author Clara Maria Jansen
student number 1518461
graduation studio ExploreLab 18
track Architecture
faculty Architecture
university TU Delft
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research mentor Dr. Ir. Machiel van Dorst
design mentor Ir. Susanne Pietsch
building technology mentor Ir. Jan van de Voort
“It takes a place to create a community, and a community to create a place.”

Fred Kent
I have been fortunate that since a very young age I have been able to visit and experience lots of theatre-, music- and arts-festivals. My father is theatre-tent owner and builds up his mobile theaters at all kinds of events in the Netherlands and abroad. From the moment I was old enough I have worked at several of those festivals. Furthermore I belong to the organization team of the Aprilfeesten, an annual six-day neighborhood music festival in the heart of Amsterdam. I have always liked the festival atmosphere. People of different age with different lifestyles and beliefs are gathered to have a good time with each other. It appears I am not the only one who likes them as the amount of cultural events has exploded in the last decade. I wondered why festivals became so increasingly popular in the last few years.

I have a feeling it is because our current society mainly exists out of independent individuals. We don’t automatically belong to groups anymore. The social contact we have has become very transitory. Because of international trade and the increasing ability of traveling we are constantly moving from one place to another. Media devices keep us connected while being in transit. We shop and dispose experiences one after another. We are living in a society where needs rapidly change. This results in a growing anxiety of commitment, even to one another. Festivals offer the chance of having fun with others and form a group for only a short weekend. Thereafter everyone continues living their own comfortable life, no one to bother. I think our individualistic lifestyles and our desire for short unconstrained experiences enlarged our interest in festivals and cultural events. Only momentary people belong to a group of persons, a so-to-say transitory community.

When I entered the ExploreLab studio I thought I was fascinated by the transportability, the demountability and transitory character of festival-
Aprilfeesten 2014 (own illustration, 2014)
tents. Along the way I however discovered it were not the technical implications of mobile architecture that struck me. All the more I was interested in what social impact festivals have on people, especially in those that last longer than just one day. Festivals of several days have the ability to connect many people in a very short time. During the event the public slowly starts forming a community. The public experience transforms into a collective experience. People get inspired by each other and meet new friends and lovers. I came to realize it was community development I was fascinated by. The downfall of festival communities is that they fall apart after the event has finished as quickly as they were formed. Everyone continues living their life as was the case before. Lately however I noticed there is a growing desire of longer lasting collectiveness among individuals. In many urban neighborhoods community places, set up by creative locals, pop up that facilitate frequent encounter of local residents. Maybe it is due to the crisis that people start seeking each other again, but maybe just because people miss having social contacts in their direct environment instead of miles away or via a screen. Now, when all tires of the church or government are loosened, people are longing for commitment again. People like to belong to a group and are willing to act for the collective goal. The bottom-up community places are perfect examples of places where locally bound community development takes place. This, I thought, was even more interesting than the transitory festival communities. Bottom-up community places that facilitate locally bound community development have become the rescuers of deprived or new residential neighborhoods where the sense of anonymity can be large. Anonymity in residential neighborhoods can cause alienation, insecurity and in the long run even criminality. Local communities are able to decrease this anonymity. Frequent social interaction between neighbors increases the social control in the area. To overcome anonymity in urban neighborhoods
The Corona theatre, a mobile festival tent (Bobbie Roelofs, 2013)
the government now often relies on these spontaneously developing informal places mostly set up by creative minds. „Currently new breeding places are mainly opened in socioeconomic weak neighborhoods that surround the city, […] They get more and more social and economical functions attributed” ¹. I however think it is an essential task of the government to support locally bound community development and not that of local creatives. By supporting locally bound community development, the government, care-taker of a healthy society, could benefit directly for it can save a lot of money on formal control. Social control works better than regulated top-down control. Municipalities should start preventing anonymity instead of trying to solve the negative consequences afterwards. Raising the frequency of social interaction among locals is however not an easy task. The old-fashioned top-down subsidized community centers are no longer the solution. This is visible in the large number of community facilities going bankrupt due to the cutbacks while at the same time self-organized community places pop up in many urban neighborhoods. How can we learn from the creative initiators that set up successful self-supporting places where locals meet one another? How can architecture contribute to this (political) issue? This is the problem field that initiates this research.

The title of the thesis, (a) community building, refers to the fact that a community building should facilitate a social process, that of building a community. The thesis is followed by a design of a community building that facilitates the development of a local community. The location of the design proposal is the Buiksloterham; a post-industrial harbor site in Amsterdam that is currently being transformed into a living/work area. This research functions as a study into architecture that facilitates locally bound community development within the current society.

¹ Griffioen, R. „Hoe de broedplaats een surrogaat voor echte stedelijke ontwikkeling werd’ De Correspondent (Amsterdam: De Correspondent, 2014)


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“A basic and recurring theme in architectural discourse—particularly since the advent of the modern city—is the issue of public space. The story is well known. The rise of the modern city is characterized by the disappearance of self-evident collective clusters (family, local community), which were part and parcel of more traditional and often agrarian societies. Other ‘light communities’ arise and insert themselves within the anonymous sphere of the modern city. Collective experience is transformed, though not suppressed, by the increasing importance of individuality. A new form of ‘collectivity’ arises, not defined by inevitability, but rather through self-chosen communities. Giving form to this new collective sphere is an important challenge for contemporary architecture.”

(Aevermate et al., 2006, p. 2)
Motive

We are all familiar with residential high rise located in the periphery of Dutch cities. Stacked dwellings stand in large anonymous deserts of green supposedly meant for communal use. There is no feeling of belonging to one another or the place. The social housing projects, which were developed as quickly as possible after the second world war to provide everyone a home, do not really incite social behavior. But not only the empty grass fields with gallery flats lack livability. Vinex-neighborhoods\(^1\) and post-industrial sites which are transformed into residential neighborhoods often present the same lack of liveliness. The luxurious ‘over-designed’ living environments seldom facilitate for spontaneous encounter of people. Streets remain deserted. There is little interaction and residents do not tend to know their neighbors. Those neighborhoods can feel unsafe, especially at night. There is a large sense of anonymity.

An anonymous place must not be confused with an empty place. An empty place can be beautiful and inspiring and is sometimes able to clear the mind of the ever busy citizen. Anonymity in places where one should feel safe and secure, like in residential urban neighborhoods, are however undesirable.

Many people like to live in large cities. In cities the social control is lower than in small villages. Citizens like to live as independent individuals. They can wonder around anonymously and do whatever they like without their neighbors constantly watching. Many have their social network stretched out over the city or even the globe. They are always connected through their media devices. A citizen might want to live without any

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\(^{1}\) A Vinex-neighborhood is a typical Dutch phenomenon. The neighborhoods are built according the Vlere Nota ruimtelijk ordening Extra (fourth note on spatial planning extra) from 1991. The new built neighborhoods are large concentrated monotonous neighborhoods in the outskirts of Dutch cities (wikipedia,2014)
Het Breed, a neighborhood in Amsterdam-Noord with a large sense of anonymity.
(www.bouw-adviesbureau-hengeveld.nl)
Anonymous environment in the Buiksloterham (own illustration, 2014)
constraints and not be sociable with its neighbors. However, this same citizen does not want to live in an anonymous neighborhood for it can feel and might really be unsafe. Anonymous living environments are desired by no one. A neighborhood without any social interaction is anonymous (Dorst, 2005). The social control is low which makes it a perfect setting for anti-social behavior (Zimbardo 1969 in Dorst 2005). Apart from anti-social behavior the commitment and care people have towards their living environment decreases as well. Places can become polluted and degraded. In 2005 the WRR\(^2\) published a report called ‘Trust in the neighborhood’. Herein they elaborate on the decreasing mutual engagement among citizens in the Netherlands. The decreasing social cohesion has detrimental consequences like anonymity, alienation, insecurity, criminality and in the end also a decreasing welfare (WRR, 2005). Besides, whereas the mobility of society has increased, there are still certain population groups which are physically quite limited to their direct living environment. Less mobile residents like elderly, families with children and not seldom people with a low income are ‘left behind’ in the neighborhoods with a decreasing social cohesion. They are also fairly limited to finding social contacts within their direct living environment. This can be hard in a neighborhood where there are little places that facilitate encounter.

Unfortunately can the loss of social contact between neighbors only little be blamed on spatial conditions of urban neighborhoods. The loss of social contact between citizens that share the same living environment is due to a number of societal changes. The writers Thierry Baudet and Geert Mak, a journalist and a historian, of the book ‘Thuis in de tijd’ tell us that ‘The context in which we work, love and live is no longer limited by geographical boundaries due to the car, the television, the

\(^2\) WRR stands for ‘De Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid’ which is translated as The Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR, 2005)
Immigration, the growing mobility and the rise in digital and mobile media caused a loss of social contact between locals (own illustration, 2014)
airplane and the internet.” (Baudet et al., 2014, p. 9) The decreased mutual engagement is hard to ignore. It is useful to look at the causes that led to a society wherein citizens no longer know their neighbors as a matter-of-course. There are three main causes that play an important role in the loss of social contact between people that share the same living environment.

The first is immigration. In the last twenty to thirty years lots of immigrants and yups\(^3\) have been moving to the urban areas of the Netherlands. Immigrants from abroad often have different lifestyles and sometimes do not speak the Dutch language very well. Yups are often quite independent and individual as they already have a social network they belong to when moving in. As a consequence the incoming citizens seldom seek contact with their new neighbors. They are not familiar with unwritten rules that exist in certain areas and are often not likely to change their way of life. „The ones who stayed (the original citizens) have been seeing their neighborhood transform and find the new situation threatening. Encounter with other residents is decreasing” (Vogelaar, 2007, p. 5). It makes sense original residents no longer feel at home in their neighborhood as new residents ‘take over’. Mutual trust decreases in a neighborhood where everyone becomes a stranger (Waal, 2013).

The second cause is the growing mobility. Because of the intensified possibility of the use of the car, public transport and maybe also the airplane, people are able to maintain social contacts living at faraway places. Instead of locally investing in social contacts people rather catch a train to meet up with family and friends living elsewhere.

The third cause is the rise of digital and mobile media that has been influencing our ways of getting in though with each other. People

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\(^3\) A yup is the abbreviation of a Young Urban Professional; a term referring to a high educated adult who has a well-paid job and often children and lives in or near a large city (wikipedia, 2014)
Scheme of how to achieve healthy safe and attractive residential urban neighborhoods. This thesis is focussed on facilitating locally bound community development (own illustration, 2014)
increasingly communicate with each other via media devices instead of just having a talk while being able to touch one another and look each other in the eyes. Due to smartphones, computers and tablets physical encounter is no longer a must to be able to communicate. In the book ’The city as interface’, Martijn de Waal (2013) discusses what impact the use of digital and mobile media has on the urban community of cities. He states that persons living right next to us can live in a totally ‘different city’, or you may call it ‘network’. „Currently citizens are merely involved in the environment where they live simply because they live there. The neighborhood, and maybe even the city, are no longer territorial unities with whom they feel connected or where they get the feeling of belonging to a community.” (Waal, 2013, p. 43) „With the accent on efficiency and personalization, digital and mobile media approach citizens as individual consumers and enlarge their freedom in the way they want to organize their lives. With that they simultaneously diminish the mutual engagement among citizens” (Waal, 2013, p. 11).

Only half a century ago population groups were clearly defined in the Netherlands. People belonged to separate pillars which formed strong communities. People adhering the same church also went to the same school, shop and doctor. It was not unusual that whole neighborhoods belonged to one and the same pillar. The mutual engagement and relations among locals was high which ensured interaction in the street. Later, when the pillarisation started to break down in the sixties, the government started building public community buildings and places (that did not belong to a certain pillar) to maintain the social coherence in residential urban neighborhoods. When many people stopped going to church, the sports club and places for cultural activities started acting as places for encounter of locals. In a way, the government partly took over the task of community development the churches earlier fulfilled. Unfortunately, the government now wants to withdraw itself from
this duty. For a long time the Dutch government has been taking care of its folk and spatial environment. The government will however gradually pull back and take a less active role in area and community development. „Holland is traditionally seen as a country of trust in international comparisons. This fact was until recently the reason for senses of pride and contentment among the Dutch. Lately however, this contentment has made place for concern about the Dutch civil society” (WRR, 2005, p. 11). The government proposes a participation society wherein citizens themselves should come into action to take care of their social and spatial environment. This is possible. However, the decreased mutual engagement among neighbors is hard to ignore if we want the participation society to succeed. Residents will not take care of their direct spatial or social environment without feeling responsible or committed to the place or its neighbors.

In order to create safe, healthy and attractive urban neighborhoods it is useful to look into existing well-functioning urban neighborhoods. Jane Jacobs states in her book ‘The death and life of great american cities’ that the two conditions for an economical healthy and livable city are diversity and interaction (Jacobs, 1961). We can implement this theory on the smaller scale as well.

The first condition, diversity, can be obtained through proper urban planning. A diversity of residents with different lifestyles can be achieved by offering different types of dwelling typologies that are of various price range in one neighborhood. By also creating a diversity of functions within the neighborhood a balance is created between residents and visitors who make use of the area at different times. Not only dwellings but also offices, ateliers, cafes and shops should be present. Attention must be paid to the spatial distribution of these public functions in combination with dwellings to prevent nuisance.

The second condition Jacobs refers to is interaction. According to the
WRR (2005) a possible answer to the decreasing social cohesion in residential urban neighborhoods might be found in strengthening the small-scale engagement in which people interact daily. They choose to focus on the direct environment of citizens in which they are being confronted with daily matters of livability. Social interaction among locals must be stimulated. Making citizens interact with each other is however not an easy goal to achieve through physical interventions. Interaction between people cannot be forced, it is not ‘makeable’. People must not be dictated how, when and where they should interact. But doing nothing is neither an option. Instead of forcing people to interact or doing nothing, the right conditions could be created in which people are invited to interact with each other. The right conditions can inspire and invite citizens to organize activities and events. Repeated interaction among the same residents can eventually lead to the formation of a locally bound community. This in turn will increase the livability of urban neighborhoods. By facilitating the development of locally bound communities the anonymity in urban neighborhoods may decrease and hence can prevent urban neighborhoods from becoming unsafe and undesirable places.

The implications of the current society related to individualism as described above and the increased cutbacks of the government on community development will increasingly cause anonymous and thus unsafe and unattractive urban neighborhoods. The retreating government should take up part of the responsibility again by facilitating interaction among residents. The government, care-taker of a healthy society, can benefit directly for they could save a lot of money on controlling forces. The police is often too late when something unacceptable happens. Besides, they work remotely and are not familiar with local affairs. Social control works instantly and according local ‘unwritten’ rules. Besides,
it is more durable than regulated top-down control. The government should start preventing undesired anonymity in urban neighborhoods instead of trying to solve the negative consequences afterwards. In order to do so they should create the right conditions in which residents will organize themselves for the common goal of creating and maintaining healthy, sustainable and lively neighborhoods. The government can only be of influence on (spatial) conditions of the public space for it has no, and surely must not have, control over private situations (meant the private living environment and/or (inter)relationships). Public space that is set up for local community development therefor becomes an important focal point. The public space should possess conditions that facilitate the encounter of locals. The design of such a place, paid by the government, appropriated and maintained by the actual users, is an interesting and challenging task for the architect. The architect should not want to design iconically shaped mono-functional architecture. The architect should try to only design starting points in which many things can happen. He or she only designs the rules of the game after which the users start playing. The completion of the architectural object will merely be a moment in the process and remains subservient to the development of the community. The users take over and are free to change the place according their desires. The architectural object must accommodate simple transformations for the place must be able to expand, shrink or maybe almost disappear. „As social identity is challenged by the effects of globalization, geographically stable place identity can be palliative to vulnerable communities. The architectural profession has a unique opportunity to influence the character of places to the benefit or dis-benefit of the resident and incoming communities.” (Adam, 2012). Architecture on itself cannot built local communities. It can however contribute in locally bound community development through the creation of the right conditions.
This thesis explores how architecture can function as a facilitator in the process of locally bound community development. The research tries to find an answer to the following research question.

