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1. Introduction

In the context of the renovations and reconstructions planned for The Hague Southwest, we were asked to come up with an idea to create or preserve the local current sense of community, in periods of *constant temporality*, as the municipality and housing corporation Staedion have stated. Broadly speaking, the housing and structure of the area will undergo major changes in the coming 17 years. The housing is old and in poor condition, and in many cases, renovations are more expensive than rebuilding. Staedion owns most of the houses in the area, and the plan is to increase both the social housing stock, and diversify the houses to attract middle incomes into the area (Rosenberg, 2021). The idea behind this is that a diversified household composition in the long term increases the socio-economic opportunities and perspectives in the area (Gemeente Den Haag, 2020).

The project is of such a big scale, that residents are forced to move out of the area and are offered the possibility to return when the renovations and rebuilding are finished (Stadsgidsdenhaag, n.d.; Brakema, 2022). This goes in phases, meaning some people move out earlier than others, and also return to the area sooner. Therefore, in these 17 years, the community sense is subject to *constant temporality*. The question is how to preserve the current, if existent, sense of community and have people engaged in the community. Besides the bad housing quality, the area is subject to low mobility among residents (both physical and social), criminality, obesity among children, and minimal employment opportunities for residents (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022b p. 36; Gemeente Den Haag, 2021a).

The goal of this report is to provide a concept that tackles several of these problems. Staedion and the municipality have tried to engage residents in the decision making process of the project, but has not proven entirely successful from what we hear from residents. In addition, we understood that the residents are willing, and capable to organise neighbourhood activities and events themselves better because of their own network. We also understood that children are less taken into account. With this knowledge, the research question we aimed to answer here is:

How to sustainably preserve and increase the present community sense in the light of constant temporality, that simultaneously takes into account sustainability, children's (mental) health, intergenerational cohesion and the area's changing structure?

We specifically focused on the area of *De Zichten*, because it is where Toon, the organisation that the universities are collaborating with for this project, is located. *Toon* is the link between project leaders, The Hague municipality, Staedion, and contractor Heijmans on one side, and residents on the other. *Toon* involves the Universities' students to participate in thinking about the community and residents' engagement in the area. *Toon* has set up a plinth in a building in *De Zichten* that currently houses the artistic research workplace of *Toon* itself, *Made in Bouwlust* (a makerspace with apprenticeship), and a Museon dependance called *Museumlab*. *Toon* also organised the neighbourhood kitchen and already has an active network of residents in *Zichten*. Apart from the proximity of *Zichten* to Sportpark Escamp (where many possibilities lie because its refurbishment is yet to be determined), we also saw that the neighbourhood's facilities focused on children are minimal and playgrounds are lacking.

The *making* of our concept relates to the creation of the community sense, in a way that it actively tries to involve residents in creating something for residents. It additionally

relates to what our concept entails, namely woodworking and the acquisition of skills related to this. The *moving* refers to the activation of residents' willingness to participate and to positively contribute to the improving health of residents. The *meeting* is the final goal of our design: by focusing on skills acquisition we aim to have people meet each other intergenerationally by having adults actively participating in the acquisition process, and having adults meeting each other on site. These three components come together in what we call *De BES*, a building playground where children and adults meet, make and move.

In the first section we explain our approach: how we collected information, and how we handled the information that we received. The insights we gained from the approach were important to understand the needs and deficits of the residents in the area, and how to incorporate this into our final proposal.

In the second section, light is shed on the context of the project and our proposal. It explains the current state of the neighbourhood, its housing, and its residents. It additionally shows how these will change in the coming years. The proposed changes in the area by Staedion and the municipality, and the information we hoped to gain from our approach, lead us to the design proposal in the third section.

Through considering intergenerational engagement, involving residents of all ages, promoting sustainability, improving the health prospects of the area's children, facilitating skill acquisition, and creating meeting places, we developed our design proposal, called *BES*. In this section we further elaborate the background and the goals of this initiative, as well as the stakeholders involved (from Staedion to the municipality and the residents, adults and children). We also discuss who we hope to involve to make the *BES* successful and thriving.

Finally, we end the report by reflecting on the process, and discussing the challenges we encountered and the aspects that proceeded smoothly.

2. Data Collection and approach

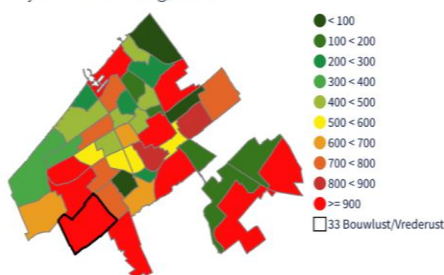
In the making of our design proposal (BES), we used various types of data. Before we visited the area, our whole team did a background search of Zichten. To do so, we utilised several online sources of information, among which “The Hague in Figures” was the most frequently consulted. This site provided relevant information regarding the city and its residents, which was presented in graphs, tables, and maps. For example, the “Leefbaarheid Cirkel” (figure 1 on the right), shows information on income, demographics, education, culture, sports and health, living, childcare, safety and overall livability in the neighbourhood. The municipality employed the gathered information to better align its policies with the city’s needs (Gemeente Den Haag, n.d.). We evaluated the information we acquired from these websites against Kleinhans’ three primary indicators, which could predict an area’s reputation (Kleinhans, 2012).



Figure 1: Leefbaarheidscirkel: Gemeente Den Haag n.d.

The first indicator is the physical appearance of the neighbourhood, which refers to the surrounding physical infrastructure and public spaces that are apparent in the area. The current physical appearance of Zichten is represented in figure 2. Decay in the neighbourhood is noticeable. There is a high number of reports of poor physical quality of the neighbourhood. During our own visit to the neighbourhood we noticed that the houses are poorly maintained, the streets are dirty and there is a lack of facilities in the area. Most of the local residents complained about the bad conditions of the housing in Zichten. In addition, when walking around in the area, we noticed that few children’s playgrounds were available in the area, and the ones available were of poor quality or consisted of only three playing tools. This was also a big complaint of the local residents. This observation sparked our imagination to create BES to tackle this issue.

Meldingen fysieke kwaliteit
Wijken in Den Haag, aantal



Meldingen verloedering
Wijken in Den Haag, aantal

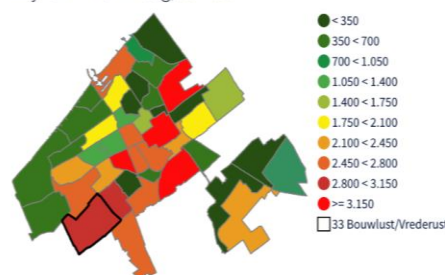


Figure 2: Left: notifications of physical quality, Right: notifications of declining neighbourhoods. From: Gemeente Den Haag, n.d.

The second indicator is the population composition, as shown in figure 3. This includes factors such as the share of ethnic minorities, age differences, and family composition. Furthermore, Ruben from TOON/DesignArbeid mentioned that everyone is part of many different groups/cultures. These findings have helped us to design BES in a way that it would

work for both younger and older generations of local residents and for people from every culture, group and background.

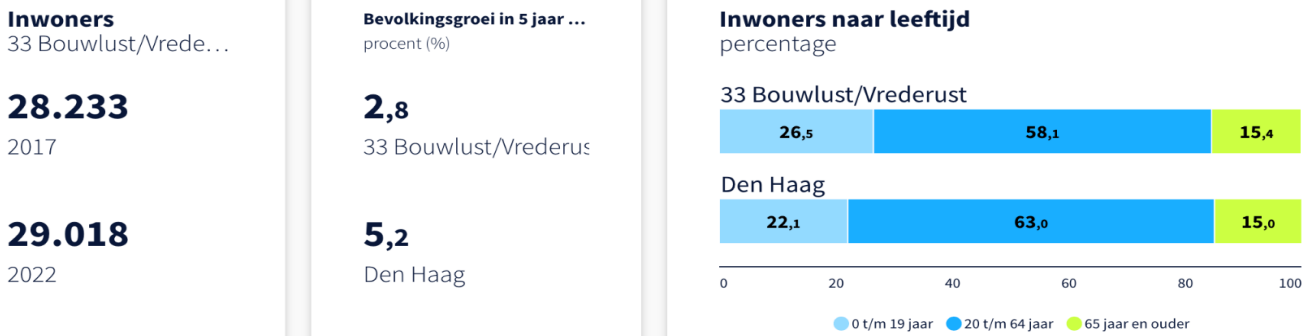


Figure 3: population composition of Bouwlust/Vrederust compared to the rest of The Hague. From left to right, top to bottom: Number of inhabitants, increase of inhabitants in 5 years, age of inhabitants, population change, average age of inhabitants. From: Gemeente Den Haag, n.d.

The last indicator of a declining neighbourhood is the socioeconomic status of the area (Kleinhans 2012). This is shown in figure 4. The socioeconomic status is seen as the differences in income and differences in workfield. This relates to the stories of the local citizens, who all agreed on the fact that the people who live in Zichten have little to no money to spend. Any design proposal that would cost a considerable amount of money, would not be feasible in this neighbourhood. Therefore, we needed BES to be accessible for people with every sort of spendable income. Nonetheless, we focused more on the lower income groups because they lacked locations to meet outside of their homes, which was not the case for the middle to higher income groups. We will elaborate this more in chapter 3.



Figure 4: socioeconomic composition of Bouwlust/Vrederust compared to the rest of The Hague. From left to right, top to bottom: Spendable household income, income sources of households, income class of households, target households with an income up to 130%. From: Gemeente Den Haag, n.d.

