

Libraries as a Safe and Public Place

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Summary

Libraries have changed significantly in the past 10 years. Libraries are no longer only places people come for book but library has gotten a lot of other functions over the years. In 2022 a Dutch law passed called the WSOB this law states libraries are now places people can meet, have lectures and organize debates and other social events. This law also states libraries are public and should be open to everyone.

Because of the rise in activities inside Dutch public libraries, libraries are attracting more people. This is on the one hand a good thing because people mostly come to libraries to learn and to socialize. With the rising popularity of library there are also noticeably more disturbances inside libraries. Recent news articles even spoke of libraries temporarily locking its doors to keep trouble makers out of the library. This defeats the whole purpose of libraries being a public place.

This research gathers more information about this problem and offers some practical solutions after having answered the following research question: *How do Dutch public libraries maintain their status as a public place and create a safe environment for everyone?*

To answer this main question the following questions have been answered first:

1. What features characterize a Dutch public library?
2. What do Dutch public libraries already do to accommodate everyone in the library?
3. What are a Dutch public libraries safety interventions?
4. What are the weaknesses and strengths in a libraries policy and what more can be done to accommodate everybody in the public libraries?

These questions are answered by using a qualitative iterative approach. The research is qualitative because of the experiences and feelings that are looked into to answer the research question. Data collection was done in the form of case study. This case study was performed at Rozet. A library on the bigger side in the capital of Gelderland, Arnhem. This city has a rich history and lots of different people that come visit a library which made this city well suited for this case study.

It is socially important for libraries to stay open because of their significance in society. Libraries are a public space and a space of interaction. People come here to socialize and debate with each other. The discourse between people that come to the library is important for everyone. For this discourse to take place there needs to be a safe environment for everyone. This research is scientifically because safety and disturbances inside libraries have not been researched inside the Netherlands before.

The main researchers into safety and disturbances inside libraries are Ceccato et al and Eck. Multiple of their researches point to libraries needing to be a safe space to encourage interactions and encounters. The main theory on providing safety in libraries are environmental interventions (Ceccato, 2024) and strong management (Eck, 2023; Eck 2019). Environmental interventions are Intervention that influence the layout of the library these interventions are natural surveillance, activity support, access control, territoriality and target hardening.

The results of the case study show Rozet as a welcoming library that is located in the city centre of Arnhem. Many people visit this library daily to study, read, socialize or because they walked by the building and wanted to look inside. Rozet consist of five floors two of which contain the library books and two contain a lot of study spaces and classrooms for cultural or language lessons. The Fifth floor is reserved for art and has a rooftop terrace.

The layout of Rozet is made with a lot of the principles of territoriality and natural surveillance in mind. There is a lot of open space. The library has done this intentionally by using an 'open store concept' which means the library uses a lot of low shelves with themed books which makes the library open and colourful. The library also has a lot of big windows on the walls and ceilings which allow lots of natural light.

The mood in the library is described as mostly homey, respectful or convivial. The staff are welcoming and the lighting and furniture choice help convey the feeling of home and thus a lot of territoriality inside the library. The high natural surveillance and territoriality makes the library feel like a safe place for a lot of people.

People that visit the library are mostly respectful as well. They are open, greet people sometimes talk to each other or sometimes come to do their own thing. Most people coming to Rozet come to study, work or read according to staff members. A lot of people also come to the library for music lessons, language lessons or for citizenship integration. The library offers a lot of activity support in the form of cultural events and help for a lot of different people, digital support for example.

Some people are however not as kind and cause disturbances. Staff describe normal disturbances, people being too loud, children screaming at the slide, eating and leaving trash for example. Once every few weeks there are also extreme disturbances in the library like angry people, drug use, or vandalism. Because of these extreme disturbances Rozet has hired security guards as a temporary solution.

Rozet also has house rules and protocols to help with safety inside the library. Rules and protocols should be clear and staff should enforce them according to Eck (2019) to have less disturbances in the library. The house rules are posted on small signs at most of the seating areas in Rozet these house rules do raise some complaints because they are worded ambiguously and are only accessible if you speak Dutch. This goes against the principles Eck talks about.

Protocols inside Rozet also lack clarity. Staff often do not know if they should approach disturbances or call security during some situations. Sometimes it is not even clear how they should call security. The emergency buttons that Rozet have placed at the desk of staff are probably broken according to staff members.

Management is aware of most of these issues that arise regarding safety inside Rozet. They have hired security guards to adapt to the problems Rozet is facing. Adapting should however not be the goal because security guards only help keep Rozet a safe space by kicking people out when they break the rules. This is not helping libraries in being a public space.

In conclusion, after a case study of one of the bigger Dutch public libraries it becomes clear that libraries are struggling with disturbances. Clear rules, Clear protocols and well trained staff can help mitigate a lot of this problem and this is something Dutch public libraries should look into. The library layout also plays an important factor as Rozet has a lot of natural surveillance and territoriality which give the library a safe homey feeling people happily come to spend time in.

Furthermore, activity support the library offers at the moment is a lot and a lot of people come to these events but not everyone is helped by these activities. Vulnerable people like the homeless, addicted and confounded often can get no help in libraries even though they do need help. This help needs to be given to them by the municipality and it may prove valuable for municipalities to hire more social workers for these people or make more money available to the library to train their staff better to help more vulnerable people.

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1 Introduction

When someone thinks of a public library they will probably think of a quiet place where you can read, borrow, and return books. This, of course, is one of the main functions of a public library. However, through the years libraries have evolved to become much more than this. They have become a social and open place people visit to do much more than reading (Aabø et. al., 2012; Van Melik & Michael, 2021; Vanderbeck, 2007). They now are a democratic place for meetings, lectures, debates and other social events as well (Stilwell, 2018). This way of running libraries has also been recorded in Dutch legislation in 2022. (WSOB, 2022)

Because of these library reforms, Dutch public libraries are seeing more people becoming members after Covid-21 (CBS, 2024). There are elderly who come to socialize and even lunch together, but youth come to the library to use the computer and study as well (Van Melik & Michael, 2021). To sum up, the visitors are not only more in number but diversifying as well (Audunson, 2005; Leorke & Wyatt, 2019) just like the libraries.

1.1 Research Problem

Disturbances in the library are becoming a more common problem with more people finding the libraries. Dutch society has changed and diversified through the years (Harteveld, 2021) and this is also noticeable in libraries. Whatever happens in a society coincides with what happens inside libraries. This can lead to new connections (Van Melik & Michael, 2021) but can also lead to conflicts. This issue was highlighted by Merklen (2017) who described libraries being destroyed as a result of cultural differences in French banlieues.