*How can architecture function as a facilitator in the process of locally bound community development in the current society?*

The research was started with a literature study to get a grip on the problem statement and to reveal the meaning of some important conceptions that are being used in this thesis. In order to get an answer to the research question has been looked into four precedents of community places that successfully facilitated the development of a local community. What did others do and what can we learn from them? Two precedents are from the past and have been researched by what was found in the literature. Both examples belong to the work of architect Frank van Klingeran who was convinced architecture could play an important role in solving societal issues (Bergen et al, 2003). The public realm was of high importance to him. The other precedents are two community places that are still running today. Both places are situated in Amsterdam and set up by local initiators. The places have been researched by several site visits, interviewing the key players and an analysis of technical drawings of the buildings.

This introduction demonstrates the relevance of community development in the current society and states that architecture is able to contribute on this (societal) issue. The first part of the thesis discusses the conceptions of a community, a place and a community place and cites its characteristics. Furthermore the community buildings from the sixties and seventies by the Dutch architect Frank van Klingeran; respectively The Meerpaal in...
Dronten and t’ Karregat in Eindhoven, are being discussed in this part. The second part includes two case studies of community places that are currently active in residential urban neighborhoods in Amsterdam, respectively the Noorderparkkamer in Amsterdam-Noord and Blijburg in Amsterdam-Oost. The concluding chapter combines the acquired knowledge and gives an answer to the research question.

The title of the thesis is (a) Community building. The a is put in parenthesis to make you aware of the analogy between the noun, a community building, and the verb community building. The thesis states that a building or a place is able to facilitate community development. The thesis is followed by the design of a community place in the Buiksloterham in Amsterdam. The Buiksloterham is a post-industrial harbor site near the city centre of Amsterdam that currently undergoes a transformation into a living and work area. Moreover, because the location of the design is in Amsterdam it was useful to choose two amsterdam-based community places as cases for the research. The design proposal tries to contribute in preventing the new neighborhood from becoming an anonymous place by facilitating the development of a community that is bound to the place.

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WRR (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid), Vertrouwen in de buurt (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005) p. 11.


Johan van Hasseltkanaal in the Buiksloterham, Amsterdam 2014 (own illustration, 2014)
Part I

Before analyzing community places from the past and present, the following chapters will try to define a community place to make clear what is aimed at. First will be elaborated separately on the conceptions community and place. Thereafter the two are combined into one definition. Also the characteristics of community places are being named. The characteristics are clearly demonstrated on the basis of two precedents of Dutch community centers from the past, respectively the Meerpaal in Dronten and t’ Karregat in Eindhoven. These community centers, both designs of the Dutch architect Frank van Klingeran, were quite successful in facilitating the rise of a local community. The architect created interesting (spatial) conditions that invited for encounter of people. Success factors but also drawbacks are being discussed.
“De vorm interesseert mij niet, ook architectuur is voor mij niet van belang. Het enige wat mij interesseert is dat het leven in een bouwsel optimaal moeten kunnen functioneren. De vraag is steeds: Kan ik het aan om een onderdak te maken voor een goed lopend sociaal mechaniekje?”

“The form does not interest me, even architecture is not important to me. The only thing that interests me is that life must be able to function optimally in a build structure. The question is always: Can I manage to make a shelter for a successful social mechanism”?

(Frank van Klinger in Bergen et al, 2003, p. 190)
In order to give a definition of a community place the conception of community is being explored first. In the Oxford Dictionary a community is being explained as „a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common”. Another explanation of a community they give is „the condition of sharing or having certain attitudes and interests in common” (Oxford Dictionary, 2014). The common aspect, which can be almost anything, is the key condition of communities.

The common aspect of a community can be a common goal, a common interest or a shared problem several people share for a certain period of time. A clear example of a community with a common goal or belief is that of football supporters. Football fans gather in the stadium to watch a football match. The crowd in favor of the same football team shares a common goal, that of overruling the other football team. It is them against the others. The united crowds support their football team in victory or defeat. People infect each other with their fanatical behavior and emotions can rise high. You either win or lose, but whatever the outcome, you deal with the result together. This softens the blow. Because of the strong common goal, football matches can work fraternizing. As long as the game lasts, the two crowds form opposite communities. When the match is over however, the strong brotherhood quickly disappears. Apart from perhaps some hooligans, everyone leaves the stadium and continues their own live. The intense belief the crowd earlier shared has gone because the strong but fleeting common goal no longer exists. The communities fall apart with the disappearance of the common goal. Communities can also exist without physical encounter of people. People that have the same interest can for example form online communities. People advice one another about software tricks, give tips about events
or discuss political topics without ever having met each other. The shared interest is that what binds them. Persons who have never met each other before, who do not speak the same language or who are of various age, easily form communities as they share the same interest. The community does not communicate about other topics. People that do not share the interest automatically do not belong to the community. The more particular the interest, the stronger the community, is often the case.

People do not only form communities in a positive sense. When people share a same defect, lack or trauma, they like to gather in order to cope with the shared problem. A clear example might be a community of (ex-)alcoholics. Members of the community support each other by addressing their problems openly within the community. If you do not share the same problem, you are most possibly not allowed to join the community. This because the members are afraid of priers. Because of the rather unwanted connection, these communities can also exist in which all members remain anonymous.

People that share the same living environment can form communities too. This shared living environment only means something in relation to another living environment they do not share. For instance, people who live on a particular side of the road do not belong to the people that live on the other side of the road. People who live in the same living environment, wanted or unwanted, use the same facilities, the same public space and experience the same weather. It is often the case that people with a similar lifestyle share the same environment. This is because people that have about the same interests, goals or problems search for the same living environment. You would think people living in the same environment would connect easily. However, in the current society this seems to be decreasingly the case. In the past there was a much higher amount of social interaction in the street due to a larger mutual interest among residents. Because of a decreased need of social
football supporters (Spaarnestad Photo, 1930)
contacts within the direct environment, the common interests, goals or problems residents share, seldom lead to a locally bound community. Nowadays, the fact that people share the same living environment is often not powerful enough to form a local community. A supplemental common aspect is lacking. This supplemental common aspect can be anything: a common goal, interest or problem. Here is an illustrating example. The municipality decides to demolish a monumental building in the middle of a village. It is an old church, out of use, but beloved by the people living nearby because of its historical and cultural value. The ones who share the opinion of trying to prevent the church from being demolished unite and easily form a community that strikes against the activities of the municipality. The common aspect of this locally bound community lies more in the shared opinion than in the shared environment. People that do not share the same living environment can also become part of the community if they share the same goal. The ones who do not share the same opinion are automatically excluded. The fact that the protest concerns tangible real estate object in a place leads to a local community.

The interests, goals and problems of a person constantly change. Therefore, communities (of persons) are very dynamic. If the common aspect of the community stays upright, community members can be exchanged by others without liquidating the community. But also the common aspect of a community can change when the goals, interests or problems of community members are altered simultaneously. Communities can come into being, grow, change goal or interest, shrink and disappear. In short, a fundamental condition for the development of a community is a common goal, problem, interest, or a combination of those. An important characteristic to take note of is that communities are very dynamic.

This research examines the development of locally bound communities
for it can increase the livability of residential city-neighborhoods. The first condition for the development of a locally bound community must be a shared environment. To make people actually socially interact with each other, an additional condition, a common goal, interest or problem is required that has to do with the place. Before further elaborating on this it is good to understand the meaning of place.
A simple definition of place is „a particular position, point, or area in space; a location”. „It is a portion of space designated or available for or being used by someone”. Both definitions refer to the antonym of place which is space. Space is „a continuous area or expanse which is free, available, or unoccupied”. Space is „the dimensions of height, depth, and width within which all things exist and move”. Space is „the freedom to live, think, and develop in a way that suits one” (Oxford dictionary, 2014). Combining the two explanations one could state a place is „a portion of a continuous area or expanse which is free, available or unoccupied that is designated or available for or being used by someone” or „a particular position, point or area in the dimensions of height, depth and width within which all things exist an move”. Place is usable space. Because the meaning of place does not inhere one true definition the conception has been scrutinized and defined by various sociologists, geographers, urbanists, architects, environment-psychologists, writers and so on. But because this thesis concerns locally bound communities in residential city-neighborhoods the choice has been made to narrow down to definitions of people’s places in urban areas.

Jane Jacobs, a Canadian journalist, famous because of her book ‘The death and life of great American cities’ written in 1961 (Sanders, 2014) including profound observations of urban life, states that „[…] it is people and their action, which make a place and that the place identity is actually the reflection of the users identity above aesthetic and spatial arrangements.” (Jacobs in Marušić, 2012, p. 121). According to her, a place without user’s presence, action or experience, can hardly be called a place. Aesthetic and spatial arrangements are subservient to people’s action.

Christopher Alexander, a famous architect, mainly because of his design
theories, partly agrees with Jane Jacobs. According to him, „The soul of place and the experiences we get does not depend simply on the physical environment, but on the ‘pattern’ of events that we experience [on that certain place]” (Alexander in Marušić, 2012, p. 121). Alexander’s definition is a bit more soft in comparison to Jacobs’ statement that spatial arrangements are little able to create a place. He states that the interplay between the physical environment and the pattern of events develop the soul of a place whereas Jacobs puts people’s experience above aesthetics and spatial arrangements.

Someone else, Edward Charles Relph, a Canadian geographer, states in his book ‘Place and placelessness’ that places are „essentially centers of meaning constructed out of lived-experience. Spaces are being turned into places by imbuing them with meaning, which might be different for individuals, groups or society as a whole. This again emphasizes the importance of sense of belonging and emotional attachment to place. […] a lived-experience of spaces is only possible with the presence of users” (Relph in Marušić, 2012, p. 131). Relph does not put users or the physical environment above one another but speaks of meaning, which can rely on either of them. But also Relph appoints the importance of users in relation to the existence of places.

In conclusion, and then merely referring to people’s places, one could state that a portion of space becomes a place due to the interplay of people’s presence, experience or action in a certain physical environment. That particular spatial environment most likely invites for the presence of those people. The presence of people subsequently transforms a piece of space into a place through experience. In this case one could state that a key condition to make a place is the (bygone) presence of users.
The tree and the bygone presence of users marks a place (own illustration, 2014)
COMMUNITY PLACE

After having explored the conceptions of community and place we are able to combine the two and give a definition of a community place and look into the important conditions to be able to create such a place. Earlier has been explained that communities only exist when people have something in common and that they are dynamic. Also has been explained that a place comes into being through the interplay of people’s presence, experience or action in a certain spatial environment. Subsequently, a community place can be defined as a certain physical environment that is being used by a group of people sharing a certain goal, interest or problem. Primal conditions for the creation of a community place are therefore users that have something in common and a certain spatial environment that invites those users to make use of it. Two characteristics of community places that are important to acknowledge are their dynamic character and the reciprocity between the place and the users. The dynamic character of communities is something to keep in mind when it comes to creating community places. Places are static whereas communities are dynamic. This opposition of dynamic versus static often leads to problems concerning the build environment. Places that are particularly designed and build for a certain community, often have a longer time span than its appropriating communities. Those places are designed for a certain amount of users sharing a particular goal, interest or problem. At the moment the community or its activities change (or expand or disappear), the place does not facilitate well the appropriating community anymore. This is why in the long run many community places become too small, too big, are left empty or undergo many transformations to keep up with the dynamics of the community. The quote of Fred Kent (2014) aims at the reciprocity between the users and the place. „It takes a place to create a community, and a community
to create a place”. A community place is only a place for the community if the community makes use of it. A community place without a relating community does not serve a community and thus cannot be considered a community place. Communities can create places for themselves and, conversely, places can facilitate for the development of communities. When several individuals appropriate a particular site at the same time and keep coming back, a community is able to develop. That particular site most probably meets certain conditions which makes people gather there and not somewhere else. Municipalities often try to create such places in newly built neighborhoods in order to increase the mutual engagement among residents. Christopher Alexander (1977) states that people need an identifiable spatial unit to belong to. In existing cities local groups should be encouraged to organize themselves to form their identifiable spatial units.

The PPS (Project for Public Spaces) is a nonprofit planning, design and educational organization founded by Fred Kent that gives advice in how to create and sustain public spaces in order to build stronger communities. They name four key qualities of successful places: „They are accessible (visually and physically); people are engaged in activities there (a reason to come to a place – and return); the space is comfortable and has a good image (safety, cleanliness, availability of places to sit); and, finally, it is a sociable place (when people see friends, meet and greet their neighbors and feeling comfortable interacting with strangers)” (PPS, 2014). The four key qualities of public spaces the PPS mentions are useful in the creation of community places but remain quite abstract. With an exception of the first and third condition (accessible and comfortable), the conditions are hard to translate into spatial arrangements. For that reason we will now look into two projects of designated community places from the past to look for spatial conditions that invite people to use the place. Also the dynamic and reciprocal character of the community places are
demonstrated. The precedents are build in the sixties and seventies. The first is a community building in the centre of Dronten, a new town in the province Flevoland in Holland, called the Meerpaal. The second is called t’ Karregat and is a community building built in a suburban setting in Eindhoven. The two community buildings, both designs of the Dutch architect Frank van Klingeran, are explored and being compared to search for spatial conditions that worked well in the development of locally bound communities.
THE MEERPAAL

A good example of how a locally bound community developed with the start of a facilitating building was the Meerpaal by Van Klingereren in Dronten. Frank van Klingereren was a controversial and often discussed architect from the sixties and early seventies of the 20th century. He was very much engaged with the social issues of his time and believed architecture could play a significant role in solving these issues (Bergen et al, 2003, p.10). The time was characterized by a segregated society due to the pillarisation and the efficiency-thinking that was set in motion by the industrialization. The social coherence and public domain were threatened to get lost.

Dronten is one of the Dutch new towns built in the sixties in the province of Flevoland. Flevoland is a large reclamation in the IJsselmeer created in the first half of the 20th century. People coming from all over the country came to build up a new home in the new town Dronten. They had different professions, adhered different religions and spoke different dialects. The few thousand new inhabitants of Dronten, belonging to separate pillars, suddenly shared the same environment. The architect Van Klingereren was commissioned to design a community-house for the not yet existing community of Dronten.

