towns.

APPENDIX V

THE GAME

V.I Rules

V.II Gameboard

V.III Game elements

V.IV Cards

Appendix V contains the elements developed for the game.

ROADMAP TO BELONGING

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

THE AIM OF THE GAME

The aim of the game is to raise awareness for the struggles Syrian status holders go through trying to belong in a place. Additionally, the game uses opportunities and recommendations found in the thesis to provide the players with new insights into where changes could be made.

The goal for each player is thus to get a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging means that you, the player, as a Syrian status holder, feel at home in a place. The research has found that this is based on three factors:

Social integration

Cultural identity

Economic integration

XP XP XP XP XP

Therefore, each player gets a personal inventory. In order to win this game, the inventory needs to be full. This means that the player needs to collect 10 social integration chips, 10 cultural identity chips and 5 economic integration chips. Once a player has all three of these, they win the game. Each player moves across the board with one pawn.

THE PLAYERS

The game can be played in solitary. In this case, it would be mostly exploratory. By playing the game with 2-4 people, the game gets more competitive and frustration arises. This frustration is necessary to highlight the struggle Syrian status holders go through.

Each player gets an identity card and an inventory. The identity card determines who you are and how much money you own. The different people have different characteristics, that affect them in the game. This will be explained in **MOVEMENT OVER THE BOARD.**

NAME Nasir

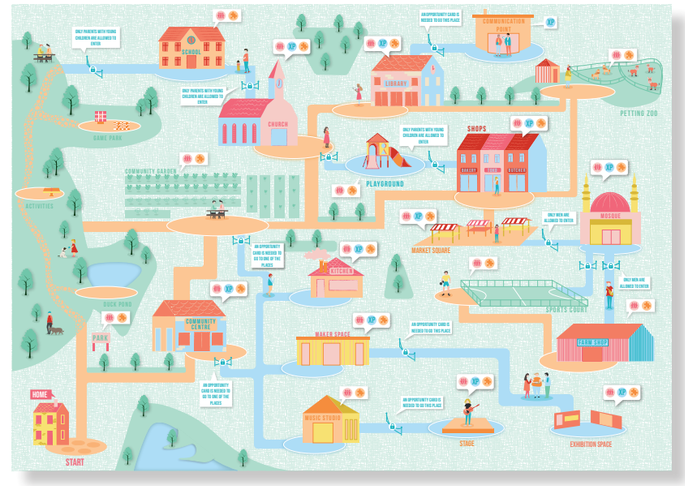
AGE 45 years old

BANK ACCOUNT 1 coin

Nasir recently received his status to stay in the Netherlands. Nasir arrived with his wife and son of 8 years old. He was immediatly connected to a buddy in the Buddyproject. He receives one XP and one friend before the start of the game. Due to physical trauma, he is not able to visit the sports court.

THE BOARD

The board is built up of pathways and places. These places are based on the research done in the thesis. In each place, rewards can be earned. The card library is placed next to the board, see **CARDS.**



CARD LIBRARY

LIBRARY	COMMUNITY CENTRE
KITCHEN	MAKER SPACE
SCHOOL	JEU DE BOULES
ACTIVITIES AND GAMES	DUCK POND
PLAYGROUND	SPORTS COURT
COMMUNITY GARDEN	MARKET SQUARE
COMMUNICATION POINT	PETTING ZOO
MOSQUE	CHURCH
EXHIBITION SPACE	OUTDOOR STAGE
SHOPS	FARM SHOP

MOVEMENT OVER THE BOARD

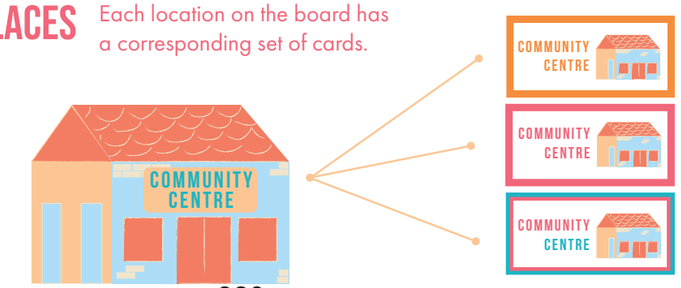
You are allowed to move from one place to one of the places directly attached to that place (if the cards don't tell you otherwise, see **CARDS**).

Some pathways are preconditional (blue). The condition is either based on what a card tells you or based on your personal characteristics written on your identity card.

For example, from the shops, you are able to go to the market square, community garden and petting zoo. You are also able to go to the playground if you have small children.

PLACES

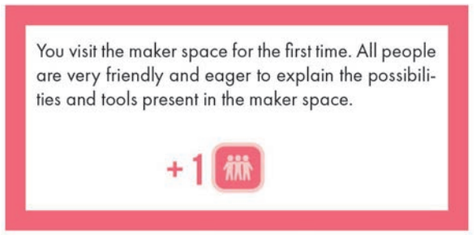
Each location on the board has a corresponding set of cards.



CARDS

The cards are the most important elements of the game. Almost every card is unique and has a corresponding reward written on them. The cards will be placed with the building upwards on the card library. The frame around the card gives an indication of which reward can be found on the card. You are only allowed to pick the card that is on top of the pile. Therefore, you must select the places you visit strategically based on which chips you need to fill your personal inventory.

Below, we will go into the cards themselves and the exceptions.



NORMAL CARDS

The normal cards describe an encounter or experience a status holder can have in their daily life that positively influences their sense of belonging. Either, this relates to a social interaction, a cultural activity or a step towards economic integration.

The cards vary in the amount of rewards you get for them. For some, you only receive one chip. For others, you can receive 2 or even more chips.

If there are more colours on the outside of the card, you will probably receive more rewards.

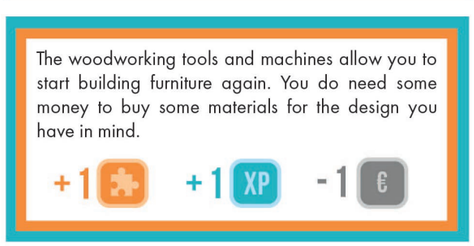
CARDS INVOLVING MONEY

Some cards involve money, as money forms an important barrier in the life of status holders.

Therefore, each player starts with an amount of money written on their identity card. This amount can grow by picking up cards where you receive money.

However, there are also cards which cost you money. If you do not have enough money, you do not get the reward written on the card and your turn is over.

This illustrates the barriers status holders encounter in their daily life in relation to money.



OPPORTUNITY CARDS

Hidden between the normal cards, are opportunity cards. The opportunity cards are based on opportunities found in the research for the thesis.

These cards allow you to move to places that are only accessible if you receive such a card.

Once your turn is over in one of these opportunity places like the exhibition space, music studio or kitchen, you are allowed to choose a random place on the board where you want to continue the journey.