In the Netherlands this problem luckily is much less violent but there has been a trend of more disturbances according to multiple news sources. (Knieriem & Plantinga, 2024; NOS, 2024) In some instances this has led to libraries locking their doors during certain times of day to combat disturbances and keep out people (non-members). As previously mentioned libraries are supposed to be public places where everybody is welcome to socialize, connect or gather information. When libraries start locking the doors to keep people out, are they still considered to be a public space?

Furthermore, people come to a library to work on themselves or see the library as a place to work or make. People make connections in libraries. This cannot be done when peace is disturbed in libraries and when people do not feel safe anymore. For libraries to be a place for everyone, they need to be a safe open space. This is, however, more and more often not the case when watching the current developments in the news.

1.2 Research Question

This research hopes to gather more information about this problem. This thesis will do so by answering the following research question:

How do Dutch public libraries maintain their status as a public place and create a safe environment for everyone?

To answer this main question the following questions need to be answered first:

1. What features characterize a Dutch public library?

2. What do Dutch public libraries already do to accommodate everyone in the library?
3. What are a Dutch public libraries safety interventions?
4. What are the weaknesses and strengths in a libraries policy and what more can be done to accommodate everybody in the public libraries?

By answering these four questions this research hopes to answer the main research question.

1.3 Scientific and Societal Relevance

Societal relevance

Latham & Layton argue that libraries often are “at the sharp end of the politics of austerity.”(2022) This is because they often lead to monetary losses. They may not generate any profits for cities but by studying social infrastructures like libraries research can show how social infrastructure does add value to a society.

Libraries add value by being a place of interaction (Aabø et. al., 2012; Van Melik & Michaels, 2021). Interactions are important in a society because discourse hugely diminishes misunderstandings between people (Amin, 2002). By understanding each other and by keeping the discourse going between people we might be able to battle misunderstandings and conflicts. This research hopes to add to this discussion by finding out how libraries can stop limiting interactions between people by keeping people out instead of interacting with them and trying to find reasoning between people.

This is also argued by Kofi (2022) who states that libraries are not a neutral place but a place of democracy. Librarians are not always able to accommodate everyone but need to make choices. These choices, however, can only be made when librarians talk with their visitors and know the needs of people or potential people who may or may not come to a library because of the activities it offers. This research hopes to find - as stated in sub questions 3 & 4 - what libraries and librarians do to accommodate an as large as possible group of people and make sure everyone feels welcome within social infrastructures.

Safety is also one of the main issues when talking about limiting interactions and encounters between people. The theory of Maslow (1943) highlights this best. People need to feel safe before they can think about self-improvement. This is why this research will focus on safety in public libraries as well. By giving an insight in how people can feel safe in public libraries it promotes people to self-actualize and work on themselves.

Scientific relevance

When looking at the introduction, and later the theoretical framework, it can be seen that the researching of libraries is not revolutionary, a lot of research has already been done regarding libraries. However, the researching of libraries is still necessary. There are still gaps in literature and this thesis hopes to contribute to filling in some of these knowledge gaps.

One of these gaps is regarding safety. There are instances of research about safety in public libraries (Merklen, 2017; Ceccato, 2024). These researches are however from different countries and may not reflect the Dutch case of safety in public libraries. This research hopes to contribute to the available research by providing a perspective on Dutch public libraries and look into how they manage safety issues and keep libraries public.

These researches also take multiple libraries into account and focus on one element in all these different libraries. For instance Ceccato (2024) focusses on an environmental dimension inside libraries and Merklen (2017) highlights the political issues that libraries deal with.

By looking at only one Dutch library this research hopes to do a more in depth-research of public libraries and take all these factors into account. Environment, Politics, Policy making, Management and encounters will all be looked into at one library to create a more complete picture and in this way provide a more in depth understanding of the working of public libraries.

2. Theoretical Framework

To answer the questions being asked in the introduction there first needs to be taken an extensive look into existing literature and theories that are applicable to public libraries and safety. This chapter starts with a literature review on these topics, then it describes main theories that are used in this thesis. Based on the theories and literature a conceptual framework will be created. And lastly, the concepts used in the conceptual framework are operationalized.

2.1 Literature review

2.1.1 Libraries as social infrastructure

Social infrastructure are places for people to meet, connect and socialize (Latham & Layton, 2022). Despite libraries being a place of silence, reading, and studying they are also increasingly becoming social infrastructure. People with the same background can interact with each other, but libraries are also a place where people meet who usually would not meet because of their different social circles (Chen & Ke, 2017). This means that in theory libraries can create connections between people that can only be created in safe open meeting spaces (Aabø & Audunson, 2012). These connections are important to combat misunderstandings and prejudice (Zhukova et al., 2024) and therefore increase safety.

So to accommodate everybody in a public library, libraries first need to be rebranded into a place of social infrastructure and encourage encounters between people. Encounters is a key-word. Because social interaction within peoples own bubble or space is not enough to create understanding for each other's differences (Vanderbeck, 2007; Zhukova et al, 2024). Encounters, as argued by Wilson (2017), are meetings that make a difference. Encounters are not meant to be like-minded people meeting each other, they are meant to be a meaningful interaction between two or more different thinking individuals who try to connect and understand through dialogue.

2.1.2 Safety in Social infrastructure

Public libraries need to be a safe space to have these encounters. They need to be a peaceful place where there is room for dialogue and constructive arguments. This is also one of the key points of Dutch public libraries, as recorded in the WSOB (2022). It requires debates to take place. Debates do not exist or have any use when like-minded people are interacting. For debates to take place there needs to be an encounter. A constructive dialogue with different viewpoints of different people. As long as encounters will be constructive this can be done in a safe manner. Once people start attacking other people their viewpoints, the library will not be a safe environment anymore.

Maslow's theory of human motivation ranks safety at number two in the hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). Maslow's theory argues that for people to even think about psychological needs and self-fulfilment needs, they first need to have met their physiological (food, water, warmth, and rest) and safety needs. In the case of libraries as social infrastructure this means that before people can start to form relationships, work on themselves or learn in libraries they need to feel safe.