The location of the Meerpaal was in the middle of town. The most important intervention of Van Klingereren’s design was the modification of the traffic plan for the entire village. The architect proposed to replace the planned crossing main roads that run right through the middle of the

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1 Pillarisation is the term used for the segregation of the Dutch society from the end of the 19th century until the sixties of the 20th century into several religious, political and/or ideological compartments. The compartments had their own social institutions like schools, churches and labor unions. (Wikipedia, 2014)

2 A new town is a town that has been carefully planned in advance before it is built. (Wikipedia, 2014)
Van Klingerens transformation of the urban plan of Dronten (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 76)
The Meerpaal on the central public square of Dronten (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 77)
city by a ring road. His opinion was that a community centre must not be situated along a thoroughfare. They changed the urban situation and located the community centre in the middle of the ring road. "By creating a ring road we cleared the way for a world of pedestrians in the heart, and of this space we covered and conditioned a piece of 50 x 70 meters" (Van Klinger in Bergen et al, 2003, p. 76)

The Meerpaal consisted of a large roofed space of 50 x 70 meter enclosed by large glass facades on all sides. The enclosed space lied 80 centimeters deeper but could be seen as a continuation of the surrounding square outside. The entrance was marked by some wide steps sunk into the square on the right side of the building. Glass doors under a lowered overhang invited for entering. After passing the low and relative narrow entrance corridor you were guided directly into the high and large indoor space. On one edge part of the floor of the large space was raised a 30 centimeters. On top of the raised floor and eccentrically in the large space there was an elliptical 'open-air'-theatre, to be used in many different ways by changing its set-up. Under the raised floor were dressing rooms, toilets, storage space and a wardrobe for the theatre. The raised floor around the oval theatre continued around the corner where a restaurant was situated. From there you could look out over the conditioned public space where they organized all kinds of public events like markets or sports activities. Around the large indoor space three smaller volumes were added. Those volumes enclosed, defined and facilitated the open space with various functions. One volume contained the restaurant. Half of the volume of the restaurant stuck out of the glass facade onto the outdoor public square. Here the restaurant had its own direct entrance. From the restaurant a lower volume continued around the corner containing a restaurant kitchen, the main entrance under the overhang, a box office and a meeting room. The third volume that again partly stuck out onto the outdoor square is a smaller box volume opposite of
Sport activity in the Meerpaal. At the back the ‘open air’ theatre (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 106)
Johan van Hasseltkanaal in the Buiksloterham, Amsterdam 2014 (own illustration, 2014)
Respectively the plan of the ground floor and the basement (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 101)
the theatre. Indoors under this raised volume a bowling alley is created and outdoors the volume functions as a shelter for parked cars. Inside the volume was a space for small expositions or dance classes. All functions of the building stood in open connection to the large indoor square. The floor of the large indoor square was a continuous white layer of concrete. Nine slender steel profiles evenly distributed over the space carried a steel roof of trusses. The roof had a 7 meter overhang on all four sides. The steel trusses were narrower towards the edges in order to bring the facade’s transparency to a maximum. The facade was made of steel bars with a center-to-center distance of 3,5 meters that carried horizontal steel windows that were fixed from outside. The steel construction was painted dark grey. The facilitating volumes were roughly plastered and painted white. The building did not contain many colors. The only highlights in the interior were pieces of art of the artist Pierre van Soest. When needed, the space could be warmed with radiating panels that were integrated in the ceiling. There were no installations for cooling or ventilation nor windows to be opened and there was no sun shading. Yet mechanical ventilation or cooling was not necessary due to the large indoor space that functioned as a buffer. The space was large enough to prevent for extreme hot circumstances and light enough to quickly cool at night (Bergen & Vollaard, 2003, p. 100).

The architect’s aim was to discourage the segregated tendencies of society of his time by creating new possibilities of encounter between the different population groups by mixing functions and removing walls. He called his approach ‘ontklontering’, which can be translated as ‘unlumping’ society. While ‘unlumping’ and mixing society, nuisance cannot be prevented. Friction may arise at places where people come together for different activities that run at the same time. The architect’s opinion was however that nuisance also is a form of contact. „This form of contact may result in friendship or enmity, or anything in between”
Van Klingeren’s opinion was that spontaneous interaction of people was brought to a minimum through the rationalization and separation of functions in the architectural practice of his time. In his work he strived for imperfection and non-order. Besides this, he tried to design ‘less’. „By doing so, designing less specific and imperfect, both with regard to the function as well as the architectural particularization, space was left open for the unexpected” (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 8). The architect tried to facilitate a social process set in motion by his designated spatial arrangements and materialization. The Meerpaal was completed on the 8th of November 1967, six years after Dronten welcomed its first inhabitants. The Meerpaal, an instant success, became the new town’s centre of social life. (Bergen et al, 2003, p.67-77) They organized sports activities, theatre shows and cultural events. Also weekly, the street market was build up within the walls of the building. This way commercial activities were combined with cultural activities. People that normally did not like cultural events could get ‘infected’ while shopping. Sport activities in the hall continued while the ‘open-air’ theatre had a play. It was the intention of the architect that those things happened simultaneously, to make people interact. After a while however, the acoustic nuisance started to become a problem. This is why after a dozen years of ‘acceptance’ the municipality, listening to the community of Dronten, would make radical changes to the building. With the renovation the open space was divided into smaller ones. This way events could be organized simultaneously without encountering nuisance of one another. Van Klingerence fiercely reacted on this. He believed the transparency and openness of the building should not disappear to keep spontaneous encounter more probable (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 84). But also this form did not survive long. Around the year 2000 the building was almost completely demolished to make way for a new community centre. The new building was though situated on the
The bowling alley (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 108)
same spot and carried the same name. In the end, the original community building did not overcome the dynamics of the community. Before all this happened however, the Meerpaal was a building that successfully facilitated the development of the community of Dronten. „Perhaps that the nuisance of Van Klingeren advocated just in the pioneers situation of Dronten […] and has indeed worked well and is partly to blame for the successful emergence of a strong community” (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 78).
The new community building carrying the same name (www.krantvanlevoland.nl)
Six years after the Meerpaal Van Klingeren was commissioned to design another community building. This time the context was Herzenbroek, a residential neighborhood from the reconstruction period\(^1\) in the Dutch city Eindhoven that needed a transformation. In order to rejuvenate the monotonous and isolated residential neighborhood the municipality proposed to build a multifunctional public facility center. The municipality had the progressive idea of changing the behavior of the inhabitants of Herzenbroek with the design of this new building. The community building would not merely facilitate cultural and sports activities. All sorts of ‘everyday’ public facilities were being combined in the building. Among others a school, a supermarket, several other shops, a cafe and a doctor’s practice were merged in one building. It was an alternative social experiment.

Like with the Meerpaal, Van Klingeren’s intention was to create the right (spatial) conditions for a lively public realm. He though changed his approach. Instead of designing an open and ‘empty’ space that was carefully arranged between serving spaces, the architect proposed a rather chaotic indoor landscape with the everyday public functions scattered around the floor field. It was named ’t Karregat.

’t Karregat was situated in a green little park surrounded by low rise dwellings. The building could be reached by car on one side but was meant to be reached through several lingering pedestrian paths from the park. Instead of one main entrance it had doors on all sides.

In the draft design, ’t Karregat consisted of nothing more than steel umbrellas that covered a large concrete floor without any facades, like

\(^1\) In the reconstruction period (de wederopbouwperiode) many large scale residential mono-functional neighborhoods were built to comply with the housing shortage after the second world war (Wikipedia, 2014).
Urban situation of 't Karregat (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 179)
trees giving shelter to the ground of the forest. Later, mainly for climatic reasons, the design was changed into a flat roof structure with transparent pyramid roof lights placed in a rectangular raster supported by steel profiles and transparent glass facades on all sides. The floor under the roof was chaotically arranged with curved walls, elevations and public functions. Van Klingeren tried to make the community building resilient to the dynamics of the community by keeping the spatial configuration flexible (Bergen et al, p. 157). The roof was independently carried by the steel columns of the umbrellas which made it possible to rearrange the floor field. Another idea was that, if needed, more steel umbrellas could be added to the building. The facade could be taken out or replaced without causing further implications concerning the construction.

The project developer wanted to experiment with the combination of commercial, social, recreational and educational facilities in one building. Schools, shops, a library, a medical practice, a cafe, a supermarket, almost all neighborhood facilities were combined under one roof. The organizations and companies within the building shared facilities like toilets, a bar, a library and storage space (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 158). In the middle of the building was a lowered pit in the floor that could be used for activities for a relatively large public. It functioned like a central public square of a small town. Around this square various open classrooms formed an educational landscape, merely separated form each other by low walls. There was a sports hall next to the square that was enclosed by walls to avoid noise nuisance and balls flying through the building. The hall could be used for physical education of the schools as well as for public events. The more public functions; the small supermarket, bakery, liquor store, florist, hobby shop, drug-store and bank branch, were spread out under the roof on the other side of the central square. Also the doctor’s practice, the library and the cafe/bar were situated here (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 178). The various functions were being managed
One of the entrances of 't Karregat (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 187)
Interior of 't Karregat, chaotic floor landscape (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 185)
Plan of 't Karregat with the central square in the middle and the public functions scattered around the floor landscape. Underneath the elevation with the transparent umbrella structures sticking out the roof. (documentatie bouwtechniek Delft, 1974)
and maintained by its owners and there was one central manager for the public indoor landscape.
The steel umbrellas were placed on a 14,40 by 14,40 meter grid. The glass pyramids on top of the umbrella structure functioned as roof lights that ensured a diffuse light entering the building. In the top of the pyramids an air outlet could be opened. Heating was covered by radiating panels and artificial light by fittings both hung to the roof structure. Between the transparent pyramids of the roof there were steel trusses that carried a flat roof with installation ducts attached to it. Because the floor and facades were cleared from installation ducts they could easily be rearranged or displaced. Moreover, the drainpipes and ventilation ducts were made of flexible tubes so they could be extended easily. The facades were made of steel bars onto which glass windows, multiplex panels or sandwich panels could be attached.
For several years ’t Karregat facilitated informal encounter between residents very well. But again, the noise nuisance, above all in the educational landscape of various schools, led to the construction of partitioning walls. The physical division rectified the noise nuisance but also caused a decrease of spontaneous encounter. In this form though, partitioned boxes under one roof, the community building was exploited for another while. At the beginning of the nineties some of the ’inhabiting’ public facilities left the building due to the emergence of competing public facilities in the area. The municipality started to doubt the existence of the community building as event hall and decided to drastically change the spatial configuration. Public facilities got their own entrance and were separated from one another by internal and external walls. This way the public facilities could operate individually and independently. A detrimental cause was that informal spontaneous encounter between residents was brought to a minimum. The vivid community life of ’t Karregat came to an end (Bergen et al, 2003, p. 162).
Section of constructive design with integrated (climatic) installations
(documentatie bouwtechniek Delft, 1974)
Both the Meerpaal and ’t Karregat successfully facilitated the emergence of a local community. The dynamic character of communities has become very clear in both the Meerpaal and t’ Karregat. The desires of the community of Dronten had changed over the years and were reflected in the construction of a new community building. The original design without walls did not overcome the dynamics of the community. The urban situation of the Meerpaal however survived as the new community building arose on the same spot in the heart of town on the public square. With ’t Karregat something similar happened despite Van Klingeren’s attempts to overcome the dynamics of the community by giving many possibilities of changing the spatial configuration. The absence of walls was again a reason for a rigorous redesign. Walls were pulled up which resulted in a decreased possibility of spontaneous encounter among residents. The load bearing umbrella constructions of ’t Karregat however survived and up till today facilitate communal activities in the neighborhood. The reciprocity of the community and the place becomes clear through the fact that the appropriating communities of the community buildings has been changing the place ever since they appropriated it. The Meerpaal and ’t Karregat worked as catalysts for the development of a local community. After they were appropriated by locals, the place became a popular community place and in turn started attracting more locals. Although the spatial layout of the buildings are very different from each other some identical conditions can be appointed which contributed in facilitating spontaneous encounters between people. In both the Meerpaal and ’t Karregat there was a manager or managing team that organized public events and maintained the building. The independent facilities (the restaurant in the Meerpaal and almost all
facilities in ’t Karregat) were managed by different persons but the coordination managing team ensured cooperation and agreement between them.

The activities and facilities in the buildings were targeted at the local population. In Dronten it was mainly sports, cultural activities and the weekly market that bonded the residents belonging to different pillars. Whereas the Meerpaal was mostly focussed on recreational activities ’t Karregat mostly facilitated everyday activities. Herzenbroek was a neighborhood with many families. All family members had something to do in the building. Parents brought their children to the elementary school after which they could do the groceries and have a talk with the neighbor from across the street.

Both the Meerpaal and ’t Karregat could be approached and accessed in a casual way. The buildings were located in the center of the area for which they were intended, the one on a public square and the other in a little green park. The community buildings were situated along dynamic thoroughfares. Also people that did not particularly had something to do with the community were casually confronted with the buildings.

The routing and the orientation in both buildings were almost a direct translation of the routing and way of orientating in the context in which they were built. In Dronten it was a central city square and in Herzenbroek a park with trees and grass fields. Both are public places, yet the use and manner of moving through are totally different. The Meerpaal is an indoor continuation of the public square, completely with pavers, sitting areas and a central focus point (apart from the ‘open-air’ theatre). ’t Karregat was an indoor continuation of the public park with small paths and little squares without one particular point of orientation. The indoor continuation of the routing and way of orientating facilitates a rather casual entrance of users. The almost unnoticeable gradual transition from being outside the place to being inside the place makes a visitor suddenly
become a participant.

Another condition that made users casually enter was the fact that the Meerpaal and ´t Karregat contained everyday public facilities that were not present in the nearby area. This condition was particularly visible in ´t Karregat as the building contained a supermarket and an elementary school.

The casuality was continued inside the buildings. If someone or a group of people had the idea of organizing a cultural, commercial or sport event it was quite easy to do so as lots of common facilities were present in the community buildings. Toilets, a kitchen, a selling point for food and drinks, storage space and a conditioned space equipped with gas and power supply were available for use after an agreement with the manager. In the Meerpaal the three volumes and the partly raised floor contained the general facilities. The general facility spaces enclosed the free space in the middle. In ´t Karregat the serving spaces were spread out over the floor landscape. A consequence was that ´t Karregat facilitated smaller events only. There was a clear distinction between the serving spaces and the free generic space (central in the Meerpaal and spread out in ´t Karregat). This created a certain ‘freedom within boundaries’. This ‘freedom within boundaries’ is what activates people to organize activities. „[Van Klingereren wanted to design] a collective public space that can be appropriated by users” (Bergen et al, p. 156)

In the Meerpaal as well as in ´t Karregat Van Klingereren tried to divide the community building in specific functions as little as possible causing an array of unprecedented use that was made possible. He tried to make more possible with less architectonic specification. The spaces were not specifically designed for certain functions but remained rather ‘imperfect’ or ‘unfinished’ and stimulated the imagination of users. In the Meerpaal he did so by designing a large functionless space which could become a market hall as well as a volleyball field. In order to make
it become a market hall, temporary market stands had to be constructed and for the organization of a volleyball tournament, volleyball-nets had to be arranged. For the design of ’t Karregat Van Klingeren replaced the oversized empty space by a floor landscape of architectonic elements chaotically arranged under one roof. The seemingly unintentional elevations and curved walls did not predict or dictate specific use, such was the case in the Meerpaal. In both cases it was the ,imperfection’ or ,incompleteness’ of the ground floor plan that inspired people to make use of it for whatsoever.

In the Meerpaal as well as t’ Karregat there were no walls which ensured a rather informal atmosphere. A theatre show was no longer some exclusive event for the higher educated people. No event or activity was more important than another. People had to speak to each other to come to an agreement of how they would organize something. Van Klingeren’s aim of building without walls was to facilitate spontaneous encounter of people. A drawback of this was the noise nuisance. The disadvantage of (noise) nuisance between functions was turned into an advantage by Van Klingeren for he said nuisance ,also is a form of encounter’ (Bergen at al, 2003, p. 8). From the moment walls were being pulled up to prevent for noise nuisance the main goal, that of facilitating spontaneous encounter, was no longer achieved and broke down the informal atmosphere. Although the nuisance could have been of help in the development of the local communities the original design of both buildings did not withstand the desires of the community.

It was the intention of Van Klingeren to accommodate spatial rearrangements within the community buildings to overcome the dynamics of the communities. He tried to make the buildings as flexible as possible. In the Meerpaal the flexibility of use was taken into account by designing a large rather oversized space. But the flexibility was also achieved through a well conceived placement of the installations. A free
floor field was created by integrating climatic installations in the roof structure. The flexibility in ’t Karregat was put to an extreme. Indoor space could be added and disposed by constructing or demolishing load bearing umbrella structures of the building. The facade could be replaced and installations rearranged. The community almost had full control over how the building should look like. This ensured that ’t Karregat remained in an ever imperfect state.