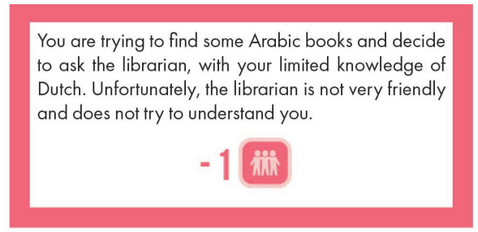
Normally, you make one move per turn. However, these cards allow you to go to another place in the same turn, resulting in more rewards in a single turn.

BARRIER CARDS

Hidden among the normal cards are also barrier cards. The barrier cards showcase the struggles Syrian status holders encounter on their pathway to belonging.

If you receive one of these cards, you do not get a reward, but you have to pay back a reward.

If you don't have any rewards yet, it stays that way.



EXTRA EXPLANATIONS

In some of the cards, a reference is made to an initiative or recommendation that is explained in-depth in the thesis. To make these cards understandable, short and concise explanations are given below.

1. BUDDY PROJECT

The buddy project, as seen in Hardenberg, but also in other places in the Netherlands, is an initiative to help asylum seekers and status holders integrate into Dutch society. This is done by assigning an asylum seeker or status holder to a Dutch buddy. This Dutch buddy helps the newcomer in navigating through the first steps of the integration process, for four months. This means, doing activities together like cooking, shopping and walking, but also in providing help in finding a job.

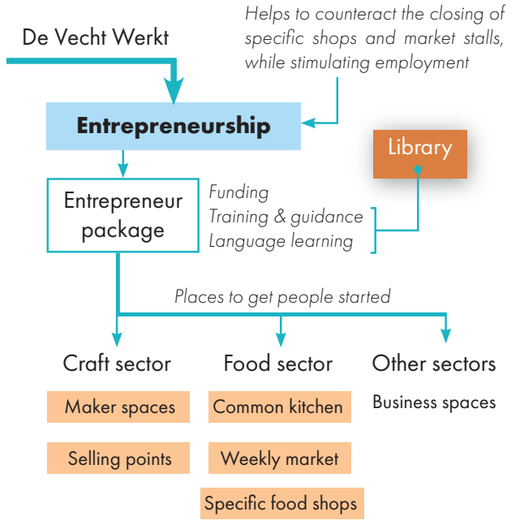
In Hardenberg extra attention is put into finding a buddy that is similar in age and gender, to create more commonalities between the individuals.

(Buddy Project Hardenberg, 2023)

2. ENTREPRENEUR PACKAGE

The entrepreneur package is inspired by a document by the OECD (2018) on stimulating the local integration of refugees. The idea of an entrepreneur package is to offer all elements an entrepreneur needs to start his own business. This includes funding, but also training, guidance and language courses. An example of such a project can be found in Amsterdam called Eigen Werk.

The entrepreneurship package is part of a larger proposal made in the thesis, the catalyst called De Vecht Werkt, in which the gap between the labour market demand and supply is made smaller. Specific places are important in recognizing talent and craftsmanship.

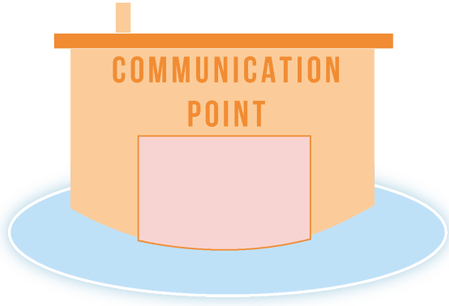


3. BOEREN MARKT

The Boeren Markt or farmers market is inspired by an initiative in Rotterdam called Oogstmarkt. The Oogstmarkt is a weekly market where local and regional products are put on display. This varies from dishes to vegetables and fruits and hand-crafts. In addition to that, there are artists and musicians invited to create an entertaining atmosphere. This idea is used in the thesis as well, to stimulate local entrepreneurship, especially concerning the agricultural identity of the region. The Boeren Markt would then be a weekly/biweekly/monthly event taking place in a bigger town in a region, attracting visitors and entrepreneurs from the entire region. The market does not only display products grown in the region but also dishes and handcrafts from the local culture, but also other cultures. The idea is that the market becomes an event, an attraction in the region, where people can spend an entire day, listening to musicians, looking at art, eating local and international food, and browsing through the different products.

4. COMMUNICATION POINT

The communication point is another element of the initiative of the Vecht Werkt. The initiative aims to bring job seekers closer to the labour market. To do so, an accessible place is needed where job seekers can go to get in touch with this initiative, this will be the communication point. In line with the research, a suitable place for such a point is in the library. The library already functions as an accessible place for the municipality to provide services to a wide range of groups (through language tutoring for newcomers and computer classes for the elderly). These services can be expanded to create a point where job seekers can go to get in touch with the labour market. At this communication point, advisors will work to sign up job seekers into a larger system, entering the qualifications, experience, education and specific job requirements for the job seekers. Thereby, helping job seekers navigate the difficult landscape of applying for jobs. The communication point can help to develop a CV and give advice on how to tackle job interviews. The communication point will then try to connect the job seekers to vacancies in the region, bridging the gap between labour demand and supply.



5. BIKE FACILITY: FIETSERIEJE

In Dalfsen, one of the studied towns, an interesting initiative by the local church, Het Kruispunt, was seen: Fietserieje. The Fietserieje is a small red shed, next to the church building. The idea of this initiative is that people can donate unused or old bicycles to the organisation. The organisation repairs the bikes when needed and makes sure the lights and locks work. The refurbished bikes are then sold for a very small fee (or donated) to people in need. For example, when a large group of Ukrainian refugees came into Dalfsen, they were provided with a bike through this facility, significantly improving their mobility and providing them with opportunities.

For example, if we consider a status holder looking for a job. If they are only able to travel on foot, they are limited to a range of maybe 3km, depending on the public transportation network in place. However, once they receive a bicycle, they can travel up to 10km to get to their newly found job, which increases their opportunities immensely.

6. CHURCH ORGANISATION

In the neighbourhood, Baalder in Hardenberg, a neighbourhood organisation could be found called *Naoberschap Baalder*. The organisation is based on the historic value of naoberschap, which illustrates the reciprocity between neighbours in peripheral regions. In the past, people in peripheral regions used to be dependent on each other during winter as they were not able to travel to other towns. Therefore, neighbours (about 8-10 households) worked together and took care of each other to survive. In present-day society, this is fortunately not a necessity anymore. However, the historic value is still visible in these towns showing the solidarity of neighbours towards each other.

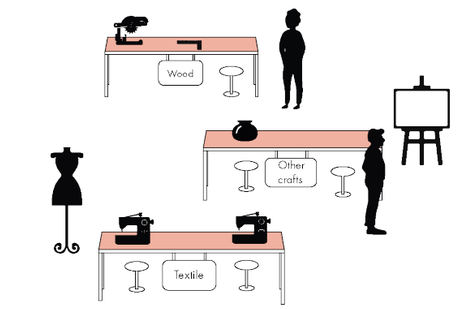
Naoberschap Baalder provides services, a helping hand, to people in need. These services are then provided by volunteer neighbours. The services can range from helping with paperwork, babysitting the children or simply drinking a cup of coffee together. The organisation also holds a community garden at the plot of the Wijkboerderij, a community centre. The produce from this community garden is tactfully donated to a selection of neighbours who are financially struggling.

