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## Arts & Resilience in a Rural Community

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# CHAPTER 3

## **'It is not only an artist village, it is much more than that'<sup>4</sup>. The binding and dividing effects of the arts on a community.**

### **Abstract**

The value of “the arts” in community development is increasingly being recognized. This chapter contributes to emerging insights on the various impacts of the arts on communities by highlighting when and how they can have binding and dividing effects on a community. We draw on a participatory research project conducted in Pingjum, a village in the Netherlands that hosts many cultural activities and in which many artists live. We discuss how the arts in Pingjum influence the community in the village. In our discussion, we pay attention to the sense of community that the arts generate, the meeting opportunities they provide and how the community is engaged by some artists. Our study shows that the influence of the arts is context-dependent, with the arts having both binding and dividing effects on the community in Pingjum. In terms of the value of the arts for community development, we emphasize three key issues: that the arts I) do not have only advantages for a community; II) do not engage the entire community; and III) could potentially contribute to community fragmentation. Given these issues, we argue that the arts should be considered as *one* of several supportive means in community development processes. Ideally, they are integrated into a wider community development strategy and planning, and exist alongside other associations and activities in a community. In this way, the arts can contribute to the robustness of a community and assist it in developing the capacity and resources to flourish.

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4 Quote walking interview Abby (middle-aged woman, “incomer”).

### 3.1 Introduction

In 2007, the *Community Development Journal* dedicated a special issue to the arts, community development and democracy. The special issue reflects a growing interest within academic research in the role of the arts in community development (see Meade & Shaw, 2007 and also Anwar McHenry, 2011; Carey & Sutton, 2004; Phillips, 2004; Zitcer et al., 2016). Matarasso (2007, p. 499), for example, highlighted ‘the potential of cultural action to bring people together and to build a foundation for lasting community development work’. Drawing on his research on “voluntary arts development” in the UK and his experience of community cultural projects in southeast Europe, he concluded that arts projects can result in a wide range of community development outcomes. Even if an original project is discontinued, Matarasso (2007) noted that the individual and collective capacities gained through an arts project strengthen the community. Such capacities can include the development of IT skills, project management and teamwork competencies, growing confidence and the build-up of social capital. Various studies, conducted in different contexts, on the role of the arts in development issues support these findings. These include Anwar McHenry’s (2011) research in the Mid-West of Australia, Kay’s (2000) examination of four arts projects in Scotland, and Lowe’s (2000) participant observation study of two community arts projects in the United States of America.

In general, publications such as the above focus on the positive impacts of the arts on communities and ignore any potentially negative impacts (Belfiore, 2006). When failed projects are examined, the focus tends to be on the causes rather than consequences of failure (Guetzkow, 2002). In this chapter, we aim to contribute to emerging insights on the various impacts of the arts on communities by highlighting when and how they can have binding and/or dividing effects on a community. Following Panelli & Welch (2005), we see communities as heterogeneous entities. Consequently, the arts will work differently and have various effects for different individuals and groups of community members. Therefore, when recommending arts-based activities for community development, attention should be given to this heterogeneity since it has consequences for the extent to which community development is actually supported. In the next section, we first provide a brief background of the literature on the impacts of the arts on communities. Then, we introduce our study that involved a participatory research project carried out in Pingjum, a village located in the Netherlands. Following this, we analyse how the arts influenced the community in our case-study village. We focus on the sense of community that the arts generated, the meeting opportunities they provided and how the community was engaged by some artists. The chapter concludes with three key issues concerning the value of the arts in community development.

### 3.2 Theoretical framework

Eernstman & Wals (2013, p. 1648) noted that nowadays 'there is an increasing recognition that the arts are valuable beyond just gallery and consumption or aesthetic purposes'. In her review on arts impact research, Reeves (2002) pointed to Matarasso's study *Use or Ornament. The Social Impact of Participation in Arts Programmes* (1997) as playing an important role in the increased recognition of the contribution of the arts to social development. She noted that his study had brought the social benefits of the arts fully to the attention of arts funding agencies and policymakers. The value of the arts in community development has increasingly been recognized (Carey & Sutton, 2004; Meade & Shaw, 2007; Phillips, 2004; Zitcer et al., 2016). As we have previously noted (see Chapter 2), participatory community arts projects are often designed in the context of a larger community goal, with the arts being used as a tool for human or material development. The expectation is that, through their involvement in an arts project, community members will develop themselves and gain skills, knowledge or insights, and that, subsequently, these benefits will positively affect the broader community (see also Eernstman & Wals, 2013; Matarasso, 2007).

