Groningen’s *Binnenstad*:
Informed Perceptions on its Design

Christopher Boyko
University of California, Irvine

&

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

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Christopher Boyko

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When we think of historic city centres in Europe, the piazzas and palazzos of Italy often come to mind. Here, the symbolic qualities of the civic -- represented by governmental buildings -- and the sacred -- best exemplified by the church -- often anchor these spaces, allowing for a relationship between the citizen and city as a design entity (Bacon, 1972). Furthermore, there is a direct and intentional continuation of the design with a focus on the exterior of the space, as if expressing the natural forces of the region. These connections between state and religion, urban and rural guarantee that the movement of daily life will be carried out in the city centre, intensifying interaction and vitality in that space (Lennard & Lennard, 1984).

But are the above connections found in Dutch city centres, or binnenstaden, and how do city centre users (defined as those individuals who live, work, or recreate within the area) perceive such spaces? Why are some binnenstaden perceived favourably (i.e., vital and well-liked) by residents, merchants, and tourists whereas other city centres are not? What physical design features are most associated with favourable binnenstaden? How have these spaces changed over time? The purpose of this NEURUS research project will be to discover people’s perceptions of the design of Groningen’s binnenstad and employ findings in the generation of design guidelines that could assist other Dutch cities interested in maintaining or improving the physical design of their city centres.

In order to achieve these objectives, some topics will need to be delineated. First, a discussion will ensue concerning some of the elements of European city centres that researchers feel contribute to the vitality and well-liked nature of such spaces. Subsequently, there will be a brief description of Groningen and its binnenstad in order for a contextual understanding of the research to take place. Following this depiction, the methodology utilized in this project will be
explained. Finally, research results, in the form of individuals’ aggregated responses to interview questions about Groningen’s binnenstad, will be shared in addition to design guidelines created as a consequence of individuals’ interview answers.

**Elements of Vital and Well-liked European City Centres**

One of the first characteristics of a vital city centre is that it provides both a setting and opportunities for frequent interaction among neighbours, shopkeepers, artisans, professionals, and visitors (Lennard & Lennard, 1984). Here, people can conduct their shopping, do business, have coffee, pass through on their way to work, or meet with others. Encountering individuals in public may reinforce a sense of place, ownership, and identification with that space, which may enhance perceptions that the environment belongs to the permanent users (Lennard & Lennard). This is often accomplished by the use of three- and four-storey buildings that help to enclose the space like an outdoor room.

Second, in order to maintain this sense of enclosure, access streets or passages should be small or angled such that direct views to the exterior of the space are limited. The implementation of arcades, clock towers, curving streets, or restricting views with an important building or topographic feature assists in emphasizing this visual enclosure (Lennard & Lennard, 1984). Another attribute of a successful city centre is the meaningful arrangement and character of buildings, the relationship of the structures to each other, and the spaces created between them (Gehl, 1987; Lennard & Lennard). Social life is always embedded in building organization, building function, and the historic significance associated with the area, which, in turn, influence the kinds of public life possible.

Fourth, removing barriers to access via traffic-limited and traffic-free pedestrian zones aids in encouraging the widest participation in public life and counteracts any environmental injustice
experienced in the city centre (Lennard & Lennard, 1984). Fifth, having windows and balconies overlooking a city centre provide evidence of human presence and allow individuals using these elements to actively participate in the public life below (Lennard & Lennard). In a sense, these individuals become an audience to the activity in the space, identifying frequent actors on the public stage and enriching their knowledge of the community’s social networks.

Sixth, the use of props -- including benches, seats, planters, walls, and steps -- furnish public space users with physical comfort, enabling them to sit alone or with others in an aesthetically attractive setting, sheltered from the weather (Lennard & Lennard, 1984)). Furthermore, these props create boundaries and focal points for people such that a variety of personal, interpersonal, and group activities can take place there. People are then able to select from several choices within the territory that will accommodate their personal agenda, and help them move through the space from one level of public life involvement to another.

