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Arts & Resilience in a Rural Community

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CHAPTER 6

Conclusions & discussion

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore the value of arts-based community activities for resilience-building. The focus on arts-based community activities aligns with resilience policies that seek to include the everyday life-world and knowledge available within communities, and can be viewed in the context of the growing interest in the value of the arts for communities in general. The thesis draws on a research project that was conducted in Pingjum, a village in the northern Netherlands. The project adopted a participatory approach consisting of three stages in which creative and arts-based research methods were used: walking interviews, group discussions, and a creative workshop that led to an exhibition in Pingjum's village hall. In this final chapter, an overview of the main findings from the preceding chapters is presented, followed by a discussion of three issues with regard to resilience-building and arts-based community activities, and to creative and arts-based research methods. Then, reflections on the research approach are provided.

6.2 Summary of the main findings

The preceding chapters addressed various aspects of the relation between arts-based community activities and community resilience: the various dimensions of social capital that participatory community arts can generate (Chapter 2), the binding and dividing effects of the arts on communities (Chapter 3), and the role of the arts in people's emotional connections to landscape and their coping with (potential) place change (Chapter 4). Altogether, they contribute to a greater understanding of the value of arts-based community activities for community resilience. In addition, Chapter 5 contributes to the discussion on the value of creative and arts-based research methods for researchers by reflecting on the participatory research project carried out in Pingjum.

In **Chapter 2**, it was noted that community resilience can be developed in various ways as communities have a variety of internal and external resources (e.g. economic, social, political, natural) on which they can draw to respond to change (Magis, 2010). In this chapter, I established the link between social capital and community resilience. In line with scholars such as Brennan et al. (2009), Derrett (2003) and Larsen et al. (2004), it was argued that social capital is one of the resources that play a role in a community's resilience. Due to the build-up of social capital, community members can become more connected to each other and their community and, subsequently, more willing and able to work together and contribute to their community and its development.

I discussed two international participatory community arts projects in this chapter in order to illustrate the various dimensions of social capital that participatory

community arts can generate (i.e. bonding, bridging and linking) and how this contributed to the resilience of the communities where the projects took place.

In the discussed projects, the arts were specifically credited with helping to involve people and to facilitate interactions. Both projects illustrated the ability of participatory community arts to generate various types of social capital. By supporting social networks and building a sense of place, they provided excellent examples of why participatory community arts can be beneficial with regard to resilience-building (see also Boon et al., 2012). Based on these findings, the chapter concluded that participatory community arts should be considered in community development processes as a means for building community resilience. They can assist communities in developing the capacities and resources to deal with challenges that they face. Though, I stressed that the specific spatial context in which a project is planned must be taken into account when planning for resilience, as each community will have its own characteristics and needs (see also Christopherson et al., 2010).

In **Chapter 3**, the various impacts of the arts on communities are discussed. It was observed that the literature in this regard generally focuses on the positive impacts and ignores potentially negative impacts of the arts (Belfiore, 2006). Following Panelli & Welch (2005), this thesis regards communities as heterogeneous entities. Hence, in this chapter, I argued that a more nuanced perspective on the impacts of the arts on communities is needed as the arts will work differently and have various effects for different (groups of) community members.

In the chapter, I discussed how the arts in Pingjum influence the community in the village. In so doing, I drew on the opinions of, and experiences with, the arts and artists in Pingjum as expressed by the participants in my participatory research project. In the analysis, I paid attention to the sense of community that the arts can generate, the meeting opportunities they can provide, and how the community can be engaged by some artists.