The last two indicators were used to get an overview of the area before physically visiting it. The information was helpful, especially combining it with our on-site observations and conversations with local residents. Most of our data collection for the design plan was done through (semi-structured) interviews and conversations with local residents, DesignArbeid, Steadion, and professionals like the supervisor of *Toverbosch* (an adventure playground in Mariahoeve). The conversations with local residents were particularly important because we wanted to create a place *for* and *by* the residents, and their opinions weighed heavily in our design plan. During our brainstorming session, we came up with BES, a place that, if it eventually gains name recognition in the neighbourhood, could tackle many of the issues that were raised by the residents (or at least partly). These issues and conversations will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

3. Context of the Design Proposal

This chapter consists of the further elaboration of the discussions held with various actors. In addition, background information about the neighbourhood is provided, and the plans of the municipality are explained in more detail.

Zichten is a neighbourhood in The Hague Zuid-West and belongs to district Escamp (see figure 5). The municipality of The Hague is planning on renovating the area substantially: houses will be demolished and rebuilt, new roads will be made and new facilities will be built (Gemeente Den Haag, 2020). The execution of these plans will take 15-20 years (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022a). The municipality has several reasons to start these renovations. First of all, the houses in Zichten are in bad shape. Since most of the houses were built soon after World War II, the (internal) structures of the houses are outdated (see figure 6) (Gemeente Den Haag, 2020). According to alderman Martijn Balster, inhabitants have been complaining about draft, moisture and mould for many years (Rosenberg, 2021). For most of these houses, the municipality claims that housing renewal is the only option.



Left Figure 5: Dreven, Gaarden and Zichten. Source: Palmbout Urban Landscapes, n.d. Right: Figure 6: Balconies of social housing are being held up with struts to reinforce them. An example of the bad conditions of the housing.

Another reason why the municipality accepted a plan to renovate Zichten is due to the shortage on the housing market. A part of the housing will be demolished to make room for an increased number of smaller houses. This fits into the plan of the municipality that wants to increase the overall number of housing in The Hague. The strategic location of Zichten offers great opportunities for this (Gemeente Den Haag, 2020). However, new houses can only be built when room is made for them by rearranging the district (Rosenberg, 2021).

Lastly, Zichten deviates strongly from neighbouring areas when it comes to livability, values of houses and employment opportunities. The houses in this area consist of 70% of social housing, which is almost twice as much as in other parts of The Hague. The municipality wants to improve the socio-economic perspectives of the area by replacing social housing with more expensive housing, in order to increase the socio-economic mix of households (Gemeente Den Haag, 2020). Important to note, is that the share of social housing was already decreasing and making place for more private owned housing in the whole of The Hague Southwest. This uneven distribution is also called socio-economic segregation. Zichten owns a large area with social housing, which means that the houses are relatively cheap. This leads to lower income households in this area (Van Ham, Tammaru & Janssen, 2021).

Changing urban policies

The policies surrounding the project for The Hague Southwest must be seen in the light of the larger *Woondeal Zuidelijke Randstad* (Housing Plan Southern Randstad) between the municipality and the national government. The plan is to focus on intensifying the housing building programme and diminishing the area's disadvantage in housing, income, and education and to work towards the national average (Gemeente Den Haag, 2021a). The Board of Mayors and Aldermen of The Hague has agreed upon the "area development Dreven-Gaarden-Zichten" (DGZ) of the Staedion corporation (Gemeente Den Haag, 2021b).

In the first phase the housing stock will be increased by 2100 homes. Around 85% of these homes are meant to attract middle-class incomes. "This is often in line with policy goals to attract middle- and higher-income households to provide more choice and housing career opportunities in regeneration areas and to increase social mix" (Kleinhans, 2012). This is also the goal for the area development DGZ. As stated earlier, a large section of the housing in these neighbourhoods consist of social housing. As a result, there were no investments in new facilities in the area because most of these households fall below the low-income threshold. These families have little or nothing to spend outside of primary needs such as rent and food. With the new plan for the area, the municipality tries to lure new investors, entrepreneurs and local residents who can and want to spend a part of their income in the area.



Figure 7: Participation meeting structure vision Zuid-west from Raadsstukken Den Haag.

To determine what the needs of the current residents are and which new target groups of residents would fit here, a participation process was followed. The residents were approached top-down for their consultancy and perspectives on the renovation projects. This was done in settings like a participation meeting, as seen in figure 7. Problems mentioned by

residents are: bad housing (noisy, mould, draught), nuisance caused by confused people, migrant workers, loiterers and poor maintenance of corporation gardens and public streets. During our own conversations with the local residents, we identified several other issues, including a lack of social gathering spaces, small and unsuitable playgrounds for children, no activities for older children, loneliness among citizens, little social cohesion, language barriers, and fear of instability in a neighbourhood so heavily subservient to change in the upcoming years. Apart from the participation evening organised by the municipality and Steadion, there is a sentiment that residents had rarely been consulted in the years before, and now that the project has been set up, the consulting of residents is on the agenda, but only rarely are the findings taken into consideration. While municipal servants have been visiting the area, and the alderman declared that people would not be disadvantaged from the plans, the residents felt they were again forgotten at some point. This contrasts the rhetoric of the project's executors, that was about including residents for consultancy, advice and participation in the project.

People are disappointed that it took the municipality and Steadion so much time to take action, and that now everything has to be executed at a high pace, resulting in the forced moving of many of the residents. Forced moving resulted in that many people are not keen on participating in the project when invited to do so. Despite the opportunity to return when the constructions are finished, not many people wish to do so. The moving itself is too costly to move a second time to return to the area. The residents feel unheard and abandoned. Furthermore, there is very little confidence in the institutions such as the municipal corporation and the enforcement organisations. In addition, residents have indicated that they attach great value to greenery in the district; a value that becomes even more important with densification of the neighbourhoods. Lastly, residents have also expressed their concerns about the level of facilities in the area (Gemeente Den Haag, 2020).

The idea of renovating and renewing the Zichten neighbourhood is a clear example of an urban regeneration policy that has been occurring in Western European countries. The characteristics of such policies are the tackling of "urban problems such as; deteriorating housing quality; poverty; unemployment; social exclusion; segregation; and low- quality public space" (Kleinhans, 2012). The municipality is applying, with several stakeholders, a place-based policy with their renewal program. They try to implement an array of "physical, social, and economic measures to improve the quality and future prospects of neighbourhoods or urban districts that face multiple problems" (Kleinhans 2012). This regeneration plan for Zichten includes demolition and conversion of social housing and the implementation of (partially) new private rented and owner-occupied housing.

Aims of the spatial interventions

The densifying (1), the increasing of sustainability (2), and the mobility transition (3) in the area are the most important goals of the overall project for Southwest (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022a), as seen in figure 10. With regards to the spatial environment of DGZ, the executors aim to reach these above points by consequently focusing on connecting (1), sustainability (2), combining functionalities (3), and greenification (4) (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022a). As stated in the municipal council, there is a larger social task in the areas of employment, poverty, safety, health and social cohesion. Adherence to these four points relate to this (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022b)

The first of the four points is that DGZ's connectability with the rest of the area must be increased. Socio-economic mobility within the neighbourhoods is to be increased by building houses of higher economic segments. A more diverse social-economic composition

of the housing makes that residents have a possibility to move into higher segments (*doorstromen*). This also attracts higher incomes to the area and provides ‘strong shoulders’ to re-energise the support for facilities and education in the area (Gemeente Den Haag, 2020).

Secondly, the executing parties see major chances for the area to profit from the energy transition. This refers to both the sustainable use of space, in addition to decreasing the carbon footprint of the area by e.g., getting ‘off the gas’ and in water collection, and enhancing the general sustainability of the dwellings. Many of the post-war buildings have very low energy labels and questionable isolation and moisture problems. (Gemeente Den Haag, 2021a; Gemeente Den Haag, 2022b). This also includes the plan to reduce the maximum speeds for cars.

Thirdly, Zichten will become a denser area than it currently is. Housing corporation Staedion owns 500 houses in the neighbourhood and will demolish 400 of them due to bad housing conditions. Instead, they will rebuild 1300 houses. They promise to give the residents the possibility to return to these newly built homes (Stadsgidsdenhaag, n.d.). The densification demands higher creativity with the space when it comes to facilities. This relates to the third vision point: combining functionalities. This means that housing will be combined with facilities as shops and business premises (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022a).