Seventh, the presence of markets in city centres has helped to keep vital the daily social life of many residents of these cities and towns (Lennard & Lennard, 1984). The vendors are well-known and eager to chat with customers. Friends and acquaintances meet as they buy their groceries, and they stand in clusters in the middle of the market to share news. Finally, chairs at the cafes around the market are used and in great demand as many people stop and socialize while having a drink before going home. The final element that is important to a vital and beloved city centre -- although there are many others that are design and nondesign-inspired -- is the visibility of the public space (Lennard & Lennard, 1984). If individuals can see what is happening around them, then issues of safety and community well-being are intensified, and it gives one a sense of involvement with public life that is not present in private or interior space.
Christopher Boyko

In terms of these characteristics of a well-liked and vital city centre, Groningen’s *binnenstad* possesses many such elements. In the next section, there will be a description of the space and an attempt to illustrate the elements as discussed above.

**Groningen and the Binnenstad**

As a city, Groningen is often regarded as the metropolis of the north Netherlands. Approximately 170,000 inhabitants live, work, and recreate here, and the many amenities (e.g., hospitals, university, musea, recreational areas, markets, cultural and sporting events) allow these individuals to enjoy the comforts of larger-city living without the congestion, pollution, crime, and so forth. The presence of the above facilities even fulfils a regional function for over a half million people living within the province of Groningen (Lubbers, n.d.).

In terms of the *binnenstad*, it is clear that this historic inner city is the administrative, cultural, and commercial heart of both the city and province (Lootsma & Damen, 1996). Groningen is blessed with a plethora of elegant and attractive shops, accommodations for entertainment and nightlife, residential dwellings, and interesting places to eat, drink, and relax all within a one square kilometre area. Moreover, there are also two marketplaces (i.e., *Grote Markt* and *Vismarkt*), the highly visible St. Martin’s Church Tower, or *Martinitoren*, and a governmental function found in the City Hall, or *Stadhuis*, and the many other offices within the area (Lubbers, n.d.)

Furthermore, there are plenty of places for interaction and social life -- including the balconies and windows of the primarily three- and four-storey buildings (Lennard & Lennard, 1984) -- and a strong sense of enclosure found in between the diverse, architecturally-styled buildings that fit within the context of the inner city (Lootsma & Damen, 1996). Finally, a pedestrian-free zone stretching throughout the *binnenstad*, an extensive array of props used for
Christopher Boyko

sitting and other activities, and a high visibility of the space as evidenced by the open layout of the market areas helps to ensure that the space is a vital one, used day and night, 365 days a year.

**Methodology**

Twelve open-ended interviews were conducted with informed (defined as a person who is educated in planning concepts) users of the city centre. Fundamentally, these individuals comprised planning professionals, a city alderperson, a university professor of heritage planning -- all of whom were involved with some of the most recent design alterations for Groningen’s *binnenstad* -- and graduate students with an educational background in spatial sciences. Two additional individuals interviewed for this project could be considered “informed” in the sense that they had grown up in Groningen and possessed direct knowledge of the physical design modifications to the *binnenstad* over the years (both interviewees were in their 60s). The final interviewee, a nonuser of Groningen’s *binnenstad*, was not educated in planning concepts although she was married to a planning professor and does, therefore, maintain some knowledge about planning principles and projects within the city.

On average, interviews lasted 45 minutes (range between 30 minutes and 2 hours) with approximately 18 questions asked to each individual. Questions involved perceptions of safety, what activities individuals performed in the *binnenstad*, how the space has changed over time, and so forth (see Appendix A). Furthermore, survey research was utilized from the *Binnenstadmonitor* (Gemeente Groningen, 1994a, 1995, 1996) regarding people’s activities within the *binnenstad* conducted by *Rijksuniversiteit Groningen* students. Finally, the planning professionals were able to find some resources concerning *Binnenstad Beter*, a plan put forth by the city in 1993 to improve the *binnenstad* over a period of 10 years (Gemeente Groningen, 1994b). The aggregation of informed individuals, published surveys, and documents about the
binnenstad have been helpful in better comprehending the city centre, the activities that take place there, and people’s perceptions of the design of the space.

Results

Sensitizing Questions

One of the first things that participants did in the interviews was indicate where was the binnenstad on a map provided by the interviewer. Most people concluded that the inner city was the area within the canals, or grachten, but could also include the buildings on the other side of the grachten and the area around the train station. Some people also said where the binnenstad was not: the Oosterpoort and Oosterhaven to the south and southeast just outside of the binnenstad. Therefore, demarcation of the binnenstad with physical markers or other design elements is not necessary because of the presence of a natural feature (i.e., water) delineating the boundary of the space.