The case-study in Pingjum showed that the influence of the arts is context-dependent, with the arts having both binding and dividing effects for different (groups of) community members. I emphasized three key issues: the arts do not have only advantages for a community, they do not engage an entire community, and they could potentially contribute to community fragmentation. On the one hand, my findings demonstrated that the arts can have benefits for some people, being something to derive feelings of pride from, contributing to a sense of community, and providing meeting opportunities. On the other hand though, my findings indicated that for others, this sense of community is contested and the arts are seen as more of a

competing force, with the risk of becoming too dominant in the village. The case-study also revealed that some people decided not to engage with the arts and that some might want to, but experience cultural, financial or age thresholds that prevent them from taking part to the extent they might like to. Based on these findings, I suggested that the arts should be considered as *one* of several supportive means in community development processes, as their various effects have consequences for the extent to which community development is actually supported. In light of contributing to a community's robustness and resilience, it would be ideal when the arts are considered alongside other associations and activities in a community and are integrated into a wider community development strategy and planning (Burnell, 2012; Kay, 2000; Phillips, 2004).

In **Chapter 4**, I explored the role of the arts in people's emotional connections to their landscape and in their coping with (potential) place change at the coast in light of wind energy developments. Taking the role of the arts into account in this regard can help to better understand public responses to local developments and move a community towards more effective participatory planning processes (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Place change could trigger forms of "place-protective" action, such as engaging in collective protest or signing petitions against proposed plans (Devine-Wright, 2009). People's interpretations of place change are socially constructed, with various people, groups and institutions influencing one another (see, e.g., Batel & Devine-Wright, 2015; Stedman, 2002; Vorkinn & Riese, 2001). In the chapter, I specifically focused on the role of artists in this regard, a group which, in this context, has received little attention until now. Several scholars though, observed that the arts can help to articulate and strengthen links between communities and places (see, e.g., Anwar McHenry, 2011; Hall & Robertson, 2001; Morris & Cant, 2004) and mentioned the arts as tools to (re) frame and engage with controversial topics, such as dealing with climate change (see, e.g. Miles, 2010; Weik von Mossner, 2013).

Chapter 4 zoomed in on the role of the arts in Pingjum in the participants' interpretations of, and dealing with, local wind energy developments in relation to a key feature of their village's landscape, a late medieval dike called the *Gouden Halsband*. Recently, the area around Pingjum (including this dike) was designated as a potential location for the construction of a new windfarm. Drawing on the walking interviews and group discussions, I elaborated on the role of the arts in people's emotional connections to their landscape and the expression of their attachments through actions.

My findings showed that the arts in Pingjum fuelled people's emotional connection to their landscape and the old medieval dike, enhanced their knowledge of both and triggered people to reflect on the meanings they assign to them. With regard to the

windfarm plans, my findings indicated that the arts enhanced people's awareness and stimulated their assessment of them. They mainly brought (potential) negative impacts on Pingjum's landscape to people's attention, framing people's interpretations of the plans. In this way, the arts encouraged action, stimulating both protests against the proposed windfarm plans and efforts to preserve the *Gouden Halsband*. Based on these findings, I concluded that in the context of people's coping with (potential) place change, artists can be players to be taken into account. Pointing to Stuiver et al. (2012, p. 309), I proposed that they could be included 'as consultants of the immaterial values' in planning processes. In this way, 'local input still can have impact' before definite plans for an area are made. In light of community resilience, this aligns with resilience policies that strive to include the everyday life-world and knowledge available within communities.

In **Chapter 5**, the focus was shifted to the lessons learned from using creative and arts-based research methods. To contribute to the discussion on the value of such methods to academia, I reflected on the conducted participatory research project in Pingjum in order to provide nuanced, concrete insights into the value of creative and arts-based research methods. In the chapter, I elaborated on how the walking interviews, group discussions and creative workshop that resulted in an exhibition contributed to producing *multifaceted knowledge*.

My findings demonstrated that a rich insight into Pingjum's village life, the key issues at play in the community and my participants' sense of place and village experiences was obtained. Each project stage provided another facet of these topics, leading to *multifaceted knowledge*. The first stage, comprising the walking interviews, generated personal, in-place accounts of the participants' village experiences and views on key issues at play in their community (see also Pain, 2004; Trelle & van Hoven, 2010). The second stage, consisting of the group discussions, brought the participants together and revealed shared and divergent intergenerational views that existed within the community on the meaning of particular places in the village. The third stage, comprising the creative workshop and exhibition, provided insight into the participants' sense of place through empathic experiences (see also Eisner, 2008; Lawrence, 2008). Further, the second and third project stages disclosed issues that had not been previously raised.