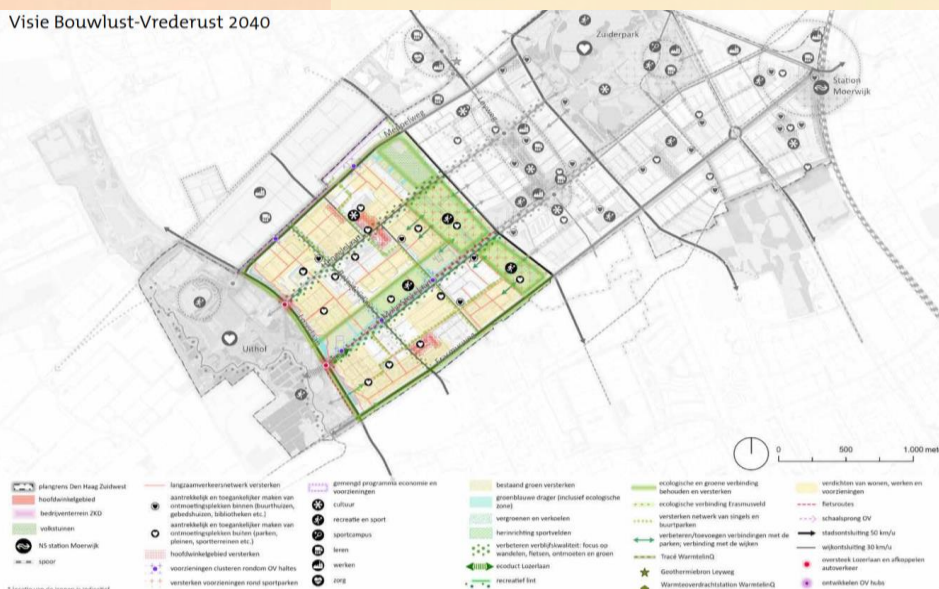


Figure 8: Visie bouwlust-Vrederust 2020 Source: Palmbout Urban Landscapes, n.d..

Lastly, the area will become greener, meaning the enhancing of the utility value of the space by adding more green to the already existing areas. As it is stated in the sketch design: green is necessary for the climate adaptation that is envisioned in the broader visions of the government, green adds up to social safety, it encourages children to play outside, and decreases heat stress (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022a). This also means that the already green areas are not built upon, but are preserved and their accessibility is improved. Finally, the executors see many chances of increasing the biodiversity of the area (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022b).

Analysing the four vision points, it is clear that the four vital parts of *placemaking* composition are present, namely; *Access & Linkages*, *Uses & Activities*, *Sociability* and *Comfort & Image*, as shown in figure 9. To exemplify: the access of residents to the park would

increase due to both, the diminishing of spatial separation through fences, and the expansion of the sportpark 'into the neighbourhood'. This consequently adds up to the overall number of uses and activities. More people being able to make use of the sportpark over a greater area could possibly advantage sociability (Project for Public Spaces, 2007). The 'pulling of the park into the neighbourhood' and the further greenification of already green spots adds up to the *Comfort & Image* in many of the area's. Densifying the area brings the risk of cramming up much housing and disrupting *sociability* and *uses & activities*. Both the combining of functions, the greenification and increasing accessibility of sport parks would all counter these risks positively (Project for Public Spaces 2007).

What Makes a Great Place?

Project
for Public
Spaces



Figure 9: Project for public spaces, Source: Project for public space, 2007

Non-spatial interventions

A vital part of the project is the rejuvenation of resident participation and consultation of residents by the executing parties. The mobilisation and politicisation of the residents is important for the executing parties to keep in touch with the needs and wishes of the respective communities of The Hague Southwest, and to preserve social cohesion in the light of 'constant temporality'. This also includes weekly consultation hours at the offices of housing corporation Staedion.

As stated in the *Structuurvisie* for The Hague Southwest, the spatial deficits, such as the bad quality of housing negatively influence non-spatial areas that relate to livability, bad health conditions and crime. The major actors and executors of the regeneration project envision that vacancy of buildings and lack of businesses contribute to feelings of unsafety

(as seen in Figure 10), by rejuvenating the area and buildings they contribute to higher feelings of safety of the residents (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022b p. 36).



Figure 10: Map of Zichten with noteworthy focal points. (Top-down) Arrow 1: The demolition of housing in Zichten has started for the rejuvenation of the area. Arrow 2: The vacancy and relocation of many shops which shows the neighbourhood decline. Arrow 3: The protestant Shalomchurch in Zichten. A place where people still meet. Arrow 4: A dilapidated portrait wall. A remnant of a past action to encourage togetherness in Zichten.

Conversations

As stated in the previous chapter, the approach, conversations are an important input for BES. By having personal conversations with local residents, stakeholders and other important figures, a clear picture can be created about what is really going on and what is needed in Zichten. The story is thereby being told from different angles. That is why we have elaborated the most important conversations below, of which had an impact on the further development of BES.

Victor van der Meijs from *Het Toverbosch*

To develop a solid plan for BES and incorporate the feedback we received from TOON/DesignArbeid and residents, we consulted Victor van der Meijs from *Het Toverbosch* The Hague. We asked him about how different aspects of their adventure playground were arranged. For example: safety, subsidies, grounds maintenance, advertising, opening days and finally how his experience has been with this location so far. Much of our idea could not have been developed without his input because he presented us with a working blueprint of an adventure playground. Several of his ideas have been implemented in our design proposal, regarding safety, volunteers, opening hours and the legal aspect of the BES. Consulting him also led us to decide to aim for increased participation from parents whose children are the original target group. From his experience at *Het Toverbosch*, it showed that having parents remain responsible over their own children enlarges the target group because parents become

actively involved in the learning process and skills acquisition of their children. This meant that our initial twofold set-up of the BES, the building playground for the children and a separate activity for parents, could be abandoned.

Tanja Luttik from Staedion

Staedion is undertaking the project with the slogan “we’re building a better neighbourhood”. Their goal is to achieve a more vibrant neighbourhood, since there is currently not much liveliness in the streets and there are too few local job opportunities. Jobs are now only available by using public transport or cars, which is not available to everyone. Another goal is to make citizens more resilient for problems of the future, like energy transition and high inflation. One of the ways to do this is by making room for facilities and jobs. The small budgets of residents currently makes it impossible for facilities to flourish. By adding more houses and also different housing types (rent and owner occupied houses) it becomes possible for facilities to stay in the area. This will then bring practical jobs back to the neighbourhood which benefits the current residents. All this fits in with the idea of Staedion to redesign the area in order to nudge healthy behaviour, like running, meeting neighbours or creating safe playing spaces for children.

Residents and local initiatives

Building and preserving community goes hand-in-hand with more thriving business, as referred to in de Notas van Uitgangspunten about ‘a better neighbourhood’ (Gemeente Den Haag, 2021a). In the talks with various residents and stakeholders we noticed that the neighbourhood has a lot of criticism on the top-down approach of the municipality and Staedion. Criticising this manner of approach, the owner of second hand shop *De Kleine Beurs* declared that residents themselves have better capacity to organise certain activities and take into account the neighbourhood’s ethnic and generational diversity. An example that shows how the residents have the expertise in building a community sense, is the providing of menstrual products and baby food for people who do not have the financial capacity to do this themselves. This is sponsored through donations of customers of *De Kleine Beurs*. Staedion is also in favour of this approach and wants to preserve the sense of community by stimulating new entrepreneurs in the neighbourhood. Staedion declared that they additionally support non-business initiatives, e.g., de buurtmoeders as seen in figure 11. As Staedion declared, they want to bring the buurtmoeders’ activity also into de Zichten when the building is finished. Fortunately, many buurtmoeders are indeed eager to return (Brakema, 2022).

The opening of Xarage by Rusen, a community based sewing shop, can be seen in the light of the plans to create more local job opportunities and entrepreneurship in the area, and is representative for creating a vibrant neighbourhood. This is also the case for Sabra who saw that the community really needed her and tried to help the neighbourhood. The owner of *De Kleine Beurs* is positive about the attraction of new creative people in the neighbourhood. Taking the example of Sabra en Rusen, Staedion has been trying to attract new creative businesses and entrepreneurs into the area. While both of them do not live there (yet), they try to support the Zuidwest community in what they are doing. Sabra also explained that she noticed the community really needed her. She offers boxing classes and other martial arts to children and women, wanting to see them growing up in a safe place. She is also a mental coach, this way she helps other women in strengthening their social position and making them more resilient to setbacks.

Another local initiative is the local community centre in the nearby neighbourhood Vrederust. One of the owners spoke to us about her experiences with the area. The initiatives

were carried out in the community centre (*De Buurtkamer*). Although it does not belong to Zichten, the owner said that the neighbourhoods were very similar in terms of backgrounds, ages and social status of the people who live there. Just as Sabra, *De Buurtkamer* initiators wanted to give something back to the neighbourhood. *De Buurtkamer* in Vrederust (Escamp) is now the 'living room' of the neighbourhood. It is a meeting place for local residents from the age of 23. All initiatives and activities are organised by and for local residents, but one requirement is that these initiatives must give something back to the neighbourhood. It is really also a place for their ideas to flourish if they meet the underlying idea of the *Buurtkamer*, namely that it also gives something back to the neighbourhood. Most courses are free and everybody works there on a voluntary basis. Sometimes a small contribution is requested for the use of material. This is a good example for BES. Looking at the background of a large part of the inhabitants of Zichten. The BES should also keep in mind that most of the initiatives must be free or for a low cost.

This was also the main argument of the local resident Ebru. She was invited to the Xarage to give feedback on the ideas. The focal point of this conversation was the fact that we should consider the backgrounds of the local residents. Most people in this neighbourhood do not have a lot of money to spend. Going out for a coffee with friends is too expensive for some of them. Ebru mentioned that there are no places for people with a lower income. The only places nearby are more expensive restaurants like Simit Sarayi. These places are only available for middle to higher income groups. This means that the local residents need to have some kind of vehicle to travel with

Figure 11: Neighbourhood initiatives mapped out.



or spend money on public transport to find a place to meet. She thought this was unfortunate because she noticed that these people also needed a meeting place. Not only for the parents or older inhabitants, but also for children. The *De Buurtkamer* as well as Ebru were both negative about the number and quality of their playgrounds in the neighbourhoods. There were also almost no activities offered to the children. In their opinion it would be useful to have a

playground that could bring both parents and children together. This is where BES comes into the picture.