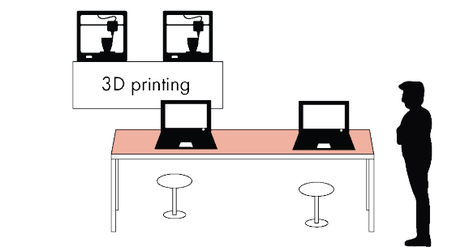
Baalder Noaberschap

7. MAKER SPACE

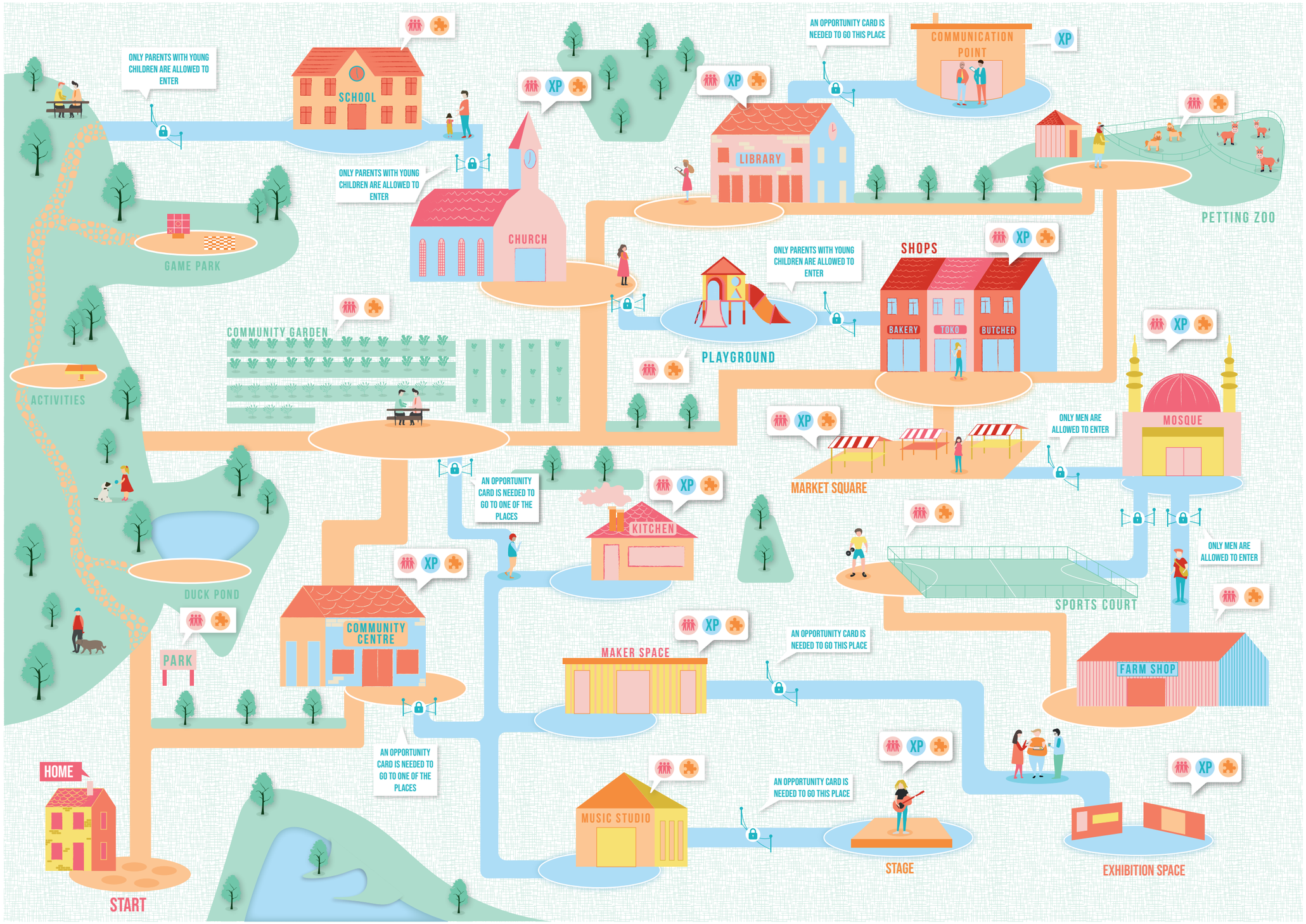
Maker spaces are simply spaces where visitors can make. In the past years, developments have been seen in libraries with the rise of modern maker spaces, maker spaces driven by digitalization. These maker spaces focus on making through digital design, 3D printing and programming. The maker spaces provide guidance and education on how to use software and the equipment on site.

On the other hand, there is also still the desire to make, without digitalization. Woodworking, sewing, pottery and other handcrafts are still used (if not more popular in the past years). Therefore, not only the maker spaces in the libraries are interesting, but also maker spaces where handcrafting is possible. This also relates to the idea of circularity, where people can use the workshop to repair equipment, furniture or clothes, lengthening their life span.

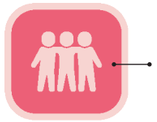




GAMEBOARD


ONLY PARENTS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN ARE ALLOWED TO ENTER
SCHOOL
XP
AN OPPORTUNITY CARD IS NEEDED TO GO THIS PLACE
COMMUNICATION POINT
XP
LIBRARY
XP
PETTING ZOO
ONLY PARENTS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN ARE ALLOWED TO ENTER
CHURCH
GAME PARK
ONLY PARENTS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN ARE ALLOWED TO ENTER
SHOPS
XP
BAKERY
TOKO
BUTCHER
COMMUNITY GARDEN
PLAYGROUND
XP
MOSQUE
ACTIVITIES
XP
ONLY MEN ARE ALLOWED TO ENTER
MARKET SQUARE
AN OPPORTUNITY CARD IS NEEDED TO GO TO ONE OF THE PLACES
XP
KITCHEN
ONLY MEN ARE ALLOWED TO ENTER
DUCK POND
XP
SPORTS COURT
COMMUNITY CENTRE
PARK
XP
MAKER SPACE
AN OPPORTUNITY CARD IS NEEDED TO GO THIS PLACE
FARM SHOP
HOME
AN OPPORTUNITY CARD IS NEEDED TO GO TO ONE OF THE PLACES
XP
MUSIC STUDIO
AN OPPORTUNITY CARD IS NEEDED TO GO THIS PLACE
XP
STAGE
XP
EXHIBITION SPACE
START

Inventory card



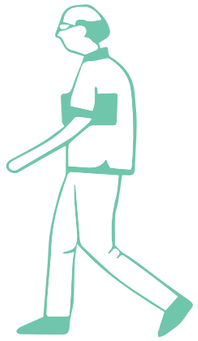
social integration chip

economic integration chip

cultural identity chip

money chip

Identity cards:



NAME Abdo

AGE 56 years old

BANK ACCOUNT 2 coins

Abdo arrived in the Netherlands with his wife, son and daughter-in-law. His new neighbours have been super helpful and warm. He receives two friends before the start of the game.