The creative and arts-based research methods proved to be useful with regard to meeting the two main aims of the participatory research project, i.e. to actively engage the inhabitants in generating knowledge about their community and its resilience and, linked to this, to contribute positively to the community's thinking about and actual resilience (see also Chapter 1). With regard to the first aim, the methods

helped in gaining insight in the participants' sense of place and village experiences, the issues at play in their community, and the overall context in which the local arts and artists exist. As Steiner & Markantoni (2013) noted, it is essential to capture and understand the issues that communities face when investigating community resilience. Ultimately, the *multifaceted knowledge* that was produced through the creative and arts-based research methods contributed to a greater understanding of the value of arts-based community activities for the community's resilience. With regard to the second aim, I concluded that the project might potentially have ignited a spark among the community members to engage in action and contribute to their community's resilience (see also Fortmann, 2014; Gupta & Kelly, 2014; Salmon, 2007 on "giving back" to communities). The project contributed to a cultural practice already existing in the community, which entails deliberate efforts of (some) artists to strengthen the inhabitants' relationship with their surrounding landscape and to contribute to a sustainable future for their village (see also Chapter 3, section 4.3). The research project added to this practice. It stimulated the formation and strengthening of links between some community members by providing meeting opportunities. In addition, the project stimulated the involved inhabitants to think about and discuss their community and their attachments to it, (potential) changes in the village, and ways to deal with these and to improve village life.

In chapter 5, I also elaborated on the hurdles and challenges in using creative and arts-based research methods. In addition to the challenge of accommodating this kind of research within academic conventions (see also section 6.3.3), I reflected on three challenges that I encountered during the participatory research project in Pingjum. These concern: the efforts to engage the community in the project, the uncertainty linked to the project (i.e. the details of the process, outcomes and possible impacts were not known in advance, which makes these methods challenging (and exciting!)), and the considerable time demands of the project to all those involved.

Despite these challenges, I concluded that creative and arts-based research methods have much to offer to researchers as they deliver substantial benefits. My reflection on the participatory research project indicated that these methods can: 1) generate multifaceted insight by providing new ways of understanding people's real lived experiences and views, by going beyond rational-cognitive ways of knowing (see also Hamilton & Taylor, 2017); and 2) present ways to contribute and "give back" to a community.

In sum, by looking into the role of arts-based community activities in community resilience from several perspectives, the chapters of this thesis come to aid in answering the question of how to achieve community resilience. The chapters presented an image of arts-based community activities as being a significant potential resource

for resilience-building. By generating various types of social capital, participatory community arts were found to be able to assist communities in developing the capacities and resources to deal with challenges that they face and to flourish (Chapter 2). Especially with regard to resilience policies that seek to include the everyday life-world and knowledge available within communities, arts-based community activities appeared to be an interesting means. When looking at people's coping with (potential) place change, the various arts activities and artists in Pingjum were found to be able to frame people's interpretations of, and dealing with, proposed developments (Chapter 4). They proved to enhance people's emotional connections to their landscape and influence people's expression of their attachments through actions (e.g. signing petitions against proposed plans). In this light, taking the role of the arts into account can help to move a community towards more effective participatory planning processes (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Further, as suggested in Chapter 4, artists could be included in planning processes 'as consultants of the immaterial values' (Stuiver et al., 2012, p. 309). Through site-specific and community-based arts projects (that actively involve the citizens in creative processes), the local knowledge of the citizens, that are affected by a proposed plan, can be made explicit. Here, it should be added that the role of artists in this regard 'is to facilitate cultural artistic expressions that capture the local uniqueness on people's own terms' (Stuiver et al., 2012, p. 300). In this way, the local context will be more involved when planning for community development. However, a nuanced perspective on the role of arts-based community activities is required, as the arts appeared to have both binding and dividing effects on the community in Pingjum (Chapter 3). Therefore, the arts should preferably be integrated into a wider community development strategy and planning. When the arts exist alongside other associations and activities in a community, they can truly contribute to the robustness of a community. Lastly, when looking at the potential for academic research to contribute to a community in this regard, creative and arts-based research methods were found to present researchers ways to "give back" to a community and potentially contribute to its resilience (Chapter 5).