Several scholars have claimed a broad range of benefits for communities from the arts (see e.g. Balfour et al., 2016; Anwar McHenry, 2011), some of which are relevant in a community development context. McCarthy et al. (2004), for instance, distinguished two general categories of social benefits in the literature on the arts at the community level. First, they observed that some studies focus on the way the arts help to connect members of a community by the 'promotion of social interaction among community members, creating a sense of community identity and helping to build social capital at the community level' (p. 14). These aspects can be beneficial for community development. Lowe (2000, p. 366) explained that working on an arts project can offer community members 'an experience of community life that inspire[s] feelings of belonging and unity'. Such feelings can be enhanced, she noted, because participants are actively encouraging each other's work or are communicating about issues of importance, thereby enabling them to express and discover common concerns. This contributes to a sense of community, implying that people identify with their community and participate in community affairs more (Sjollema & Hanley, 2013). The second category distinguished by McCarthy et al. (2004, p. 14) consists of 'studies maintaining that the arts can enhance conditions conducive to building a community's organizational capacity'. They mentioned three ways in which this is stimulated: 'through the development of local arts groups and leaders, through the promotion of cooperation among arts and non-arts groups, and through the more general process of people organizing and getting involved in civic institutions and volunteer associations'. They referred to these as structural assets that are essential for community mobilization and revitalization.

Based on the above, the arts seem to be an appropriate means for community development. Community-based arts projects indeed appeal to many authorities, Sharp et al. (2005, p. 1004) noted, as ‘they are generally low-cost and yet are perceived to be able to yield benefits beyond the aesthetic that correlate with social policy objectives’. However, such positive outcomes of arts projects cannot be taken for granted and a more nuanced perspective is needed. As Matarasso (1997) observed, the social impacts of the arts are complex since ‘the arts are not fast-food, predictable in content in every place and on every occasion’ (p. 75). He noted that they can have negative as well as positive outcomes, and that some outcomes are both positive and negative, or change from one to the other. Nevertheless, the literature on the impact of the arts on communities tends to focus on the positive impacts of the arts. Newman et al. (2003), for instance, conducted a literature review to explore the extent to which community-based arts projects achieved social gains and noted that only a few unintended negative consequences of projects were ever mentioned.

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Despite the generally positive focus on the effects of the arts on communities, some scholars have paid attention to the less positive sides of the arts for communities. Newman et al. (2003), for instance, did note reservations in their literature review about ‘to what extent *all* sections of a community are reached’ (p. 12, emphasis added) by arts projects. This is related to the extent to which arts projects are in-/exclusive, and provokes the question as to *who* is participating in the arts (see e.g. Anwar McHenry, 2011; McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001) and what the potential barriers to engaging in the arts are (see e.g. Grodach, 2009; Mulligan et al., 2006; Zitcer et al., 2016). People’s backgrounds, for instance, may influence whether they experience barriers to engaging in the arts. Referring to Bourdieu (1993), Balfour et al. (2016, p. 7) stated that ‘those who lack the cultural capital developed through academic and family social processes tend to be segregated as inferior if they create or interact with art, just as an academic credential for an artist or an artist critic is used to legitimize them as being superior’. A subsequent issue that can arise out of these different levels of participation in the arts is that a relatively small number of ‘local activists’ dominate, as Sharp et al. (2005) noted with regards to the production of public art.

In light of the above, Sharp et al. (2005, p. 1002) remarked that the question ‘culture for whom?’ immediately arises when culture is employed as part of regeneration processes. Mattern (2001) provided an illustration of this by pointing to the potential of the arts to divide. In his study on Santa Ana’s efforts to use the arts to promote community development, he found that the arts acted more as a “social wedge” than as a “social bridge”. Although the arts helped to create and develop community within the city, they divided inhabitants ‘along interrelated class and ethnic lines by segregating experience and by providing inequitable opportunities for participation

in the public and civic life of Santa Ana' (p. 302). The creation of an "Artist Village" in downtown Santa Ana, for example, led to gentrification processes that tended to drive mostly Hispanic artists and small businesses out of the neighbourhood. Although the "Artist Village" in itself might have been successful, it had (unintended) side effects which were negative to some.

