

Reflection

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Management in the Built Environment
Reflection on Graduation Project_P5

1 Relation to Study Program

This section describes the relationship between the graduation topic and the theme of the graduation lab, master track Management in the Built Environment (MBE) and master programme MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences (AUBS).

1.1 Relation Graduation Topic and Master Track MBE

By conducting a research individually, I want to demonstrate I am able to work independently and academically as expected from students from the TU Delft. Additionally, I would like to meet the final learning goals of the MBE master track; having a decent understanding about managing urban developments and construction processes and all the complexities involved. In general terms, this graduation project helps me to understand better how to deal with seemingly conflictual uses in urban planning and how to steer on higher satisfaction among various users. More specifically, it helps me to understand how residents perceive nuisance caused by industry, what situational factors could minimize this perception and how to support satisfaction in residential areas close to industry. In MBE we have learned that the users are the driver of the real estate demand cycle. If we construct the built environment in a way that satisfies the user, demand, value creation and increased supply will follow. The graduation's focus on how residents experience their living environment matches well with this theory and therefore the topic proves to be strongly related to MBE.

1.2 Relation Graduation Topic and Master Program AUBS

Characteristic for the master program AUBS is its interdisciplinary approach. Various perspectives are included in the program and knowledge is derived from design, technical, financial, management and social sciences. Similarly, my graduation research involves also a blend of multiple science fields. The port city issues mentioned in the introduction of this research relate to urban planning and management, financial and social challenges it could involve, the topics covered in literature study correlates to spatial and social sciences, setting up the focus groups requires management skills and the improved understanding of residential nuisance gained in the end of the research could be useful in urban planning and urban design practice.

2 Strong and Weak Points Chosen Methodology

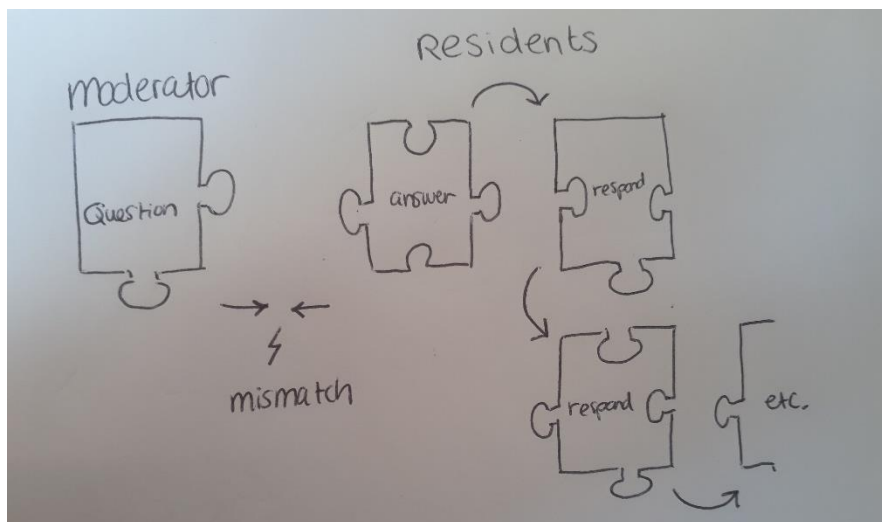
In this section the scientific relevance is determined by reflecting critically on the executed research. What went well, what could I have done differently and how does this impact the validity of the results? Taking a closer look at the appropriateness, preparation and the actual execution of the methods, these questions could be answered.

2.1 Appropriateness Methods

In retrospect, I still support the choice for combining focus groups with desk-top research and an in-depth interviewing as research methods. Together they offered ways to gather data and to gain a deeper understanding of residential nuisance from multiple perspectives. The positive and negative aspects of the methods have already been described

extensively in section 3.2.2 of this report. That it is harder to bring the discussion to a deeper level during focus groups, something which is often put forward by critics of focus groups, was not strongly experienced during this research. Residents asked each other often for further explanation or details, that way a natural way of probing led to deeper insights.

However, two focus groups characteristics have been recognized during the research; First, focus group participants influence one another and second, it is hard to guide the discussion in a way, all prepared questions are answered. During the focus groups, some residents, more than others, tended to adopt views of fellow participants. This is not necessarily a disadvantage because it could also mean the dialogue supports a critical stance against own viewpoints and the final answers are already self-evaluated and likely to be closer to the truth. On the other hand, the fact residents influence one another could also mean they have felt social pressure to give a particular answer, which would make their answers less reliable. In this case, I believe this aspect of the group process effected the results positively. Considering the confident and open way of speaking and the overall feeling of respect among the residents, I believe residents spoke freely about the nuisance they experienced and thus, I do not expect social processes biased the outcomes.