DesignArbeid

DesignArbeid is a foundation that aims to maintain a cities livability, using design thinking to improve residents' quality of life and is situated in De Zichten (DesignArbeid, n.d.). Ruben Abels is one of the designers of DesignArbeid. According to him, it is important to come up with a continuous program, because social interventions are often the first to be cut off when the government/municipality needs to save money. DesignArbeid works together with TOON to create a so-called "cultural production house program" that aims to encourage innovation through collaboration. They try to connect people with activities and bring innovation by design and art. Their main focus is on culture and participatory art, which initiates dialogues and unites individuals around a particular theme. The idea is to leverage people's skills and working methods by connecting them with designers. For DesignArbeid, participation in public arts involves being involved in any stage of the process. The most important aspect for them is reflecting on the entire process. Not just like the portrait wall in figure 10, that was created and then never been looked at again. As a participatory art project, DesignArbeid thus aims to engage people and allow them to be part of the solution. Art provides a unique way of addressing difficult topics.

According to DesignArbeid the problem in Zichten is that the government and institutions block the influence of the people. Ruben states that people in the neighbourhood have little influence, and their demands are not being heard. According to Ruben, everyone is part of many different groups/cultures. Therefore, an intersectional approach is necessary to address these issues. With the project in Zichten, TOON/DesignArbeid tries to create a cultural hub for the people of the neighbourhood that will sustain the renovation and aim to empower the community to become a political force. This entails a different approach to governance, where bottom-up decision-making is prioritised by listening to various needs. However, given that the renovation is underway and choices have already been made, the sense of community that existed before may not be the same. The challenge now is to create a new one.

Figure 12: Artwork with Toon Zichten.

Figure 13: Toon Zichten.



Typically, the creators of an area would have a plan or profile, but Ruben noted that there was none for Zichten. This is where DesignArbeid comes in by promoting the involvement of cultural players in the area, which is crucial for the neighbourhood. However, Ruben cautioned that there is always a balance between the intentions of those in charge and what can realistically happen. They have to acknowledge the existence of multiple cultures in the area. This poses a challenge but also presents an opportunity for DesignArbeid. The diverse identities, cultures, and ideas create a rich environment for artistic creation and enable DesignArbeid to foster a sense of commonality among people despite their differences. The area was originally created with an economic perspective, as Nina Cranen pointed out in her introduction, but DesignArbeid questions whether neighbourhood cohesion can be achieved through economic means. Ruben is sceptical and cites culture and politics as examples of areas where people can disagree with each other. It is not always about having the same opinion about everything, but it is important that there is a conversation about all the important subjects.

4. Design Proposal and stakeholder analysis

The goal

Based on the previous analysis of Zichten, it can be concluded that this neighbourhood suffers from a lack of liveliness and community, with little social cohesion and attachment to the area. The residents are facing several challenges, including limited development opportunities for children and youngsters, high poverty rates and inadequate public structures such as benches and playgrounds. The neighbourhood is already undergoing changes, with many buildings being demolished, leading to a lot of materials left behind.

Cultural differences, language barriers and socioeconomic disparities are factors that can hamper the social thriving of an area and obstruct the fostering of social cohesion and community sense. Therefore, our goal is to create opportunities for people to come together, interact and build relationships. Through this approach, residents will increasingly engage with one another, establish connections and share the issues they are experiencing. Additionally, we want to provide children and youngsters with safe and accessible spaces for recreation with the aim of having a positive impact on their mental health and social skills. Another goal is to make the area more inviting and to promote social interaction and community pride. Implementing public amenities can be a way of achieving this.

By working in the light of the philosophy “*by and for residents*” (a community-based approach), community members are empowered to engage and take ownership of their neighbourhood and work together to create positive change. Residents can create a vibrant and inclusive neighbourhood for themselves in this way.

The concept

The design proposal is called BES (abbreviated from the Dutch ‘bouw- en speelplaats’, meaning ‘building and playing site’): a “building playground” where children and adults can use local construction materials and are provided with tools to build and create public amenities (see Figures 15 and 16). The site also gives children the opportunity to build their own forts or playground equipment, and get acquainted with woodwork. The playground will be supervised, for the users’ safety and to oversee and assist in acquisition of skills by both children and adults.

The playground provides a place for residents to connect and develop. This concept offers a unique and engaging experience that encourages creativity and collaboration, and additionally uses the wooden waste from the demolitions sustainably. The idea of combining the “building playground” for the children, with a place where adults meet each other and offer assistance to their learning children, enlarges the target group and builds on the community sense intergenerationally.

The proposal is based on Danish, British and Belgian examples, that have proven that the building playgrounds possess the ability to attract people and henceforth create cohesion. The original idea comes from Copenhagen, and is called *Skramellegepladsen*, loosely translated to ‘junk playground’ (see figure 15 and 16). The junk playground was an initial attempt to give the city’s children ‘a substitute for the play and development potential that it has lost in the city’. The city offers few spaces for children’s imagination, and because access to building sites is forbidden and trees are scarce, the junk playground offers an alternative. John Bertelsen, the site’s ‘pædagog’, called the children’s play *skrammolog* (‘junkology’). Over time, pre-built structures and a range of additional activities have been added: including

vegetable and flower gardening, sports and a clubhouse and even theatre and events like cooking and baking days. The recreational facility that houses the *skrammellegepladsen* also organises meetings with the parental board and the volunteers ([O'Connor & Palmer, 2003](#)).



Figure 14: Notting Hill Adventure Playground, source: *The Guardian* (19th July 2017).

The British playground in South London has shown that the ‘adventure playgrounds’ only need to be as large as a suburban garden (figure 14). The *Triangle Adventure Playground* was set up for children in nearby tower blocks and estates who have no gardens themselves. Most of the current adventure playgrounds are located in poorer neighbourhoods. ‘Playmakers’ in the Triangle in London state that they are not only supervisors, but are also educators, police and social services, that ensure that children are not stuck at home or at risk on the streets. People who played at the site when they were young now come back to supervise at the Triangle. British research on the adventure playgrounds has shown that many cities are becoming more hostile to (non-middle class) children, especially in the gentrified areas where priorities are not with children ([Grant, 2017](#)). In Denmark, the UK, and Belgium, the supervisors are crucial in guiding the children in skill acquisition to handle the tools. All the different initiatives strive towards something they call ‘guided freedom’ ([Das Kunst, 2023](#)).

Above all, The Hague has already shown its success in projects like this. *Het Toverbosch* in The Hague North is already housing a building playground ([De Wilde, 2019](#)). The example of *Het Toverbosch* also shows that the playground cannot be copied one-on-one from the British and Danish examples. Professional supervisors cost money, and this would not enhance accessibility. So in the concept, the supervisors’ first and foremost tasks are the handing out of nails and tools, and providing first aid if needed. They can also support in providing skills to both children and adults. Other than in the Danish and British examples, the most important condition for initiatives like this in the Netherlands to succeed is in keeping parents responsible.

Similar to what *Het Toverbosch* does, parents will be asked to agree to the terms of accessing the building playground, meaning they remain responsible over their children at all times. This does not only enable the BES to be set up quickly with regards to legislation, but also includes an important component of our concept: intergenerational engagement. *Het*

Toverbosch has proven that adult participation increases when they are held responsible. Skills acquisition has become something that passes on from parent to child, with the supervisor taking up only a minimal role. Additionally, this means that parents meet each other, further enhancing community cohesion.

It is easy to see the overlap of the roles of the supervisors in both Danish and Dutch examples with the roles of the *Buurtmoeders* as mentioned above. Just as the *pædagog*/supervisors the *Buurtmoeders* are very approachable to youth and are able to use this for community projects, as the *Mengelmoestuin* (Brakema, 2022). Building on this example, we thus expect that the neighbourhood will respond positively and are able to organise this by themselves. The *Buurtmoeders* have also shown the possible success of an expansion of the playground with gardening activities.



Figure 15 (Left): Children constructing at “Bouwspeelplaats” in Antwerp, Belgium (*Bouwspeelplaats – das Kunst*)
Figure 16 (Right): Children using tools at “Bouwspeelplaats” in Antwerp, Belgium (*Bouwspeelplaats – das Kunst*)

Location

The building playground can be located within the boundaries of sportpark Escamp. The refurbishment of the sportpark is still to be determined and therefore offers an opportunity for the building playground, as seen in figure 17. The sportpark is currently where football associations are situated (see figure 18), and offers a place for people to move, meet and develop. By adding the building playground, the area still functions as a place for people to meet and develop. Besides, the residents have expressed their concerns that the neighbourhood will be less green after the renovations. By placing the playground here and possibly expanding it with the (school) gardens, the neighbourhood remains green.