6.3 Discussion

Having discussed the main findings of this thesis, the next section elaborates on three issues with regard to resilience-building and arts-based community activities, and to creative and arts-based research methods: 1) the degree of caution required regarding both community resilience and arts-based community activities; 2) concerns around the "instrumentalisation" of the arts; and 3) the position of creative and arts-based research methods in academic research.

6.3.1. No "magic potion"

In this section, it is stressed that both resilience and arts-based community activities

are not a ‘magic potion’ (Shaw, 2003, p. 1) and, therefore, require attention when employed. First, some cautionary notes with regard to resilience and the necessity to take the local context into account when planning for resilience are discussed. Then, the focus turns to arts-based community activities. Although they appeared to offer an interesting means in this light, they, as highlighted next, also have to be employed with caution.

According to White & O’Hare (2014), resilience appears incontestable as it portrays a desirable goal relevant to practically any given issue in the field of many public and social policy initiatives. Several scholars, however, argued that the concept needs to be approached with a degree of caution, both conceptually and when transferred into practice. Resilience is often used as a panacea to various problems and, in this way, runs the risk of becoming a heavily contested buzzword (see, e.g., Brice & Fernández Arconada, 2018; Hutter & Kuhlicke, 2013; O’Hare & White, 2013; Shaw, 2012; van der Vaart et al., 2015; White & O’Hare, 2014). For instance, when translating the resilience concept from the natural to the social world, Davoudi (2012, p. 306) observed a challenge relating to ‘power and politics and the conflict over questions such as, what is a desired outcome, and resilience for whom?’. She emphasized that in the process of resilience-building, some people gain while others lose. Hence, issues of justice and power relations are always at stake and, therefore, deserve attention when developing resilience strategies (van der Vaart et al., 2015). In addition, several scholars pointed to potential dangers in a *neoliberal* interpretation of resilience, which entails a strong emphasis on self-reliance, with people and places being seen as being responsible for developing their own resilience (see, e.g., Davoudi, 2012, 2018; Porter & Davoudi, 2012; Shaw, 2012; White & O’Hare, 2014). In this regard, Porter & Davoudi (2012, pp. 331-332) warned that ‘resilience concepts are quietly beginning to justify policy directions that demonise those people or places who are deemed to be “just not resilient enough”, and support a withdrawal of state services’.

In accordance to the above, during my research, the necessity to take the local context into account when planning for resilience emerged. In this regard, Brice & Fernández Arconada (2018, p. 225) rightly pointed out that ‘top-down implementations of resilience planning [...] raise questions of how resilience objectives are identified and achieved, and by what methods these initiatives can be kept relevant to specific places and specific communities’. As stressed in this thesis, each community has its own characteristics and needs. Therefore, rather than being used as a broad generic aspiration, resilience strategies should take the specific socio-spatial context of a community into account (see also Christopherson et al., 2010; Hutter & Kuhlicke, 2013; O’Hare & White, 2013; Zitcer et al., 2016). Correspondingly, the local knowledge present in communities should be incorporated when developing resilience strategies

(see, e.g., Brice & Fernández Arconada, 2018; Reichel & Frömming, 2014; Steiner & Markantoni, 2013; Stuiver et al., 2013). In this regard, McEwen et al. (2013), for example, drew attention to folk songs as informal archives of flood narratives and memories. They noted that these convey ‘material collected not by the professional documenter, but rather created by people in response to their own situations’ (p. 15). This local knowledge can, McEwen et al. (2013) concluded, form a key resource in communities’ flood resilience – their learning to live with uncertainty and changing flood risk.