NAME Faiza

AGE 51 years old

BANK ACCOUNT 3 coins

Faiza arrived in the Netherlands with her husband and two young children. She got an apartment in a small municipality. Due to her religious background, she doesn't feel comfortable visiting the church by herself.

NAME Nasir

AGE 45 years old

BANK ACCOUNT 1 coin

Nasir recently received his status to stay in the Netherlands. Nasir arrived with his wife and son of 8 years old. He was immediatly connected to a buddy in the Buddyproject. He receives one XP and one friend before the start of the game. Due to physical trauma, he is not able to visit the sports court.

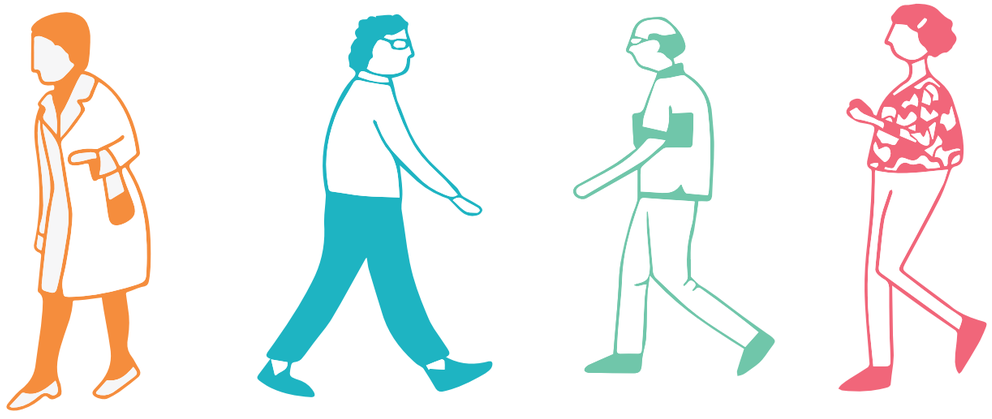
NAME Marjam

AGE 32 years old

BANK ACCOUNT 3 coins

Marjam arrived from Syria with her husband and are assigned a house in a small town in the Netherlands. Marjam aims to find a job as quickly as possible. Therefore, Marjam started learning Dutch in the reception centre. She receives 1 XP before the start of the game

Pawns:



COMMUNITY CENTRE

During culture day you are able to share your culture and customs with culturally similar and culturally dissimilar people. In the meantime, you also learn more about the Dutch culture.

+1

COMMUNITY CENTRE

An elderly man starts a conversation with you during coffee hour at the community centre.

+1

COMMUNITY CENTRE

Unfortunately, your visit to the community centre was not as you had hoped. A group of regular visitors were not very welcoming and ignored your attempts to socialize.

-1

COMMUNITY CENTRE

A woman at the community centre recognises your crafting skills during a workshop and introduces you to the maker space in the neighbourhood. You can take a card at the maker space without waiting for your turn. *(See explanation 7)*

+1 + go to maker space

COMMUNITY CENTRE

The community centre offers language classes and tutoring sessions for newcomers on a weekly basis. This results in your language skills improving significantly.

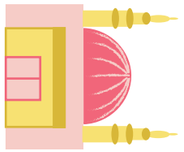
+1 XP

COMMUNITY CENTRE

Your buddy from the buddy project takes you to the community centre to chat with neighbours and to help you with the homework for the language classes. *(see explanation 1)*

+1 +1 XP

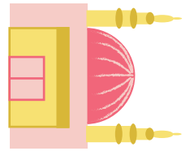
MOSQUE



You are able to attend Friday prayers and meet culturally alike people in a safe and comfortable environment.

+1

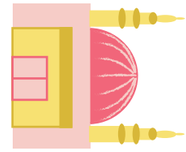
MOSQUE



The mosque provides you with guidance through paperwork and language learning in your own language.

+1 XP

MOSQUE

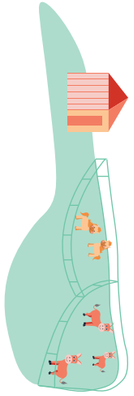


The mosque organises cultural events with other organisations where you can exchange with culturally dissimilar people, make friends and learn about other cultures.

+1

MOSQUE

PETTING ZOO

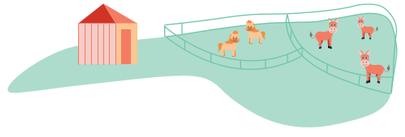


You visit the petting zoo. The donkeys and chickens remind you of the farm you grew up on in Syria. It gives you a moment of peace. If you have children, you tell them stories of the past and of how you grew up.

+1

You receive 2 puzzle pieces if you have young children

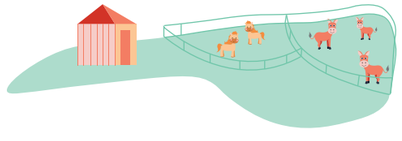
PETTING ZOO



You visit the petting zoo. The animals remind you of home. The people working at the petting zoo are very friendly and offer you a cup of coffee.

+1 +1

PETTING ZOO



You visit the petting zoo. The donkeys and chickens remind you of the farm you grew up on in Syria. It gives you a moment of peace. If you have children, you tell them stories of the past and of how you grew up.

+1

You receive 2 puzzle pieces if you have young children

COMMUNITY CENTRE

The organiser of the music workshop at the community centre sees that your music skills are too good for the workshop and gives you the information on different music studios and groups in town. You can take a card in the music studio without waiting for your turn.

+1

+ go to music studio

COMMUNITY CENTRE

The organiser of the music workshop at the community centre sees that your music skills are too good for the workshop and gives you the information on different music studios and groups in town. You can take a card in the music studio without waiting for your turn.

+1

+ go to music studio

KITCHEN

You want to cook some typical Syrian meals for your neighbours to share your culture with them. You need to go shopping to get the ingredients. You can take a card at the shops without waiting for your turn.

+1

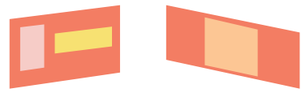
+ go to the shops

KITCHEN

You volunteer to help with cooking for the weekly neighbourhood diner. During the evening you share your cooking tips and have some nice conversations with your neighbours.

+1 +1

EXHIBITION SPACE



The visitors at the exhibition admire your work and show interest in the story behind your artwork. You feel validated and proud of what you have achieved.

+1 +1

EXHIBITION SPACE

An art collector notices your art and offers to buy one of your pieces. He gives you information that helps you to kickstart your artistic career.