Existing literature suggests multiple environmental intervention methods libraries can enforce to reduce the feeling of unsafety (Loren et al. 2013). Ceccato et al (2024) describes the following interventions:

“Natural surveillance refers to an environment’s capacity to maximize visibility and observation. This can be ensured by the quality, location, and type of lighting, by windows, entrances, fencing, and natural elements, such as vegetation and furniture. Activity support references facilitating activities that can help promote reductions of problematic behaviour, while access control not only refers to property control through barriers, enclosures, and entry portals but also encourages internal movement throughout the place. Territoriality is intended to create a sense of ownership and refers to how physical design can develop a sense of ownership of specific areas. This is created by delineating activity zones, or edges. Target hardening is about how the design of a space can make it difficult for people to steal or damage private and/or public property (e.g., by using padlocks)”

Some of these interventions will be more applicable in the case of Dutch public libraries. Natural surveillance and Activity support are more desirable solutions whereas access control could be breaking the WSOB-laws when taken to a certain extent. These are, however, all measures that Dutch libraries could take to improve safety.

These measures have to be implemented in the library by someone. This someone is a place manager (Eck et al., 2023). Eck describes place managers as *“a person who owns a proprietary place or is someone to whom the owner has delegated authority to operate a place”* (Eck et al., 2023; p3) and Eck et al. describes place management as *“what place managers do to operate the place and carry out its functions”* (Eck et al., 2023; p3). So place managers are the ones who make sure that a library is run well and thus safe as well. Place managers are the ones who implement policies and interventions like the ones mentioned by Ceccato et al. (2024).

2.1.3 Prioritizing Safety

According to the literature mentioned above (Eck et al. 2023; Loren et al. 2013; Ceccato et al, 2024) all the measures that can be taken to improve safety in libraries are focussed on the library itself. The key concept is that the library its layout should be designed to make the library a safe space. This is because most disturbances in libraries happen in hidden places inside the library (Henrich and Stoddart, 2016; Carey, 2008; Cromwell et al, 2008). So the layout is important for safety in a public library.

But for who is the library a safe space? Of course the library should be a safe space for everyone. But this is more easily said than done because of all the different people that visit the public library (Shuman, 2002; Ceccato et al, 2022) . So who is ‘everyone’ that needs their safety prioritized inside the library? Hartley (2015) gives examples of violence against staff inside the library. They are the group of people that deal with the most violence and disturbances inside the library. The library staff its safety should be prioritized because of this. But visitors also deserve to feel safe inside the library. Their patronage makes it possible for libraries to exist.

To make sure visitors feel safe inside a library there are a few factors needed. All these factors are related to management. According to Eck (2019) and Ceccato (2022) poor management affects crime but also visitors their feeling of safety. Poor management can be understood as: Few rules, Lax rule enforcement and poor training. Poor management makes it so that visitors can get away with disturbances without being noticed (Clarke & Eck, 2007 & Linning and Eck, 2021). So to prioritize staff and visitor safety it is important to have a well-managed library with clear rules and protocols in place. This research is therefore focussed on these rules and protocols as well.

2.2 Conceptual framework

Considering the concepts discussed in the theoretical framework the following conceptual framework can be construed. In this conceptual frame work, just like the research question, safety in libraries is the main focus. To research this main focus we need the concepts shown in figure 1 . These concepts and their role in this conceptual model are described below and operationalized in chapter 2.3.

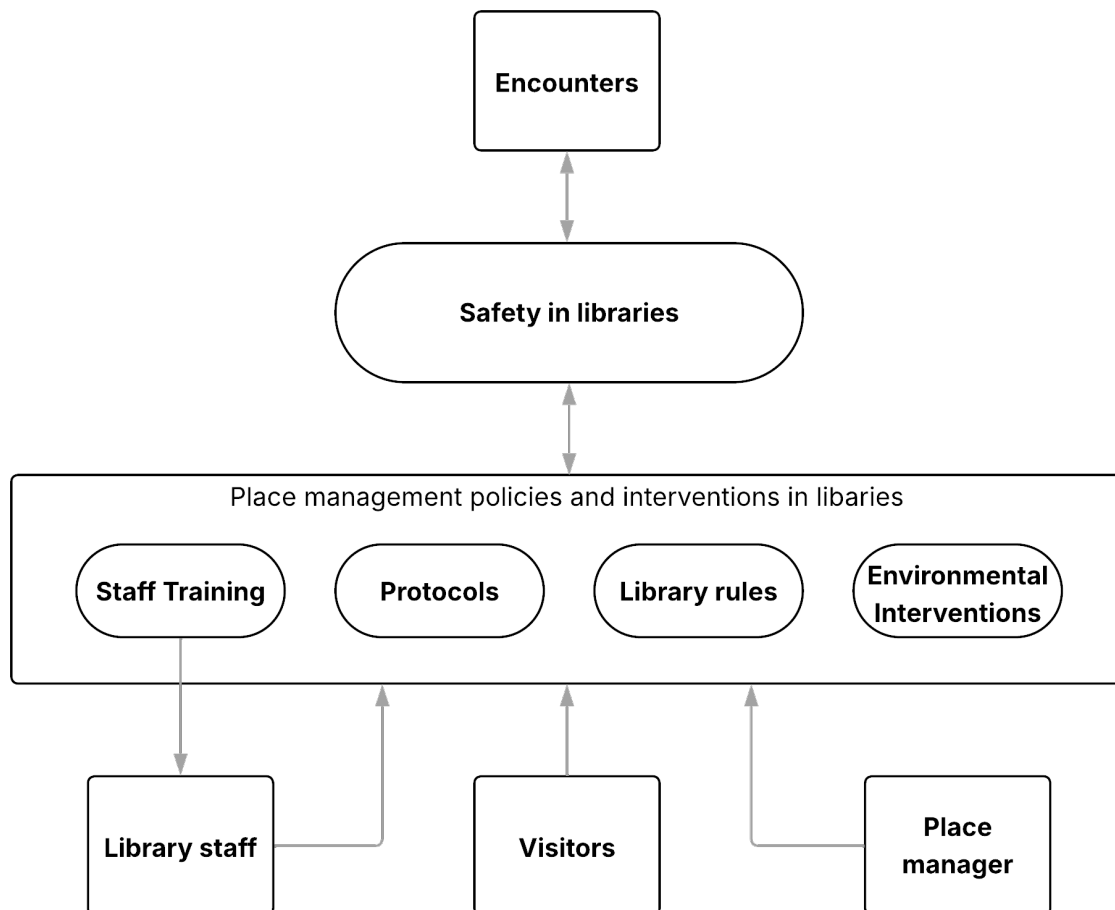


Figure 1: The conceptual model

Firstly, when studying the figure above from top to bottom we see the interaction between safety in libraries and encounters. In the theoretical framework this was described already but encounters are the meeting between different minded people. When encounters are done civilised this will lead to understanding and contribute to safety in the library. When encounters lead to conflict this negatively impacts the library's safety. The arrow goes both ways because when a library is safe there will be more encounters between people and when the library is not a safe space there is less place for encounters. So libraries need to be safe for encounters to take place but (good) encounters need to take place to make the library safer.