With regard to the value of the arts in a community development context, it is important to note that some authors raised questions about whether the claimed benefits could be produced in another, more efficient way through other group activities such as competing in a sports team or attending religious services (e.g. Guetzkow, 2002; McCarthy et al., 2004). Matarasso (1997) argued, however, that arts projects are different because of whom they engage and the quality of that engagement. He explained that, more than other human activities, the arts are concerned with meanings and values, which motivate people and make them engaged participants in arts projects and, by extension, in local democratic processes.

This chapter contributes to emerging insights on the various influences of the arts on communities by highlighting when and how they can have binding and/or dividing effects on a community. Unlike scholars such as Newman et al. (2003) and Matarasso (1997), we not only focus on community-based arts projects but take a broader perspective of the arts. This breadth ranges from the presence of various artists in our case-study village (e.g. visual artists, a goldsmith) and the local places connected to the arts (e.g. the podium venues), to activities such as the annual arts weekend and performances in which the inhabitants themselves are involved. In order to examine how the arts influence the community in the case-study village, we draw on opinions and experiences with the arts and artists in Pingjum as expressed by the participants in our participatory research project. In the next section, we introduce the participatory research project and the village where it was conducted.

### **3.3 Pingjum and the research project**

This chapter draws on a participatory research project that was conducted in Pingjum, a village of around 600 inhabitants in the province of Friesland in the Netherlands. The inhabitants include *Pingjumer*s (people who were born and raised in Pingjum), other Frisians (who moved from within Friesland to Pingjum), and "incomers" (people who moved to Pingjum from outside of Friesland). Currently, many rural communities face economic and social changes such as depopulation, ageing, unemployment, insufficient access to and quality of services, school closures and a lack of transport services and affordable housing (Steiner & Markantoni, 2013). Pingjum is experiencing some of these changes. For instance, over recent decades, many of the village's facilities such as the supermarket and bakery have disappeared. Nevertheless, Pingjum still has an

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active village life with many associations, such as an orchestra and the *kaats*-association (*kaatsen* is a typical Frisian sport). In addition, compared to other villages in the northern Netherlands, Pingjum hosts many cultural activities and has a relatively large presence of artists. These activities range from music performances and exhibitions to community arts projects, and involve both professional artists and people who engage in art as a hobby, such as visual artists, graphic designers, photographers, musicians, a documentary producer and a goldsmith. The performing arts seem to play the most important role in the economic life of the community with the local performances contributing to Pingjum's reputation (see below) and attracting visitors to the village who, subsequently, might visit the local bar and pizzeria. Pingjum has a small music/theatre podium (that was initiated by one of the inhabitants) and a theatre podium annex workplace (led by an artist couple living in Pingjum). The village also has an artists' association to which many artists in Pingjum belong, that organizes an annual arts weekend during which artists can exhibit their work throughout the village. All this artistic activity does not go unnoticed beyond Pingjum's boundaries, leading to Pingjum having a reputation as an "artist village" in the media (e.g. van Santen, 2013).

Our participatory research project was conducted as part of a broader study that addresses the role of the arts in community resilience. It had three stages: walking interviews, group discussions and a creative workshop that resulted in an exhibition in Pingjum. Participants were recruited in several ways, such as by the door-to-door distribution of flyers and giving a presentation at the annual meeting of the village's interest group. In total, 28 inhabitants participated including both men and women, people in different age groups (<25, 25-65, >65) and *Pingjumers*, other Frisians, and "incomers".

The first stage of the participatory research project involved walking interviews. Walking interviews are a good way of accessing community members' connections to their surrounding environment (Evans & Jones, 2011) and offer an informal way of interaction that makes participants feel at ease and able to express themselves in everyday talk (Lager et al., 2015). Here, in order for the researcher to gain an understanding of the participants' *sense of place* of Pingjum, each participant was asked to take the researcher on a "tour" through the village. During the walks, the participants showed and took photographs of places that are meaningful to them and places that, in their eyes, are facing potential changes or are disputed in the community. In addition to the walking part, the interview questions probed people's opinions on and experiences with the arts and artists in Pingjum, their opinions on Pingjum's reputation of being an "artist village", and the positive and negative sides of this reputation, and their views on whether the community values and supports the presence of the arts and artists.