What we can learn from Van Klingeren is that he thinks in dynamic processes instead of static forms. He considered architecture as subordinate to the sociological experiment. (Bergen at al, 2003, p. 82) Both the Meerpaal and ’t Karregat were buildings of their ’zeitgeist’ and both successfully facilitated the creation of a locally bound community. Despite the architect’s aim to make the community buildings possibly respond to changes within the local community, the designs unfortunately could not, in the end, overcome the dynamics of the community. The Meerpaal was renovated in the eighties but after some decennia it had to be almost completely demolished and redesigned to serve another community generation. In the case of ’t Karregat the educational functions turned out to be very unsuitable public facilities for a community building. After a rigorous redesign of the building, also here, the spontaneous encounter of people came to an end. The urban situation of both buildings however withstood the dynamics of the community as they are still public buildings. The original load bearing structures are currently used for other spatial arrangements. Actually, the architect meant this to happen. Van Klingeren however always disagreed with partitioning walls as this would bring spontaneous encounter to a minimum.
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Part II

After having defined a community place, analyzed its characteristics and explored spatial conditions which can facilitate encounter and thus the development of a locally bound community of precedents from the past, it is useful to look into community places of today. The following two chapters are case studies of community places currently active in Amsterdam. The case studies start with a description of preliminary conditions of the context, the process of coming into being and spatial conditions of the community places. Thereafter a conclusion is being drawn which contains relevant findings of how architecture can function as a facilitator in the process of locally bound community development.
“In many cities, urban wastelands and vacant structures suddenly metamorphose in exuberant places. After city planners and the real estate market have failed in their initial attempts to develop them, these sites become the setting for clubs and bars, start-up firms and art galleries, migrant economies and informal markets, recreational activities and nightlife. Indeed, it is often precisely here that innovative cultural production and a vibrant public sphere are to be found.”

(Oswalt et al, 2013)
Public event at the Noorderparkkamer in summer. (own illustration, 2014)
Ik denk dat het heel erg helpt als mensen zelf vorm kunnen geven aan hun ontmoetingsplek. Ze kunnen een speelplaatsje aanleggen, een tuintje of een voetbalveldje. Als je samen een gebied gaat ontwikkelen met buurtbewoners, bedrijfjes en organisaties, dan werk je volgens mij heel goed aan het opbouwen van een buurt. Maatschappelijk heeft het veel betekenis. In de toekomst kan je zelfs geld uitsparen op welzijnswerk of hulpverleners omdat een wijk die zichzelf organiseert veel sterker wordt.

“I think it really helps when people are able to contribute in shaping their own meeting place. They can create a little playground, a small garden or a football field. It helps when you develop public places together with neighbors, companies and organizations. Then they really contribute in the development of the neighborhood. Socially it means a lot. In the future one might be to be able to save money on social work and workers because a neighborhood that manages itself becomes a lot stronger.”

Simon van Dommelen
INTRODUCTION

The Noorderparkkamer is a 'temporary’ park pavilion located in the rather degraded part of the Noorderpark in Amsterdam-Noord. In 2008, a team of initiators placed a small pavilion in the park and started organizing events for and with local residents in and around the pavilion. The Noorderparkkamer gradually but successfully turned into a community-hub that welcomes and connects the diverse population of the northern district of Amsterdam. Lately, the temporariness of the pavilion has been put into question.

This case study examines the emergence of a community place within the existing suburban fabric of Amsterdam-Noord. In order to get a grip on the success of the Noorderparkkamer, the case is divided in three parts.

In the first part the prior conditions in which the community place came into being are explored. It starts with a historical overview of the development of Amsterdam-Noord with a focus on the demographics and spatial data of the district. The overview is based on information found in the literature. The contextual conditions of the direct environment of the pavilion are researched through observations on site and underpinned with an interview with one of the founders of the Noorderparkkamer.

The second part tells the unique story of how the Noorderparkkamer came into being. The story is based on an interview with Simon van Dommelen, business leader of the Noorderparkkamer foundation.

The third part is an exploration of spatial conditions of the pavilion(s). The analysis is done by studying original design drawings and a site visit to examine the current situation of the pavilion. Illustrations and pictures support the matter.

Interesting conditions in relation to the creation of a community place
which serves a locally bound community are being discussed at the end.
The Noorderparkkamer pavilion in the Noorderpark (own illustration, 2014)
The Noorderparkkamer and the Noorderparkbar in the back, both in closed situation.  
(own illustration, 2014)
Amsterdam-Noord across the IJ in the top of the picture (www.fundamentalconcepts.nl)
„Ze noemen mij een vandalist
Maar als ieder toch eens wist
Wat bet is om in Noord te wonen
Het kost veel tijd om in de stad te komen
Weinig kroegen, geen bioscopen
Alleen een telefooncel, die zullen wij slopen”

„They call me a vandal
But if everyone would know
What it’s like to live in the North
It takes time to get into the city
Little bars, no movie theaters
Only a telephone booth, which we will demolish”

(“Ik verveel me zo (in Amsterdam-Noord)”, Drukwerk, 1981)
Amsterdam, the capital of Holland, counts just over 800,000 inhabitants (CBS, 2014). The city is geographically divided by a broad waterway from east to west called the IJ. The IJ splits the city into a southern and a northern part. On the southern bank is the beautiful old city. Most citizens live on this side. The northern part is only inhabited by approximately 90,000 people (O+S Amsterdam, 2014). The smallest distance between the districts is about 300 meters. Pedestrians and bicyclists can cross the IJ with a ferry and car drivers use tunnels or the ring road. The northern district has long been separated from urban life as most urban facilities are situated on the southern bank.

Amsterdam, originating and developing on the southern bank, was not much interested in what lied across the IJ until the 19th century. Then, due to the Industrial Revolution, the fast growing capital needed land for industry and housing. The northern bank was considered a suitable area for it was rather close to the city centre yet far enough to industrialize without causing any health problems for the affluent citizens of Amsterdam. Shipyards and companies like Shell started settling across the IJ. Simultaneously, as the economical growth and prosperity of around 1900 demanded for a quick expansion of the housing stock, housing associations, commissioned by the municipality of Amsterdam, started building residential neighborhoods in the northern district. They mainly built according the garden city principle. To surpass the impoverished working class neighborhoods of the inner city they built neighborhoods with spacious homes full of light surrounded by lots of greenery with schools and churches close by (Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsdeel Noord, 2014). Only put on hold during the first world war, the northern bank of Amsterdam quickly developed into a new city-district mainly consisting of industrial areas and garden-city like neighborhoods for the working
Noorderpark, a park in English landscape style, without users... (unbreakable-nl.blogspot.com)
class.
Until 1921 the IJdijk, currently named the Nieuwendammerdijk and Buiksloterdijk, was more or less the northern border of Amsterdam. Quickly however, the borders of the capital were shifted further to the north incorporating small villages like Buiksloot and Nieuwendam. A whole new city district was emerging on the other side of the IJ. After the second world war there was again a huge shortage of housing. In the fifties the housing stock in Amsterdam-Noord was extended by the construction of neighborhoods with the typical small duplex houses (twee-onder-een-kapwoningen). Many of those neighborhoods were constructed by housing associations related to socio-religious compartments of the pillarisation. These neighborhoods had their own neighborhood facilities and consequently turned inwards. The sixties and seventies were characterized by the construction of the typical portico- and gallery flats of modernist times in which private gardens were being exchanged by green open fields, meant for collective use. The years that followed were dedicated to the urban renewal of the neighborhoods from the twenties. The residents of these neighborhoods moved to new neighborhoods within the northern district or further up north to the province of Noord-Holland. At the same time, immigrants from Morocco and Turkey moved into Amsterdam-Noord due to its cheap housing prices (Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsdeel Noord, 2014). Meanwhile, because the socio-religious compartments started to break down, the municipality took over responsibility concerning local community development in the working class neighborhoods. From 1970 onwards, Amsterdam shifted its industry-based economy towards an international service based economy. This had a huge impact on the

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1 Pillarisation is the term used for the segregation of the Dutch society from the end of the 19th century until the sixties of the 20th century into several religious, political and/or ideological compartments. The religious compartments had their own social institutions like schools, churches, labor unions etcetera. (Wikipedia, 2014)
working class and the physical environment of Amsterdam-Noord. The deindustrialisation caused high rates of unemployment and left behind abandoned industrial buildings and polluted wastelands. Furthermore, the related economic crisis led to cutbacks on public facilities. There was not much to do in Amsterdam-Noord. The amsterdam based pop-group Drukwerk from the eighties once wrote a song that was called „ik verveel me zo (in Amsterdam-Noord)” which is translated as „I am so bored (in Amsterdam-Noord)”. The couplet of the song at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates the lack of public facilities in the northern district at the time.

To this day, the post-industrial status of Amsterdam-Noord remains problematic. In order to uplift the derelict post-industrial areas, the municipality of Amsterdam turned its approach towards attracting educated and high income citizens to the highly potential waterfronts of the IJ. Furthermore, housing associations have changed their strategy and are no longer controlled by the government because of the privatization since the nineties. They started to build less for the wealthy and turned their focus to the higher incomes. They did so to gain money, through selling expensive property to the higher incomes, to be able to build for the poor. This resulted in the fact that the qualitative areas of the north of Amsterdam are increasingly inhabited by the rich and that the lower income working class is pushed outwards to the periphery of the city.

In short, at the moment the Noorderparkkamer was called to life, Amsterdam-Noord mainly consisted of mono-functional neighborhoods with little public facilities and meeting places. The population of Amsterdam-Noord can be narrowed down to a mixture of original working class inhabitants, immigrants mainly coming from Morocco and Turkey and the recently moved in „creative’ class with a relative high income.
Right in the middle of the northern district lies the Noord-Hollands canal. The construction of the canal was started in 1819 (Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsdeel Noord, 2014). Almost a century later the residential neighborhoods for the laborers of the factories were developed. Two parks were developed around the canal as part of the ideals the government had for the working class. The green areas were meant for recreation and could provide the residents with some fresh air after working hours and in the weekends. The Florapark was developed in 1921 on the westside of the canal in english landscape style. The park was provided with neighborhood facilities like a childcare, an in- and outdoor swimming pool and playgrounds. Soon after, the Volewijkspark was developed on the other side of the canal, also in english landscape style. Still, the parks with the canal in the middle form the green core of the northern district. The canal, running north-south, always kept the parks separated from each other. In 1968 this division was increased by the construction of the IJ-tunnel and the Nieuwe Leeuwarderweg. The new motorway cuts right through and makes it even more difficult to get from one side to the other (Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsdeel Noord, 2014).

Since the seventies the number of visitors that used the parks started decreasing. The car made it possible for families to go to nicer recreation areas further out of the city. Also, the public facilities in the two parks suffered from cutbacks and had to close or were sold and changed into private real estate. Because of a lack in maintenance and use, the parks turned into gloomy and sinister places. The few people to be found were the homeless and some people walking the dog two times a day. The public parks, once meant for the recreation of the working class, got a bad reputation (Bergevoet et al., 2013, p. 191). According the municipality the green core of Amsterdam-Noord had to be reconstructed quickly to prevent the surrounding neighborhoods from decreasing in value. To
Abandoned skatepark in the Noorderpark (www.fundamentalconcepts.nl)
reach this goal they launched a design contest at the turn of the century which was won by the urban design office West8. The winning design proposed to physically connect the two parks. By constructing bicycle bridges and lowering the highway they could let the two parks function as one big park. This one park, in total covering 30 hectares, would get the name the „Noorderpark” (Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsdeel Noord, 2014). More park users would be attracted by restoring the park and giving it a modern touch. Furthermore the municipality planned a new metro station of the North-South line in order to give those who live further away the possibility of reaching the park easily. On locations inside the park that had a high potential for liveliness, for they lied along bicycle roads, park pavilions would be built and rented out to provide for earnings to cover the costs of the park. A sum of 32 million euro was reserved for the reconstruction of the parks. (Bergevoet et al., 2013, p. 191) They started transforming the Volewijkspark on the east side of the canal first. In 2008, after two years of construction, less than a quarter of the design was being completed whereas half of the money had yet been spent. The reconstruction was being paused for an indefinite period of time. While was being sought for other sources of money to be able to finance the rest of the reconstruction, the untouched part of the park, the Florapark, remained unused. The degradation of the park would increase further if not someone would come into action.
The grass field besides the Noorderparkkamer (own illustration, 2014)
A music event at the Noorderparkkamer, visited by many. (www.noorderparkkamer.nl)
„Een park gaat pas leven als je er gebruik van maakt, als je er programmeert”

„A park only start living when it is used, when you organize something”

Simon van Dommelen
Waving at Passers-by

It all started in 2008 with Floor Ziegler. She, a former producer, business director and coach in the classical music scene, came to live on the Buiksloterdijk in the north of Amsterdam. She was asked to become culture scout in her new living environment Amsterdam-Noord. Her idea was to connect all artists in the district to build up a wide network of creative minds. To let the northern residents get in touch with (professional) arts and culture, Floor’s idea was to bring arts and music to the district instead of sending them to one of the museums or concert halls in the inner city across the IJ. Floor had many artistic and musical friends and only a suitable place to start her project kept her from starting right away.

Unless its bad reputation, Floor saw an opportunity in the gloomy Florapark that lied opposite her house. She contacted the project developer of the Noorderpark to ask for possibilities of setting up a cultural program in the park. The project developer saw a chance in lifting up the bad reputation of the park with a cultural program. A quick solution for the degrading park was urgent in order to keep the surrounding neighborhoods from sliding off more and more. The municipality and the project developer of the Noorderpark saw Floor as the right person to create more liveliness. And so it happened she could start her initiative of bringing arts and culture to the northern district. To Floor, the unmaintained park was the perfect place to implement her ideas. A natural green environment and lots of open space were directly available. Only a stage for the artists to perform and some basic facilities were missing. The project developer offered Floor the task of seeking a suitable temporary pavilion that could facilitate the cultural program. The pavilion had to be mobile so that, if money would become available again to finish the reconstruction of the park, the mobile pavilion could
Exterior of the Noorderparkkamer with the red letters on top. (own illustration, 2014)
be easily removed to make place for the planned real estate. Because Floor was born in a family of architects she had the right network to find a mobile pavilion that suited her ideas. Floor contacted someone of the architectural office Korteknie Stuhlmacher which owned a large folder with hundreds of architectural ‘parasites’. An architectural parasite is a replaceable architectural artifact that can be placed in and on existing constructions. The folder also contained many mobile pavilions that could function on its own. The project developer let Floor choose the pavilion that suited her ideas most. Floor chose the pavilion of the Swiss architects Meili & Peter that was originally designed as a wood workshop in Switzerland in 1989. Later, From 2001 until 2007, the pavilion was transported and used as an information desk at the international urbanism exhibition ‘Welcome in my backyard’ in Hoogvliet Rotterdam. Various parasite pavilions were part of the six year during exhibition which served as a model for the reconstruction of post-war neighborhoods. Some pavilions became superfluous as the exhibition came to an end in 2007. Two reasons were very important in Floor’s decision of choosing this particular pavilion. One important reason was that the pavilion was extremely cheap as it was being sold for the symbolic price of only 1, euro. Another important reason was that Floor immediately imagined a stage if the big sliding door of the pavilion stood in open position. The municipality arranged and payed for the transportation costs of the temporary pavilion. The pavilion was demounted and transported from Hoogvliet Rotterdam to Amsterdam-Noord. The ‘mobile’ pavilion was not entirely suited for transportation. Large and heavy parts had to be loaded on big trucks. Whereas the pavilion only cost 1, euro, the total costs for the transportation and reparation were 200,000, euros. The location of the temporary pavilion was based on future developments of the Noorderpark, chosen by the architect of the winning design Adriaan Geuze in consultation with the project developer. The park design of
render of redesign by WEST8 of the Noorderpark with a new bridge (WEST8, 2003)
West 8 proposed a bridge over the canal halfway the Noorderpark. A big park pavilion was planned at the foot of a proposed new footbridge and the crossing of two yet existing bicycle roads. This pavilion would be equipped with a restaurant, a big terrace and many rentable spaces. „The plan of the new park design was to develop real estate to support for vitality at places in the park where the chance of traffic, movement and meeting were biggest but would also provide for financing the development and maintenance of the park itself. Creating and maintaining a park costs a lot.” (Dommelen, 2014) The perfect location for the temporary pavilion of Floor was found on the spot where in the future the big park pavilion would arise. While the sewage, electricity and licensing was taken care of by the municipality, the demounted pavilion was temporary stored at the NDSM shipyard nearby. As the demounted building was not being protected against rain, some parts went rotting and had to be repaired before they installed it in the park. Also it was made vandal resistant to prevent it against sceptic loitering teenagers. After the municipality arranged the sewage, electricity and concrete slabs as foundation, the temporary pavilion was placed near to the two existing bicycle roads slightly hidden behind some green. It was placed at the edge of a green grass field surrounded by tress with the openable parts of the pavilion facing the open field. Furthermore, big red letters were added on the roof carrying the new name of the pavilion „Noorderparkkamer”. The letters were pointed towards the adjacent bicycle road. After the installation was done Floor started using the Noorderparkkamer as her new office space. While working she often opened the large sliding wall to be able to get in contact with other park users. She waved at every person passing by. The park was still not being used much. The homeless and dog walkers were sceptic at first but quickly got used to the woman waving at them. After a while they started waving back. While Floor was setting up the cultural program she also searched for colleagues who help
outdoor activity at the Noorderparkkamer (www.noorderparkkamer.nl)
The playground of natural materials (www.noorderparkkamer.nl)
The interior of the Noorderparkkamer as study. (www.noorderparkkamer.nl)
organizing the starting initiative. Because of her large network, a group of enthusiastic persons was quickly formed. Together they worked in the park inside the pavilion on their first activities. The very first activities were important as the right target-group, the so-to-say early adapters, had to be attracted. „Great connectors are children, dogs, sport activities and free events.” (Dommelen, 2014) Slowly but successfully, by introducing the right program on the right time and with a lot of patience, the organized activities of the Noorderparkkamer started attracting people. At first, the Noorderparkkamer mainly attracted people from the higher income creative class. A bit later however, it started attracting the working class and immigrants as well. Even the homeless lingering in the park started coming to the pavilion. Everyone was welcome to do that whatever they were good at. Women organized Moroccan cooking workshops and a homeless person got deeply involved in building a fireplace with the children every sunday (Dommelen et al., 2012). Many people got inspired by the freedom to organize whatever they wanted to. If someone wanted to organize an activity he or she just had to pay for the required supplies. He or she did not have to pay rent for the use of the location or basic facilities of the building. This was possible because the Noorderparkkamer was being subsidized by the municipality. Because the pavilion is easily transformed from an enclosed indoor space into an open stage, it facilitates for a very diverse program. The one pavilion is suitable for cooking workshops, talent shows for young rappers, formal meetings and office practices. Also the freedom of the adjacent outdoor grass field inspired people. Some frequent visitors, in cooperation with the managing team, built a playground next to the pavilion, made of natural materials such as tree trunks and bamboo sticks.