Secondly, we move to the row below the "safety in libraries" variable. These are the interventions mentioned in the theoretical framework that can lead to a safer library. These dependant variable are each important contributors to safety and can be measured by different

factors that will later be described in the operationalization. These factors are dependant variables because they are also influenced by place management policies and interventions in libraries.

Lastly, place management policies in the libraries are influenced by multiple independent variables. The librarians, the library guests and the place manager. These independent variables all influence and have a say in how a library's policy comes to place. One will have a bigger part to play in the development of the policies than the other but in which manner will be further discovered during the field work conducted in this thesis.

2.3 Operationalization

To answer the research question and translate theory into real life, each concept will be translated into a measurable variable. This paragraph will describe each concept discussed in the conceptual framework and describes how they can be measured:

Encounters: The meetings of people with different backgrounds. In this thesis they will be measured by frequency and length of conversation.

Safety in libraries: How at ease visitors and staff feel being in a library and how many rules are broken within the library. In this thesis this will be measured by: the five concepts described by Ceccato et al. (2024); The time people spend inside a library; how often warnings or penalties are handed out in the library; and, the feelings visitors and staff describe being inside the library.

Environmental interventions: Intervention that influence the layout of the library these interventions are natural surveillance, activity support, access control, territoriality and target hardening.

Natural surveillance: How the library's environmental arrangements stimulates an open space and safe feeling. This is measured by: The quality and type of location; type of lighting; amount of windows; amount of entrances; fencing; vegetation; and, furniture.

Activity support: The facilitation of events in a library that help prevent problematic behaviour. This will be measured by: Frequency of events; Quality of events; And, Attendance of events.

Access control: The way in which libraries regulates who and how people can enter the library. This will be measured by: amount of entrances; amount of visitors in a certain amount of time; and, amount of access denials in a certain amount of time.

Territoriality: The creating of a sense of ownership by using design and zoning in a library. This is measured by: What and how many zones a library has; how responsible of a library staff feel; and, how responsible of a library visitors feel

Target hardening: The concept of reinforcing parts of a library to discourage destruction or theft. This is measured by: How many parts of a library are reinforced and, how these parts are reinforced

Place management: The policies and interventions libraries make use of. This will be measured by how often the five interventions of Ceccato are mentioned within the libraries policies and how they are enforced within the library.

3. Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology that is used to answer the research questions and the methodology used to collect the data that is described in the operationalization. First the research philosophy behind this thesis is described. Then the methodological approach will be highlighted. After this the methods for data collection and data analysis is described and lastly the validity and reliability of this research will be discussed.

3.1 Research Philosophy

During this research a critical realism approach is best fitting. Critical realism means there is an ontological principle (a reality influenced by mechanisms exists), but also an epistemological principle (how this reality is perceived by people). Both these principles will be studied during this thesis.

The ontological principle relates to reality influenced by mechanisms. In this research multiple mechanisms can be identified. The main mechanisms studied in this thesis are: the mechanism between the policy making and the five intervention methods of safety; but also, the mechanism between the five intervention methods of safety and safety in the library. These are all mechanisms that influence the reality in this research.

The epistemological principle relates to the way people perceive reality. In this thesis this mainly relates to the way people perceive the feeling of safety. The way safety is perceived is on the one hand measurable by the ontological approach mentioned above but on the other hand the threshold when somebody feels safe is perceived differently for everybody. This is important to take note of during this research.

3.2 Methodological Approach

The methodological approach that is best fitting during this research is a qualitative iterative approach. Qualitative is best fitting in this thesis because of the epistemological principle mentioned in the research philosophy. This research will be an in-depth research and analysis of people's feelings of safety, their opinions on the way a library is run and how a library can improve itself. This can only be done by using a qualitative approach.

An iterative approach is chosen because this research, or any research for that matter, may encounter complications during the analysis of the data may suggest new insights which can alter the conceptual model and theoretical framework. This means that this research may be subject to change during the course of this thesis.

Furthermore, this thesis has some limitations because of the time period this research needs to be done and the fact that this research is done by one person. This means this research will be a case-study of a single library in the Netherlands. This is done to ensure that this matter can be viewed from multiple different angles and an in-depth research can be done. When focussing on a single Dutch public library it is possible to interview multiple visitors, managers and staff members. The data that is collected during this research will still be relevant because it can lead to insights or problem-solving that can be applicable to other public libraries who face the same kind of problems.

3.3 Methods for Data Collection

This research will be a mixed-method case-study of a Dutch public library. The methods used are: an in depth desk-research, multiple observations of the library, and semi-structured interviews with staff. The order this research will be done in is by first conducting a desk-research on the library's policies regarding safety, rules and regulations. Based on this desk research an observation protocol can be designed and field tested inside the library. This protocol can be found in the appendix of this research. Once these two phases are complete an extensive interview guide can be designed to conduct the semi structured interviews in the third phase the interview guide that is constructed based on desk research and observations is also found in the appendix.

The observations that are done in the first phase of this research will be non-participant unstructured observations. This is done to study the natural behaviour of people inside the library. When participating people may show different behaviour than when they normally would and the results will not be all that valid. Unstructured observations ensure that the researcher keeps an open mind about how libraries encounter varying situations from day to day and describes the observations strictly how they are seen. This means the researcher will not interact with subjects in the library. When entering a later stage in the research it may be beneficiary to attend certain types of activities to see how they influence the safety of a library.

The interviews that are done during this research will be semi-structured interviews. This means the interviewer has a set amount of questions but has also prepared questions to follow through on subjects' answers. Asking more about an interviewee's answers usually results in different opinions and experiences shared more easily with the interviewer and makes the conversation feel a lot more natural and relaxed during the interview. This makes people share more about their experiences as well. That is why it is important for this research to conduct semi-structured interviews.

3.4 Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, the process of research is an iterative process. The data is collected in phases, and during the phases the data will be analysed and used in the later stages of this research to be able to ask more accurate questions. This method is also known as triangulation in qualitative research. The act of using multiple sources of data to compare to each other (Vennix, 2019. P. 230).

Analysis of the data will mostly be done in atlas.ti. Each phase of the research (policy, observations and interviews) will undergo the same steps. First the data will be collected as described in the previous paragraph. Then the data will be organized an structured. After that the data is coded in atlas.ti and lastly the data will be analysed based on the codes given in the previous stages. Complete data sets will not be included in the appendix out of the respect for the privacy of the subjects.