Sketch 1 The occurrence of off-topic discussions during focus groups

Elaborating on the second characteristic, sketch 1 illustrates difficulties to guide the focus group and occurrence of off-topic discussions. During the focus group the moderator intends to stay a little bit on the background. That way, serendipities, valuable for qualitative research, are more likely to arise and this also leaves more space for the residents to develop a group dialogue. However, this distance has also a negative side. When residents are sharing opinions about a somewhat related, but relatively irrelevant topic, it feels unnatural for a moderator to interrupt because he or she is not completely part of the discussion. Often, as in usual conversations, residents respond to the last person speaking. What could happen then, is that the moderator asks a question to a resident, but the resident answers off-topic, the following resident responds to this answer and a third residents does the same. That way a whole of-topic discussion is started and the question of the moderator remains unanswered. I dealt with this by interrupting residents when needed and repeating unanswered questions. What I could have done better is the formulation of questions, as explained further in the next section.

2.2 Appropriateness Preparation Methods

Overall, I am very satisfied with the way I prepared the focus groups and in-depth interview. Firstly, the probing techniques and generative techniques proved to be effective. During individual focus group exercises residents were requested to work with markers, maps and stickers (see photo 1). When I wanted to take these materials away because it was time to go to the next exercise, one resident asked me: "Oh may I keep it? That talks easier". This question illustrates generative techniques actually helped the residents to formulate answers regarding their perception of nuisance and served also as fruitful starting point for a collective discussion about the topic. Something similar could be noticed during the in-depth interview. As interviewer, I did not only provided input in the form of questions, but also, I shared some findings of the focus group with the urban planner. This little bit of additional input served as foundation for a deeper discussion, it showed the urban planner the residential perspective and that way opened up new topics to consider.

Secondly, asking residents about some more personal information has been beneficial. By asking them how long they have lived in Hoek van Holland, their personal expectations, age and address, during the data analysis their personal characteristics could be linked to their perception of nuisance.

Finally, the fact the focus group was hosted in a resident's home, I brought drinks and bites and the assignment to bring a personal object, all contributed to a trustworthy and comfortable setting, as important for qualitative methods.