As the Noorderparkkamer is meant for everyone, the program had to be adjusted to all kinds of cultures, interests and activities. Furthermore, the
The interior of the Noorderparkkamer as concert room (own illustration, 2014)
managing team actively tried to prevent exclusion of certain population groups. “At one point they accused us of attracting too many mothers with children”.

The organized activities in and around the pavilion seemed to be a success. The Noorderparkkamer organization discovered what arts and culture can mean for a society (Van Dommelen et al., 2012). All kinds of people, both locals and visitors, come together in the Noorderparkkamer.

After a while the managing team of the Noorderparkkamer started thinking about extending the place as the crowd was getting bigger. Also, they needed a source of income as the funds of the municipality were being reduced. A proper cafe to get nice drinks and food was missing. Together with an architectural office they developed the ‘Noorderparkbar’. The unit, smaller than the Noorderparkkamer, is built of second-hand elements bought through the website marktplaats.nl. The new cafe was built next to the Noorderparkkamer and could be exploited independently. The Noorderparkbar got a lot of publicity as the concept of building with second-hand building elements was quite original and in line with the sustainability issue of today. The cafe is run by others but officially belongs to the Noorderparkkamer foundation. The goal of the Noorderparkkamer foundation is to continue with (community) activities and become less dependent on funds of the municipality. There is a plan to spatially extent the community place even further in 2015. A third pavilion will be placed across the canal, again in an unmaintained piece of the park. The new pavilion will function as a classroom of the Clusius college, a nearby green college. Pupils of the college will be able to put their theoretic knowledge into practice in the Noorderpark. This way the pupils simultaneously contribute to the maintenance of the park. Outside school hours the pavilion will be rented out to external parties. The classroom pavilion will be made of three old construction sheds.
Proposal for the new classroom pavilion (bureau SLA, 2014)
which are to be covered with recycled plastic. The facade will be made of plastics which are collected, sorted and transformed into plastic slates, manufactured with the help of future users. The costs of the pavilion will remain low as the construction sheds are a gift and the surface of the facade will be made by people for free.
maquette of the pavilion with movable parts (www.meilipeter.ch)
„Ik zag meteen een podium voor me”

„I immediately imagined a stage”

Floor Ziegler
A pavilion of €1,-

The pavilion is designed by the Swiss architectural office Meili & Peter Architekten. They were commissioned to design a workshop pavilion for wood working. The location was a terrain for the storage of wooden planks. The materialization of the pavilion therefor consists, almost logically, mainly of wood. When the workshop pavilion got out of use in its original location it was transferred to Rotterdam for the urban exhibition WIMBY. There it functioned as an information desk. The Noorderpark is yet the third location of the wood workshop. The function changed from a wood workshop to an information desk and eventually into a community hub.

In the role of Noorderparkkamer the pavilion is situated on the west side of the Noord-Hollands canal near two bicycle roads on a grass field enclosed by trees. A small path of asphalt lingers through the open space. The pavilion is placed on the edge of the open field and remains humble under the high trees. The small public building can be passed without compulsory engagement. The form or style of the pavilion does not take into account the context of the park as it was originally designed for a wood workshop in Switzerland. The contrast makes the pavilion noticeable as it stands out against the rather old-fashioned park in landscape style. The pavilion has a clearly defined open front and closed backside. The front is positioned towards the open grass field. The building is not properly funded in the ground but stands on standard concrete slabs. These same slabs are also used to create a little terrace in front of the pavilion. At some spots around the terrace wood chips are sprinkled to prevent the grass from getting marshy. The Noorderparkkamer reaches a large and broad public. The building itself is however relatively small. The pavilion is 11 meters long, 5.5 meters deep and only counts one floor.

The building is rectangular but has one slanted wall at its backside that can
The interior of the Noorderparkkamer as cosy living room (www.noorderparkkamer.nl)
The situation of the Noorderparkkamer and the Noorderparkbar on the grass field in the Noorderpark next to the bicycledroads, lingering park paths and the Noord-Hollands canal.

(own illustration, 2014)
section and plan of the Noorderparkkamer (own illustration, 2014)
be associated with wooden boards that lean up against the pavilion. The architects were probably inspired by the original location of the pavilion which was a terrain with wooden boards and pallets. Another aspect that inspired the architects of the pavilion was the constantly changing stacks of planks (Meili et al., 2014). Half of one exterior wall, part of the roof, and an indoor partitioning wall are movable. The movable elements represent the changing environment of piles of wood. The moving roof and walls can effectively transform the spatial arrangement of the space. The right panel of the exterior front wall can slide to the left, revealing half of the interior. An underlying transparent panel of glass can also slide sideward. This aspect of the pavilion inspired Floor Ziegler to use it as a stage for performances. While the artists played under a roof the public could watch the performance from outside.

The little pavilion consists of five spaces that can be transformed into four by moving the interior wall. The spaces of the pavilion have a clearly determined division from public to private spaces. The 'official’ entrance of the building is situated on the short side of the building. A wooden ramp leads towards a raised floor with an overhanging roof. A large door, visually incorporated in the wall, connects outdoors directly with the main public indoor space of the pavilion. This space can be divided in two even parts by a hanging movable interior wall in the middle. After entering you see on the right the partly movable exterior wall. The wall contains checkered openings in the form of diamonds. On the left side is a long closet wall that stretches from one side to the other. Two door height openings are incorporated in the closet wall and lead to a lower and smaller elongated kitchen. One side of this space is the same closet wall. On the other side a kitchen counter stretches over the full length of the space and leaves little space to walk. Daylight comes in through high placed opaque windows above the kitchen counter. On the two far ends of this space there are doors that lead to even smaller spaces. One
Exterior of the Noorderparkkamer with the entrance door closed. (own illustration, 2014)
is a small office and the other is a toilet. These are considered to be the most private spaces of the pavilion. The office is used only by members of the Noorderparkkamer. A little less private is the kitchen space. This space is mainly used by the Noorderparkkamer team but also by people that rent the pavilion. The main space can feel either private, collective or public. When it is raining outside and a concert is being given with the exterior wall in closed position, only a small amount of people fit inside. The main space feels like a living room where you should be invited. At the moment the exterior wall stands in open position and the main space is used as a stage focussed towards the grass field, the main space turns into a private space for the artists and outside the public can enjoy the event. When a workshop is being organized and the exterior wall is in open position the public outdoor space easily flows over to the interior. Most activities and events are organized in summer and take place around the pavilion. In winter the activities mainly take place inside the pavilion and thus are of a rather collective character.

The pavilion is entirely made of wood. The construction consists of exposed wooden beams and columns. The load bearing construction is taken up in the walls of the pavilion. The building elements of the pavilion never solely act as partitioning elements. Part of the roof can be moved to function as a roof light, the movable exterior wall turns the pavilion into a stage and in the interior a division is made with a closet wall that can be used from both sides.

The stability is obtained by diagonal wooden planks in some of the fixed exterior walls. This is probably the reason why the windows on the front side are diamond shapes on alternate height.

Most exterior walls are painted in a dark brownish red color to prevent the wood from degrading. In order to make the pavilion vandal resistant the windows are covered with metal sheets and big locks are applied on the entrance doors. „The pavilion is however made of wood and
sometimes they threaten to burn it down.” (Dommelen, 2014)
Out of this case study interesting conditions can be extracted that successfully facilitated the development of locally bound community. The Noorderparkkamer has been set up by an enthusiastic managing team. They got to know many locals and got attached to the place in the park. The presence of the managing team inspired locals to make use of the place and the locals in turn inspired the managing team to keep on organizing events.

The Noorderparkkamer has a program that consists of large public events in the weekends, weekly repeating workshops but also private occasions. The wide range of possibilities make a lot of (different) people come to the place on a regular basis. An important binding component proved to be children, sports and culture (music events or cooking workshops). The success of the Noorderparkkamer did not merely depend on the enthusiastic managers and the right program but also on some contextual and spatial conditions. Through a profound analysis of the community place, spatial conditions that have stimulated the development of the local community have been extracted.

Because the gloomy park had no purpose for the next few years there was a lot of freedom. There were little rules or restrictions. The community of the Noorderparkkamer was allowed to light a fire which is restricted or regulated in most city parks. Also, the community place could easily expand.

Another reason it was an attractive location was the fact that, unless the park was not being maintained for a long time, the park still possessed a lot of greenery. The Noorderparkkamer only had to redraw the attention to it.

Apparently, the need for cultural activities was high. For families it is much of a hassle to travel all the way to the inner city. Because of the
little amount of other public facilities in the nearby area people where
drawn to the liveliness of the Noorderparkkamer.
The costs for the transportation and the repair of the pavilion were paid
by the municipality. Also the payment and installation of the sewage, the
foundation, water, power and gas supply were paid and organized by the
municipality, something a local would not have been able to do.
The Noorderpark is surrounded by residential neighborhoods. The park
in which the pavilion is placed is unless its degraded state still open to
the public. The building is located near two dynamic bicycle roads so it
would attract the attention of passers-by. It is placed on the edge of the
grass field enclosed by trees and remains humble under the high trees.
These conditions make the Noorderparkkamer a casually approachable
and accessible place. The place can be passed without any compulsory
engagement. The front of the pavilion is positioned towards the public
glass field and gets a very open character when the sliding wall stands
in open position. Therefor the Noorderparkkamer ’works best’ on hot
days when it does not rain. On those days the Noorderparkkamer-space
is extended onto the grass field. Someone walking in the park is casually
invited to the community place. The border of being outside and inside
the place is almost invisible. The gradual transition makes the place
casually approachable and accessible. In wintertime the park pavilion is
most of the time only used by the managing team and sometimes by
some private occasions but attracts lesser people.
The array of ways to use the building inspires people. As the activity
is not imposed by the spatial conditions of the pavilion people start
inventing and become creative with what is present. The movable building
elements, the exterior and interior sliding walls, can open up or enclose
spaces of the pavilion in order to get the desired spatial arrangement for
a certain activity. There is not one dictated way of using the pavilion.
It is quite easy for eager people to organize events themselves because
The transition of being inside or outside the place is almost invisible which causes a casual approachability and accessability. (own illustration, 2014)
someone does not have to pay rent for the use of the Noorderparkkamer. They are able to propose ideas and can organize activities in consultation with the managing team. All are welcome to do that whatever they are good at. The fact that people are invited to take part in the organization of events inspires and activates a lot of people.

The presence of sewage, power, water and gas supply, toilets and a kitchen also stimulates the organization of events. Without these basic facilities the place would have been a lot less comfortable and people would be less eager to organize activities.

The managing team and the users make use of the same facilities which creates an informal atmosphere. Also the smallness of the pavilion and place creates a certain transparency and honesty.

The exterior of the pavilion is made vandal resistant to prevent skeptics from demolishing the building.

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terrace of the Blijburg beach pavilion on a summer day (own illustration, 2014)
We willen een plek zijn van simpel geluk, een plek, voor de buurt en voor de stad, waar alles mogelijk is.

“We want to be a place for simple happiness, for the neighborhood and for the city, a kind of place where everything is possible”

Stanja van Mierlo
**INTRODUCTION**

Blijburg is a community place based around a beach pavilion which was practically built in the middle of nowhere. The pavilion was built on empty sand plains in the water of the IJmeer where the new neighborhood IJburg would arise soon. Eleven years later, Blijburg, a gypsy self-made beach pavilion, and the modern housing blocks of IJburg, developed by a professional project agency, belong to each other. What started as a temporary solution to deal with the ‘dead’ environment of IJburg during construction works, unexpectedly evolved into a popular community place citizens like to visit to escape from city life.

The case study has been done by studying the literature, observations on site, an interview with one of the founders of Blijburg Stanja van Mierlo and some analyses of old technical drawings.

The case study tells the unique story of how the community place emerged in a rather ‘tabula-rasa’ environment. The case is divided in three parts.

It starts with a short history of the development of IJburg based on information found in the literature. The very few but not least important prior contextual conditions of where the beach pavilion was built are explored. Characteristics of the physical environment are explored and a population profile of IJburg is being sketched. The physical conditions are researched through observations on site visit and through an analysis of old drawings and pictures. A qualitative reconstruction of the contextual situation of Blijburg in the past is obtained through the interview.

The second part describes the coming-into-being of the community place. The story is based on the interview with Stanja van Mierlo, the one who founded Blijburg in 2003 and to this day runs the business. The chapter is supported with pictures and illustrations.

The third part investigates spatial conditions of the community place
that stimulated people to use the place, both then and now. Descriptions of Stanja van Mierlo helped in reconstructing the spatial arrangements of Blijburg throughout the years. Also old drawings of plans and sections have been studied. The current situation of Blijburg is observed on site. In the conclusion interesting conditions in relation to the development of the community place are discussed.
The beach Blijburg on a summer day (own illustration, 2014)
The beach shop of Blijburg (own illustration, 2014)
The sand plains of IJburg with the IJmeer (Het bidboekje van Blijburg 4.0, 2014)
“Het nieuwe concept van een stadsstrand trok veel nieuwsgierige Amsterdammers over de brug naar IJburg. De tot dan toe vastgelopen huizenmarkt trok met een ruk aan en huizen gingen als warme broodjes over de toonbank. IJburg werd mede door Blijburg hip & happening. En dat was nodig voor de wijk IJburg.”

“The new concept of a city beach attracted many curious citizens from Amsterdam and got them over the bridge to IJburg. Up to then the housing market was stuck but with the arrival of Blijburg the houses were selling like hot cakes. IJburg was partly due to Blijburg hip and happening. And that was needed for the IJburg.”