Figure 1: Groningen’s binnenstad.
Christopher Boyko

In terms of the physical appearance of the binnenstad, planning professionals described the area as a sequence of squares (i.e., Vismarkt, Grote Markt, Martinikerkhof) and streets that were of human-scale. These urban spaces were not too big or too wide, and the structures had sufficient detail and variety, which all helped to understand the history of the city.

Interviewees were then asked to discuss the significance of the inner city from a personal perspective. Fundamental to most people’s answers was that the binnenstad was the heart of the city, the centre of activity and life. Participants also believed that the importance of the binnenstad lay in its multifunctionality (i.e., people eat, shop, meet with others, etc.). Others perceived the city centre to possess significant social, economic, and architectural components; that is, interaction with friends and family, the amount of shops and offices in which to do business, and the historic buildings and context, respectively, were mentioned frequently as meaningful parts of the binnenstad. Finally, interviewees used adjectives, such as cozy, vibrant, safe, fun, and eclectic, when describing the intensely urban space. Lootsma and Damen (1996) chose words, including attractive, comfortable, welcoming, and agreeable. In comparison, the noncity centre user believed that the binnenstad’s significance lay in the exclusive shops and the attractive places to walk.

Theoretical or Guiding Questions

Sharing what they liked about Groningen’s binnenstad, the most recurrent themes mentioned by interviewees included:

- The variety of activities within the space- people could shop, eat, drink, and so forth.
- Architecture- a diversity of building styles, shapes, and ages appealed to interviewees.
- Lively atmosphere- students, among others, helped to make the binnenstad entertaining and a space that was used throughout the entire day.
Christopher Boyko

- Pleasant- the space was nice, cozy, and there was a good atmosphere (“gezellig”).
- Socializing component- people enjoyed meeting and interacting with others in the space.
- Compact- a 1sq km area filled with many things to do and see (Gemeente Groningen 1994a, 1995, 1996).
- Many shops- a diversity of stores (e.g., clothing, furniture, books, music) for the entire range of incomes (Gemeente Groningen 1994a, 1995, 1996).
- Free of automobiles- the 1977 Traffic Circulation Plan transformed the inner city into a pedestrian-friendly zone, making it difficult for automobiles to enter and exit the space (Gemeente Groningen 1994a, 1995, 1996).

In terms of things that interviewees did not like, only the presence of taxis and buses was referred to more than once (i.e., the speed and size of these vehicles often made it difficult for bicyclists and pedestrians to move easily around the binnenstad). Other responses of interest to this study include a dearth of seating and bicycle racks in the inner city, the potential creation of social problems (e.g., increase in crime) as a result of increased diversity of people and variety within the space, a lack of accessibility and parking spaces, and a general sense of uncleanliness. The nonuser perceived the binnenstad to lack parking spaces and not have long enough hours for shopping. Convenience was a problem, something that the IKEA store on the outskirts of the city, did not possess.

A similar question -- asked only to the planning professionals -- was, “What are the most and least popular spaces within the binnenstad and why?” Interviewees perceived the most popular spaces to be the axis between the Vismarkt, Grote Markt, and Herestraat. The Poelestraat was also mentioned as a popular place for going to pubs. One of the least popular spaces within the binnenstad was the north side of the space because not as many people lived
there (i.e., lower density). Other unpopular places included the area around the Casino and the Red Light District. In the least popular instances, perceptions of safety were a problem.

Investigating the types of activities carried out within the binnenstad -- which, on average, occurred 5 times a week -- it appeared that most interviewees divided their stay depending on the time of day. During the mornings and afternoons, people spent time shopping, buying groceries, or using the market. In the evenings, people would go to movies, the cinema, cultural events, bars, and pubs. The former activities were often done alone whereas the latter activities were usually accomplished with friends or significant others. Seasonally, activities did not change that much with the exception of having drinks: in the summer, people drank outside on terraces and used café seating on the sidewalks whereas in the winter, people had drinks inside the cafés and restaurants. Furthermore, there was more physical activity during the summer, such as bicycling or rollerblading though the streets of the binnenstad. Finally, according to the Binnenstadmonitor (Gemeente Groningen, 1994a, 1995, 1996), the top reasons for being in the binnenstad included shopping, living, using the cafes/terraces, and working.