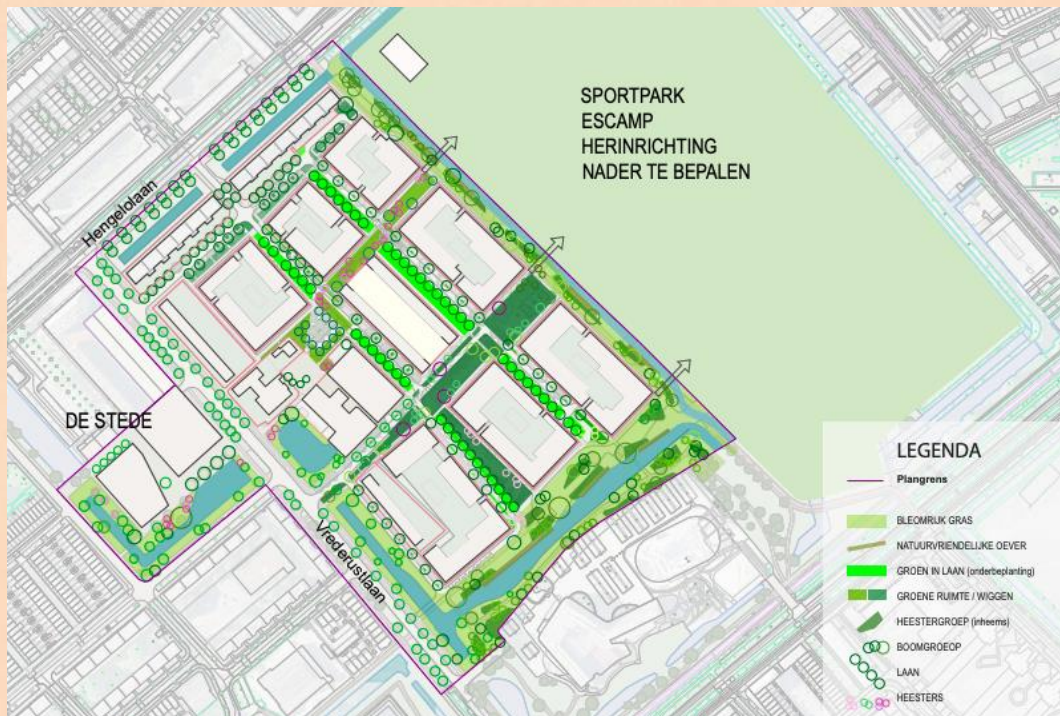


Figure 17: Refurbishment of Escamp sports park. Source: Gemeente Den Haag, 2022a p.13



Figure 18: parking lots at sportpark Escamp

The biggest issue is the realisation of the building playground in terms of the Dutch legislation concerning playgrounds. An actual playground has very high standards regarding safety. Contrasting a building site, where nails and splinters are everyday matters, an actual playground can have no factors that negatively influence children's safety. This is why the BES is not a real playground, and requires supervision, by both designated supervisors and parents. Building and tinkering are central to the building playground, supervision over the handling and application of tools, and supervision over the safety of the constructions is

necessary. This is also one of the reasons why many construction playgrounds are also called leisure centres (Gemeente Den Haag, 2011).



Figure 19: example of *Het Toverbosch* where the building area, a communal garden and meet and greet spots are combined and provided.

The idea to realise the playground was taken from *Het Toverbosch* in the Hague, and inquired with its leading figure Victor van der Meijs. *Het Toverbosch* is a place in Haagsche Hout, where you can play outdoors, develop talents or just relax, as shown in figure 19. It offers building days on the construction playground, and sometimes offers crafting instructions/workshops and gardening days. At first, the building playground in Mariahoeve was led by a contractor company. The municipality found this too expensive, but wanted to preserve the initiative. *Stichting Kunstpost* jumped in to recruit volunteers for the building playground, so the municipality would only have to facilitate the site and the materials. In Mariahoeve, *Stichting Kunstpost* and the building site proved very successful in getting people out of their houses. Besides select open days, they mostly focused on the summer vacation, and provided a sort of 'surrogate vacation' to people without gardens and that did not go on vacations themselves. During the 'building period', *Het Toverbosch* only lets children under guidance of their parents access the sites, the parents carry the responsibility over their own children, and in this way they become active participants in the building and learning process. The volunteers are merely there to give instructions on what to build, hand out nails and hammers, and maybe apply a band-aid once in a while. The age boundaries are not strict anymore, adults who wanted to make use of the materials and site to build a spice rack for example were ought to be valuable for the playground because they pass on their skills.

Het Toverbosch does not fit in the descriptions and standards of a real playground, so is not bound to the strict legal regulations of playgrounds either. The volunteers are also to oversee that the children do not climb too high on the forts and material containers, so they do not cross the legal boundaries of a playground. *Het Toverbosch* does not fall in a certain category, so neither in certain prescribed regulations for their project.

This concept is also where the BES will be focused on. The central point of the BES is the "building playground", where children and adults can use local construction materials and are provided with tools to build and create craftworks. The site also gives children the opportunity to build and paint their own forts made out of pallets, and get acquainted with woodwork. The plan is to make it a building playground. Not just a place where the children can build something but also a place where they can play outside, and for adults a place where they not only build something but also a space for them to meet and greet, but especially guide their children in getting acquainted with woodwork and crafting. Before accessing the site, parents need to sign a list of conditions that states that they are always responsible for their children.

Place to meet, move and make

In order to integrate the building playground into the neighbourhood, it is important that parents find the place accessible, in the end, they are the ones responsible over their children. Ebru stated that there are only a few meeting places for mothers and other people in the neighbourhood. All of this means that these parents often stay at home. On its open days, BES can provide a place for people to come together and bring their own food to consume on the BES' picnic tables around lunchtime. The BES can provide coffee and tea for parents, and lemonade for children.

Het Toverbosch in The Hague Mariahoeve has shown that keeping the parents responsible for the children involves them in the process and lets them pass on their skills to youngsters. For the preservation of safety in de BES, the presence of parents is crucial. Their presence needs to entail active involvement, for which they also sign a document.

The opening hours

The playground will be open on select days, with space for expansion. Starting point is any May vacation in the coming years. The May vacation is a good starting point because the weather lets people use the outside environment and for most of the children it is a two week vacation from school, so lots of free time to do activities. From the start onwards, the period between the May and the Autumn vacation is the ideal period to have the outdoor part of the BES opened. Also looking at similar initiatives, it seems most tenable to open the BES once per month, and more often during May and Summer vacations.

The set up and supervisors

To have the BES supervised in a responsible way, it's crucial to have volunteers/paid supervisors who are acquainted with using building equipment and tools, and have knowledge about the materials. Subsidies are needed for both compensation of the supervisors and possible training for people who are willing to participate at *BES*. However, paid supervisors cost money, and this would negatively influence accessibility. *Het Toverbosch*, for example, runs on volunteers, who all have regular jobs and do volunteering on the side. This means that the building playground is opened only on select days, so it remains accessible. The difference is that the *Toverbosch* came about through local initiative, whereas *BES* is initiated via project leaders. Volunteers thus must be attracted externally.

Local resident Ebru made the suggestion to give allowances to the people who come as supervisors. This is also done for lunchtime mothers in the neighbourhood. They supervise the lunch meetings and get a weekly fee of 10 euro. It is a small fee but, according to her, this gives the mothers the validation. She suggested targeting the group of women and men that cannot find a job or are unable to work fulltime. The *Buurtmoeders* can also be involved with the supervision of the BES. They are very approachable to youth and are able to use this for community projects, such as the *Mengelmoestuin* ([Brakema, 2022](#)). Building on this example, it is expected that the neighbourhood will respond positively and are able to organise this by themselves. The *Buurtmoeders* have also shown the possible success of an expansion of the playground with gardening activities.

All of this is a way to involve local residents more in the concept. This fits in with our community-based approach to work "by and for residents". In this way, community members are empowered to take ownership of their neighbourhood and work together. When they are made supervisors or are given another job at the BES, you really involve the local residents and you give them a sense of responsibility which will positively affect the neighbourhood.

This idea is supported by one of the project leaders of *De Buurtkamer* in Vrederust. Many volunteers who previously worked for the *De Buurtkamer* have left the Vrederust district, partly due to relocations, but there is still a lot of enthusiasm to do work in and for the neighbourhood. Local residents have also contributed ideas, and this is why they are enthusiastic to volunteer.

Local resident Ebru also mentioned that when it comes to the BES being dangerous, you need to make the parents aware that they are in the end responsible for their children. The supervisors of the BES should give a brief instruction lesson before the start of a workshop, event or play session. The parents are responsible, but at the same time it is about guided freedom. Experience from *Het Toverbosch* has shown that parents are a bit reluctant at first, but the point they get used to the idea they become less worried about the use of tools by their children, and also gradually give them more space. Of course, it is important not to let the children use large tools unsupervised or let them build and climb too high.

Lastly, in order to introduce children to the possibilities of professional woodworking, supervising the playground can be an internship spot for the secondary vocational education schools (Dutch: MBO-scholen). This way, professionalism and sufficient building skills of the supervisors are guaranteed. In addition, by setting up a link between the MBO schools of ROC Mondriaan, connections between the BES and the area are further enhanced.

Communication strategy

In the interviews held with Ruben, residents, and other similar initiatives in the neighbourhood, we discovered that they are enthusiastic about the idea. It has become apparent that there is indeed a need for this concept, but it is crucial that residents are involved as much as possible. Henk Baarbé, who is also actively involved in organising activities to bring the neighbourhood together, has stressed the importance of making residents feel like they are the ones organising it themselves and that there is no hierarchy. This brings us to the task to inform the neighbourhood about the plans for the BES. With this spreading of information, the hope is that enough people apply for the various positions that are being offered on the BES. Ruben has also emphasised the need to create a strategy for communicating the idea to the neighbourhood so that residents can be encouraged to participate in BES. DesignArbeid themselves has experimented with flyers, but has concluded that they have little or no impact. This is also the case with neighbourhood meetings. There is only a small part of the local residents who show up and also the people who come cannot reach all people.