(Het bidboekje van Blijburg 4.0, 2014)
THE SAND PLAINS OF IJBURG

IJburg is a neighborhood built on a series of custom-made islands in the IJmeer between Amsterdam and Almere. The neighborhood belongs to the eastern district of Amsterdam and is connected to the main land by bridges. It can be subdivided into four smaller islands that carry the names Steigereiland, Rieteiland, Haveneiland-west and Haveneiland-oost. A long broad road through the middle of the islands, called the IJburglaan, connects the islands with each other. The road contains car and cycle paths, tram tracks in the middle and a large space for pedestrians on both sides. The total district counts 7163 dwellings, 69 shops, 13 primary schools and 1 secondary school. The built-on area is still expanding (Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsdeel Oost, 2014).

The spatial planning institute of Amsterdam was responsible for the urban planning of IJburg. The construction of the islands, which in total cover 464 hectares, was started in 1996 to meet with the housing demand of the capital (Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsdeel Oost, 2014). Solutions for the growing housing need were mainly investigated in the form of densification or development of new residential areas in the periphery of Amsterdam. The attractiveness of living by the water played an important role in the choice for the development of residential islands in the IJ (Lee, 1995) For that reason water is a big theme in the dwelling designs on IJburg. Many homes have direct access or views to the water that surrounds the island. Also, many waterways lead through the district and Steigereiland mainly consists of floating houses.

The urban and architectural design was done by various Dutch offices that had to work together. The architecture is a combination of large modern housing blocks developed by different architects and individual parcels on which residents could design their own house. The very first house was completed in 2002 (Mierlo, 2014). The first buildings were
Typical environment of IJburg; sand ground ready for construction with contemporary housing in the background (own illustration, 2014)
surrounded by large surfaces of sand on which the wind had free play. Since 2002 the amount of residents has been growing with only a short stagnation during the financial crisis in 2008. At the moment IJburg counts 17,368 inhabitants (Stadsdeel Oost, 2014). The large majority of the population of IJburg has an average to high income. This is due to the fact that the houses for sale were quite expensive (Tilman, 2001) Many yup families chose this living environment as it lied close to their work in the inner city yet it was like being surrounded by nature.

The population of IJburg is rather young. One third of the inhabitants is younger than 18 years old and only 3% is older than 65 years. Only 28% of IJburg is social housing. (Gemeente Amsterdam Oost, april 2014)

The exact location of Blijburg is difficult to grasp as it has been moved a several times. Though, in all situations the pavilion was located on the north-eastern waterfront of IJburg. On this shore one can look out over the IJmeer, a view on the horizon with sailboats and kite-surfers. When Blijburg opened its doors in 2003, IJburg was still inhabited by only a few residents. They lived in one housing block that was built on the other side of the island. The piece of sand on which the beach pavilion was constructed for the first time lied halfway across Haveneiland on the north-eastern shore. The sandy waterfront, or one could call it a beach, would not be under construction for the coming 17 months. The location consisted of nothing more than large surfaces of sand and water. The pavilion, which was an old construction shed, was positioned towards the vast water surface, with a view on the horizon.
A flea market on Blijburg with the Chapel in the background (own illustration, 2014)
“We totaal geen idee van wat er nodig was op zo’n plek. Achter het paviljoen bouwden we een laag muurtje met een geïmproviseerd dak en dat was dan onze opslagplek.”

“We actually had no idea of what such a place would need. Behind the pavilion we built a little wall with an improvised roof and then that was our storage space.”

Stanja van Mierlo
The place of her dreams

2001 - 2003

It all started in 2001 when Stanja van Mierlo, a woman in her early thirties, organized a festival for the ice-cream company Ben & Jerry’s at the beach pavilion Timboektoe in Wijk aan Zee. Stanja’s work was organizing events for various brands to uplift their image. They called it „communication of experience”, a combination of public relations and advertisement (Mierlo, 2014). Organizing the Dutch version of the Burning Man festival on a beach in Holland was an idea Stanja had cherished for a long time. She refused to do business with big brands or money lenders as she would have to conform to their style and choice of music. The boss of the ice-cream company Ben & Jerry’s, which was still a small company and did not belong yet to Unilever, had faith in her idea and offered to sponsor the event of her dreams. Stanja set up a team to make it happen. With the little amount of 8.000,- gulden the event was a big success mainly due to the unlimited energy and enthusiasm of the organizing team. Through the success of the event Stanja knew she was capable of starting her own business. While the North-Sea coast of Holland was yet full of beach pavilions, Stanja saw a gap in the recreative use of freshwater near the city. A trendy place with an Ibiza-vibe was what she had in mind. In the process of organizing the beach event at Timboektoe, Stanja met Britt Stegerhoek. Britt, a woman of similar age, had a long experience in the catering business. Stanja shared her thoughts with Britt of starting her own business without having to compromise to the demands of sponsors. Stanja and Britt had a lot of creative friends they could call to help set up the business. The only thing lacking was a

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1 A hippy-like festival in the desert of Nevada in the United States.
2 Gulden is the old currency of Holland. 8000,- gulden can be converted to approximately €3600,- euros.
suitable location to start their dream business. Every friday they searched for locations near freshwater in and around Amsterdam. Finding a location proved more difficult than they initially thought. The heard about the new custom-made island in the IJmeer and pitched their idea at the office of the project agency. Unfortunately the project developers of IJburg were not convinced. At the time, they did not belief the windy and sandy emptiness would become a problem for selling the property. Soon however, the project agency realized a bit of liveliness would do good to promote IJburg. They started looking for volunteers that would want to run a temporary beach pavilion to attract possible buyers for the new apartments. A piece of land was reserved on the waterfront that would not be under construction for the coming 17 months. Stanja and Britt got notice. They knew an operating period of 17 months was way too short to be able to payback a business but they anyhow wrote their plan of approach. The project agency chose the plan of Stanja and Britt because of their complete and large-scale concept. Also, it would cost the project developers very little. The two young and creative women finally found the right place to realize their dream.

2003 - 2005

Stanja and Britt were able to loan €180.000,- from a bank that believed in young entrepreneurs. On top of that, each of them invested €7.500,-. The project agency wanted them to start a beach pavilion and defined the location of where they would start their business. The project developers took care of the sewage and electricity. All that had to be constructed below ground was financed and constructed by them as they knew the future plans of the ground. All the rest, the paths, the building and its facilities were taken care off by Stanja and Britt. In return, the starting entrepreneurs did not have to pay rent for the use of the ground. With concrete slabs, which were partly financed by the municipality, they built
a path for the wagons and a foundation for the pavilion. Because they
did not have a lot of money they started building the beach pavilion of
scrap wood. For the pavilion they had a certain gypsy atmosphere in
mind which was easily achieved by constructing it with left over materials
they were able to collect.

Inside the pavilion they built a stage, a bar, toilets and a kitchen. The
kitchen inside the pavilion was outsourced as this was too complicated
for them to built themselves. Stanja, Britt, a lot of friends and some
employees of an employment agency worked hard to make the pavilion
ready for the first summer season in 2003. Most of them slept in gypsy
wagons on the location. During daytime the wagons served as offices
and at night they were their beds. The whole crew, including its founders,
constructed the place together. After long hours of work they enjoined
the freedom of the beach place, threw parties and created bonfires.

When Blijburg opened for the public it almost continued in the same
way. The team members were creator and visitor at the same time. Stanja
and Britt worked behind the bar, improved some constructions here and
there and partied along with their clients. Artists from the inner city were
invited to give performances. Along the way they figured out what spaces
were necessary and so it happened the place gradually expanded. When
they opened the pavilion for guests, the whole backside of the pavilion
was still open. „We actually had no idea of what such a place would need.

Behind the pavilion we built a little wall with an improvised roof and
then that was our storage space.” (Mierlo, 2014) In order to serve all the
guests they needed more cool storage space than they figured. They were
given a shipping container they used as a large refrigerator to cool the
drinks and food they sold. This of course needed extra electricity. Not
the project agency, but they themselves had to dug for new power cables.
Materials that were available served to built improvised storage space,
tables and windshields. To keep the costs low and because the crew of
Site plan Blijburg 1.0. The front is positioned towards the IJmeer. (Van Mierlo, 2004)
Blijburg was quite small they only had self-service. They expanded the place with a little shop to sell beach products and a tiny library where you could lend books for a day at the beach. The building permit came half a year too late but as the municipality and the project agency started the idea of a temporary beach pavilion themselves it did not matter. Blijburg was a success from the start. Week after week they programmed bands, DJ’s and parties. They were not restricted to closing times as there were hardly any neighbors to complain. As a matter of fact, the few neighbors most likely participated in the activities of Blijburg. The carelessness and incompleteness of the place did not matter. The lack of restrictions attracted the young public of Amsterdam. Coming from the inner city they withstood the trip all the way to the empty sand plains for a bit of fun and freedom. The city folk loved to take a swim or a breath of fresh air in the far city district. At night they were coming for the cosiness of the bonfires. „It was like being on a short holiday” (Mierlo, 2014). The place was born and marketed itself. The rumor of ‘a place where everything was allowed’ off course spread like wildfire. To get there was a journey of discovery on itself. It was not easy to find by yourself so you had to be invited by someone who had already been there. People discovered the spaciousness and views of IJburg and actually started to like the new built environment. The crew and regular visitors of Blijburg started to represent a community. To the satisfaction of the project agency, the community of Blijburg contributed in giving IJburg the identity of a place with many recreational possibilities and a large freedom. IJburg was put on the map.

After the period of 17 months the project agency allowed Stanja and Britt to continue with Blijburg for another year. Blijburg served well in attracting potential buyers for the developed property and the construction works on the particular site were delayed. The community of Blijburg was happy they could continue for another season. For the
Interior of the Chapel (own illustration, 2014)
second summer season they wanted to expand the place to be able to serve more people as the place became increasingly popular. Also, with another pavilion they could earn some money by renting out the space for private occasions. The turnover of a beach pavilion stands or falls with the weather. „With bad weather you still need to pay the band” (Mierlo, 2014). An extra indoor space could steady the irregular income. They however did not get a permit for the expansion of Blijburg. Stanja and Britt figured out tents do not fall under the same license and started searching for potential tent constructions. They were able to get hold of an old military tent, an elongated dome made of an aluminum frame covered with canvas. The dome can be extruded by building more of the same segments that can be clicked on to the structure. They attached the tent on the short side of the existing pavilion and called it the Chapel. The Chapel was used as a small external stage for live music and independent parties such as weddings. The layer of canvas was too thin for a comfortable indoor climate so they started to isolate the tent by covering it with cloths as insulation material and wooden panels. Because they could rent out the Chapel as a wedding- and private party location they were able to run the business in wintertime as well.

27 months later Blijburg finally had to close its doors. The beloved beach place had to make way for a large housing project. The pavilion, the built additions, the wagons and the concrete slabs had to be cleared from the location. The crew of Blijburg was responsible for the removal. The wagons could be taken away easily but the pavilion and its improvised additions had to be broken down. They were able to store the building elements and materials inside the Chapel on a parking lot on IJburg. The removal of course cost a lot of money. „After those months the project agency thought we were very successful and very rich, which of course was not true. Doing business on a temporary basis is very expensive. Paying off in a couple of months is something else than paying off in the
The different locations of Blijburg on the shore of the IJmeer (own illustration, 2014)
somewhat 15 years a normal entrepreneur does.” (Mierlo, 2014) Stanja and Britt ended up with the small profit of €30,000,- each.

2006 - 2009

To the great indignation of frequent visitors of Blijburg and the new residents of IJburg the fun at the island came to an end. The community of Blijburg therefor united for a protest. The project agency responded to this in proposing to built a second version of Blijburg on another piece of sand a few hundred meters further to the east from the old location. IJburg still contained large plains of sand on the waterfront that were not yet to be developed.

Britt left the business and went after her love and left the country. Stanja used the profit she earned from the first two seasons of Blijburg to overcome the period before it was to be opened again. „I remember very well that I was broke a couple of days before Blijburg II opened its doors and that I had to think of what to do with my last money” (Mierlo, 2014). A cup of coffee is what she bought. For the application of the new building permit, Stanja asked for a couple more square meters in order to be able to expand the business. Before rebuilding the site they drew a plan to arrange the spaces more carefully for better logistics. They expanded the site with several mobile sheds and tents. They placed a yurt a bit away from the pavilion to be used as an independent assembly room to be rented out. Furthermore they built a massage shed and hired a mobile toilet-unit to provide for more toilets. Also they introduced a more defined backstage patio for the crew and artists. Blijburg II opened its doors in the summer of 2006 and at a distance of 300 meters from the original place. It took several years, but after a lot of party days the crew gradually started to manage the business more professionally and introduced automation. At this location they ran their business four summer seasons. But again it was temporary due to construction plans.
The situation of Blijburg 2.0 in 2006 on the shore of the IJmeer. (own illustration, 2014)
of the project agency.

2010 - 2014

During the winter of 2010 Blijburg was moved again for the third time in seven years. Blijburg moved to the south-eastern corner of IJburg, the far end of the island. This is the current location of Blijburg. The place is large and wide. Because of the large open space and the permission to cover more square meters the pavilions are more spread out. The Chapel is disconnected from the pavilion and can consequently facilitate more independent programming. The Chapel is being used as shop, as a yoga studio or as a ‘chapel’ for beach weddings. The crowd that visits Blijburg has changed over the years. The young and arty crowd from the inner city is extended with a broader public including families, elderly and lots of residents of IJburg. The programming of Blijburg has changed as well. The current programming is a mix of shows given by artists from the city and events organized by residents of IJburg. Every sunday morning the beach pavilion facilitates for a theatre show for children and every friday residents of IJburg organize a music night where talent from the island goes together with talent from the inner city. Schools organize beach volleyball tournaments next to the pavilion in cooperation with the municipality. Blijburg offers the space, the atmosphere and basic facilities such as water supply and toilets. Festivals or large events are organized by Blijburg itself or by companies that fit to the spirit of it. The business is now run by an established team of 15 persons. On sunny days it can happen that 40 to 45 employees are serving the large crowd. Children from IJburg who learned walking at the beach of Blijburg in its first years, can, eleven years later, start working as runners in the pavilion. This comes in handy as they can be called upon quickly when the sun breaks through and gets busy. An alarm is being installed to ward the pavilion from thieves. It all became a lot more professional compared to
the first years of the beach place. Blijburg III is already going into the fourth season on the same location. Because it is their fourth season on this location, they had to start paying rent for the use of the ground.

2014 - …

After the summer, in October 2014, Blijburg will close again and has to be taken down in one month. On the 5th of May in 2015 they want to reopen on the new location. Here they are permitted to stay for ten years. On this location they have to pay rent from day one. The new location is a spit of land that in the future will become the central place of IJburg if the second phase of the custom-made islands will be developed. In the mean time, Blijburg is able to ‘land’ on this piece of sand with large views on the horizon and lots of space. Constructing the pavilion will go different then before. „For Blijburg 4.0 we want people to participate in the building process” (Mierlo, 2014). The load bearing construction will be constructed by professionals. Residents of IJburg, frequent visitors or architecture students who like to participate in the building process of the new pavilion are invited to help with the infill of the structure. In return they will get free food and a lot of fun. This will hopefully reduce the construction costs. „The big construction will be made by professionals wherein normal citizens can add beautiful details so they can say, ‘look, I helped building that bar, don’t you think it’s beautiful?’” (Mierlo, 2014).
containers and gypsy wagons stacked on each other (own illustration, 2014)
„Het is geen buurtcafé ofzo, het is bedoeld voor een veel groter publiek.”

„It is no neighborhood cafe or something, It is meant for a much larger public”

Stanja van Mierlo
THE GYPSY SHED

In 2003, Blijburg was reached by a long road alongside the north-eastern dike of IJburg. At first it was hard to see but while approaching a tiny building arose at the far end of the dike. Once you arrived at the bike stands, made of untreated wooden poles, you had to walk around the pavilion and wagons to reach the beach place on the waterfront. Concrete slabs led the way to the front and marked the terrace belonging to the pavilion. The large beach was enclosed by construction fences of the adjacent construction works.