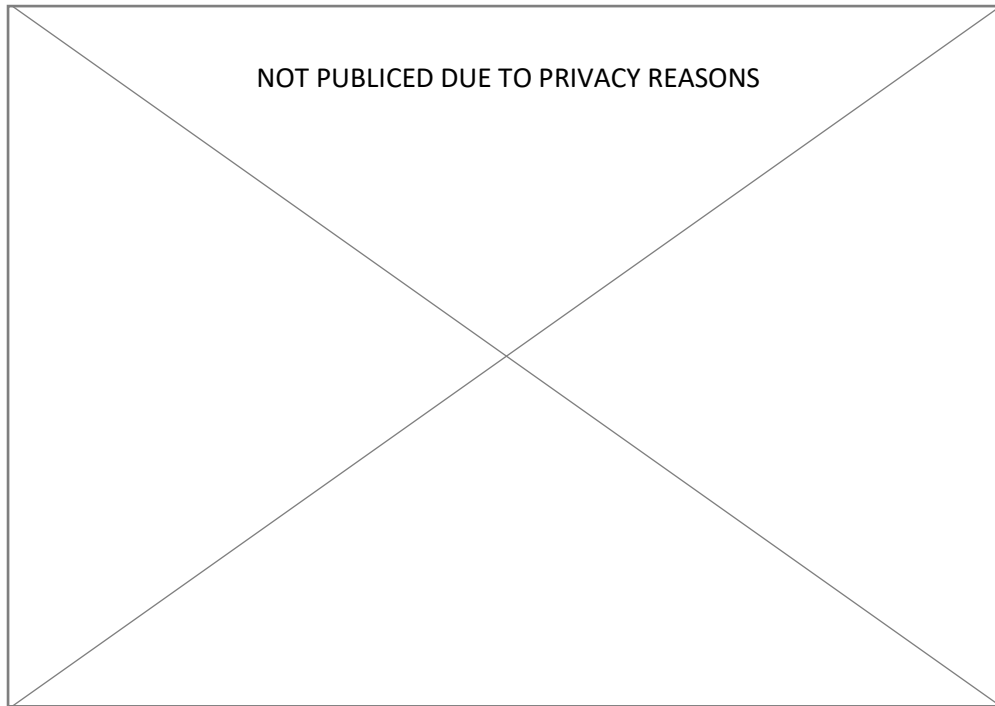


Photo 1. Residents making individual assignments during focus group

That said, two drawbacks of generative techniques could be observed. Firstly, a drawback is of collecting multiple types of data is that they could lead to contradictory results. For instance, some residents indicate with stickers visually they are very annoyed by something, but do not point out the nuisance in words later in the discussion. Potentially, residents avoid saying something double and do not elaborate on something when other residents already have done it. Secondly, the fact generative techniques serve as springboard for the discussion has a positive and negative effect; On the one hand, it is positive because it supports residents to formulate and structure their thought, on the other hand, it could steer the residents in a certain direction. All residents mentioned time-related factors in their arguments, but did they do it because they all believe frequency of an externality is important? Or did they do it because the matrix in front of them included different levels of frequency and they were steered to think about it? The same is true for the situational factors, the residents came up with a wide range of ideas. But did they do so, because they usually think about their living environment in a broad way, or did they do so because I provided an inspiration booklet that encouraged them to think this way?

Looking more closely to the precise questions asked during the methods, one part of the focus group could clearly have been better. During the focus group, I aimed to investigate the possible influence of Hoek van Holland's usability for relaxing or distracting activities on the degree of nuisance experienced by the residents. Therefore, one of the focus group themes was called "Relaxation in Hoek van Holland" and I asked the residents: "What activities do you like to do in your free time and to what extent does this influence your perception of nuisance caused by industry?" Prior to this question, I included an individual exercise whereby residents could formulate what type activities they do and where they do this. This exercise was intended as a bridge towards the more pivotal issue; the relation between usability of living environments and the perception of nuisance. However, in the end residents tended to stick on this "bridge" and were mostly talking about how Hoek van Holland could be improved regarding its activities. My attempts to steer them back to the topic of nuisance remained difficult.

If I would do this research again, I would have reconsidered this part of the focus group by framing it more as an exercise about nuisance. Furthermore, if the available time would have allowed it, I would have organized a test-focus group. Such a trial could show whether the questions and exercises are well chosen and in what way the preparation for the actual focus groups could be improved.

2.3 Appropriateness Focus Group Participants

So, in the end two focus groups and one in-depth interview have been executed in the empirical part of this research. Reflecting on the execution, important to note are the similarities and differences between the two focus groups.

Differences:

- The first focus group consisted of five participants, the second of three
- The variety of residents was higher in the first focus group than in the second
- During the first focus group was less experienced as moderator, than during the second.

Similarities:

- In both focus groups residents were between 50 and 70 years old.
- The individual assignments proved to be useful in both groups to divide the amount of speaking time equally among the participants.

The fact more residents were present during the first group, could mean a stronger and more varied dialogue took place during this group and therefore the findings of the first focus group could be argued to be more valid than the ones of the second. However, I expect this is mostly true for the collective findings, information provided by residents combined. Findings originated from residents separately could be just as valid.

The difference in variety of residents could have impacted the validity of the focus groups as well. Residents of the first focus group lived in different parts of Hoek van Holland, while the three residents of the second group all lived relatively close to De Waterweg, two of them were even living in the same street (see figure 1) Furthermore, residents of the first group varied in their relation with industry, some had worked or are working in industrial sectors, some didn't, and also they differed in other personal characteristics, such as sensitivity for noise and light. This all could have contributed to the fact that during the first focus group residents more often disagreed with one another and the discussion about perceived nuisance was easily flowing. During the second group, the residents agreed about many aspects related to nuisance and continuing the discussion was a little bit harder. Disagreement seems to be a driving power; It triggers residents to explain their own viewpoints better and that way a deeper conversation could grow.



Figure 1. Map Hoek van Holland, showing places of residence participants second focus group

In light of research validity, the age of the residents in the focus groups is something to consider as well. While a combination of ages was aspired, in both focus groups residents were between 50-70 years old. Since different generations are likely to have different viewpoints and knowledge, a more balanced mix of young and old could have enriched the conversation and enhanced the research results. Apparently, attracting younger aged participants requires a different approach. Making use of modern online media, such as Instagram, showing young people on the flyer or offer a financial return for participation possibly results in a more diversely aged group.

Important to note is that in the second focus group two residents knew each other personally. They have been neighbors for many years and regularly have some small talk. In theory, this could have biased the research results; Knowing each other, the anonymity decreases and maybe they felt urged to answer socially accepted answers. However, on the topic of "perceived nuisance" many perspectives appear to be socially acceptable. Combined with the fact the overall atmosphere was positive and respectful, I believe the bias remained limited, if not neglectable.