In order to be in the binnenstad, however, people first needed to travel there. When asked about their mode of transportation to the inner city, interviewees stated that they either walked (mostly because they lived in, or close to, the binnenstad), bicycled, or took the bus. The last transportation option, the most expensive mode, was used normally when the weather was bad (i.e., snow, rainstorm), when the person was sick, or when the person was going away on holidays and needed to carry luggage to the train station. No one took a car to the binnenstad except for the nonuser who did not utilize the binnenstad on a regular basis (i.e., less than once every 2 months). Statistics from the Binnenstadmonitor (Gemeente Groningen, 1994-1996)
indicate that travelling by foot was the most popular mode of travel to the binnenstad, followed by bicycle and car. Taking the bus was the number four mode of transportation.

Of course, there are individuals who do not travel to the binnenstad and, therefore, do not use any form of transportation to get there. Interviewees suggested that elderly people did not take advantage of the binnenstad because the inner city might be perceived to be too crowded or they could not drive to the area with their car because of the pedestrian-friendly nature of the space. In addition, suburbanites and individuals or families with higher incomes who used their cars yet did not understand the inner city and, therefore, felt unsafe went elsewhere. Finally, interviewees believed that young families might refrain from using the binnenstad because there existed shopping centres closer to their homes and it was more convenient for them to take their children to these centres (e.g., Paddepoel).

The nonuser felt as though it would take too much time to travel to the binnenstad (she lives in the suburb/town of Haren to the south of the city) and, therefore, did not use the inner city. She mentioned that she would first have to imagine what she would need, and where she needed to shop, in order to maximize her time. Also, the Park + Ride system (i.e., park in lot outside the city and wait for bus to take them to binnenstad) was too slow for her liking. Instead, the nonuser would shop and complete other activities in Haren or in the city’s south end (e.g., Corpus den Hoorn) because she worked there and she could shop, by car, after she finished work at 17.00 (most shops closed at 18.00 with the exception of Thursdays, when shops closed at 20.00).

As mentioned above, the presence of a marketplace in European cities has helped to increase vitality and social life within city centres (Lennard & Lennard, 1984). Interviewees in Groningen agreed with these statements. Examining the responses, it was clear that the market
Christopher Boyko

was used as a place to buy cheap and fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, and cheese. However, there were not a lot of other direct uses. Nonetheless, some people felt that the market lent a nice, cozy atmosphere to the binnenstad, all income groups could enjoy the market thus providing a sense of increased accessibility, and it was a meeting place for friends.

Figure 2: The Marketplace

When questioned about safety within the binnenstad, interviewees stated that they generally felt safe because of the constant presence of people within the space. However, some streets (e.g., the Poelestraat and Peperstraat where there was a large concentration of bars and pubs) were considered unsafe because of the “rowdy” atmosphere. These responses illustrate the positive aspect of a 24-hour-type city in addition to the possible negative ramifications of assembling one type of function within one or two streets.

A prominent question for this research project concerned people’s recollections of the changes within the binnenstad over time. Answers to this question could assist in understanding the periods of time in which the greatest alterations were made to the inner city in addition to the modifications that were most significant in the minds of the interviewees. There were four responses, presented in chronological order, that were referred to most frequently:

- The demolition of most of the buildings on the north and east side of the Grote Markt during the Second World War. After the war, there was a period of stagnation in which no new buildings were constructed. It was not until the early 1960s when structures were erected in
the place of the old buildings, lending to the appearance of the *Grote Markt* today. There is much controversy concerning these modern, 1960s buildings: some people like them and believe that they are part of the modern history of the space whereas others dislike the buildings and feel as though new buildings -- with historic facades -- should be constructed where the modern ones stand presently.

The Traffic Circulation Plan of 1977 that inhibited automobiles from entering into the inner city, allowing the space to become pedestrian-friendly. Large-scale clearances for new roads were not undertaken and the return to more small-scale and varied building was encouraged to increase quality of life and a liveable milieu (Lootsma & Damen, 1996). However, it was not until the early 1990s with the introduction of *Binnenstad Beter* when habitability and accessibility were examined at the master plan level with discussions concerning parking, priority for pedestrians and cyclists, and the integration of public space (Gemeente...
The planning professionals and the professor who were interviewed only cited this change for the **binnenstad**, although the alteration provided significant impetus for the appearance of the **binnenstad** today.