To generate excitement in the neighbourhood about the building playground and promote the concept, we have developed a few strategies. To begin with, we aim to involve schools and community centres. By inviting schools to participate in “building days” and organising fun activities for children, we hope to introduce them to BES and inspire them to share their excitement with their families. Similarly, by collaborating with community centres and offering workshops, we hope to increase BES's existence within the community. This is also something we want to achieve by creating ties with MBO courses in the area. The ROC Mondriaan in The Hague offers a study to become a carpenter. These students almost always have to do an internship. They can do an internship on the BES to increase their own knowledge and help with the use of materials and the art of the carpenter's trade. Other courses could also be linked to the BES and the students could follow an internship or traineeship on site. The Participation of MBO schools with BES offers some stability and the structural income of skilled people to help on site.

Another strategy is to directly approach people.

Figure 20: a poster with pumpkin competition.

We want to do this by, for example, knocking on people's doors and chatting with residents, informing them about BES, upcoming activities that BES is organising, and what they can do for BES. Additionally, we plan to set up a stand in a more crowded area in the neighbourhood (next to the supermarket for example), where people can do experiments and in this way interact with BES. This approach was inspired by Ruben's suggestion to develop a strategy where people come to us and not the other way around. The owner of the *De Buurtkamer* also mentioned that, in these neighbourhoods the best way to reach people is via word of mouth referrals. The first steps, attracting residents to BES and communicating the concept to residents, will be the most difficult. However, once BES is up and running, we expect that more and more people will become familiar with it.



Continuing on the idea to lure local residents to de BES is to create a competitive element. In addition to workshops, we plan to host other events such as design/building competitions, inspired by local initiatives (see figure 20). By making it a competition (and offering prizes), we think we can make people even more enthusiastic and attract them to BES. This has also been done on the communal garden in Zichten. The pumpkin competition was all about carving out the nicest pumpkin for Halloween. The winner got a price of 50 euro, which is a lot of money for the people in the neighbourhood.

The last strategy is not something we do, but something the local residents build themselves. The idea of the BES is that people can make their own objects, pieces and artworks for their homes, but also for their neighbours who are not able to do this themselves. Other neighbours can also become inspired in making something of their own. This is the effect we want to create.

Funding

One of the ways in which the BES could get funding is by asking for an ANBI (Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling) status. An ANBI is a public benefit institution. An institution can only be an ANBI if it is almost entirely committed to the public interest. Associations such as sports, personnel, singing, harmony or theatre associations and hobby clubs are usually not ANBIs. To be designated as an ANBI, the institution must meet all of the following conditions (Belastingdienst.nl): The BES must be fully focused on the common good. This must be apparent from, among other things, the statutory objective and the intended activities. They must serve the public interest with 90% requirement of its activities. BES should not have a profit motive with all of its activities that serve the public interest. Money that remains after the closure of the institution is spent on an ANBI, or on a foreign institution that focuses for at least 90% on the public benefit. For a cultural ANBI, the positive liquidation balance must be spent

on an ANBI (or foreign institution that focuses for at least 90% on the public benefit) with a similar goal (Belastingdienst, n.d.).

Furthermore, the BES and the volunteers need to meet certain integrity requirements, like a Verklaring Omtrent Goedgedrag (VOG). Another important thing, which is applicable to the BES is that no natural or legal person may dispose of the assets of the BES as if they were their own (for example the equipment or other means). Directors and policymakers may not have a majority in control of the assets of the institution and the BES itself can not hold on to more money than is reasonably necessary for the work on the location. Therefore, equity must be limited. The BES needs to have an up-to-date policy plan and knows that it complies with the administrative obligations. Lastly, The BES needs to have a website with specific data and the execution of activities (Belastingdienst, n.d.).

This can also work for BES because the above named building and playground in Rotterdam had this status. Here the board members do not receive any monetary reward for the board work they do. The board has appointed a manager/coordinator construction playground who receives a salary for maintaining the facility. The resources required for this come from municipal and sub-municipal budgets. His tasks include recruiting and managing voluntary employees, offering adapted work to those who need it, such as young people through Bureau Halt, clients of institutions that have to integrate into society and trainees, day-to-day management, and planning the activities of the construction playground. The ANBI status could ensure that both the location and the persons who make the donations to the location can enjoy many tax benefits. This ensures that companies and entrepreneurs are more inclined to make a donation. In addition, such a status also shows that the BES is really only there for the local residents and is not looking for large profits.

Our main example, *Het Toverbosch*, is led by the organisation *Kunstpost* that took over from a contracting company that became too expensive for the municipality to uphold. Toverbosch thus exists entirely from municipal funding, the municipality facilitates the site and provides funding for the equipment. Officially, *Het Toverbosch* is property of the municipal *Dienst milieueducatie* (that also manages the schoolgardens). Wood and materials mostly come from donations from people who visited *Het Toverbosch*. *Het Toverbosch* is 'project based subsidised', opening only on select days makes it possible to maintain this subsidy. Lastly they host children's parties and see this as a way to uphold the building playground financially. They succeeded because the municipality saw Mariahoeve as a deprived neighbourhood, and the municipality wanted to invest in projects that would make the area thriving again.

Stakeholders

The interventions planned by the municipality will thoroughly change the neighbourhood. There are several groups of people and institutions that have an interest in the renovations and can be classified as stakeholders. In this section, an overview and description of the stakeholders is given. When applying the "Building playground" as a design intervention in the area of The Hague, we identify twelve stakeholders. Each of them has different levels of interest and power as can be seen in table 1. The identified stakeholders and their motivation, (potential) role and collaborating/conflicting stakeholders can be found in table 1. Although we identified many stakeholders, the key stakeholders are the municipality, the creatives and the children. The municipality being an internal stakeholder that is responsible for the project to take place and creatives and children being external stakeholders who are the future users of the Bouwspeelplaats. The other stakeholders are a little less important as they play a less crucial role in the process and execution, however they should be taken into account.

Stakeholder	Motivation	(Potential) Role in the project	Conflict/Collaboration
<i>Municipality</i>	They want a thriving neighbourhood, anything that could help to obtain this goal is at their interest. BES would stimulate social cohesion, a component of a thriving neighbourhood. Thus they have high interest.	The municipality of The Hague, being the initiator of the plans, is a big stakeholder in the project. The municipality is responsible for the liveliness of the city and the well-being of its citizens. They have the power over the Hague and thus over this intervention, they need to give BES a permit. Also, they could help by granting subsidies for materials, tools and payment of potential employees.	The municipality could cooperate with Heijmans, Staedion, the government, DesignArbeid and investors to realise the project. Perhaps they could have a conflict with Heijmans as well, if they want higher financial contributions.
<i>Staedion</i>	They will not gain much from BES, rather than people being happy with the intervention and somehow link it to Staedion, therefore their interest is low.	Staedion has the opportunity to make place for the intervention in the urban program they're making for the area.	Staedion could cooperate with the municipality and Heijmans, since they are in close contact with each other.
<i>Heijmans</i>	This stakeholder has to get rid of the rest material coming from the demolished houses. BES would happily make use of this material and help them get rid of it.	This stakeholder could provide BES with construction materials.	Heijmans could cooperate with the municipality and Staedion in order to deal with handing the materials. However, perhaps the municipality is not willing to pay them much for their contribution.
<i>Government</i>	Their goal is to have vibrant cities, thus vibrant neighbourhoods. The intervention could help to obtain this and thus contribute to their goal.	They could maybe help the municipality realising the project in terms of granting them money.	They could cooperate with the municipality.
<i>Supervisors</i>	These people are handy and are seeking a job.	This group provides professional help at the Bouwspeelplaats.	They could cooperate with the creatives, schools, community houses and ROC Mondriaan
<i>ROC Mondriaan (MBO)</i>	Students from the MBO could benefit from internships at the Bouwspeelplaats and working experience.	Students from this MBO could provide help with building construction at the Bouwspeelplaats.	They could collaborate with the other supervisors.
<i>Creatives</i>	Creatives want a place to be creative/do practical work. A free place to do so like BES is appealing for them.	The creatives could help build street furniture in BES. Also, they could become volunteers/employees.	Creatives could collaborate with community houses, but also with supervisors and the ROC Mondriaan
<i>Primary & Secondary Schools</i>	Their aim is to conduct an interesting school program, BES could be a good attribute to that. Since it's free, schools would probably happily be connected to BES.	They could generate many visitors for BES. This would help with the popularity and recognition of BES.	Schools could cooperate with DesignArbeid/Toon, creatives, supervisors & ROC Mondriaan.
<i>Community Houses</i>	Their goal is to bring people together, which is also the purpose of BES.	This group has the power to bring many people to the Bouwplaats.	They could collaborate with creatives, since their visitors might be creatives.
<i>Parents</i>	They want a place for their children to safely develop and play around. Also, meeting other parents and coming together is of their best interest.	They could supervise the children.	They could cooperate with Primary- and Secondary Schools.
<i>Children</i>	Children want a place to play since this is lacking in the neighbourhood. A place like BES where they can do whatever they like would be very interesting for them.	Their role is to make use of BES and to help build the playground.	They could 'collaborate' with schools.
<i>DesignArbeid/Toon</i>		They have a wide network, which could help BES to gather volunteers.	This stakeholder could cooperate with creatives and employees.