Finally, it could be argued that also the degree a resident is involved with spatial planning of its living environment should be taken into account during participant selection. During the first focus group one of the residents, Jan, seemed to be remarkably uncritical towards his living environment and minimally expressed his own feelings or perceptions. As member of the area committee, he is involved with the urban planning of Hoek van Holland and this could have possibly biased his behavior during the focus group. Possibly, he was careful with expressing himself and showing critic, because then he would indirectly criticize the area committee as well? that said, having an active and resident in the focus group has advantages too; During the focus group Jan gave input by explaining issues, referring to past and future situations and technical and sharing political and technical knowledge regarding nuisance. This way, Jan sometimes helped to keep the discussion flowing and functioned as a kind of informal moderator too. In this sense, it could be argued he has been of value for the discussion, yet, in a different way than expected.

2.3 Appropriateness Interviewee In-Depth Interview

Frans Pieters proved to be a useful source of information regarding the urban planning of Hoek van Holland. He has been closely involved in urban decision making for many years and is aware of the main urban planning challenges in and around Rotterdam (the municipality Hoek van Holland is officially part of). The interview revealed most important decisions regarding nuisance management seem to be taken on provincial level. The DCMR, the joint environmental protection agency of the province of South Holland, manages arrangements between the harbor companies and the residents living in places close to the harbor and these arrangements serve as basis for further urban planning decisions. In this regard, it could be argued it would have been better to interview someone from DCMR, who exactly knows how nuisance arrangements come into being, how participation is managed and to what extent residential perceptions are considered. On the other hand, an actor from the municipal level, such as Frans Pieters, has a broader focus, works on various urban issues and, maybe doesn't know the management of nuisance in full detail, but is able to place nuisance in a wider perspective and to draw interrelations between social context, demographics and perceived nuisance. When the time available for this graduation project would have allowed it, interviews on multiple levels could have been conducted. With DCMR representing the top-view, an urban planner the middle-view and the residents the bottom-view a complete picture of residential nuisance in urban planning practice could be drawn. In the end, every perspective knows its own bias and by joining and comparing various views, this bias could be reduced. The reflection above shows that selecting respondents or interviewees is a deliberate task that should be done carefully in every research.

3 Experienced Problems or Challenges

3.1 Insufficient Residents to Conduct Focus Groups in Pernis

As common for research projects, some empirical aspects developed differently as planned and, responding to them, some method deviations are made along the way. In advance of the empirical process, finding enough participants for the focus groups was already seen as one of the possibly challenging steps of this research and, in the end, this concern proved to be right.

Albeit my effort; In both villages I have spent approximately two days to post in total 2000 flyers. Posting them in people's post boxes and showcase them at public locations, that either people often visit, like supermarkets, or places people are not in a hurry, such as waiting rooms or medicine stores. Additionally, I approached local newspapers and online media, such as Facebook, to share my flyer and invite residents for the focus groups (see figure 2). In the end, this approach proved to be insufficient, because not enough residents had shown their interest. In Hoek van Holland six residents responded to the flyer, of which five were available on the same date. In Pernis, the response was rather disappointing, to be precise, no resident had shown their interest. The poor prospect of finding an acceptable number of residents in Pernis, led to a pivotal decision: the main aim is to organize two focus groups in Hoek van Holland and, likewise, in search for more participants no further attention will be paid to Pernis.

Once again, I visited Hoek van Holland and went from door to door to motivate people to join one of the focus groups. This time I did not only post a flyer, but handed it over personally by ringing the doorbells. It proved to be effective; Three additional residents verbally showed their interest in only two hours' time. Unfortunately, only one of them send an e-mail to officially apply. As final step, I turned to "snowball-sampling". Existing participants were asked to look for relatives who might be interested in joining the focus-group. In the end I managed to find a sufficient number of residents for two focus groups in Hoek van Holland. The first focus group took place on the 4th of March 2020, consisting of five residents. The second was conducted on the 12th of March 2020 and three residents joined

this group. The latter supposed to be with four residents, however, one canceled due to illness, so in the end three residents were present.

Thus, where initially the aim was to conduct two focus groups in Pernis and two in Hoek van Holland. But in the end, only two focus groups have been conducted in Hoek van Holland and the focus groups in Pernis have been cancelled. In Pernis none of the residents responded to the flyer to participate in a focus group. But why was this response so low? Possibly, Pernissers are not interested in the research topic because they are used to being surrounded by industry, they simply do not see the urgency to talk about it. Another reason could be that last year's already a considerable amount of research has been conducted in Pernis. To illustrate, in 2017 residents were approached by a student of Utrecht University to join a research about living preferences and, in 2018, some students doing research for Shell Pernis approached them as well. Perhaps, residents are saturated respect to their contributions for research. For future research it's therefore advisable to consider previous studies when selecting a case-study. Furthermore, the social context and previous studies combined could also impact the way you want to approach residents or experts of a certain area.