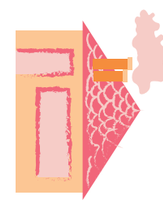
+1 +1 +2 XP +1 €

KITCHEN

One of your neighbours acknowledges your cooking skills and signs you up for the Boeren Markt at the market square, to be able to sell your delicious dishes and share some of your culture with the rest of the town. *(See explanation 3)*

+1 +1 +2 XP +1

KITCHEN



One of the key figures at the kitchen recognizes your cooking skills and ambitions and suggests looking into the entrepreneur packages, which can help you to start your own business. *(See explanation 2)*

+1 +2 XP

STAGE

Together with other musicians you are performing at the Boeren Markt. You are making new friends and sharing your own culture and learning about the Dutch culture. *(See explanation 3)*

+1 +1

STAGE

Your performance at the Boeren Markt was seen by someone who works in the music industry and she offers to help you to build your musical career. *(See explanation 3)*

+1 +1 +2 XP +1

LIBRARY

You want to attend the language classes at the library, but unfortunately the waitlists are too long and you are not able to join straight away.

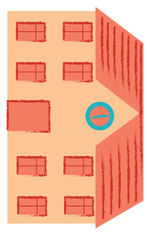
-1 XP

LIBRARY

You are trying to find some Arabic books and decide to ask the librarian, with your limited knowledge of Dutch. Unfortunately, the librarian is not very friendly and does not try to understand you.

-1

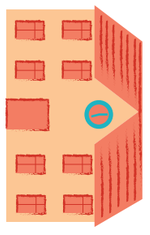
SCHOOL



Your children come up to you with their new friends to ask whether they can play at their house. The mom of the other children comes over too and has a little chat with you.

+2

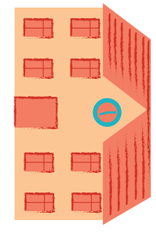
SCHOOL



The parents in the schoolyard don't include you in their conversations and so you stand alone, waiting for your children to come outside.

-1

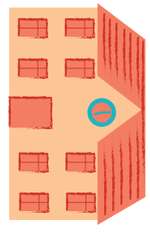
SCHOOL



Your child's teacher invites you to come to the Sinterklaas celebration at school, so you can see how this holiday is celebrated in the Netherlands.

+1 +1

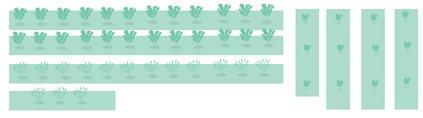
SCHOOL



Your child is invited to a birthday party of a classmate. A fellow parent gives a few tips on what kind of gift to get and on how to organise a birthday party yourself in the future.

+1 +1 -1

COMMUNITY GARDEN



One of the organisers of the community garden, knows that you are struggling with money. He offers a basket with fresh produce for free you can take home. (See explanation 6)

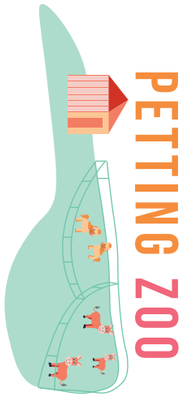
+1

COMMUNITY GARDEN

You plant some favourite plants you had back in your garden in Syria like peppers, tomatoes and basil.

+1

PETTING ZOO



You visit the petting zoo. The animals remind you of home. The people working at the petting zoo are very friendly and offer you a cup of coffee.

+1 +1

MARKET SQUARE

The market seller starts a conversation with you while you are buying some vegetables. He is very patient while you try to find the right Dutch words for the vegetables.

+1 +1 -1 €

MARKET SQUARE

The greengrocer on the market offers fresh figs and apricots that you were not able to find at the supermarket yet. The fruits remind you of home and you buy a few to take home for your family.

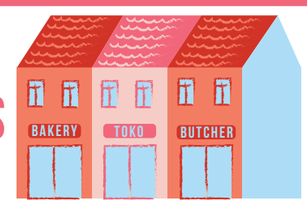
+1 -1 €

MARKET SQUARE

You are strolling through the supermarket and are noticed by one of your neighbours who makes a bit of small talk with you. You are happy that your neighbours recognize you and are actively trying to communicate with you.

+1

SHOPS



The cashier at the supermarket is impatient and annoyed as you do not completely understand what she is saying. You leave the supermarket feeling sad and frustrated.

-1

PLAY GROUND

Your son is playing happily with the children in the playground. One of the moms strikes up a conversation with you and offers a playdate for the kids at her place, while you can drink coffee and eat a Dutch pastry.

+1 +1

COMMUNITY CENTRE

A woman at the community centre recognises your crafting skills during a workshop and introduces you to the maker space in the neighbourhood. You can take a card at the maker space without waiting for your turn. *(See explanation 7)*

+1 + go to maker space

COMMUNITY CENTRE

During the culture day, you bring some typically Syrian dishes. Everyone loves the food and someone raises the idea to go to the shared kitchen of the neighbourhood. You can take a card in the kitchen without waiting for your turn.

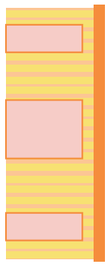
+1 + go to kitchen

COMMUNITY CENTRE

During the culture day, you bring some typically Syrian dishes. Everyone loves the food and someone raises the idea to go to the shared kitchen of the neighbourhood. You can take a card in the kitchen without waiting for your turn.

+1 + go to kitchen

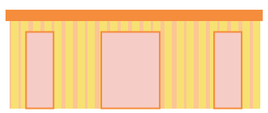
MAKER SPACE



You visit the maker space for the first time. All people are very friendly and eager to explain the possibilities and tools present in the maker space.

+1

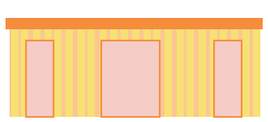
MAKER SPACE



The woodworking tools and machines allow you to start building furniture again. You do need some money to buy some materials for the design you have in mind.