Analysing qualitative data is a matter of interpreting the data to uncover the underlying systems and mechanics of society. One of the issues with qualitative research is the amount of data collected. Once data is coded it is easier to have an oversight. First each interview, observation and policy will be coded individually but after this is done the data can be grouped together so that it is possible to interpretant the data and gain an oversight in the multiple

different sources of data (Vennix, 2019. P. 228). Based on the analysed data the research can draw its conclusions and come up with possible suggestions regarding safety in libraries.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

To make sure the results discussed in this thesis have a high validity multiple steps will be taken into account while conducting research. First of all, as mentioned earlier, this research makes use of triangulation. Multiple sources and modes of research are used to make sure this research actually measures what it is supposed to measure. Furthermore, because of the choice to research only one library it is possible to have a higher saturation of the data. By interviewing more library-goers, there will be more data that makes sure the validity of this thesis is high.

To make sure the results discussed in this thesis are reliable multiple steps will be taken into account as well. To make sure the research can be recreated the steps undertaken in this research will be meticulously described. In the appendix the observation protocol and interview guide will be provided. During the course of this research the data collected will also be made available to the thesis-supervisor. Analysed data will also be shared in this thesis along with anonymised quotes to increase the credibility of this research and thus increase the reliability.

4. Positionality

To further ensure the validity and reliability of the thesis positionality is an important aspect. For a research its heightened validity and reliability it is important to know that the researcher leaves his preconceptions at the door. When conducting an interview or doing an observation it is important there are as little biases as possible. Of course it is not possible to completely disregard ones positionality but it is possible to be aware of it and to enlighten the researchers positionality about safety in libraries.

The researcher is someone who was brought up in a middle income household in the middle of the Netherlands. There could be differences in age, marital status, living situation and monetary situations which are all important to keep in mind when looking for the encounters described in the theoretical framework. These factors all influence how the researcher sees the world and how different people see the world and thus are important to be aware of during the course of this research.

5. Analysis

5.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the chapter 3.2 this research focusses on one library to do an in depth research into said library. The library chosen for this research is the central library of Arnhem, Rozet. The Rozet is a library located in the city centre of Arnhem, which makes it easily accessible for visitors. There is a bus stop nearby and the train station is not that far of a walk. Being located in the city centre also means numerous people walk by the public building daily and are free to enter even though they had no intention of visiting a library. During an interview multiple people walked in who were from outside the city and simply wanted to look around or look at history of Arnhem and the art that hangs in the library. During interviews the library staff welcomes everyone into the building and effortlessly points them in the right direction when needed.

Rozet's mission is "for everyone, with everyone". Which means the library is meant for everyone in Arnhem and is done with everyone in Arnhem. Another quote on the website of Rozet makes this even more clear:

"Rozet is there for all inhabitants of Arnhem and surroundings. For inhabitants with different ages and different interests. As partner of the city on the cultural and societal side, we want to make personal development possible for everyone. We do this with Language, Art and Heritage."

This can be seen by people participating in the library as staff and volunteers. But also, Rozet has multiple classrooms, a restaurant and places to put posters. In these places in the library people can participate and organise activities for the visitors of Rozet, and everyone is welcome in these activities. The role of these activities in Rozet will be elaborated upon further on in this chapter.

Rozet offers, besides being a library and a place for study, a lot of cultural events. These cultural events can be anything and can be joined by anyone as long as they are related to something cultural. This is also reflected in the online agenda of Rozet, there is always an activity planned which visitors can sign up for or simply join in. When making observations at the library multiple of these events were also ongoing. One of these events was called 'freedom soup' where visitors of Rozet could sign up to have lunch in the Rozet in the form of soup to celebrate freedom of Arnhem after ww2. During this event not only lunch was being served but there was also live music, story and poetry. This is an example of how the library offered multiple cultural stories and songs and these types of activities are being done every month where people can sign up, socialize, enrich their worldview and share their own stories.

Rozet is located in a relatively new building, only ten years old. The library is, however, not the only occupant of the building. Rozet is an organisation which is a fusion of four older organisations: the library, The historical museum of Arnhem, The art company, and Folks university of Arnhem. These four cultural companies were fused together in one building. Partly because of budgetary reasons but also because these four companies can co-exist together and are more accessible when placed in a building together. Art, books, knowledge and history are all beneficiaries of each other and help enrich and boost activities in Rozet. So the fusion can mostly be seen as a good thing, during interviews there were some blemishes shared by staff which will later be discussed.

Background information on the city of Arnhem might also help understand the people that visit Rozet but also give us some insight into the issues that the library is facing in its day to day operations. Arnhem is the capital city of Gelderland and has a population of about 170.000 inhabitants and is the second biggest city in Gelderland (Nijmegen being the first). The amount of inhabitants is still growing yearly. The city of Arnhem has a relatively young population with 30% of its inhabitants being between 25 and 40 years old and in 2023. Arnhem had 35.000 students living in the city, from primary education to university students (allecijfers.nl, 2023). Arnhem can be divided into three parts. Arnhem-North, Arnhem-South and the city centre. Rozet has multiple locations divided over these regions. The largest one is located in the city centre. Rozet Kronenburg is located in Arnhem-South, and Rozet Presikhaaf is located in Arnhem North. This research will mainly be focussed on the library in the city centre.

Arnhem is made up of 36% migrants (western and non-western) which is relatively high compared to the rest of the Netherlands (CBS, 2024). The library also plays an important role in the integration of immigrants to the Netherlands. The municipality organises immigrant integration courses inside of Rozet but Rozet is also used by different schools, 'En nu Nederlands Taalschool' for example, which is a school located in one of the classrooms of Rozet where people can learn to speak Dutch. During interviews staff tells that part of visitors do not speak Dutch or English which can lead to problems with house rules or getting other help in the library.

5.2 The library

5.2.1 Layout

As stated earlier in this chapter, the library is located in a relatively new building located in the city centre. The building the library is located in is built with multiple different ideas in mind that support the Rozet and its mission. According to the architect of the building is a 'dirty' building. Where modern new buildings are too plastic and too sleek, Rozet was built with the idea of creativity and freedom in mind. This can be seen by the panelling and layout of the building where no floor is the same and the walls are designed with all different kinds of light features, showcases, balconies and big windows (Raaij, 2013).

So the building was specifically made for Rozet and this can be seen in the layout. The Rozet contains five floors and a basement. The ground floor is made up of the entrance with two reception desks. One of these desks is mostly occupied by the security guards. The ground floor also has a restaurant and some classrooms made for arts and crafts. The restaurant has been closed for almost a year now due to bankruptcy after Covid-19. According to staff this has been a great loss but in 2025 a new restaurant will open in its place with ideas that contribute to the library. The restaurant will be made by and for refugees and is a concept which was earlier opened in in Utrecht and Amsterdam. It is made to connect people and refugees together and promotes interactions with each other just like the library.