The cancellation of the focus groups has been an unfortunate twist in the graduation project because the comparison of findings of Pernis and Hoek van Holland could have given useful insights regarding the perception of nuisance; In existing research about the nuisance levels in Rotterdam the perceived nuisance of Hoekenezen seems to be relatively high, given the actual nuisance level measured in Hoek van Holland. Interestingly, for Pernis the opposite is true.

Looking back, I feel a little proud about how I dealt with this issue. I stayed optimistic and went outside my comfort zone by going from door to door and rang the bell to invite people for the focus group in person. Although labor-intensive, I experienced this as a very effective approach. By including a question about Pernis and Hoek van Holland in both the focus groups as well as in-depth interview, I managed to benefit from the interesting differences between de two places after all.

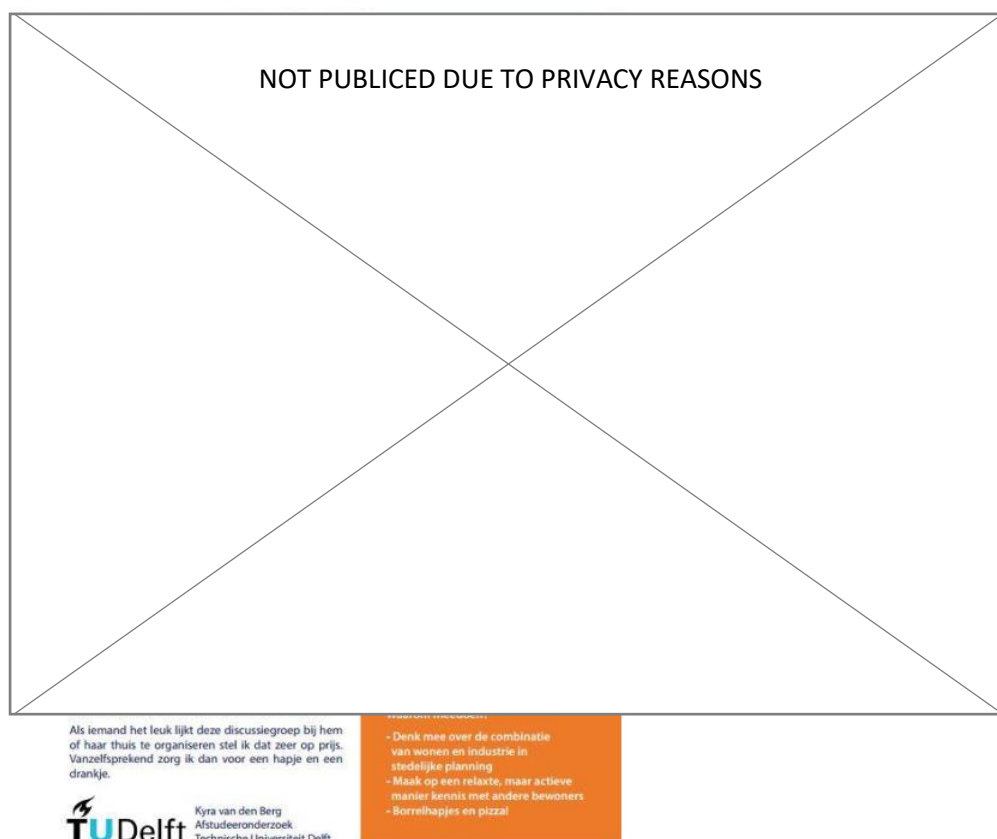


Figure 2. Flyer used to invite residents for the focusgroups

3.2 The Corona Epidemic

Besides, the disappointing response of residents to join the focus group, another event lead to method deviations during this study; the international corona epidemic. Since the January 2020, a new human corona virus, called Severe Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV-2), spread around the world and in the beginning of March 2020, it became a more

serious problem in the Netherlands as well. The virus causes respiratory infections and has in some cases even a fatal end. With no vaccine available, the Dutch government posed strict measures in order to control the spreading of the corona virus; People may only go outside when necessary, (for example for groceries or a breath of fresh air), have to work at home as much as possible, keep 1,5 meters distance from one another and wash their hands with soap several times a day. Luckily, I had conducted the second focus group just in time: the 12th of March 2020, which is three days before the initiation of all these measures. The in-depth interview with the urban planner, however, was planned on the 2nd of April 2020 and would take place in person. In agreement with Frans Pieters (fictive name), the in-depth interview proceeded through a video-call on the 3rd of April 2020 instead. Besides some moments of poor connection and a recording error, I didn't experience a lot of drawbacks from conducting an in interview via video-calling. Looking back, the impact of the corona crisis on my research is rather limited. However, I do believe my days would have been more productive without it. Living in a student house with thirteen others, is sometimes a bit distracting and staying concentrated was sometimes a challenging task. In addition, a printer or computer with photoshop would have been helpful from time to time.