Table 1: The stakeholders for BES

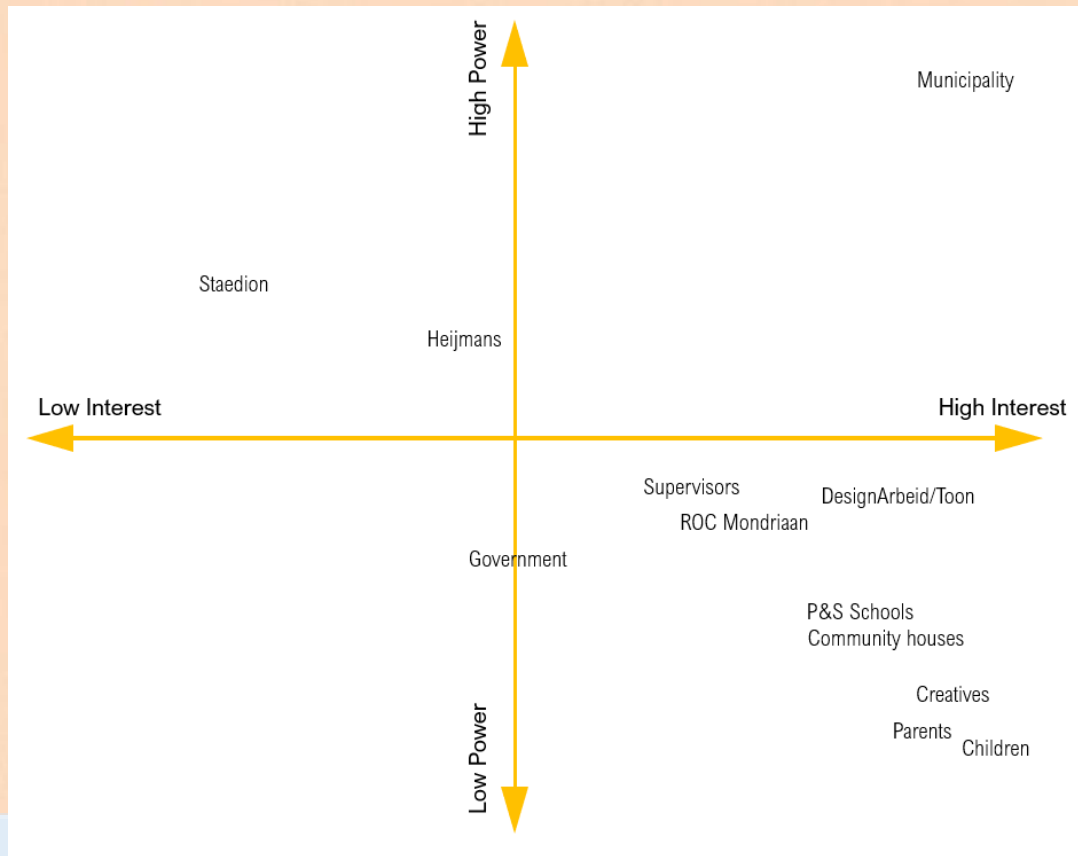
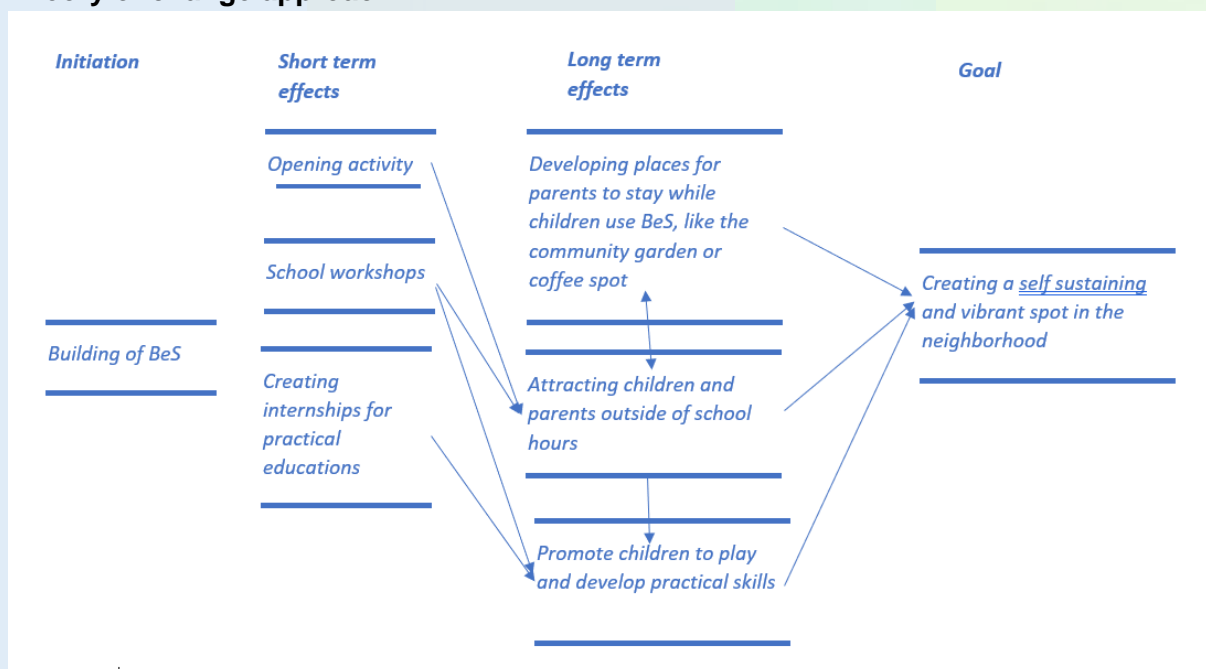


Figure 21: Stakeholder Analysis BES

Theory of change approach



(Figure 22: A conceptualization of the theory of change)

Initiation

First, the BES has to be built. The Building ground is based upon other examples in the Hague and other areas. So The Hague has already shown its success in projects like this. *Het Toverbosch* in The Hague North houses a building playground and sometimes collaborates with community gardens from other areas in The Hague ([De Wilde, 2019](#)). There is also a building playground in Rotterdam, Bouwspeeltuyn Maeterlink. This also shows that projects like these have potential for succeeding in the Netherlands. The BES can provide space for organising workshops on using tools, materials and art supplies. Workshops can be organised for the locals, but also for school classes and even children's parties. Inspired from a similar initiative in The Hague, the organising of 'building days' and workshops in an indoor space are another possible expansion.

In a conversation with one of the owners of the Buurtkamer in the neighbourhood of Vrederust, says the need for a bigger childrens playground is very alive in the neighbourhoods. There is nothing for children around. There are small playgrounds but those are not enough for the number of children living in the area. She says "how are you going to entertain 20 children with 1 seesaw and a swing. That is by far not enough for all the young children in this area". She continues "There is also nothing for the older youngsters, the teenagers. The playgrounds must be challenging for children of all ages. But the municipality does not look at these facts. The result of this is that young people will look for other things to occupy themselves with. These are often not the things they should be involved with as a young teenager or they stay inside and play videogames, which is also not something they should do all the time. Or they go out with their older brother and we want to prevent that." Juvenile crime rates are also high in these neighbourhoods, so a playground where children and young people of all ages can come and work seems like a good idea to her.

Short term effects

The short term effects are initialised by activities such as opening activity, school workshops and creating an internship spot for practical education.

The activities that are to be offered are useful for the community of Zichten. We want to continue on the same line as the other building playgrounds in the area (Zuid-Holland). *Het Toverbosch* does not only consist of the Bouwspeelplaats, but there are also various other workshops and activities to do: for example, there is a weekly fresh market with vegetable garden vegetables, they reflect on the changes in nature all year round with a series of seasonal celebrations and there is a changing educational offer, such as the drawing course Nature Drawing ([Tuinenvanmariahoeve.nl](#)). These are the kind of activities we want to offer to the children. Next to the children's activities there are also enough ideas to entertain and educate the adults who are interested. We could offer furniture workshops, sewing lessons, sessions on how to handle different building materials, but also less serious lessons such as making your own flute and jigsaw competitions.

By doing this, BES can introduce itself as a central and creating spot in the neighbourhood. The opening activity and school workshops can introduce residents to the concept of BES and make BES attractive as an after school activity. By supervising the playground by experts and teaching children during the workshops, children can develop practical skills and are encouraged to play and discover by themselves.

Long term effects

Once the playground has taken root in the neighbourhood and is regularly visited by local children, the playground can be expanded further, by expanding possibilities for parents to supervise the children while they play, or undertake activities themselves. Here, the community garden and coffee spot can be created. By making BES an attractive spot for parents as well, the place can attract more children, since it will be more attractive to parents to take their children there.

There is already a small community garden in Zichten that is quite successful, showing how our design proposal has potential to succeed in the neighbourhood. The playground can also be expanded with a communal garden, both for residents as for local elementary schools. The community garden is something we are not sure of. It could be placed on the terrain if there is enough space left after the buildings, building space and the playground are all placed. However, if this is the case then a communal garden is very effective for the neighbourhood. Children learn where the food comes from. They learn how vegetables and herbs grow. Also as adults it is instructive to discover how vegetables and herbs grow. With a vegetable garden you depend on the seasons. As a result, you live more in the here-and-now and you learn which vegetables and herbs go with which seasons. By growing your own vegetables and herbs you develop more patience. You will have to wait for your vegetables to be harvested. Finally, you learn to deal with disappointments. A harvest can also fail. The last important thing is that the people can take home vegetables they have planted themselves. It is a lot cheaper and satisfactory to harvest your own food.