The first and second floor are almost entirely made for the library. The first floor is the adult section and the entire second floor is the children section. This means the floors are mostly shelves full of books but also places to read, study and work. Some corners are furnished with comfortable chairs to sit in and some corners are made out of study booths and tables with chairs where people can come and work. The booths are almost always full because of the privacy and comfort they provide when studying. The comfortable chairs are used less because of the lack of table to work.

The first floor also houses a computer corner. This is a place where member of the library can freely use the computers. There is also a room dedicated here for helping people with digital problems. Library staff have speaking hours where people can get help with their laptop, phone, tablet or other electronic devices. Rozet also hosts a digital government help where people can get help with governmental issues which needs to be dealt with online. Taxes, grants, DigiD and health issues for example.

The biggest parts of the floors are where the books are stored. These parts are made with an open “store concept” in mind as the employees call it. The idea behind the store concept is that books are not only put in shelves with only the side cover of the book showing. The books are presented like you would see in stores and supermarkets, with the front cover showing in some places. Some parts of the library are sorted by theme while others are sorted by colour for example. The books are presented on low shelves which makes the library have a lot more overview in the departments and makes it an more open space which feels less cramped.

The open store concept of the library does come with some extra work for the staff however. By making the design of the bookcases more complex the staff also need more training on how to restock the bookshelves. Staff members share during the interviews that some parts of training and onboarding are lacking in this area of the library and the restocking of books is sometimes done in a different way than the library is supposed to look. This way a difference between the theory of the store concept and the practice of the open store concept. Staff wishes to have more training in this matter to create a more uniform way of stocking the shelves and making sure the library is stocked the way the theory dictates.

The second floor is also equipped with a slide which start on the second floor in the children section and comes out in the adult section on the first floor of the library. The feelings on the slide are incredibly divided. The people’s opinions are divided by the slide but also that of the staff. Some staff love that a library has such an unique item and claim even other libraries come look at the slide as a source of inspiration for their own library. Other personnel would rather get rid of the slide they say they do not like to work on the children department on busy days because of the noise and busyness the slide comes with. The slide came with the building 10 years ago and has brought a lot of joy to children and parents. It brings children to the library and keeps them there and parents can give their children something to do and a place to play while they go look for books themselves says staff of Rozet.

However, this is also where the problems coincide. Children with lack of supervision left by a slide to play leads to a lot of annoyance with customers and staff. This is also where most of the negative reviews of the library come from when looking the library up online. In the meantime the slide has gotten opening hours. At 1 in the afternoon the slide opens, it closes at 10 at night when the library closes. This means that in the evening, when there are no more children around the slide is still open. According to staff this has led to some situations where older youth are causing disturbances in the library by throwing things like furniture down the slide. In summary, the slide is a nice addition to the library according to most by attracting children to the library and keep them coming back but more supervision and maybe different opening hours should come with the slide to combat the disturbances and negative view on the slide.

The third floor is a place for studying and coming together according to Rozet. Observations on this floor back this up. The third floor is an open space with a lot of seating

places and places for studying. This is what a lot of people come to Rozet for. When visiting this floor on multiple different days and times during this research there were always people on this floor reading writing and sometimes making calls and having meetings. The third floor is mostly an open space with a lot of windows on the walls and even the ceilings that give a lot of natural lighting during the day. This makes the space pleasant to work in. The place was never truly quiet due to people communicating with each other or on the phone but there was still a respectful environment for other people studying and most people were talking quietly.

Staff did tell of instances where this was different when conducting the interviews. There sometimes are people that do not understand the rules and that are talking way too loudly. It even went so far sometimes that it angered other library visitors who in their turn started screaming in the library for people to be quiet. This is, of course, counterproductive and a disturbance in itself which makes people feel uneasy or unsafe in the library and should be avoided.

The rest of the third floor is built for classrooms. The classrooms are mostly used by companies who rent it from Rozet. Music schools, Theatre classes, The previously mentioned language lessons but also other workshops can be organised in these classrooms and even the municipality uses these classrooms for their immigrant integrations workshops. These classrooms are highly used by a lot of different instances and are an important part of the library even though they are not used for the Rozet but other cultural instances that want to operate in Rozet.

The fourth and fifth floor of Rozet are smaller. The fourth floor is made for other music and theatre workshops and lessons. When observing in the library the fourth floor was often in use for workshops, meetings and lessons. These lessons were just like the classrooms in the third floor but in a more open space. The fifth floor is mainly meant for art and the city panorama. The inside of the fifth floor is hung with art that is significant for the city of Arnhem and its history. The fifth floor has a big panorama rooftop terrace where it's mainly busy when it's warmer outside. People come there to sit, lunch, talk with people and look over the whole city centre of Arnhem. The rooftop terrace is part of the heritage centre of Rozet.

The rooftop however was not always supervised that greatly. This is because of the location, away from the busy library and study places and furthest away from the front desk where the people from maintenance and security are located. Staff have told of incidents on the rooftop where people vandalized by throwing library property from the roof and risking hurting people the youth that pulled this stunt first got away because maintenance could not get to the rooftop in time but after filing a police report the youth responsible got caught and got a restraining order for Rozet. After the incidents with vandalizing stuff and throwing stuff off the rooftop the municipality of Arnhem, who owns the building, hired permanent security guards for Rozet the security and their role in Rozet will be analysed later in this chapter.

The mood in the library is described by staff members as mostly warm, welcoming, homely and convivial. Most people treat the library with respect and the furniture in the library also helps the homely vibe of the library. It is something the director of the library is proud of. The interior of the building is made to contribute to the homely vibe by making custom lighting, shelves and tables, and by thrifting old furniture like the chairs and seats. The seats and other places to read, study and play make the library a place to hang around in and make you spend more time inside than originally planned according to the architects (DeMunnik-DeJong-Steinhauser & Merk X, 2013).

The welcoming, open and homely mood in the library helps people come to the library, stay there but also to treat the library with more respect. As described in the theoretical framework lightning and furniture contribute to natural surveillance in libraries. Rozet and its furniture is a great example of this phenomenon. The high natural surveillance helps contribute to a feeling of safety in libraries and makes the homely mood that almost all staff describe during the interviews.