The second stage of the project consisted of group discussions in which the participants further discussed the shared and different meanings of particular places in Pingjum. These took place on one morning, with 16 of the 28 interviewed participants meeting in the village hall. Those absent were either unable to join due to a scheduling conflict or lacked interest. The participants were divided into three groups of mixed ages, which were presented with the photographs taken during the walking interviews and some guiding questions (on the photographed places and their meanings over time) as starting points for their discussions.

The third stage of the participatory research project involved a creative workshop leading to an exhibition. Nine participants were willing and able to take part in this stage, which had as its aim visualizing the meanings that participants assigned to places in Pingjum. The participants gathered for one morning in the village hall and, with the help of four students from the Minerva art academy in Groningen, visualized some of the “stories” attached to certain places in Pingjum that had been collected during the first two stages of the project. During the morning, four groups emerged, resulting in four different artworks. A few weeks later, the artworks, together with an overview of the photographs taken during the walking interviews, were presented during an exhibition in the village hall. The exhibition aimed to engage the audience and generate discussion on the meanings of certain places in Pingjum. In this way, the project aimed to contribute positively to the community’s (thinking on) resilience and development. At the same time, the exhibition served as a closure to the participatory research project.

### **3.4 ‘Pingjum is known as an “artist village”, but...’<sup>5</sup>**

While walking and talking with our participants, it became clear that many of them regard the presence of the arts and artists in their village as something positive, although some expressed annoyances with regards to the influence the arts have had (see below). In our analysis of how the arts in Pingjum influence the community, we focus on: the sense of community they generate, the meeting opportunities the arts provide and how the community is engaged by some artists. Throughout the discussion, we highlight the binding and dividing effects of the arts on the community.

#### **3.4.1 Sense of community**

The contribution that the arts can make to a sense of community is seen as an important social benefit (McCarthy et al., 2004). In Pingjum, we found that the arts can indeed contribute to this, but also that, in practice, they can simultaneously have a dividing effect.

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<sup>5</sup> Quote walking interview Abby (middle-aged woman, “incomer”).



As already noted, the presence of the arts and artists in Pingjum has led to Pingjum gaining a reputation as an “artist village”. Dorpsbelang Pingjum (2012), the village’s interest association, wrote the following about this reputation in their vision document:

‘Pingjum is considered to be an artist village by many. It is undeniable that this is reflected in the culture, the economic activities and the atmosphere of the village’ (our translation).

This statement was included in the interview guide and read to the participants during the walking interviews, who were then asked to give their opinion on it. Some participants agreed with the statement and acknowledged the role that the arts play in people’s sense of community. Furthermore, they argued that the arts contribute to people’s feelings of pride, which, in their eyes, also enhances the sense of community in Pingjum. The participants take pride in both the number of events (including arts events) that are organized in their village and the nature of the arts events themselves. Talking about the annual arts weekend, William<sup>6</sup> (middle-aged man, “incomer”), for instance, noted:

‘I feel some pride then, like gosh, this is organized in tiny Pingjum’.

However, other people in Pingjum are not so happy with the amount of attention the arts and artists receive, both within the village itself and in a larger context. During the research, it became clear that some of the participants are annoyed about the “artist village” reputation and see the arts as too one-sided and dominant in Pingjum’s village life. They argued that the focus on the arts does not do justice to other activities, such as the *kaats*-sport, and people such as farmers, that they saw as more ‘authentic’ within the village. In their eyes, the arts are more like a competitive force in the village, with the risk of becoming too dominant. Abby (middle-aged woman, “incomer”), for example, commented:

‘[Pingjum] is known as an artist village, but it also is a *kaats*-village, it also is a horse village, it is a farming village. It is not only an artist village, it is much more than that’.