Figure 5: Grote Markt today

- The replacement of old, darker stones within the **binnenstad** with new, yellow ones in the 1980s. This urban design treatment is reminiscent of Lynch’s (1960) notion of **districts**, or neighbourhoods with a common, identifying character. Interestingly, there is mixed reaction to this design feature: some feel as though the yellow stones helped to demarcate new or different behaviour within the space from the area outside the **binnenstad** whereas others perceive the stones to be ugly, dirty, and a waste of money.

- The construction of the new **Waagstraat** complex (1994-1996) by Italian architect Natalini, inspired by the piazzas of Italy composed of buildings with arcaded walkways. Most interviewees felt that the building was an improvement from the structure that was on the site prior. However, according to two interviewees, the **Waagstraat** complex was a modern structure that did not fit with its surroundings and looked “cold”.

Figure 6: **Waagstraat** Complex

Analyzing these responses, one can discover that each decade has experienced new changes within the **binnenstad** that have produced both positive and negative feelings about the
Christopher Boyko

space. From an objective standpoint, it appears that the traffic circulation plan was the most important feature aiding in the vitality, liveability, and visibility of the urban structure by removing automobiles and introducing pedestrian-friendly zones. Interviewees believed that the city’s decision has allowed the space to be safer for people to walk and conduct pedestrian-related activities (e.g., shopping). In addition, there was a reduction in pollution in terms of automobile exhaust and noise. According to planning professionals, the 1970s was a vibrant time in Groningen because new ideas were germinating about the use of automobiles in inner cities. Having new politicians in government with visions of liveability helped Groningen succeed further in attaining these goals and creating the traffic circulation plan.

In terms of the 1977 Traffic Circulation Plan helping or hindering Groningen, most interviewees perceived the change in the binnenstad from an auto-friendly to a pedestrian-friendly space as helping the city culturally, socially, and physically. People can do more in the space because they can walk around without having to worry about cars, pollution, accidents, and so forth. New, attractive public spaces have also been created due to the pedestrian-friendly atmosphere of the binnenstad. However, some feel that the absence of automobiles within the binnenstad has also hurt the city, economically, because people cannot find parking spaces for their cars and they do not have the patience to use the Park + Ride system. Finally, several interviewees felt as though some of the multifunctionality of the binnenstad had been lost because offices have moved to the outskirts of the city where employers can drive to work if necessary, and land and office space is cheaper.

Endeavouring to comprehend potential similarities and differences between Groningen’s binnenstad and other binnenstaden, interviewees were asked to compare and contrast Groningen and other cities in which they lived or visited. Most interviewees felt that Groningen’s
binnenstad shared many urban form elements with other cities, including the presence of shops, cafes, and museums; pedestrian zones; and the fact that most inner cities were within grachten. There was also a marketplace that possesses both symbolic (i.e., identification with the city) and functional (i.e., used or shopping) aspects, and a sense of history associated with the architecture and the spaces between the buildings. Investigating the differences between city centres, interviewees perceived that:

- Groningen was less modern in appearance, architecturally, than other cities (e.g., Rotterdam). There was a sense of history and uniqueness attached to the city. For example, when people see the Martinitoren, they know that they are in Groningen. There is only one Groningen.

- The city was smaller and had less to offer in terms of variety of shops.

- Groningen was more lively in terms of a “24-hour”-type of city

When asked a modified form of this question, the nonuser replied that Assen (a town approximately 40km from Groningen) had a better binnenstad because it was a smaller and friendlier place in which to walk. There were also no buses entering into the city centre using main arteries, and the shops were closer together than was found in Groningen.

Finally, participants were given the following question to answer: “What are the physical design elements that help to create a vital and beloved historic city centre?” Interviewees responded by saying that there needs to be a diversity of buildings to visually delight and impel the binnenstad to take on a more beloved status. Lootsma and Damen (1996) state that Groningen’s binnenstad has a historical structure yet is not being fabricated into a museum. New buildings are permitted to look contemporary without the city becoming too commercial.
CITIES should also attempt to strengthen their identity through the use of landmarks and structures (e.g., Martinitoren). In terms of vitality, the quality of public space between buildings needs to be improved via more cultural activities and perhaps less deliberately-planned spaces (e.g., corner of the Grote Markt, Oosterstraat, and Poelestraat). Last, perceptions of vitality and a beloved nature can be augmented through the design of safer and cosier spaces, perhaps ones in which better lighting and more socializing can dominate.