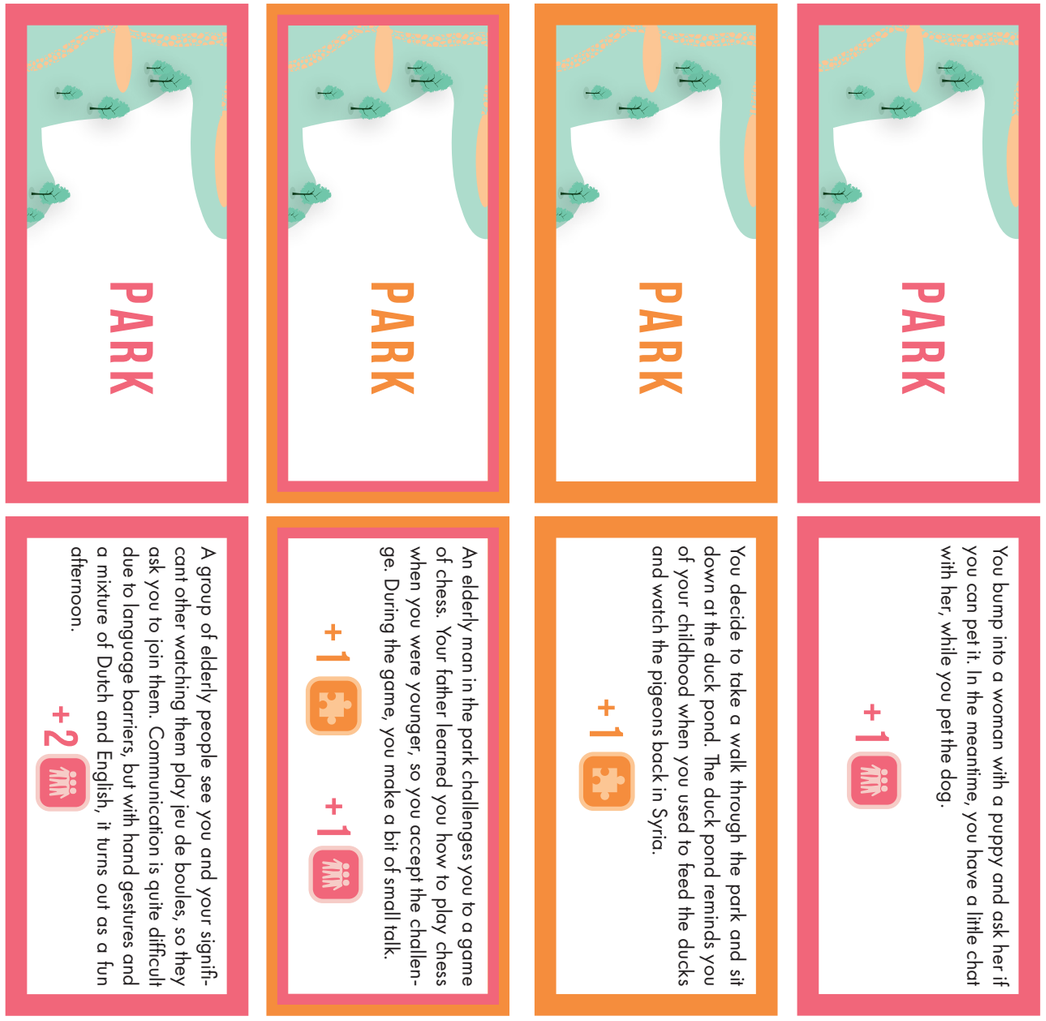
+1 +1 XP -1 €

MAKER SPACE



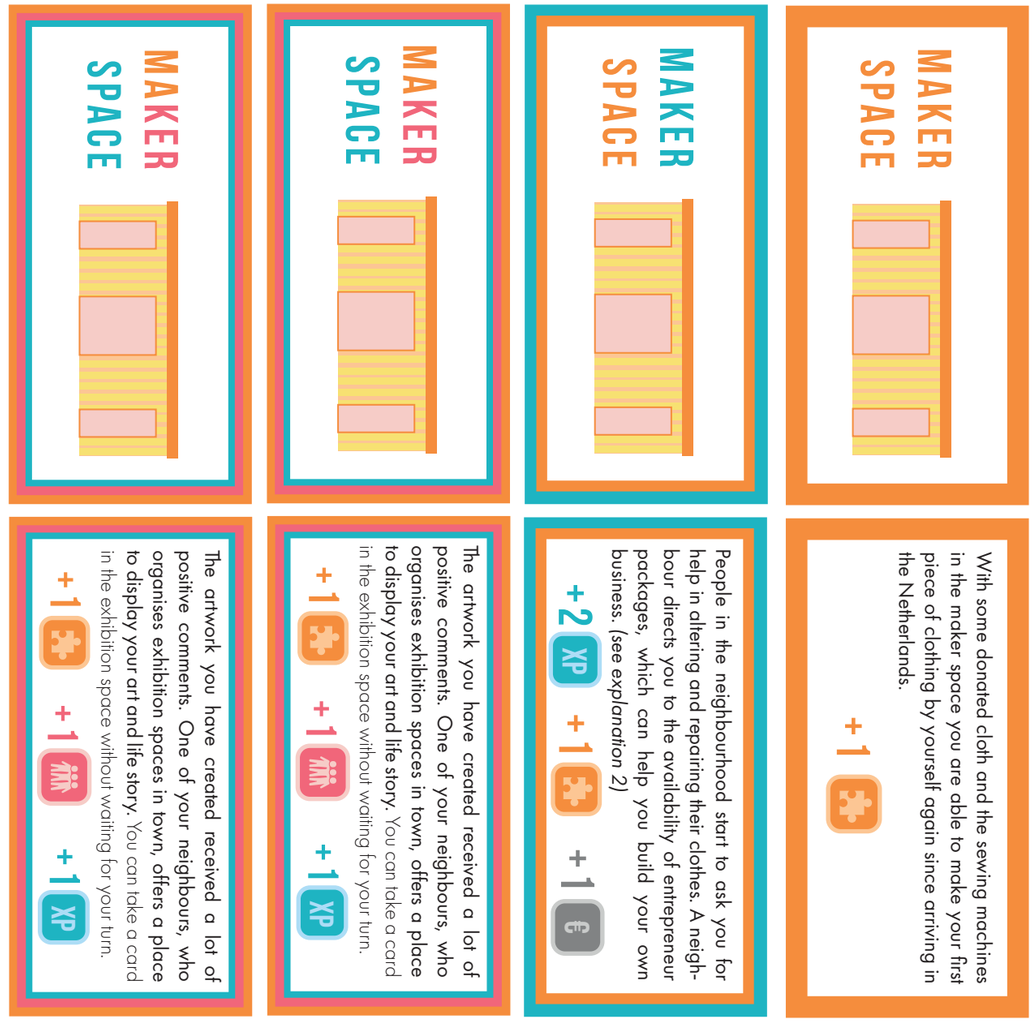
The charity shop in town donated some old furniture which you are able to refurbish with the tools and materials at the maker space. A fellow creative is amazed by your skills and wants to buy the piece from you. You start to see the potential for your own business.

+2 XP +1 +1 €


PARK
You bump into a woman with a puppy and ask her if you can pet it. In the meantime, you have a little chat with her, while you pet the dog.
+1
PARK
You decide to take a walk through the park and sit down at the duck pond. The duck pond reminds you of your childhood when you used to feed the ducks and watch the pigeons back in Syria.
+1
PARK
An elderly man in the park challenges you to a game of chess. Your father learned you how to play chess when you were younger, so you accept the challenge. During the game, you make a bit of small talk.
+1
+1
PARK
A group of elderly people see you and your significant other watching them play jeu de boules, so they ask you to join them. Communication is quite difficult due to language barriers, but with hand gestures and a mixture of Dutch and English, it turns out as a fun afternoon.
+2

PARK
Every year, the town organises a game competition, where different games, for young and old, are spread over the park. You and your family decide to join and play various typically Dutch games, like *ezeltje-prik* and *koekhappen*, with fellow townspeople.
+1
+1

PARK
You try to say hello to passersby in the park, but they turn their heads and ignore you. You decide to go home again.
-1