3.3 Recording Error during in-depth Interview

The in-depth interview was broken down in two parts, because the Frans Pieters had to pick up some school stuff for one of his children. In between the two parts, I found out something inconvenient had happened: my mobile phone had an error and therefore only the first ten minutes of the previous video call were recorded. I dealt with this by directly writing down all the answers I could recall by memory, and by discussing the problem openly with Frans. We decided to do the interview partly over again. This way, I could collect all data needed anyway, whereby approximately 60% were spontaneous answers and 40% were answers given for the second time. A considerable drawback of this recording error is that it could have biased Frans. knowing what questions were coming, Frans reformulated or even deviated a bit from his unrecorded answers given earlier. Apart from this, I believe the interview succeeded anyway.

3.4 Acting as Moderator for First Time

Something that probably impacted the validity of the focus groups is the moderator's level of experience. Before this research, I had no experience with preparing and leading a focus group. So, the first focus group in Hoek van Holland was also the first time I acted as moderator. In general, this went quite well, but time management was definitely an issue. The introduction alone took one hour and this made we were already behind on schedule before the discussion even started. To deal with this directly, I decided to spend less time for the final theme of the focus group, because I expected this theme would be covered naturally throughout the discussion. Notably, also the residents knew we had started later as planned and I believe this could have impacted the quality of their answers as well. Possibly, they felt rushed and ought to answer quickly and in fewer words. During the second focus group, I felt already more confident as moderator, felt comfortable making interruptions and as a result, time management definitely improved.

4 Relevance and Transferability

4.1 Practical relevance

Many benefits regarding urban quality, livability and sustainability are associated with mixing different uses. Likewise, the mixed-use concept is often applied in modern urban planning. In port cities, the interest in this concept is growing too. Port and city are both growing and while seemingly conflictual, more and more attempts are made to mix harbor and urban uses. To understand better if and how mixed-use could be an outcome in the port-city context, this research looked deeper into mixing uses in general and the combination of industry and housing in particular. The first part of the literature study indicated residential nuisance caused by traffic or industry appears to be a recurring issue in mixed-use areas. Sustainability, synergy and diversity is not always achieved and, moreover, residential satisfaction in mixed-use areas appears to be rather low. In line with this, the second part of the literature study focused on residential nuisance. This way, important factors that could influence the perception of nuisance are identified and a conceptual model is developed accordingly. With help of empirical research this theoretical model was tested. By conducting two focus groups with residents living in Hoek van Holland, a Dutch residential area located close to industry, and additionally, by interviewing an urban planner involved with Hoek van Holland a deeper understanding of residential nuisance caused by industry is gained.

The knowledge gained serves multiple objectives:

- Encourage a critical stance among policy makers and urban planners
- Placing the perspective of the resident in the table in the context of urban planning discussions.
- Uncover factors that might play a pivotal role in the perception of nuisance
- Inspire policy makers and urban planners to approach residential nuisance from an overarching perspective.
- Support end-user involvement in urban planning
- Highlight the possible difference between actual and perceived nuisance
- Provide starting points for future urban planning research about mitigating residential nuisance
- Reveal possible improvements for the urban planning of urban areas that include both residential and industrial uses and enhance the overall development of port-cities as a whole.

4.2 Scientific relevance

Reviewing existing studies on mixed use and residential satisfaction some limitations could be observed. Firstly, there is a lack of local solutions to deal with conflicting functions in mixed-use areas. Among existing studies general statements are made, like “public space is critical”, but specific recommendations related to the urban planning are omitted. Secondly, to my knowledge, no qualitative research effort has been made to investigate the residential experience of residents living close to industry, considering both aspects of the living environment and of the users inside it. Thirdly, in existing research relatively much attention is paid to smaller scale and fine-grained mixed-use areas, the issues related to larger scale areas including industrial and residential areas are seemingly unexposed. Finally, there is still rather limited knowledge about why people feel annoyed by industrial activities and the role urban planning could play in mitigating this annoyance. This research aimed to fill this gap.