Goal

In this way, BES can help achieve the final goal, namely improving the livelihood in the neighbourhood and giving people a fun activity that doesn't require much money. Our goal is to create opportunities for people to come together, interact and build relationships. We hope that through this approach, residents will start conversations with one another, establish connections and share the issues they are experiencing. Additionally, we want to provide children and youngsters with safe and accessible spaces for recreation with the aim of having a positive impact on their mental health and social skills. Another goal is to make the area more inviting and to promote social interaction and community pride. Implementing public amenities can be a way of achieving this. We want to work with the concept of *"by and for residents"*, which is a community-based approach. In this way, we aim to empower and engage community members to take ownership of their neighbourhood and work together to create positive change. We believe that residents can create a vibrant and inclusive neighbourhood themselves. We want to do this with the Building and playground of the BES.

Expansion possibilities

Most people in this neighbourhood do not have a lot of money to spend. Going out for a coffee with friends is too expensive for some of them. Ebru mentioned that there are places for people with a lower income like IKEA and Hema, but these are further away. This means that the local residents need to have some kind of vehicle to travel with or spend money on public transport.

That is why we also see an expansion in the BES providing a place for visitors to have a place to eat and drink. Tables and benches can be divided throughout the playground. This is not only for people who want to buy something on the BES like breakfasts, tea and coffee that are served for a low price. But it is also for the people who cannot afford that, and want to take their own food and drinks with them. This is all possible on the BES. The breakfasts that

the BES will be served and prepared by volunteers from the neighbourhood. This gives an opportunity for people with a migration background to improve their Dutch language skills.

5. Reflection

In hindsight, the process for us as a group ran quite smoothly. Especially in the first weeks, this ran smoothly to such an extent that we were confident the assignments of the last couple weeks would run just as smoothly, but not taking into account the increasing amount of work. This resulted in us beginning to work on the design game the Monday before the deadline, just as we did in the first two weeks. In combination with low presumed need to thoroughly look into a division of tasks, this finally led to unnecessary request of a deadline extension. This improved when we worked on the final report, where we all quite well knew what still needed to be done. Obviously, as also explained during the lectures, the weekly submission of parts of the final assignment very positively contributed to a smoothly running final part of the working process. An additional advantage that we had was the fact that both Ruben from Toon, and lecturers Kleinhans and Newton were very enthusiastic about our proposed concept, necessary adjustments thus turned out either minimal or easily conducted.

The fact that the original concept, on which we built our own idea, was subject to much previous research made it easier for us to identify where advantages laid for us to apply to our focus area. It additionally showed what was lacking in our area to execute this concept one-on-one, and what factors are additionally needed to have the *BES* possibly succeed. We found out that, even while there are similar initiatives present in The Netherlands, and even in The Hague, an initiative that requires major contribution and engagement from residents is highly context dependent. We had the luck that our major inspiration and source of information, *Het Toverbosch*, in The Hague North was located in Mariahoeve, an area that is similar to Southeast with regards to its composition of residents and housing. Thus not many changes were needed, besides the initiating and attraction of volunteers.

It definitely did positively contribute to our progress was the accessibility of physical information, meaning the opportunity to engage with residents, Staedion, The Hague municipality, DesignArbeid, local entrepreneurs and lecturers mr. Kleinhans and ms. Newton. Weekly on-site meetings made the process very flexible and favoured engagement with the surroundings. It was very informative and experience enhancing to be able to engage with the project's largest stakeholders Staedion and the municipality. It proved a very viable experience, not only personally, but also with regards to understanding what our proposal should entail, to be able to question and debate these two actors. Of course, their willingness and openness to our suggestions and questions was crucial, and this also contributed to the feeling we were actually working towards something with them, and not merely for them.

The major challenge for us was the weekly submission at the moment all group members were increasingly busy with subjects outside of the Design Game. This resulted in infrequent meetings and different periods of opportunity per person to work on the design. This meant that without a clear task division, aligning the pieces and doing corrections comes down to the last person that is available to work on the concept. First and foremost, nobody is to blame here, because having other responsibilities and duties is quite straightforward as a student. We could have tackled this however, by finding one weekly moment to meet and work forward with a task division.

All in all, this did not jeopardise our work and progress to such an extent that it would cause problems and delay. It would have increased efficiency in our work substantially, however. It was foremost everybody's motivation that contributed to our succeeding proposal. On meeting days in the *Xarage*, everybody was very willing to either stay behind and talk with residents, or move into the neighbourhood and engage with locals outside of our own comfort. We also have profited from everybody's creativity and flexibility, which also enabled us to continue without problems without having a clear task division or schedule. This taken into account, we do believe our proposal could have been better should we have implemented weekly task divisions. Regardless, the positive responses by both Ms. Newton and Ruben Abels, and the fact that we could differentiate ourselves from other proposals in originality by focusing on intergenerational engagement, and hereby involving both children and adults.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Interview questions

Questions for the residents

- Wat is uw band met de wijk?
- Heeft u een lange familiegeschiedenis in de wijk?
- Wat was uw eerste reactie toen u hoorde van de plannen om grote veranderingen aan te brengen in het gebied?
- Bent u of zijn andere buurtbewoners betrokken bij een soort buurtorganisatie om te praten over de veranderingen en jullie wensen bijvoorbeeld?
- Heeft u contact gehad met de stakeholders, dus met Staedion, de gemeente of andere partijen?
- Bent u tevreden in hoeveel u geraadpleegd bent als bewoner door de ondernemers van het project? Of is dit te weinig of te veel geweest?
- Heeft u vertrouwen in de partijen die de veranderingen gaan realiseren? Is het vertrouwen gestegen door dit project?
- Zijn er dingen waar u bang voor bent met betrekking tot de veranderingen?
- Welke deel van het gebied vindt u het mooiste of betekent het meeste voor u?
- Welke deel van het gebied vindt u het minst mooi of betekent het minst voor u?
- Wat mag wat u betreft absoluut niet veranderen in het gebied?
- Heeft u er vertrouwen in dat u zult gaan kunnen terugkeren in uw woning na afronding van het project, en wil u dit zelf ook graag?
- Gelooft u dat de voorgestelde en geplande werkzaamheden en maatregelen op de lange termijn zullen bijdragen aan het vergroten van de sociaal-economische kansen voor de bewoners, en het verhelpen van armoede en criminaliteit?
- Bent u gemotiveerd om bij het proces betrokken te blijven?

- Questions for Staedion

- What is the biggest complication your company faces in the execution of these Neighbourhood changes?
- Do you feel like you have had enough discussion/conversation with the citizens of this area?
- Where will the residents go when their apartment is being demolished? (in the meantime).
- How will you ensure that all residents can return to the neighbourhood when the new apartments are finished? Will they also return to their former area (also vertically).
- How is it feasible for you to rebuild social housing, does the municipality/government support you financially?
- How do you see the composition of the neighbourhoods when the social housing is returned and middle-class housing and private sector housing is added. How would this look spatially? Are there decisions made in where to put the social housing, and where to allocate the housing for higher incomes?

- What is Staedion's role in increasing the employment rates in the area? How do you see the interventions from a housing corporation positively contribute to more social-economic progress? Does Staedion feel responsible for taking up a role in this as well?
 - How do you see the consultation take form in the coming years? You are a big corporation, and from my own experience I know communication with you was not always the easiest. How do you ensure that residents have good (or better) access to you for consultation and questions?
 - With extra housing for middle and high incomes, how do you see the prevention of rising housing prices for the low incomes? They are in a precarious position, and attraction of higher incomes does always influence the general housing prices in the area, how can Staedion counter this, if they see it as their responsibility at all? Returning to the area is one thing, but how do you consequently preserve the residents ability to keep living here?
- Questions for DesignArbeid
 - Why have you chosen this location to place the cultuurplint?
 - What is the most successful plan that has been put on the cultuurplint?
 - Does the neighbourhood interact with you out of themselves or do you have to put in a lot of effort to make them come to this location and why do you think it is this way?
 - What are the most important buildings or sites in the neighbourhood?
 - Who are the key actors in this neighbourhood?
 - Did you see a change in the neighbourhood after the presentation of the plans of the municipality (in the surroundings as well as with the citizens)
 - Why do you think a cultuurplint like this would work better than a physical location where people could come in and talk or sit down?
- Questions for Nina Cranen (independent process manager, expert in placemaking, hired by The Hague, Staedion and Heijmans)
 - How do you look at and deal with the criticism that a part of the citizens of this neighbourhood have given on the plan to change the area?
 - Why is it important to change the neighbourhood in this particular way? Were other options also possible?
 - What is there to happen with the people who have to leave their homes for 3 years?
 - Do you feel like the residents were informed enough?
 - Do you feel like the residents were involved enough, did they have the possibility to really participate?
 - Is there in general something that could have been done differently regarding the residents for example?
- Question / approaches for interviews with residents when exploring the neighbourhood
 - Heeft u vertrouwen in het behoud van de wijk en de community tijdens het gehele project?

- Als u de wijk tijdelijk moet verlaten, wilt u daarna dan weer terugkeren?
- Heeft u het gevoel dat de veranderingen die worden doorgevoerd ervoor zullen zorgen dat de wijk in zijn geheel 'verbeterd'?
- Als u nu in de wijk rondloopt, voelt dit anders na voor het project werd voorgesteld aan u?
- Heeft u uw stem laten horen toen dit project aan u voorgesteld werd?
- Welke eerste veranderingen heeft u al zien ontwikkelen in de buurt n.a.v. de presentatie van de plannen?