She regards Pingjum’s reputation as an “artist village” as too one-sided:

‘You ignore a proportion of the people. There are twenty-five artists who live here, I believe. And then you have some people like me, who can kind of be associated with it... who feel comfortable with it. But there are also people who get really angry about it [the reputation]. [They say] “Yes, coincidentally, quite some artists are living here, but it is still *our* village”. It is as if those other people [non-artists] are just tolerated here [...] yes, a few people who can create something nice are living here, but it is *my* village, that also has the right to exist’.

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6 Fictional names are used for the participants.

Although the arts can contribute to a sense of community and feelings of pride, our walking interviews suggest that this is not a universal interpretation. Not everyone in the community appeared willing to identify with Pingjum's "artist village" reputation, making this a contested identity. For some people, the reputation does not contribute to a sense of community. This might reinforce a division of people in the community between those who are engaged in the arts and those who are not.

### 3.4.2 Meeting opportunities

Over recent decades, facilities such as the bakery and the supermarket have closed down in Pingjum. This not only means that people now have to rely on facilities further away, but also that some of their interactions *in* Pingjum have changed. The facilities that disappeared used to be central meeting points in the village, being everyday meeting places that were important for people's daily interactions. As Elle (middle-aged woman, Frisian) put it during the group discussion:

'In the past you met each other in the store [...] Saturday morning you went to the bakery, because such and such were there, and then you had a little chat, then you got all the news. That is no longer.'

It emerged from our interviews that the arts in Pingjum do provide meeting opportunities in addition to the facilities and associations that are also present/active in Pingjum (e.g. the pub, the *kaats*-society). One of the reasons why the participants seemed to value the arts is because, thanks to the arts, there is more going on *in* their village itself. The arts facilitate meeting opportunities, both in terms of actual meeting places (e.g. the two podium venues) and activities (e.g. the annual arts weekend), during which people can meet. During her walking interview, Elle (middle-aged woman, Frisian) explained:

'[The arts] create a lot of variation in everything that is happening here [...] something is going on, something to do, something to see. I think that is important. It keeps the people *in* the village [...] You see each other again, you have a chat with one another. Look, if you always have to go somewhere else [outside of Pingjum] you do not meet each other.'

By facilitating opportunities for people to meet and interact, to form and strengthen bonds with fellow inhabitants, the arts can have a binding influence on the community (see also McCarthy et al., 2004).

It should be noted, however, that the meeting opportunities facilitated by the arts are of a different, more "specialized" nature than the everyday meetings at the bakery or supermarket. While they have a binding influence, they also have a dividing influence on the community. During the research it became clear that not everyone in Pingjum engages with the arts and, thus, not everyone makes equal use of the meeting opportunities that they provide. This finding finds support in the literature,

where it is acknowledged that there are different levels of participation in the arts (see e.g. McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001; Mulligan et al., 2006). In Pingjum, we found that these different levels of participation resulted in one group strongly bonding with one another. We heard from many of our participants that it is often the same active “core group” that is involved in the arts events in the village and they further reasoned that it is also this “core group” that values and benefits from the arts the most.

During the walking interviews, it emerged that in addition to the people who do not engage in the arts due to a lack of interest, some villagers experience certain thresholds to engaging and thus availing themselves of the meeting opportunities that the arts provide. This underlines the contingent nature of the influence of the arts, showing their potential to divide as it is the same group of people who are meeting each other while others are excluded. The participants mentioned three potential thresholds that might limit people from engaging in the arts in Pingjum. We briefly explain each threshold below.

3 First, even though some participants argued that the active arts “core group” in Pingjum is made up of *Pingjumers* and other inhabitants of the village, others believed that *Pingjumers* are actually more involved in Pingjum’s “traditional village culture” (referring, for instance, to the orchestra) and are less, or not at all, engaged in “the arts” (referring to the professional artists in the village). As a reason for this they pointed out that *Pingjumers* might not be entirely at ease at certain arts events because the events are not related to their “traditional” culture. Thus, in the eyes of these participants, people’s Frisian background might, at least initially, constitute a threshold that limit people from engaging in the arts because they are unfamiliar with that kind of art. John (middle-aged man, “incomer”), for example, noted:

‘It requires practice to start appreciating it [the arts]. But yeah, if you come from the local polder and have only lived in your own little circle – that small, Frisian, village life – then you do not recognize certain art forms... and you also value them less’.