5.2.2 Staff

Rozet of course has a lot of staff that keeps the place running, up to date and clean. The staff in the library consist of front office staff and back office staff. People that do back of house often also work some hours in the front office. The front office staff are people that can be seen working on the floors of Rozet. Cleaners, Management, Maintenance, Security, Reception, general staff and volunteers. Most of the general front office staff and volunteer works between 12 in the afternoon and 12 in the afternoon. During these times they are found on the floor of the library to help people. Before 12 and after 5 in the afternoon the library is self-service and people can walk around but there is no staff available to help them. The staffing hours were recently cut due to budgetary reasons in the library. Between 5 in the afternoon and 8 at night there are volunteers working in the library restocking the shelves. They are not however authorised to help people with stuff like memberships.

Most staff is next to general floor staff also working in different departments. What these different task are, is up to the staff. Some of the staff organise different workshops for kids and youth, other staff like to help in the digital department and other staff work in the back office developing the digital environment of the library. So even though the visible working hours of staff are between 12 and 5 they make themselves busy with multiple different projects in the library that also need to be done to make the library accessible, viable and attract new people to the library. Some staff also push for better regulations in the library. This will be discussed in chapter 5.3

Maintenance and Security are also a big part of Rozet. They can be found at their desk and function as the access control of the building. After multiple incidents in Rozet and news rising over disturbances and unsafe situations in libraries the municipality of Arnhem decided there should be more security in the library. The security helps to keep the library safe by screening people at the door and dealing with disturbances in the library. Before security this was the role of maintenance. Maintenance was not trained to do so however but were there to maintain the building. Nowadays a security company is hired to function as access control during the daytime. At nighttime a different security guard has a permanent function in Rozet and sits there every night.

Some people are opposed of the hired security guards for multiple reasons. Some staff say they are not needed. They feel like disturbances are a rare occasion and can be handled by maintenance and police if needed. Other people think the security guards that are there during the day do not have a connection with Rozet. Because the security guards are from an external company they are rotated in and for that reason they have no sense of ownership of the building. They do not know Rozet and do not know the way things work in Rozet according to staff. Other staff say it is good the guards are there to deal with disturbances and it makes them feel safer. The staff that are opposed also say they understand the viewpoint that there is need for access control and the feeling of safety that is created by having security in the building.

5.3 House Rules in Rozet

The visitors of Rozet are mostly described as respectful and calm. Different people come to the library for all sorts of different reasons. Some come to read, some come to study, some come for digital help. Others come for the art and heritage and some people come for the classes workshops and lessons. Some people come simply just to socialize. Rozet is not just a library. It is a multicultural house as some staff members describe it. Just like other libraries Rozet has changed through the years. Some people forget that Rozet is more than a library and think it is just a place to read and be quiet they will stand at the top of the stairs and scream at people to be quiet. “that (it being quiet) is the stigma of a library but it changed years ago” says one of the staff members.

To keep people calm and respectful in Rozet and to ensure the safety of everyone inside , the organisation has rules people need to abide. These rules are part of the place management and interventions in libraries. The rules are there to cement expectations of people and give them a perspective on what they can and cannot do inside Rozet. These rules are, according to staff, listened to by most people. Rozet however is a public building and there will always be rule breakers who cause disturbances in libraries even though most rule breakers are not always aware they are breaking the rules.

When interviewing staff and observing Rozet multiple issues regarding the house rules came to light. But to further describe the issues Rozet has with house rules. How often they are broken or overlooked and what the role of staff and security is in making people abide the rules , it firsts needs to be clear what the house rules are. These rules are from the website of Rozet and translated from Dutch to English:

- “
1. Rozet is the “living room of the city,” where everyone feels safe and comfortable. Therefore, keep it clean and throw your garbage in the appropriate bins.
 2. Smoking and the use or possession of alcohol, drugs or prohibited substances are not permitted in Rozet in any form. Visitors under the influence of alcohol or narcotics may be denied access.
 3. Disturbance in the form of noise, offensive behaviour or language is unwanted. Any form of (sexual) harassment, racism, discrimination, aggression and violence will not be tolerated.
 4. Treat the building and everything in it with care and respect.
 5. In Rozet, you'll find plenty of art and books to dream away at, but sleepers will be awakened.
 6. In the event of theft or other conduct giving cause to do so, we will report it to the police.
 7. Rozet is not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged property. So please keep an eye on your own belongings. You can use the lockers on the first floor.
 8. For children, a visit to Rozet is a celebration. Of course, as a parent/guardian, you always remain responsible for your child.
 9. Assistance dogs/ guide dogs are welcome, other (domestic) animals are not. (the signs posted in Rozet are outdated and state dogs are welcome in Momento, the old restaurant)
 10. Eating in public areas is allowed on a limited basis. Hot food, fast food or food preparation is not allowed.

If the house rules are violated, employees/security personnel are authorized to speak to the responsible person about this and, if necessary, to deny access and, if repeated, to impose a restraining order for a certain period of time. They may also inspect bags.” (Rozet, n.d.)

These are the rules from the websites but they are also posted with signs inside of Rozet. They are posted at the entrance and can be found on little signs placed over the study places inside the library. This way they cannot be missed was the idea. The staff that was interviewed disagrees however. They find the signs to be too small and too little posted over the library. They wish for bigger posters with rules posted over the library so that they can be found more easily without having to look for the little plastic signs in the library its study spots.

This is only one of the small grievances the staff has uttered regarding the house rules in Rozet. One of the bigger grievances staff have with the rules is the wording and the language. The house rules are often to ambiguously worded one of the staff members says. Because of the long sentences used throughout the rules, they are not easy to understand for non-native Dutch speakers. The pictograms that are paired with the house rules are also not always clear, which makes it hard for non-Dutch speakers to understand the rules. However, the biggest issue regarding the accessibility of the rules is that they are only posted in Dutch.

Staff say that people can scan QR-codes that are also posted on the signs together with the rules to translate the rules via their website. The scanning of a QR code is an extra step in itself which limits the accessibility of the rules but, during the conduct of this research it became clear that the translate button on the website of Rozet is broken. Which means the rules are only available in Dutch. This is an issue because a fair amount of people coming to Rozet do not speak the language and thus may be breaking some rules and causing disturbances without knowing it.

Another issue that comes with the current set of rules is that they are outdated. One of the signs in the Rozet states that dogs are welcome in the restaurant of Rozet, Memento. But this restaurant has been closed for over a year now and a new restaurant opens soon. Another rule showing the rules are outdated is rule number 7 which says that belongings can be stored in the lockers on the ground floor of Rozet. According to staff these lockers have been closed for some time now because people abused them. They left too much trash in these lockers and staff had to clean them out too often. Which is why they closed the lockers and they can no longer be used by visitors. These rules therefore need updating.