**Design Guidelines**

The decision making process concerning the perpetuation, maintenance, or destruction of buildings within an area may be influenced by the creation and introduction of criteria or guidelines. These standards may be used in the designation of particular buildings, districts, or cities, where certain design attributes are sought for protection purposes. However, these standards are meant to be general in nature because each property possesses unique characteristics respecting site and district location, architectural style, local and cultural significance, and so forth.

When examining interviewee’s responses to questions concerning their perceptions about the design of Groningen’s binnenstad, a number of design guidelines could be created in order to enhance vitality and a well-liked city centre. For example, participants perceived the significance of the inner city as a multifunctional space that is social and active. Maximizing these criteria, one design guideline could be to provide moveable seating and tables for use throughout...
the day in open, public places. Research has concluded that having moveable chairs and tables, in addition to other design elements, can invite people into urban spaces and keep activity on the streets (Whyte, 1980).

Figure 8: Moveable seating

Responding to individuals’ preferences for what they liked and did not like about Groningen’s binnenstad, design guidelines could be used to enhance the appearance of the inner city. It appears as though people favour the historic architecture of the space yet they also like some of the newer, more modern and postmodern structures (e.g., the Waagstraat Complex). Continuing their idea of introducing international architects to design new buildings that fit into Groningen’s historic content is one way that the city can maintain or augment people’s positive feelings for the binnenstad.

Another option would be to emphasize the “24-hourness” of the city centre by expanding the amount of urban spaces that allow for activities to take place at any time (e.g., courtyards in the inner city could be used as meeting points, places to relax in solitude, café seating, or even outdoor dancefloors in the evening and the summer). Finally, one design guideline that could aid in reversing people’s negative perceptions of the binnenstad being dirty would be to have merchant and shop owners sweep the area in front of their stores before, during, and after working hours. In return, the city would allow the owners to display merchandise on small racks on the sidewalks, thus potentially increasing sales for the merchants and not inducing clutter via city-regulated racks.

Similar to the idea of amplifying the “24-hourness” of the binnenstad to increase the use of urban space, people staying longer use in such places could also help to augment perceptions of safety. Furthermore, having a greater dissemination of functions within the inner city (e.g.,
pubs, restaurants, and shops together instead of just one of these functions on a street) is one
design guideline that can assist in positive associations of security.

A seventh design guideline that would aid in maintaining or increasing the amount of
pedestrian traffic in cities would be to designate part or all of their city centres as pedestrian-
friendly. Although some feel this change has hindered Groningen, economically, because
automobile drivers are shopping on the periphery of the city, others believe that the change has
helped culturally, socially, and physically. People can now do more in the binnenstad because of
the ability to walk around without having to worry about cars, pollution, accidents, and so forth.
New, attractive public spaces have also been created due to the pedestrian-friendly atmosphere of
the binnenstad, which have helped to increase social interaction.

A final design guideline, used to promote the uniqueness of the city, is to encourage
public spaces that display Groningen’s many distinct features (e.g., terraces around the
Groninger Museum). There can also be more placement of symbols of Groningen’s history
around the binnenstad (e.g., provincial and city flags) that help people to identify with the city
and its past.

Lessons Learned

It appears that there have been a lot of small and large changes to Groningen’s
binnenstad over the years that have resulted in aesthetic alterations to the space. However,
people still appear to identify with the binnenstad and its many urban design components,
enjoying its cosiness, liveliness, and architectural splendour. Design guidelines for Groningen
should be formulated to protect these already existing positive qualities and aid in promoting
new ways of creating well-used and well-liked space, whether intentional or not. Creating
pedestrian-friendly zones and attracting people at all hours of the day with interesting shops,
entertainment, and eating areas appears to have made Groningen’s binnenstad a vital and beloved space. These ideas, if not already established, should be formulated into an aggressive public policy that would protect this space for years to come. These standards could also be used in other Dutch cities looking for solutions to improve their city centres. With great urban design successes, such as those found in Groningen, it will not be difficult to increase vitality and a beloved nature in these cities, too.
Sourcenotes for Figures

Figure 1: Lubbers, T (n.d.).