This quote supports the notion of Balfour et al. (2016, p. 7) that ‘those who lack the cultural capital developed through academic and family social processes tend to be segregated as inferior’ (though “stipulated as other” would be more appropriate in this case). However, given the efforts of some artists to involve those community members who are less inclined to engage in the arts (see next section), the cultural threshold could also amount to a form of “self-imposed exclusion”, with those with a Frisian background having the perception of not belonging at certain arts events (see Mulligan et al., 2006).

Second, a few participants pointed out that there might be a financial threshold preventing some people from taking part in all the arts events they might like to (see also Mulligan et al., 2006). Pepijn (>65, man, “incomer”), for instance, noted that one of the podium venues:

‘hosts performances which will cost you fifteen to twenty Euros, well you can understand that this might be difficult [to afford] for the average *Pingjumer*’.

Third, during the walking interviews with the younger participants it appeared that, in their eyes, the majority of the arts in Pingjum are targeted at an older audience. The young participants expressed either disinterest because of the content of the arts events or uncertainty about whether or not some of the events are meant for younger people. An example of how this age threshold is experienced is provided by Sabrina (<25, woman, “incomer”). Despite being an Arts Education student, when asked if she would like to take part in Pingjum’s annual arts weekend with her own artworks she answered:

‘Well maybe, maybe. But I am... perhaps still a bit too young for that, I guess. Because mainly older people are exhibiting things, so I do not know if it would be appropriate for me to do so too’.

As the quotes indicate, all the above three thresholds can prevent villagers from benefiting from the meeting opportunities that the arts facilitate, and show that the arts in Pingjum work differently for different community members. Nevertheless, some artists in Pingjum actively try to make their arts more inclusive, to which we next turn.

### **3.4.3 Engaging the community**

In the literature, reservations are sometimes expressed about the extent to which all sections of a community are reached by arts projects (Newman et al., 2003). Nevertheless, during our research, it became clear that some of the artists in Pingjum put considerable effort into involving inhabitants who are less inclined to engage in the arts, thereby lowering the thresholds described above. As already noted, participatory community arts projects are often designed in the context of a larger goal concerning community development (see Chapter 2). Interestingly, in Pingjum, such efforts come from within the community itself. It appeared that the artists, themselves inhabitants of Pingjum, have a strong place attachment insofar as they aim to actively contribute to it. They aspire to strengthen people’s relationship with their surrounding landscape and to contribute to a sustainable future for their village (see van der Vaart et al., 2015).

The artists try to make their arts more inclusive in two ways. First, they involve the village itself in their arts. The artists use the lives and stories of the inhabitants themselves as inputs, such as their personal experiences of the changes in agriculture (see Bolswards Nieuwsblad, 2013), and they try to appeal to people's place attachment and connect to concerns that inhabitants currently have about their village and its future. People are, for example, stimulated to think about and reflect upon their connections to Pingjum's landscape in the context of plans for a new windfarm (see van der Vaart et al., 2015). Second, the artists seek collaboration with other associations and institutions in Pingjum, such as the local orchestra and school. This can lower the cultural threshold that some people might experience by interweaving the arts with "traditional village culture". Both efforts strive to engage more inhabitants in the arts, making the arts more of a binding influence in Pingjum by becoming more inclusive.

An example of an arts event that tried to involve Pingjum's community was provided by Pepijn (>65, man, "incomer"), who pointed to a performance that took place in the village some years ago (see also Bolswards Nieuwsblad, 2013):

3 'You know what worked well? *Boer Vond Vrouw* [Farmer Found Wife<sup>7</sup>]: old farmers, how they met their wife, how they are working at their farm. That was something that people could identify with, and then they overcame the barrier to stepping into that weird building [the podium venue]. And then, if there is a woman who spouts out some modern language [as part of the performance] they take it as part of the bargain. Because it is their own people who are also performing, making it familiar to them'.

Efforts such as *Boer Vond Vrouw* seem to have been successful in involving villagers who were less inclined to engage in the arts, with some participants noting that, over the years, such people were becoming increasingly familiar with the arts and more engaged with them in general.