In this thesis, arts-based community activities emerged as an interesting means for resilience policies that strive to include the everyday life-world and knowledge available within communities. In a previous publication, colleagues and myself saw a potential role for the arts in enhancing exchange and trust between community members and policy makers/professionals (van der Vaart et al., 2015). We argued that the arts could assist in ‘translating between [their] different lifeworlds and types of knowledge – between theory and the reality of everyday life, working with professional and lay understandings, different types of authority, skills, perspectives and narratives’ (p. 165 and also see Brice & Fernández Arconada, 2018; Jones, 2013). However, as highlighted in Chapter 3, the influence of the arts is context-dependent, with the arts having both binding and dividing effects for different (groups of) community members. The arts do not have only advantages for a community, do not engage an entire community, and could potentially even contribute to community fragmentation (see also Mattern, 2001). Therefore, when discussing the arts in terms of their usefulness, the question whose interests are served, and how, becomes relevant (Brice & Fernández Arconada, 2018; Sharp et al., 2005).

Other critical notes with regard to the value of arts-based community activities for community resilience that emerged throughout this thesis include: the importance of sustaining the impacts of participatory community arts projects; the difficulties in obtaining funding and support for projects; the fact that the arts could work out differently than anticipated (Stuiver et al., 2012); and the notion that the arts cannot alone resolve the complex challenges that communities face (Burnell, 2012). Issues such as these have to be taken into account when incorporating arts-based community activities in resilience-building strategies, as they have consequences for the extent to which community resilience is actually supported.

6.3.2. Concerns around the “instrumentalisation” of the arts

This thesis highlights arts-based community activities as a significant potential resource for resilience-building. However, ‘in becoming “useful”’, Brice & Fernández Arconada (2018, p. 229) observed, ‘artists risk subjecting their practice to

instrumentalisation through the implicit and explicit agendas of commissioning and funding bodies'. Here, the arts, and especially participatory or socially-engaged art, are being embraced as a form of "soft social engineering", with the idea that they can be useful to effect concrete changes in society (Bishop, 2012). This section briefly discusses three common concerns that are raised by this instrumentalisation of the arts: the downplaying of the "intrinsic" benefits of the arts, the debate on how to understand "quality" in the arts and how to judge it, and the reality that not all artists might want to deliberately contribute to resilience-building with their arts.

First, several scholars noted that there is a strong emphasis on the so-called "instrumental" benefits of the arts in arguments for public investment in the arts (see, e.g., Hawkes, 2001; Khan, 2010; McCarthy et al., 2004; Mulligan et al., 2006; Otte, 2015). These "instrumental" benefits, which are indirect outcomes of arts experiences, are not the sole benefits of the arts though. Instead, there are other, so-called "intrinsic" benefits, which are inherent in the arts experience itself (McCarthy et al., 2004). Such benefits can include, for instance, being given pleasure and emotional stimulation, gaining a new perspective and an expanded capacity for empathy (see, e.g., Gielen et al., 2014; McCarthy et al., 2004; Otte, 2015). The "intrinsic" benefits are actually, McCarthy et al. (2004, p. 3) observed, 'the fundamental layer of effects leading to many of the instrumental benefits that have dominated the public debate and the recent research agenda' (p. 3). However, because of this dominant focus on the "instrumental" benefits of the arts, the "intrinsic" benefits tend to be downplayed (McCarthy et al., 2004). With this in mind, many arts advocates expressed concerns with regard to only funding the arts based on their instrumental benefits (Belfiore, 2002; Gielen et al., 2014; Khan, 2010; McCarthy et al., 2004). In case the arts fail to sufficiently prove to be a cost-effective means of delivering certain social or economic benefits, they are likely to lose the competition for funding against other areas of public spending (e.g. investments in education, sports, infrastructure).

Second, the instrumentalisation of the arts provokes debate on how to understand "quality" in the arts and how to judge it (see, e.g., Bishop, 2006; Kester, 2006; Matarasso, 2013). In this regard, Brice & Fernández Arconada (2018) pointed out that socially-engaged artists are: 'caught between *aesthetics* on the one hand and *utility* on the other [...] [they] are left to ask what kind of practice most closely reflects both the interests of participants and the aspirations of artistic practice, as opposed to social provision, governance, or activism' (p. 230, emphasis added). Brice & Fernández Arconada (2018) argued that socially-engaged artists extend the parameters beyond the aesthetics, as they 'attempt to find new ways of making meaningful work, or making work meaningful' (p. 229). Here, as Belfiore (2002) noted, more value and emphasis tends to be placed on the artistic *process* (with its empowering effects) than on the artistic *product*.