4.3 Societal relevance

According to van der Voordt (1998), societal relevance is high when a research contributes to the improvement of quality of life. On the neighborhood level, this research aims to formulate planning recommendations that maximize residential satisfaction and minimize related environmental nuisance in industrial mixed-use areas. Since these are important determinants for quality of life, it could be stated this research is of considerable relevance for society.

Furthermore, also on a higher level, it could be argued this research contributes to quality of life. Giving insight in how residents experience living near industry and how their perception of nuisance could be mitigated with help of urban planning, support planning decisions that could relieve environmental frictions between harbor and residential activities, prevent residential complaints or NIMBY- behavior, undesired relocations of harbor companies or industries and the time and cost overruns currently associated with unforeseen incompatibilities of functions. Moreover, it could give rise to a more collaborative way of urban planning: harbor and urban actors that work together, exchange knowledge and grow together as one knowledgeable port-city culture. Such a culture affects everyone and is likely to increase overall quality of life.

5 Ethical Issues and Dilemmas

A moral problem was encountered when discussing the results of the focus groups during the in-depth interview. I had to be sensitive to respect the value of privacy and to maintain anonymity of statements made by the residents. On the one hand, my ethical responsibility as researcher obliged me not to pass on confidential information to other people. This is true from the deontological point of view, that would consider this action is morally wrong because it is against a moral rule. On the other hand, quoting the residents supported a vivid discussion with the urban planner, which is beneficial for the research outcome of the in-depth interview. Moreover, explaining how residents perceive nuisance in Hoek van Holland, seemed to induce genuine interest from the urban planner, which might trigger new ideas to manage residential nuisance or which might even arouse new decisions that benefit the residents of Hoek van Holland. In consequentialism, the consequence of an act is considered more important than the act itself. Following this perspective, my action of passing on information would not be worth pursuing. Virtue Ethics, which focuses more on the morality of the person doing the act than the act itself, would come to the same conclusion. That said, in this case a major bias could be noticed when the virtue ethics doctrine is followed; As researcher, my personal mortality is being judged by myself, naturally I consider myself a moral person, who always aims to respect other’s values and behaves according to moral norms. To deal with this moral issue, I took a hybrid approach, touching on

deontology and consequentialism, and I decided to share residential information to the urban planner, while respecting the resident's privacy at the same time. During the in-depth interview, while quoting the residents, their names and other possible sensitive information were not mentioned. That way, the anonymity of the residents was safeguarded without limiting the possible positive consequences of sharing information.

6 Personal Reflection

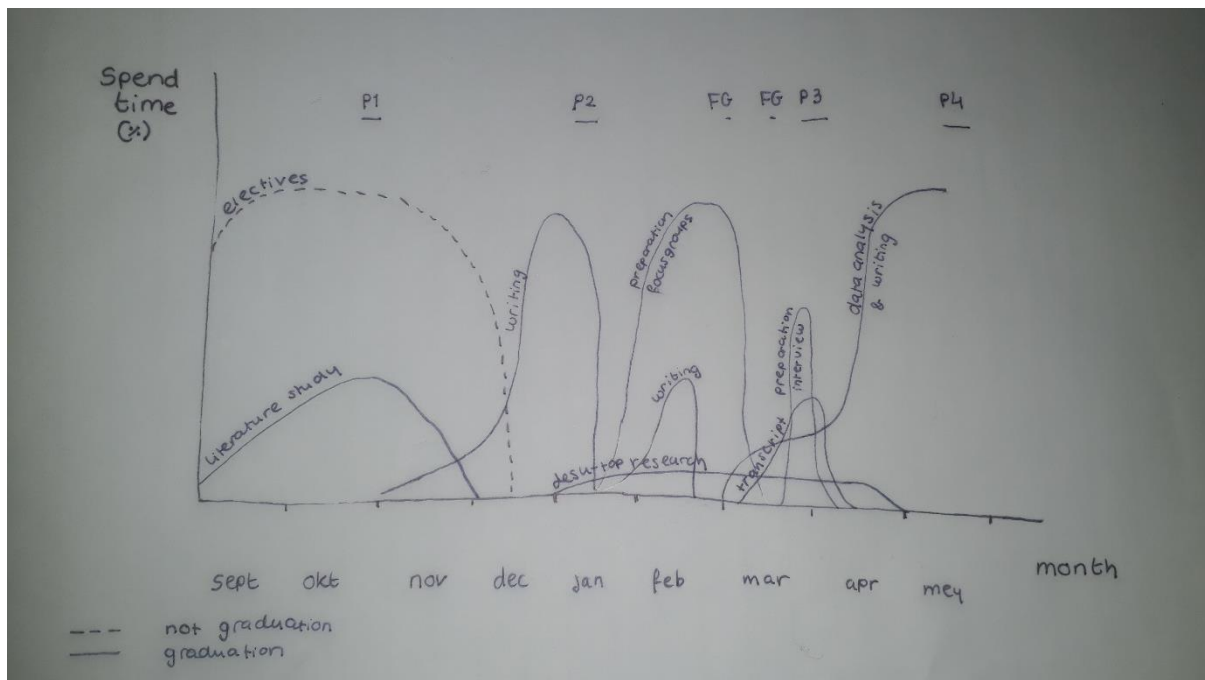
Graduating has both positive and negative sides, but on the balance, I am very satisfied with the overall process. How I personally experienced this graduation project could be summarized in a few sentences:

"Jumping from wideness to the deep and back"

What I like about doing research is that you can dive deeper into a topic and place it in the broader context at the same time. My natural way of thinking is either very precise or very scopic and I enjoy thinking about interrelations from multiple perspectives. This has been useful during this graduation project and could be useful in potential future research as well. In practice, however, it seems many tasks and activities are also tailored on the level in between. There is less time and freedom to wonder around or investigate something in detail. Working with the right balance of depth and wideness to finish tasks in time, could be a challenge for me and forms a new personal development goal.

"Let's keep it moving!"

One of the reasons I am happy with the overall progress had to do with my planning and the fact I managed to stick to it as well. Typically, at the start of a project some information is hidden and therefore not yet included in the planning. Also, during graduation this is the case. Along the way new to do's pop up, such as buying gifts to thank the participants or arrange a microphone to record the focus groups. When preparing the planning for the empirical part of the research, I estimated some tasks, like preparation of the focus groups and finalization of the report, to be very time consuming. For these activities I reserved a great amount of time and in addition I included a considerable buffer of two weeks into the planning. Furthermore, right after P2 I tried to keep on moving, which also has contributed to a constant working flow. In retrospect, I am very happy I did; The second focus group in Hoek van Holland was conducted just in time. Three days later the corona related measures (as explained in section 3.4) would already have been imposed by the Dutch government and the focus group would have been cancelled. Lucky me! Anyway, the data analysis and conclusion were more work than I expected and this caused some delay at the end of the process.



Sketch 2. Graduation tasks through time

“During graduation every phase is different and I like it!”

One of the main things I didn't expect from doing research, but did enjoy, was the diversity it offers. During graduation every phase is different (see sketch 2). Firstly, it starts with orientation by reading among others, many literature papers. For me this provoked many research ideas and I enjoyed reading more about the topics. Then, approaching the P2 it was time to capture all these thoughts and turn them into specific products for the report: writing the literature study, research questions and methods. After P2, the empirical phase starts. This includes more practical tasks, such as calling, e-mailing, posting flyers and the execution of the focus groups and interview. This empirical phase is followed by a few weeks of writing; To be well-prepared for P3, not only some preliminary results have to be presented in the form of a presentation, but also the method and data analyses sections of the P2 report had to be completed and improved. The period after P3 consisted of data analysis and writing, which required both thinking about the research topic itself as well as deciding on how to express the findings in words. Finalizing the report and presentation formed the final phase of the graduation. Overall, I enjoyed there was that much variety during the process and I believe it helped me to avoid boredom and stay motivated for the long-run.

“Energy in = Energy out”

One task I particularly liked during the research was organizing the focus groups. It costed a lot of energy to prepare them, but it gave me even more energy in return. I enjoy meeting new people, (philosophic) discussions and creative activities. All things that to a smaller or greater extent happens during a focus group. It would be great if organizing focus groups or similar participation sessions could be part of my future job.

“Graduating during corona: It is a solo!”

A more negative aspect of doing graduation is the fact it is an individual process. Although writing is something I really prefer to do by myself, (during other study projects I noticed nothing is as challenging as writing a coherent text in collaboration), the graduation was from time to time a rather lonely process. This is not only from the emotional perspective an issue, but also from the practical point of view this entails some difficulties. Sometimes I missed bumping into some fellow student at the coffee machine to casually share some thoughts. And, even if you could talk to someone about your research project, the conversation is likely to stay on a superficial level. Helpful in this respect, were the meetings with my supervisors. Since the supervisors knew the ins and outs of the research, I could discuss issues with them in greater detail and depth. These discussions helped to structure my own thoughts and to come up with new ideas. In general, it should be said I am very happy with Karel and Erik as supervisors because they gave useful, motivating feedback and supported me to take a critical stance throughout the research.