MAKER SPACE
With some donated cloth and the sewing machines in the maker space you are able to make your first piece of clothing by yourself again since arriving in the Netherlands.
+1
MAKER SPACE
People in the neighbourhood start to ask you for help in altering and repairing their clothes. A neighbour directs you to the availability of entrepreneur packages, which can help you build your own business. *(see explanation 2)*
+2 XP
+1
+1 €
MAKER SPACE
The artwork you have created received a lot of positive comments. One of your neighbours, who organises exhibition spaces in town, offers a place to display your art and life story. You can take a card in the exhibition space without waiting for your turn.
+1
+1 XP
MAKER SPACE
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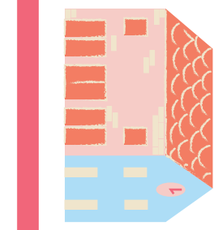
+1
+1
+1 XP

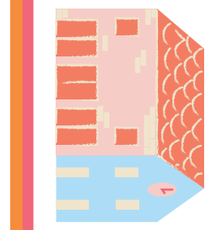
MUSIC STUDIO
The choir is very welcoming towards you. You make new friends and learn about Dutch music. Together with the choir, you are invited to perform at an event. You can take a card at the stage without waiting for your turn.
+1
+1
+ go to the stage

MUSIC STUDIO
At the music studio, you are allowed to practice with the instruments you like. The people at the studio are delighted to hear songs from another culture and propose you perform on stage. You can take a card at the stage without waiting for your turn.
+1
+1
+ go to the stage



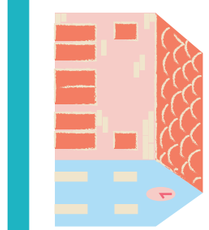
An old man who visits the library often strikes up a conversation with you and asks where you are from. The conversation is still a bit rough as your Dutch is not great yet, but with a couple of hand gestures thrown in it is a nice conversation.

+1



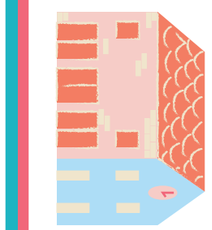
During an intercultural day books and stories from different cultures are shared. You bring one of your favourite books and share it with one of the Dutch women.

+1 +1



You attend the weekly tutoring hour of the Taalpunt to ask a couple of questions you have about the Dutch language.

+1 XP

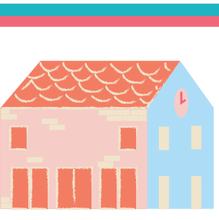


You borrow a couple of Dutch books on Dutch customs. In this way, you learn about Dutch social rules and you improve your language skills.

+1 +1 XP

You have become quite familiar with the librarian. You talk about your struggle in finding a job. She brings you in contact with the communication point in the library. You can take a card at the communication point without waiting for your turn. *(See explanation 4)*

+1 XP +1 + **go to the communication point**



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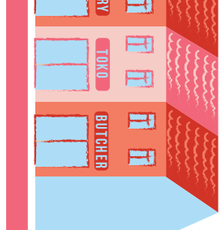
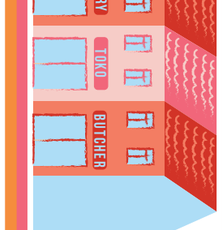


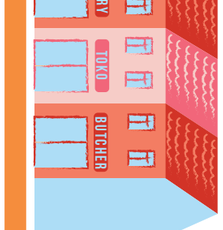
The cashier at the greengrocer spends some extra time chatting with you and offering you some tips on cheap shops in town for clothing, shoes and other utilities.

+1 -1



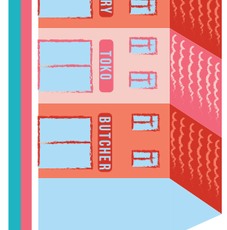
At the Arabic supermarket you find spices that remind you of home and are not available at the supermarket. During shopping you bump into a fellow Syrian, immediately falling into conversation, making a new friend.

+1 +1 -1



The strong smells at the toko remind you of home and inspire you to make a delicious dinner for your neighbours.

+1 -1



The cashier at the bakery gets to know you as you visit quite often. She tells you that they have an urgent vacancy for the packaging of products, which might be interesting in the short term, as you can chat with the other employees while working, improving your Dutch skills.

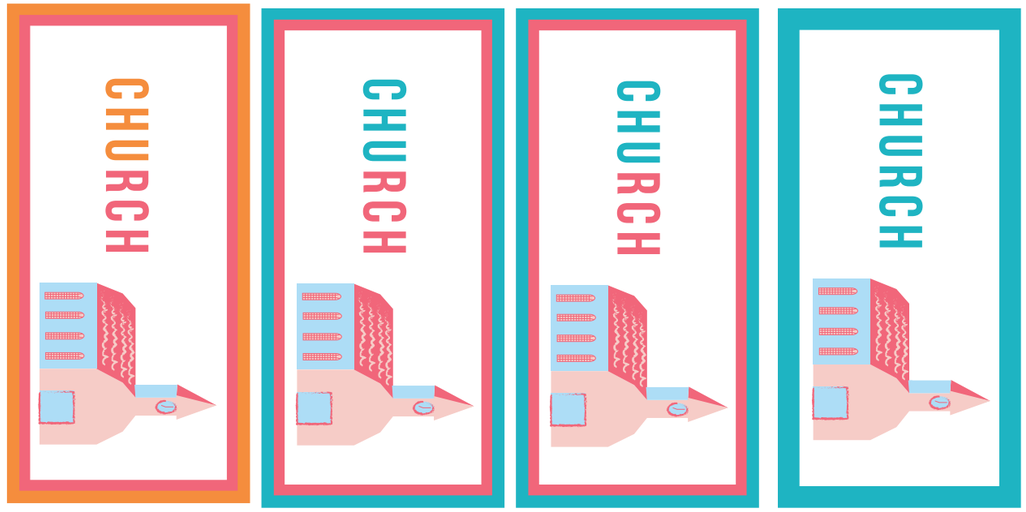
+1 XP +1

The children and parents at the playground are unfriendly. The children do not allow your son to play with them. You leave quickly after arriving.

+1

You chat with one of the moms at the playground. She tells you about some other fun activities in town. Her favourite is the park. You can take a card at the park without waiting for your turn.

+1 + **go to the park**

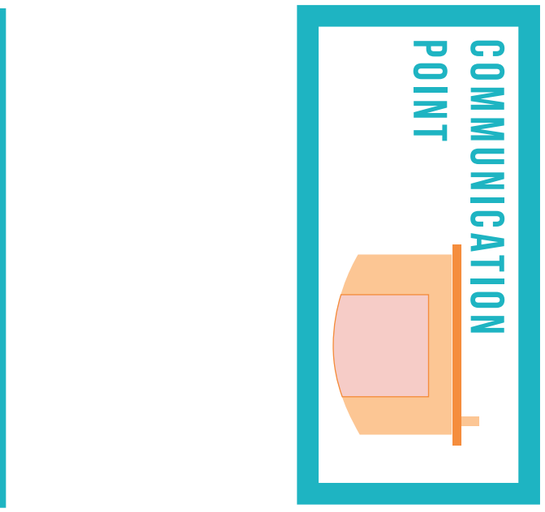


You attend language classes and tutoring sessions at the church to improve your knowledge of the Dutch language.