Third, and related to the above, not all artists might want to deliberately contribute to resilience-building (or other societal or policy goals) with their arts, or demand certain preconditions when they are involved in such processes. Stuiver et al. (2012), for instance, experienced that artists can explicitly demand to work completely independent and without interference from planners, as they refuse to become instruments in the hands of policy makers. In this context, Lippard (1984, p. 341) already stressed a few decades ago (with regard to activist art) that: ‘I don’t think it is necessary for all artists to make activist art’. Consequently, some art forms or artistic standards could be less well-represented in resilience-building processes.

6.3.3 The position of creative and arts-based research methods in academic research

As this thesis illustrates, research using creative and arts-based methods can deliver substantial benefits. The reflection on the participatory research project in Chapter 5 indicated that these methods can produce multifaceted knowledge and contribute and “give back” to the community where the research is conducted. Researchers using such methods, however, can encounter difficulties in defending and financing their work because it often challenges dominant assumptions and conventions around what constitutes “research”, “knowledge” and “impact” (see, e.g., Coemans & Hannes, 2017; Foster, 2012; Hamilton & Taylor, 2017; Kelemen & Hamilton, 2015; Lawrence, 2008).

Currently, an increasingly important factor in obtaining public funding and support for research is societal impact (Bornmann, 2012; Pain et al., 2015). In the Netherlands, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (which funds scientific research at public research institutions), requires applicants, since 2013, to describe how their research could contribute to society and to the economy. In the so-called “knowledge utilisation” section, applicants have to provide plans for sharing their research results outside the scientific community (NWO, 2017; and see also van Dijck & van Saarloos, 2017; see for the UK case, e.g., ESRC, 2017; Research Councils UK, 2007).

Several scholars, however, noted that academia seems to somewhat stuck in narrow approaches to knowledge creation and argued that the notion of “impact” is problematic (see, e.g., Bornmann, 2012, 2017; Macpherson et al., 2014; van Dijck & van Saarloos, 2017). When looking at, for instance, the main funders and main audit of UK research, Pain et al. (2015, p. 4) observed that ‘the way in which impact is conceptualized and measured tends to be very narrow, and unreflective of the diverse approaches to creating knowledge and affecting change that researchers today utilize’. Along similar lines, Macpherson et al. (2014, p. 30) expressed the concern ‘that only *some* of th[eir] impacts on and between participants and key agencies are easily captured and would be measurable under the current REF [UK Research Excellence Framework] criteria for impact’ (emphasis added).

The currently still persistent “academic climate” sketched above (though see Wiles et al., 2013) can be highly disadvantageous for researchers using creative and arts-based research methods. As noted in the reflection on the research project in Chapter 5, these methods could involve quite some uncertainty (e.g. with regard to the details of the process, outcomes or possible impacts). In addition, it can take considerable time to find suitable community partners and to establish a genuine co-working agenda, and there can be certain impacts that are hard to measure or take time to emerge (Bornmann, 2012; Macpherson et al., 2014). In light of these issues, it can be difficult for researchers using creative and arts-based research methods to obtain funding and support for their research, given that many funding agencies are in general more inclined to honour proposals with clear, predictable and demonstrable outcomes involving few risks (see also Bornmann, 2012; Carey & Sutton, 2004). In the Netherlands, however, one of NWO policy’s key areas of interest aims ‘to provide plenty of opportunities for scientific creativity and unrestrained science’ (NWO, 2017, n.p.).

Though I do not provide a concrete solution to the challenge pointed out above, I would like to draw attention to the need of accommodating research using creative and arts-based research methods more in academic research (see also Kelemen & Hamilton, 2015; Macpherson et al., 2014). As illustrated in this thesis, such methods can deliver substantial benefits for both researchers and communities and hence, they deserve more recognition.