When Blijburg opened its doors in 2003 it consisted of only one pavilion, an old wooden construction shed they repaired with scrap wood. The elongated pavilion, 15 meters long and 6 meters wide, was built up with the long edge positioned towards the wide IJmeer. They opened up the facade so one could look out over the beach and the water from within. The main entrance was positioned in the middle of this front facade. The pavilion had only one level. It was small but as there were no buildings present in the surrounding area it was the one and only warm and secure place on the large plains of sand. On the beach they positioned thick tree trunks in circles to create fire places. Industrial wooden spool cable reels were spread out over the sand and used as tables. Blijburg was open to everyone. The public was able to use the beach and visit the parties, also if you did not want to buy a drink in the pavilion. You could throw your own party if you wanted to. Since there was nothing else happening in the area people were attracted to use the beach pavilion at the far end of IJburg. They came for the programming, free atmosphere and inspiring audience. They made the whole trip not for nothing.

In 2006, when they started to rebuilt the second version of Blijburg, the surrounding context had changed. At some places the sand was replaced by modern housing blocks. More people were inhabiting the island. This
A hearth for cold nights in the main pavilion of Blijburg (own illustration, 2014)
Elevation and plan of Blijburg 2.0 in 2006. (own illustration, 2014)
time they got a permit for 1300 m2 to rebuilt Blijburg. The new location was 300 meters further to the south-east. Blijburg expanded as they were able to cover more space. By separating the several indoor spaces over a longer distance and by adding constructions such as a pair of swings they started to cover a larger field.

Currently, Blijburg is found on the far south-east corner of IJburg. Every time the pavilion has been pointed towards the water for the view on the IJmeer.

The beach place got a rather gypsy look because the pavilions were a mishmash of old buildings and building elements. On the one hand it was the cheapest way to construct a beach pavilion like this. On the other hand was it the intention to built with everything they could collect in order to create the real ‘do-it-yourself’ gypsy style. Building facilities like a kitchen and toilets were outsourced. A kitchen is hard to built from left-over materials considering the strong regulations of hygiene nowadays.

Blijburg was meant to be temporary and also looked like it. The wagons could be moved, the pavilion could easily be changed or repaired with scrap wood and the concrete slabs for the terrace and paths reminded of a temporary solution for construction works.

In the later versions of Blijburg, the pavilions kept their gypsy do-it-yourself image. Blijburg did however change from a tiny improvised shed that sold home-made chips into a large well functioning bar and restaurant serving a large and demanding public.

The first season of Blijburg consisted of the following indoor spaces: a main pavilion with a bar, the Chapel, which was used as a small concert hall, a kitchen, a library of 8,5 m2, a first aid, a small office, 4 toilets and (cool) storage space. The public spaces had their entrance on the waterfront side. Several wagons and containers behind the pavilion enclosed a space that was used as private backstage area. The main pavilion
was furnished with a large bar and some large tables and chairs. During the first seasons of Blijburg, the available indoor space was gradually expanded. The additions were connected with the main pavilion. The Chapel was positioned on the short side and connected with a small hallway where tickets for the performances could be sold. The Chapel was used as a concert hall or as an indoor restaurant furnished with loose tables. Also it contained a hearth inside for cold summer nights. The kitchen was situated on the other short side of the pavilion. Food could be ordered from within the main pavilion as well as from the 'take-away’ extension outside on the terrace. The toilets were attached to the main pavilion and could only be reached from inside. On the terrace they placed windshields so you could eat in peace without getting sand in your food.

In the second version of Blijburg the spatial lay-out was the same except for some changes in the logistics. Small additions and changes were made in the backstage area. They started building on top of containers. A second floor was thus introduced at some points. Furthermore a yurt was put up and placed separately on the lee side behind the Chapel and used for independent rental. They extended the terrace with more concrete slabs.

In the third edition of Blijburg, they separated the Chapel from the main pavilion to be used as a yoga studio, a shop and sometimes for independent rental. Also a massage pavilion was added.

Wood is the most used material in the pavilions of Blijburg. The first pavilion, the old construction shed, was a straight-forward wooden construction. The pavilion was repaired with scrap wood and changes in the original design were easily made. The front facade was opened up to get a nice view on the beach. The ceiling of the beach pavilion is an uncovered wooden framework construction. People can hang and fasten things like sound boxes or lamps.
temporary tent structures on the beach of Blijburg (own illustration, 2014)
The Chapel is an old military tent. It is an elongated dome structure made of lightweight aluminum bars covered with canvas. The dome has been insulated on the inside with colored cloths hanged on to the structure for a better indoor climate.

The pavilions are not resistant against vandalism. However, in case of undesired destruction, the pavilions are relatively easily repaired. Because of the gypsy style of the place, the repairs could be done with different materials than the original material. No one would complain about the sloppy look. A bit of paint would do.

Blijburg 4.0

Again, in the winter of 2014/2015, Blijburg has to be moved to another location. This time the beach club will be placed on the peninsula called Centrum-Eiland. The peninsula lies on the same shore as the former locations of Blijburg. For Blijburg 4.0 they propose to built a new pavilion. The pavilion will be larger, more comfortable and sustainable but which tries to keep the original atmosphere of Blijburg. Because the original pavilion and the Chapel are at its end they will only be partly re-used for the fourth version of Blijburg. The pavilion of Blijburg 4.0 will count 1,940 m². Compared to the small amount of 90 m² of the first Blijburg this is a lot. The various pavilions Blijburg earlier had will be replaced by two buildings, a large main pavilion and one smaller building for private occasions. The new main pavilion is built up on the east side of the spit of land and the Chapel on the west side. The main pavilion is being designed in cooperation with the architectural office Zwarts & Jansma. The architectural office is specialized in bridges and large building projects but as the architect Rein Jansma is a good friend of Stanja he is willing to help by providing technical drawings. The construction of the pavilion will be demountable as it is already known the pavilion most probably has to leave after ten years. The building
will consist of two floors. A shed that looks like the current pavilion will be placed on the first floor surrounded by a large terrace. On the lower ground level will be a large space with flexible interior walls in order to be able to optionally divide or enlarge the space. There will be a workshop space to be able to repair or construct things for events or for the pavilion itself, a well insulated space for clubbing and enough space for storage. The old Chapel tent will be repaired and built up on the other side of the spit of land. The Chapel will get its own facilities like toilets, a wardrobe, a bar and storage space. These basic facilities of the Chapel will be accommodated in a construction that is attached to the long edge of the tent. The main space of the Chapel is extruded with four meters so it can give shelter to a bigger amount of people.

For the new pavilion they want to make use of recycled materials like they always have done. Wood from the old pavilion will be used to make tables and toilet walls will be covered with collected 5 cent coins. „All materials in Blijburg have a story, the lamps come from a prison and the bar outside is made of bottles we drank and collected ourselves” (Mierlo, 2014). The pavilion will be made of recycled or environmental friendly materials. Also they want to generate their own power to become self-sufficient. „We go from gypsy-rough to gypsy-chique” (Mierlo, 2014).
Site plan of Blijburg 4.0 that will open in the summer of 2015. The chapel will be placed on the northern shore and the large pavilion on the southern shore of the central island. 

(Het bidboekje van Blijburg 4.0 (Zwarts & Jansma), 2014)
Plan of Blijburg 4.0 with on the left the Chapel and on the right the new large beach pavilion. (Het bidboekje van Blijburg 4.0 (Zwarts & Jansma), 2014)
Interesting conditions considering the development of a local community of the case study Blijburg can be filtered out of the obtained information. Blijburg was originally set up by Stanja van Mierlo and Britt Stegerhoek. They made the construction of the place part of the fun which made friends of them willing to help out. The close-knit group of people enjoined the freedom on the freshwater beach and threw parties after long hours of work. They automatically got attached to the place because it was their creation. When they started organizing public events it was their enthusiasm that inspired many visitors of the beach place. Currently a group of 15 persons runs the business with Stanja van Mierlo as official director.

When Blijburg opened for the public in the summer of 2003 the events were mostly focussed on the young and creative from the inner city of Amsterdam. The team members themselves belonged to this target group and with the program attracted the same crowd. During nice summer days the pavilion functioned as a typical Dutch beach pavilion; a place with a terrace, to go to the toilet, to get a drink, an ice-cream or some home-made chips. At night and in the wintertime people came for the club nights or music concerts. Later the program was adjusted to other target groups that also made use of Blijburg. Activities for children and new IJburg residents were introduced to also attract these population groups. The wide range of activities attracted many different people to the beach place. The ongoing organized events made (the same) people come back to the place.

The successful emergence of Blijburg, besides the program and the enthusiastic team, did also depend on some contextual, process-related and spatial conditions of the place. Some interesting conditions stimulated spontaneous encounter among people and facilitated the
development of the Blijburg community.
A very important condition was the freedom the founders of Blijburg had when they started their business. Blijburg was developed on large sand plains where the wind had free play. To most people, a windy location where there is not much to do is not very inviting. The untouched and unfinished state of the island however appealed to Stanja van Mierlo and Britt Stegerhoek. To them, the empty sand plains meant freedom. They could run their business without any obligations towards stakeholders or neighbors because there were none. They could do whatever they liked. The lack of restrictions during nighttime attracted the young outgoing crowd of the inner city. These early adapters cleared the way for the later crowd and contributed in spreading the word of a trendy beach place within cycling distance from the inner city.
The location on the shore of the IJmeer attracted the two founders all the way to IJburg. Water is perfect for all kinds of recreational use. The horizon of the IJmeer was a quality Blijburg kept throughout the years. The pavilion was completely focussed on the water. Its programming, the way the pavilion was embedded in the location and its atmosphere all had to do with the water.
When Blijburg was opened in 2003 it was the only lively place on the island IJburg. New residents started checking out the beach place as it was the only nearby public place where there was something to do. Despite the high amount of free space the time they were given was limited. The municipality gave them a permit for only 17 months. However, this limited amount of time probably contributed in the speed at which the place was created. The public as well was aware of the temporariness of the beach place. It gave the place an exclusive character. Everyone wanted to be part of it as long as it lasted. Besides time they also had a limited amount of money. For the creation of Blijburg the founders put in money they got through a loan from the
bank and some was their own investment. This was not a lot and they only had 17 months to be able gain it back. However, instead of limiting their dream plans the little amount of money often led to creative solutions. They asked friends who helped in constructing the place for free. These friends also helped in enlarging the social basis of the place.

The municipality helped in paying and organizing the infrastructure below ground, the sewage, electricity, water and gas supply. Without this, the beach place most probably would have come into existence a lot slower. Everything above ground, the visible and thus representing part of the place, was taken care of by Stanja and Britt. Blijburg was built on large sand plains. The combination of the sand, the water and the presence of a beach pavilion made it become a public beach for recreative use. The beach is open to everyone. The pavilions and public furniture of Blijburg that are spread out over the sand make the place casually approachable and accessible. There is no clear division between being outside or inside the place. In wintertime this is less the case as activities mainly take place indoors. Then the barrier to join in is higher as you have to enter through a door.

The undedicated use of the community place Blijburg inspired people to invent all sorts of activities, like is normally the case on a beach. Visitors are invited to make use of the place and frequent visitors are allowed to organize events or construct small buildings. The temporariness of the place gave people the feeling of ‘now or never’. This resulted in fast improvised constructions. This made the barrier to construct something very low. The mishmash of old and new, self-built and bought building elements made clear that it did not matter how you should built, what materials you should use or how it should look like. Also, the fact that the shed was made of wood increased the possibilities of making changes in the design. Wood is a very suitable material for constructions built with bare hands. With a saw and drill,
The transition of being inside or outside the place is almost invisible which causes a casual approachability and accessability. (own illustration, 2014)
common tools almost every household possesses, you come a long way. Wood is relatively lightweight and easily (re)shaped.

After a while, the crowd started wanting to be able to reserve space for private occasions. Blijburg benefitted from this change by renting them out separately. The pavilions were spread out over the beach which would minimize nuisance between the private occasions. The added pavilions focus on smaller collective groups that unite for a certain activity. The Chapel for example was used as concert hall for which people have to buy a ticket. After a while it also facilitated weddings and currently it houses a yoga studio. People are often attracted through a specific and collective get together and thereafter dare to enjoy the more public space. With the profit of the rent Stanja and Britt were able to run the business in winter time as well.

There was no clear line between the crowd and the employees of Blijburg. This resulted in a very informal atmosphere. The founders, besides constructing and managing the beach place, also came to enjoy themselves at their own parties. The inhabitants of IJburg contributed in the existence of Blijburg as well as the employees and founders did. The wishes of the municipality were met. IJburg was put on the map as a nice place to live. IJburg had its own community that was attached to the place and the project agency of IJburg wanted to keep it that way but also wanted to keep up with the original plans. This is why Blijburg has been moved to other locations quite a few times. This winter (2015) it will be relocated for the fourth time. The place will become even larger than it has been. It will serve a larger crowd as the number of inhabitants on IJburg has been growing fast. The managing team wants to keep the spirit of Blijburg from the early years wherein everyone contributed to the success of the place. They will invite people to take part in the development of Blijburg 4.0 by letting them contribute in small construction works like making a table or decorating walls.
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The thesis discusses how architecture can facilitate the development of locally bound communities in the current society. The relevance of this research lies in the fact that we are currently dealing with a decrease of social interaction among neighbors in urban neighborhoods. On top of that we have to deal with a government that is retreating from its task of supporting local community development. The consequence is an increase of anonymous living environments. In anonymous neighborhoods there is little to no social interaction (Dorst, 2005). The social control is low which makes it a perfect setting for anti-social behavior (Zimbardo 1969 in Dorst 2005). Detrimental consequences of a decreasing social cohesion are alienation, insecurity, criminality and at some point even a decreasing welfare (WRR, 2005). Furthermore, the commitment and care people have towards their living environment decreases which results in polluted and unmaintained places. Besides, less mobile residents such as children and elderly are still quite limited to social interaction in their direct environment. It is no pleasure to be left behind in places with a large sense of anonymity. Unfortunately we are dealing with a loss of contact between citizens that share the same environment. The causes that played an important role in the decreased mutual engagement among citizens are immigration, the growing mobility and the rise of digital and mobile media.

In the recent past people belonged to communities that were defined by religious compartments. People belonging to similar pillars often shared the same living environment. Interaction in the streets was ensured by a high mutual engagement among the residents. When the system of pillarization started falling apart and in order to maintain the social coherence in urban neighborhoods the government took over the task of community development the churches earlier fulfilled. Lately
however, the government is withdrawing from its duty and will take a less active role in area and local community development. A participation society is proposed wherein citizens should take care of their social and physical environment themselves. This is only possible when people will feel responsible or committed to the place or its neighbors.

In order to create healthy, safe and attractive residential city-neighborhoods people should become aware of a social environment that is linked to the place. Jane Jacobs (1961) speaks of two conditions for healthy and livable places; diversity and interaction. Diversity of residents with a different lifestyle and diversity of facilities within the urban neighborhood can both be taken care of by clever planning. Diversity however must not be overdone. People like to be surrounded by people that have more or less the same lifestyle. Interaction among residents is another story for it cannot be planned. Instead of forcing interaction or leaving the decreased amount of encounter among locals as it is, the government, care-taker of a healthy society, could take up the task by not forcing but facilitating interaction. Certain conditions can invite and inspire locals to meet and interact. Through regular activities (organized by locals) a locally bound community is able to develop. This in turn will increase the livability of urban neighborhoods. The government directly benefits as it could save a lot of money on formal control due to an increased social control in the neighborhood. The government should start preventing residential neighborhoods from becoming anonymous places by creating the right conditions in which residents will organize themselves for the common goal of creating and maintaining healthy, sustainable and lively neighborhoods. The design of such a place, one that facilitates the development of a locally bound community, is an interesting and challenging task for the architect. Architects are able to contribute in locally bound community development by designing the right (spatial) conditions and facilities. This thesis tried to find an answer
to the following research question. „How can architecture function as a facilitator in the process of locally bound community development in the current society?”