+ 1 XP

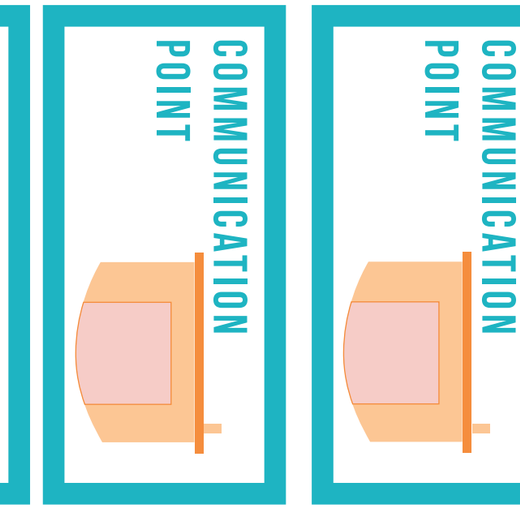
The church helps you by offering a buddy in the Buddy Project. Your buddy becomes your first Dutch friend. They help you with the language, paperwork and getting to know the town. *(See explanation 1)*

+ 1 XP + 1



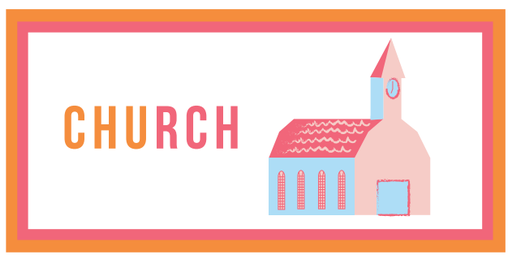
The church organises an initiative where old bikes are collected and donated to people in need. In this way, you are able to travel much further, improving your mobility and offering new opportunities. *(See explanation 5)*

+ 1 XP + 1



The church provides intercultural church services to people from different backgrounds. It provides an opportunity to make friends with fellow newcomers.

+ 1 + 1

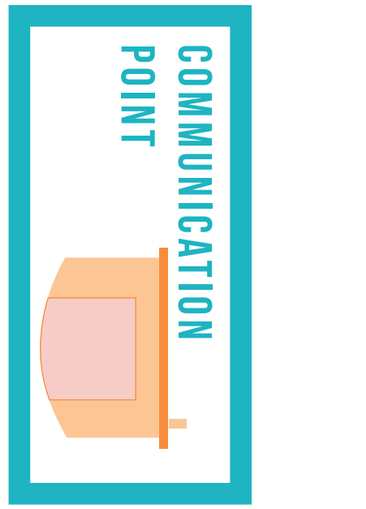


The church establishes a neighbourhood organisation that provides help of any kind to people in need, based on the idea of reciprocity. The organisation helps you during your first time shopping. You can take a card at the shops without waiting for your turn. *(See explanation 6)*

+ 1 + 1 + go to the shops

Together with the gardening group, you decide to cook dinner during the peak harvest season with the fresh produce from the garden. You can take a card in the kitchen without waiting for your turn.

+ 1 + 1 + go to the kitchen



The advisor helps you to get your previous education validated so that your qualifications are in line with Dutch standards.

+ 1 XP

The employee helps you to find a temporary job which offers the opportunity to learn Dutch while providing your family with an income. Once your language is at the right level, the employee will help you find a more suitable job.

+ 2 XP

The advisor finds a suitable training programme that helps you to find a job in your field of expertise.

+ 2 XP

The advisor immediately finds a job for you that fits your previous expertise and education. The company is in desperate need of employees and provides on-the-job training to help you develop your skills.

+3 XP

You raise the problem of not being able to find a job with one of the people you see regularly at the library. The woman refers you to the communication point in the library. You can take a card at the communication point without waiting for your turn. *(See explanation 4)*

+ 1 XP + go to the communication point

You raise the problem of not being able to find a job with one of the people you see regularly at the library. The woman refers you to the communication point in the library. You can take a card at the communication point without waiting for your turn. *(See explanation 4)*

+ 1 XP + go to the communication point

One of your neighbours is picnicking in the park with her children and spots you. She asks you to join them and offers you a piece of cake.

+1

You join a women's yoga morning, organised by the community centre, all the participants are very friendly to you and give you tips.

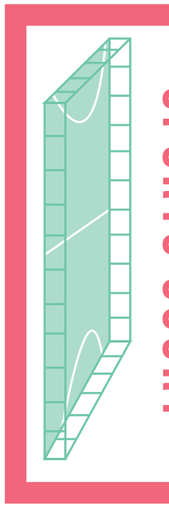
+1

You only receive the reward if you are female.

A football tournament is organised for children. Your children decide to participate and you join them to cheer them on. Fellow parents start talking to you and offer you a cup of coffee.

+2

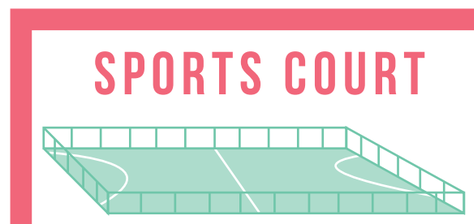
You only receive the reward if you have children



An adult soccer tournament is organised. You decide to join the senior team, who is still looking for teammates. You are welcomed warmly and everyone is excited to see your skills.

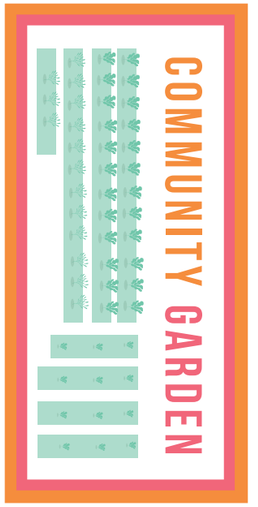
+1

You only receive the reward if you are male



Your family decides to participate in the family soccer tournament. In between the games, you chat with other families and have some drinks.

+2 -1



Together with fellow newcomers, you create a garden that reminds you of home, chatting about the past and your childhoods.

+1 +1

A woman in the cue of the farm shop chats with you while you both wait for your turn. She recommends the best fruits at the shop and how to make pastries with them.

+1 -1

The farm shop reminds you of the markets and fresh products back in Syria, where you are able to see, smell and feel the fresh products before picking them.

+1 -1

The lady at the farm shop offers you a recipe for Dutch *stamppot* with the fresh vegetables they sell at the farm shop.

+1 +1 -1

You strike up a conversation with a fellow gardener and practice your Dutch skills by talking about the lovely weather.

+1

The people at the garden tell you there is no space or time available for you to work in the garden. You leave disappointed.

-1

STATION
OFFICE
THEATRE
PRIMARY SCHOOL
DAY CARE
BAKERY
سوبر ماركت
SUPERMARKET
TAILOR
RESTAURANT–CAFÉ