6.4. Reflections on the research approach

For my research project, I adopted a participatory approach consisting of three stages in which creative and arts-based research methods were used. A reflection on these stages, comprising walking interviews, group discussions and a creative workshop that resulted in an exhibition in the case-study village, is already provided in Chapter 5. In this section, then, I briefly reflect on the research approach adopted and on an ethical consideration that arose concerning this approach.

My participatory research project contributes to a greater understanding of the value of arts-based community activities for resilience-building. However, more research in *different contexts* is needed to provide further support for the claims made. In this light it would also be fruitful to conduct more *longitudinal* research. As observed by several scholars, certain benefits of the arts can take considerable time to emerge (see, e.g., Belfiore, 2006; Mulligan, 2006). Therefore, it would be interesting to study a community and the relations between its arts-based community activities and community resilience in more depth for a longer period of time. In addition, potential differences in *types* of arts-based community activities in resilience-building processes

could be further explored. Otte (2015), for instance, pointed to several “art-languages” that can be used in art practices, i.e. visual arts, literature, dance, theatre, new media, music. It would be interesting to investigate whether arts-based community activities with different dominant ‘art-languages’ affect community resilience differently. In this way, more insights in what constitutes good practice with regard to resilience-building can be obtained.

The participatory approach that I adopted aligns with the currently more frequently articulated aims of academic research to directly benefit the people that are involved (Macpherson et al., 2017). By actively engaging the inhabitants of Pingjum in generating knowledge about their community and its resilience, I intended to keep my research and its outcomes relevant to the community members involved. As noted, with the research project, I aimed to contribute positively to the community’s thinking about and actual resilience. Several scholars observed that when community members are actively engaged in a research, the research is more likely to come from and reflect lived experiences and, potentially, lead to actions that address people’s real desires and needs (Breitbart, 2012; Pain et al., 2015; Trell, 2013). In light of community resilience this is important because, as noted, local knowledge and everyday experiences of people should be incorporated when developing resilience strategies (see, e.g., Brice & Fernández Arconada, 2018; Reichel & Frömming, 2014; Steiner & Markantoni, 2013; Stuiver et al., 2013; van der Vaart et al., 2015).

However, an ethical consideration concerning the *sustainability* of my research project needs to be considered. In Chapter 2, the importance of sustaining the impacts of participatory community arts projects was identified, especially in light of community resilience. It was noted that the real value of community development is only achieved if such projects are sustainable. In this regard, Carey & Sutton (2004, p. 133) argued that a “long-term legacy” should be an important outcome of projects and that, ideally they ‘should not “finish”, but should evolve to meet the expanding capacity and aspirations of the community, as well as building on success’ (see also Askins & Pain, 2011).

With the above in mind, questions around the sustainability of my academic research project arise (see also Mattingly, 2001). To what extent did it truly make a difference to the resilience of the community in Pingjum? This remains a question that is difficult to answer with certainty. As noted, the project can be placed in a cultural practice already existing in Pingjum, which entails deliberate efforts of (some) artists to strengthen the inhabitants’ relationship with their surrounding landscape and to contribute to a sustainable future for their village. I noted that my research project stimulated the formation and strengthening of links between some community

members, and stimulated them to think about and discuss their community and their attachments to it, (potential) changes in their village, and ways to deal with these and to improve village life. By doing this, the research project might potentially have stimulated the involved community members to engage in (further) action and contribute to their community's resilience. However, a humble attitude in this regard is highly appropriate, given the project's relatively small scale and time frame.

Ultimately, taking the time to listen and speak to community members might be the starting point in successful resilience-building. As Donald (man, >65) remarked at the end of his walking interview:

'It is so wonderful you are doing this, doing this research project and that it concerns your PhD. But it is already nice because that man that is living here on his own [referring to himself], he enjoys to be involved once, being asked questions which make him think "gosh I never thought about this", "how to explain this?", "is it like that?", "oh, does it also has that side to it?". Well, I made all those discoveries. Applause, applause!'