In order to get an answer to this question the conception of community place has been explained in combination with profound analyses of several community places from the past and the present in the Netherlands. A community place is being defined by a brief remark on the separate concepts community and place. A community is a group of people that shares a common goal, interest or problem or a combination of those. The key condition for the development of a community is the common aspect. The elementary condition for the development of a locally bound community must be a shared environment. However, to make people socially interact with each other an additional common aspect is required that has to do with the place. Personal interests, goals or problems constantly change as do the common aspects of communities. This results in the fact that communities are dynamic.

Considering places, this thesis merely refers to people’s places as it is the social interaction that is aimed upon. A portion of space becomes a place due to the interplay of people’s presence, experience or action in a certain physical environment. A physical environment can contain certain conditions that invite for the presence or action of people. Activity of users can transform a piece of unused space into a people’s place. A fundamental condition to create a place are therefor users.

Thereupon a community place can be defined as a certain physical environment that is being used by a group of people sharing a certain goal, interest or problem. Essential conditions for the creation of a community place are therefor users that have something in common (apart form the shared environment) and a certain physical environment that invites those users to make use of it. Places that successfully facilitate
community development most likely posses certain conditions that make people gather and interact, there, and not somewhere else.

Two important features to keep in mind is that community places have a dynamic character and that there exists a certain reciprocity between the place and the community. Because community places are appropriated by dynamic communities and because of the reciprocity between the people and the place, community places are dynamic. Places are static whereas communities are dynamic. This opposition of dynamic versus static often leads to problems concerning the built environment. Communities can grow, change and disappear whereas places stay the same. When designing places for communities it is therefore useful to create places that easily accommodate change.

Throughout this research two community places from the past and two community places from the present have been analyzed to search for conditions that successfully facilitated the development of locally bound communities in urban neighborhoods. The examined places are respectively the Meerpaal in Dronten, a design of the Dutch architect Frank van Klingeren built in the late sixties, ’t Karregat in Eindhoven, by the same architect built in the seventies, The Noorderparkkamer in Amsterdam-Noord, set up by Floor Ziegler in 2008 and Blijburg in Amsterdam-East, founded by Stanja van Mierlo in 2001. In all analyzed community places the dynamic character and reciprocity between the people and the place were observed very clearly.

The precedents have been or still are appropriated by totally different local communities. The places therefore differ a lot from each other. Still, similar conditions can be found which stimulate the encounter of people. In all community places there was a manager or managing team that regulated the activities of enthusiastic locals. In the Meerpaal and ’t Karregat the managers were probably appointed by the municipality or the project developer of the community buildings. In the case of the
Noorderparkkamer and Blijburg the founders and creators of the place automatically became the managers. In most cases the managing team was or became attached to the place. With their presence and initiatives they inspired and invited locals to make use of the place.

Another similarity is that all community places facilitate a certain program that is aimed upon the appropriating community. The activities and events are matched with the interests of the local community. When the communities’ interests change the type of activities changes along. Certain events organized at the community places facilitate (spontaneous) encounter. On top of that, in the case of community development, it is important to have a certain continuity of activities to ensure encounter of (the same) people on a regular basis. This partly depends on the manager or managing team and the enthusiasm of the local community but also on the number of uses of the place. All the examined cases can be used for a numerous amount of activities; spontaneous public use on a daily basis, occasional organized public events and organized collective use on a repetitive basis (weekly, monthly, annual). The Meerpaal could facilitate all these types of use. ’t Karregat was more focussed on public use on a daily basis (supermarket and cafe) and repetitive collective use (school and library) but was less suited for large public events. The Noorderparkkamer and Blijburg can facilitate all types of use. But, as they are focussed on outdoor activities they have difficulties in staying open during winter time. This diminishes encounter on a regular basis in the cold months of the year. The continuity of activities at these community places during winter mainly depends on the manager(s) and less on the community.

For an architect the most interesting conditions of the examined community places are the spatial conditions, facilities and characteristics. Starting with prior conditions of the yet existing contexts we see that all community places were situated in and surrounded by public space. This
provides a casual accessibility and approachability of the (community) place. The Meerpaal was situated on a town square, ’t Karregat and the Noorderparkkamer in a park and Blijburg on a fresh water beach. The spirit of the public space continues within the community place. The Meerpaal was a continuation of the outside square with its large flat concrete floor field and great height. The umbrella structures in ’t Karregat can be compared with the trees of the park that provide a certain security. The Noorderparkkamer is situated in a public park. When activities are done on the open grass field outside, the public space unnoticeably flows over in the community place. Blijburg is a number of pavilions spread out over some sandy ground. The sand continues within the community place. The transition between being outside or inside the place is almost invisible. The fact that the public spirit continues inside is important for it gives people the opportunity to approach and access the community places in a casual way.

Another notable feature is that the community places, except Blijburg, were situated along a dynamic thoroughfare. The Meerpaal was situated on the central square in the middle of town, the park of ’t Karregat was an intersecting zone between different neighborhoods and the Noorderparkkamer was located besides two important bicycle paths. Also this contributes to a casual approachability and accessibility. People walking the dog in the Noorderpark are casually confronted with the community place. There is no forced engagement but if people want to join in at activities it is possible, it is facilitated.

In all community places most spaces were not designed for specific use. In the Meerpaal en ’t Karregat the architect Van Klinger and Klingeren tried to dictate specific use as little as possible by designing ‘imperfect’ or ‘incomplete’ spaces. In the Meerpaal he did so by creating a large empty space that could by ‘completed’ by the users by filling the space with furniture for the organization of activities. The space became a market hall by setting
up market stands and it became a sports hall through the presence of volleyball nets. In ’t Karregat the imperfection and incompleteness was achieved by the creation of a floor landscape of curved walls and small elevations which were of no direct functional use. The unspecific architecture allowed for diverse and unexpected use that inspired the users to make use of the space for whatsoever. The Noorderparkkamer was designed and originally served as wood workshop. After the several relocations of the pavilion it now functions as a park pavilion that can be transformed into a stage. The pavilion can be used in many different ways and for different purposes because of the movable interior and exterior walls. Also the grass field outside facilitates unpredicted use. In the case of Blijburg the unpredicted use of the place is due to the sand. A floor field of sand is no normal condition. The presence of sand makes Blijburg a special place and different from others. People associate sand with a beach; a beautiful natural environment that is mostly used for recreation. Although a beach raises certain associations of specific usage, the sand ground allows for all kinds of use; building a sandcastle, organize a football match or construct a shop that sells beach items. The non-dictated use inspires people to use places.

It turns out that the presence of sewage, water-, power- and gas supply is very important and perhaps sometimes a bit underestimated or taken for granted. Community places lacking these facilities can come into being as well. However, when managers and users do not have to worry about the presence of these banal facilities they can put their energy into the representation of the place and the organization of activities. In all the examined community places the gas and water supply, electricity and sewage was taken care of and paid by the municipality.

Also basic facilities like public toilets and a place to prepare or buy food and drinks are present in all analyzed community places. The presence of these basic facilities contribute to the comfortability of the places.
Every basic need is at hand. In the Meerpaal, ’t Karregat and Blijburg the bars or restaurants are or were exploited by catering personnel. In the Noorderparkkamer community members are also able to make use of the kitchen after an agreement with the managers.

An interesting characteristic the examined community places share is an informal atmosphere. The barrier to approach persons is low which makes people more sociable. In the Meerpaal the informal atmosphere is created by letting different adjacent activities run simultaneously in the same space. Persons in a work meeting in the cafe could be confronted with school kids having a volleyball tournament in the same hall. No activity or group of people is more important than the other. In ’t Karregat it is the mixing of public functions such as a school and a supermarket that provokes the informal atmosphere. There is a minimal division of roles and little hierarchy. Schoolteachers are mixed with people who are doing some shopping. The informal atmosphere in the Noorderparkkamer is obtained by the fact that visitors are allowed to use the same facilities as the managers. It is like being invited at the manager’s home. The place feels cozy and familiar. Blijburg’s whole spirit is informal. The visitor can become part of the staff and visa versa. The fact that everyone contributes to the creation of the place, which makes the visitors equally important as the staff members, causes the informal atmosphere.

Earlier has been told that communities are dynamic. Because the community place is a reflection of the community the places should be able to accommodate change. The Meerpaal, though designed as an ’unfinished’ project, seemed, in the end, unable to cope with the changing desires of the community. At first walls were constructed to eliminate the nuisance of other activities. After some more years however almost the whole building had to make place for a new design. In the design of ’t Karregat architect Van Klingerent tried to prepare the building
for the dynamics of the community by creating the possibility to easily enlarge or minimize the building by con- or destructing columns and facades. Against Van Klingeren’s will, the community once again started constructing walls to minimize the noise nuisance several years after the completion. Again some years later the whole spatial configuration was changed according the desires of the community. Though it was not meant to function like this, the load bearing construction elements, the steel umbrellas, still serve new versions of community places. In a way ’t Karregat survived the dynamics of the community. In the case of the Noorderparkkamer and Blijburg a transformation of the place according the changing needs of the community is easily possible because of the large free space the places are surrounded with. New pavilions and facilities are constructed next to or nearby the original community building. Also, both the Noorderparkkamer and Blijburg are not completely founded into the ground. This makes it even possible to move the whole community place to another location as has often been the case with Blijburg.

After having summarized conditions that facilitate the development of a locally bound community it is useful to examine characteristics of the current society to be able to design a community place for the people of today. In order to search for different behavior a quick comparison of the precedents of the past and the present can be made. It is noticeable that the examined community buildings of the past were provided with a lot more conditioned space and facilities than the precedents of the present. It could be the case that people of the current society like to be engaged in smaller groups. The grand mass we once were is being exchanged by a lot of individuals that all have their own opinions and desires. Another difference is found in the influence of users in the organization and appearance of the community places. The old precedents were provided
with a great amount of possibilities to be able to do whatever you liked. In the community places of today people increasingly like to be able to have a say in what should happen with the place. Instead of giving a choice out of a range of activities or spaces as was the case in the buildings of Frank van Klingereren, the community places of the present are open to all kinds of initiatives and invite people to set up their ideal situation. The do-it-yourself spirit is large. This also has to do with the individualization of society.

The research question to be answered was „How can architecture function as a facilitator in the process of locally bound community development in the current society?”. Architecture cannot force but can facilitate the development of locally bound communities. This has been proved in the analysis of the designs of Frank van Klingereren and the two case studies of community places that are currently active in Amsterdam. In all examples the architectural object has worked as a facilitator by possessing certain conditions that invite people to make use of the place. The question of how architecture can facilitate the process of locally bound community development has been answered by giving conditions that can lead to different interpretations and spatial configurations instead of summoning specific architectural tools like spatial configurations or types of material. The conditions are:

- The presence of a manager or managing team that is attached to the place.
- A continuous and varied program aimed upon the local population.
- A casual approachability and accessibility of the place by locating the place in public space, situate it along dynamic thoroughfares and making the transition between being inside and outside the place almost
unnoticeable.
- A non-dictated use of the place.
- The presence of general facilities like sewage, water-, power- and gas supply, toilets and a place to prepare or buy food and drinks.
- An informal atmosphere.
- The accommodation of (spatial) change.

The individualization of society makes that people like to join in at collective activities in smaller groups and imposes an increased influence of locals on the spatial and social environment of the place. The place should facilitate this. The conditions could be kept in mind and architects, when designing a community place, should be aware of the fact that communities can grow, change and disappear.
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Reflection

The research was started with finding out the relevance of the topic. It is always good to find out first why a particular study is appropriate. Except for the fact the research serves my own design proposal, it proved to be relevant on the much wider scale of the (Dutch) society. It turns out local community development is very important for it can contribute in the creation and maintenance of healthy, safe and attractive urban neighborhoods.

Community development is, at first sight, not an issue at which an architect could be of help. I put this into question as I do think spatial conditions can be of influence on societal matters. Architects design the built environment and that built environment is used by society. I think architects must be aware of the fact that their designs are built for people. Buildings and places are used in certain ways that might not provoke but surely facilitate certain (social) behavior. The facilitation of regular encounter of local residents to let local communities arise can therefor become a task of the architect. The research partly became an argumentation and tries to prove its reason of being.

Thereafter the question of how architects can contribute in community development has been asked. As architects design static buildings and places they can only indirectly influence the behavior of people. As has been said, buildings and places can merely facilitate certain behavior. The question to be answered became how buildings or places can facilitate community development. At the start of the research it was not yet known if architectural design could, and, if so, how it could facilitate community development. Therefor has been searched for examples of buildings and places that did or do facilitate community development. For a designer it is useful to search well-functioning precedents to demonstrate what is aimed upon and to make sure the idea can work.
It turned out to be quite difficult finding useful conditions without comparing well-functioning precedents to bad-functioning precedents. But places that do not facilitate community development will not be referred to as community buildings in the literature. There is little information to be found on failed projects. Besides, the reasons for failure can be numerous.

The research tries to find certain conditions that facilitate encounter of local residents on a regular basis to let a locally bound community arise. For the research has been looked into the definition of a community, a place and a community place and the characteristics they have that might be of interest in relation to the built environment. Furthermore, four community buildings and places that successfully facilitate(d) the development of a local community have been analyzed profoundly. The different cases have been compared with each other to search matching conditions that facilitate frequent encounter of locals. The corresponding conditions can be kept in mind while designing a community building or place.

However, the reader must be aware that this study is no handbook for the design of community places. The conditions given are merely suggestions that help the designer to think about his or her approach. More research on other community places is needed to prove the functioning of the conditions that facilitate the development of a local community. Moreover, there is not one truth. Every case is different and has its own specific contextual, process-related and spatial conditions that stimulate encounter of people on a regular basis. While designing a community place, specific contextual conditions should be taken very serious. The beach place Blijburg for example is not situated along a dynamic thoroughfare, which was the case in all the other community places. In the case of Blijburg this is however a positive feature. It was precisely the contextual condition of it being far away from the busy city
life that attracted users. This shows every case is unique. The conditions found in this research can be used while designing a community place but one must always stay critical.

There are many places in the world that successfully facilitate the development of a locally bound community. It proved better to do a qualitative research on a little amount of projects than a quantitative research on many. Because every case is unique it needs to be analyzed profoundly to get to the reasons of success. For this research was chosen to focus on community buildings and places situated in the Netherlands only, two from the past and two from the present. Because the community buildings and places are based in the same country they serve a more or less similar society. It became possible to compare the precedents of the past with the precedents of today. Also, because I myself live in the Netherlands, I was able to visit the currently active community places. Because the community places work differently with different weather conditions it turned out to be very important being able to visit and observe the places more than once, at different times of the day and in different seasons. Besides, the location of my design proposal that follows this research is in Amsterdam. This is also the reason why two of the four chosen precedents are based in Amsterdam. The community buildings from the past by architect Frank van Klingeren are chosen because the Meerpaal and ’t Karregat are famous examples that had a huge societal impact in the sixties and seventies. The precedents of the architect Van Klingeren have also been chosen because there was a lot of information to be found in the literature. I found a book by Marina van den Bergen an Piet Vollaard that clearly described the success but also the drawbacks of the buildings considering locally bound community development.

Apart from the maybe little amount of analyzed precedents in this research has been revealed clearly why community places are dynamic
and that there exists a certain reciprocity between the community and the
place. The understanding of this is very important for this does counts for
all community places. Architects must be aware of the conflict between
the static (designed) place and the dynamic character of the communities
that use the place. Community places must facilitate a social and thus
dynamic process and therefor should accommodate spatial change.
The research can be read by others and can be of help while designing
community places. Or at least, it makes the architect aware of some
important aspects while designing for local communities. Instead
of dictating guidelines to design well-functioning community places
the research shows the complexity of the development of (local)
communities.
But the research is intended primarily for myself. I am glad I did this
research as it provides guidelines that can be of use in the design
that follows this research and simultaneously helped me in giving my
graduation project a scientific basis. With this research I have become
able to support and explain my position within the field of architecture.