Figure 2: Vroege, Herst, & Barends (1997)

Figure 3: Gemeente Groningen (1994b)

Figure 4: Gemeente Groningen (1994b)

Figure 5: Vroege, Herst, & Barends (1997)

Figure 6: Lubbers (n.d.)

Figure 7: Vroege, Herst, & Barends (1997)

Figure 8: Vroege, Herst, & Barends (1997)
References


Appendix A

Interview questions with a binnenstad planner

1. What do you do in the city planning office/city hall?
2. What is a typical day like for you?
3. How did you get involved in this type of work?
4. What do you consider to be the binnenstad? What is its significance in your opinion?
5. Who is involved in the planning and design of the binnenstad?
6. What are their specific roles in this planning?
7. Could you describe any current projects or activities of the planning department in the binnenstad?
8. What does the binnenstad mean to you? To the city? To others?
9. From as far back as you can remember, what has been the involvement of planning and design in the binnenstad?
10. How have planners and designers in the Netherlands and Groningen learned to shape binnenstaden?
11. How have planners and designers in the Netherlands and Groningen learned to shape binnenstaden?
12. Could you please describe the physical appearance of the binnenstad?
13. How has the binnenstad changed over time in terms of physical appearance?
14. Tell me about the change in the binnenstad from an auto-friendly zone to a pedestrian-friendly zone? What prompted this change? Who were the people involved in altering the binnenstad? Why did these people want to change this space?
15. In your opinion, has the change helped or hindered Groningen?
16. Were there noticeable differences in the number of people using the binnenstad, or kinds of uses, before and after the decision to make the space pedestrian-friendly?

17. How do people use the space? What do people do in this space?

18. Are there people who don’t use this space? Why or why not?

19. What are the most and least popular spaces within the binnenstad and why?

20. What brings people to the binnenstad? How does the city promote bringing people to the binnenstad?

21. What is the role of the market in the binnenstad?

22. Extra comments?
Appendix A

Interview questions with a binnenstad user

1. How would describe yourself in terms of occupation, age, residency, or any other distinguishing characteristics?

2. What is a typical day like for you?

3. What do you consider to be the binnenstad? What is its significance, in your opinion?

4. Do you think of the binnenstad as a whole or separated into many, smaller parts?

5. What does the binnenstad mean to you? To the city? To others?

6. How has the binnenstad changed over time in terms of physical appearance?

7. Why do you think the city decided to make the space only available to people and buses?

8. In your opinion, how has the change helped or hindered Groningen?

9. What do you like about the binnenstad? What don’t you like?

10. What sorts of things are similar in Groningen’s binnenstad and other binnenstaden you have visited/lived in or around? How does Groningen’s binnenstad differ?

11. How do you get to the binnenstad?

12. What do you do in the space (e.g., shopping, drinking at cafes, day and night)? With whom?

13. Do you use the market at all? Why or why not?


15. Are there people who you feel do not use the binnenstad? Why or why not?

16. How many times in a week would you say you are in the binnenstad? How many of those times are you just passing by the space? How many times are you actually in the space and doing something there?
17. Are there many places to talk, sit, and interact with other people, either friends, family, or strangers?

18. What are the physical design elements that help to create a vital and beloved historic binnenstad?

19. Any extra comments?
Appendix A

Interview questions with a nonbinnenstad user

1. How would describe yourself in terms of occupation, age, residency, or any other distinguishing characteristics?
2. What is a typical day like for you?
3. What do you consider to be the binnenstad? What is its significance, in your opinion?
4. Do you think of the binnenstad as a whole or separated into many, smaller parts?
5. What does the binnenstad mean to you? To the city? To others?
6. Why do you not use the binnenstad?
7. Have you ever used the binnenstad? When did you stop using the binnenstad? Why?
8. What other parts of the city do you use? What do you do in those places?
9. How do you get to those places?
10. How many times a week would you say you are in those places? How many of those times are you just passing by the space? How many times are you actually in the space and doing something there?
11. What would make you want to use the binnenstad again?
12. What sorts of things are similar in Groningen’s binnenstad and other binnenstaden you have visited/lived in or around? How does Groningen’s binnenstad differ?
13. If known, how has the binnenstad changed over time in terms of physical appearance? Are there people who you feel do not use the binnenstad? Why or why not?
14. Extra comments?