As noted earlier, the arts in Pingjum contribute to people's feelings of pride. We found that people's own involvement in the arts seems to play a role in these feelings. This corresponds with Lowe's (2000) findings that working together on an arts project can offer people 'an experience of community life that inspire[s] feelings of belonging and unity' (p. 366). The following comment by Kees (middle-aged man, "incomer"), who talked about the arts making the inhabitants feel more connected to Pingjum, captures the above:

'[the arts] bring people together. And many of those things they [the artists] organize are quite unique to Pingjum. So I think some villagers take some kind of pride in that, like "look, we did this together"'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Its name is inspired by the popular reality television series *Farmer wants a Wife*.

Kees stressed the sense of ownership that people can feel, something which Sharp et al. (2005) mentioned as a key component of inclusion. They noted that this depends on the extent to which, and how, people are included in processes of producing public art. By actively engaging the community in their arts, some artists in Pingjum are contributing to people's feelings of pride and sense of ownership and, linked to this, their sense of community. Ultimately, the artists hope to contribute to the sustainable development of their community.

Nevertheless, when looking deeper into *who* mentioned these efforts by artists to engage Pingjum's community in the arts, a certain pattern emerges. Mostly it was the middle-aged participants who mentioned these efforts, while only a few of the older participants and none of the younger participants mentioned them. Given our earlier observation about the potential age threshold, it seems that the efforts of the artists are not targeted at engaging everyone in Pingjum. This in itself does not have to be problematic, but it might become an issue if the artist "core group" becomes dominant (see Sharp et al., 2005), and suppresses other community activities leading to a further fragmentation between those who are regularly engaging in the arts and those who are left out.

### 3.5 Conclusions

The value of the arts in community development is increasingly being recognized (Carey & Sutton, 2004; Meade & Shaw, 2007; Phillips, 2004; Zitcer et al., 2016). To date, however, little attention has been paid to the variable influence of the arts on communities. Our participatory research project in Pingjum contributes to the emerging insights on the various impacts that the arts may have on communities by highlighting both the binding and dividing influences they can have in practice. Our study shows that the influence of the arts is context-dependent, with the arts having various effects for different groups of community members. With regard to community development, we found that, in Pingjum, the arts generate community participation and social capital and contribute to a sense of community. This plays a role in people's willingness to contribute to their community and its development (see Chapter 2). In addition to the various effects on Pingjum's community described above, we noted that the arts have other effects, such as generating custom for the local bar and pizzeria.

Overall, with regard to the value of the arts in terms of community development, we would emphasize three key issues:

First, that the arts do not have only advantages for a community. As Matarasso (1997) noted, the social impacts of the arts are complex. Our study demonstrated that while,

on the one hand, the arts can have benefits for some people, can contribute to a sense of community, are something to derive feelings of pride from and provide meeting opportunities; on the other hand, for others, this sense of community is contested, and the arts are seen as more of a competing force in their village, with the risk of becoming too dominant.

Second, the arts do not engage the entire community. As became clear during our research, some people do not engage with the arts and some of these might want to but experience cultural, financial or age thresholds that restrain them from taking part to the extent they might like to.

Third, and linked to the above, there is a danger that the arts might contribute to community fragmentation (see also Mattern, 2001). In Pingjum, the efforts of some artists to engage the local community enhances the binding influence of the arts. However, there is a risk that the artist “core group” becomes too dominant and the arts start to suppress other activities and exclude people in the village (see also Sharp et al., 2005). This could fragment the community into those who are engaged in the arts and those who are not.

Given these three issues, we suggest that the arts should be considered as *one* of several supportive means in community development processes (see also Belfiore, 2006; Burnell, 2012; Matarasso, 2007). Ideally, the arts would be integrated into a wider community development strategy and planning (Burnell, 2012; Kay, 2000; Phillips, 2004;) and exist alongside other activities and associations in a community. As noted by Abby (middle-aged woman, “incomer”), Pingjum ‘is not only an artist village, it is much more than that’. Here, the arts, for instance, exist alongside the *kaats*-association, which also plays a considerable role in bringing community members together and developing people’s sense of community (albeit with its own binding and dividing influences). Adopting this perspective, the arts can contribute to the robustness of a community and assist it in developing the capacity and resources needed to flourish.