The last issue that staff mentioned regarding the rules is the ambiguous wording of some of the rules. Especially the last rule regarding eating. This rule states that eating is allowed but not all eating, Warm food, fast food or preparing food is not allowed. Interpretation of staff is "people can bring their own bread or some fruit from home to eat because when they spent all day in here they need to eat". In reality staff see people bring in all kinds of food. Staff members described some cases where they had to tell people to leave that they were having a picnic. The majority of people coming to the library to study spent a long time in there and the library is located right across the supermarket. Which makes it easy for people to get croissants, chips or other kinds of foods that leave a mess and they do not clean after themselves. During interviews staff describe a lot of mice living in the building because of all the food crumbs they can eat. The food people bring to the library does not break the rules however. So the staff cannot do much to stop them even though they would like to.

When asking what staff would change about the rules they say the spirit of the rules is not the problem. The rules are just worded wrong, not posted big enough throughout Rozet and not available in different languages. This makes it hard for staff and security to point the rules out to people. During the time of this research there was a workgroup created consisting of li-

library staff to tackle the issues that are mentioned in this research regarding the rules. By posting the rules more clearly in more languages and making the rules better comprehensible there is a better place management which means less disturbances which means a safer space inside Rozet.

5.4 protocols and staff training

To ensure a safe environment there are also protocols and staff training in place in Rozet. The protocols and training are in place to give staff something to hold on to when encountering situations that put safety in jeopardy. In an ideal situation staff know what to do when they have protocols and know how to follow them. The following paragraph explains what protocols are in place, what protocols are missing and what training is missing according to staff members.

When asking staff about protocols most of them were able to name some of the protocols that are in place but most of the answers came with some doubt as well. One of the staff members says: “protocols are maybe a maximum of one page”. Another staff member does not recall ever having to remember the protocols. The staff of Rozet know that there are protocols but they are not aware of all of them can lead to problems regarding their safety and other people their safety in the library.

Staff of the Rozet told that most of the protocols that are in place are dealing with disturbances. When dealing with disturbances staff should “assess the situation”. To maintain the safety of everyone involved staff need to make sure that it is safe for them to approach certain individuals. When people are breaking simple house rule: eating, sleeping or just being a little too loud at the slide for example, it is preferred by most staff to just approach the rule breaker and talk to them. According to the staff members “almost everybody listens to you if you ask people politely to stop”. So it is protocol for staff to approach these simple rulebreakers and ask them to stop when it is safe to do so.

However, It does not happen often but sometimes there is a disturbed or really angry visitor in Rozet who can behave irrational or confused. According to staff members this happens once every few weeks. These individual its behaviour is not easy to predict so staff need to keep a safe distance to them and call security. Security are the people who deal with the extreme disturbances because they are trained to do so and they also have the authority to deny people access to the building. So it is not allowed for staff to approach extreme disturbances in the Rozet according to the protocol.

It still happens that staff sometimes ignore the protocol which leads to management having to discuss the protocol again with staff members to make sure it is stuck to. However, usually done via internal email. This leads to staff not always reading or discussing the protocol that strictly. Some staff members also say they do not scare easily and they want to approach rule breakers themselves before calling security because according to them it is safe to do so. The protocol is a bit ambiguous in that viewpoint according to them and because management only shares the protocol via email they do not get a chance to discuss this ambiguity.

When needed to, staff can call security in multiple different ways. The main way to do so is by phone. All staff inside Rozet have a number that gives them direct contact with security or maintenance. This means however when security is needed in a tense situation staff members first need to reach for their phone and enter the number. This is not the quickest way to alert security members. An alternative way of calling security is through panic buttons that are installed underneath the staff counters in the library. When asking staff on the protocol of the

use of these buttons almost none of them could answer. One staff member talks about having to had use the button once a long time ago but in that instance the button did not work. Other staff members say they know of the existence of the emergency button but they would not be able to tell their exact locations or they do not know who the buttons calls. Whether that is security, maintenance or police.

In short, there are multiple ways to call security according to protocol but in practise both of them have their downsides. One staff member shared the idea to have staff work with earpieces to initiate direct contact with everyone in the library. When asked why they have not implemented this idea staff members said there is an issue with money most of the time. Another issue is the management that listens to ideas but simply does not implement them. One staff member says “there is a distance between staff and management and at some place in the chain of higher ups the ideas simply strand”. Management does try to listen to staff but ideas are not often implemented. This is further explained in chapter 5.5.

Protocols can also be in place to help prevent disturbances in the library. Staff say the preventable protocols are having to do with openness and being seen. According to protocol staff should be on the floor and should be visible. This is also part of the reason why the counters they use, which the staff complain about, is set up in the middle of the library. Staff is approachable and welcoming. “we need to be able to spot and approach people that have a question for us before they ask the question”. By being visible, approachable, and alert staff can help more people in the library and prevent disturbances.

To conclude, there are multiple protocols in place in Rozet. Mostly to ensure safety of staff and visitors. But there are also preventive protocols. If protocols are abided by is dependent on staff. Some staff members know a lot about the protocols while others know very little. Some of the protocols are also ambiguous enough for staff to decide for themselves if they want to approach rulebreakers or not which leads to staff doing things differently than other staff members. In short the protocols need some revisions, clarifications and expansions.

Staff training

Staff need to receive training as well to make the library a safer space. Staff need to be able to deal with disturbances. They do have protocols and house rules but when protocols say to “assess the situation and only approach people when it is safe” it is important for staff to also know how to approach people. Naturally, staff are trained in their job as librarians or hostess. This next chapter describes the training staff receives, the effects of these trainings and what trainings are missing and why staff want or do not want to receive certain training.

The training staff currently receive varies per staff member. The training staff receives varies from the onboarding process to yearly new training courses. The onboarding process is, of course, important to the functioning of Rozet and therefore mandatory to start working at Rozet. The yearly training staff receive appears to be less mandatory. During interviews staff members reveal that they have received different kinds of training or no training at all.

Yearly training staff receive varies. Almost all staff members share that they have received resiliency training. In this training they learned how to deal with difficult visitors of Rozet and how they ensure their own safety in risky situations. This means that Rozet want to make sure that staff know how to deal with disturbances. However, one other staff member tells that they did not attend this training and have not had the opportunity to attend a resiliency training in the meantime.

When asked if staff have received other trainings to deal with disturbances and safety concerns in Rozet, a few staff members tell they have received training on how to deal with people with dementia. This means staff inside Rozet also receive training for other kinds of disturbances that do not have to do with safety or disturbances. These kinds of training are more focussed on the social help side of the library.

Expanding on this topic staff was asked if they would like to receive other kinds of social services training to help with disturbed people, confused people or other kinds of help seeking visitors. Staff members were not open to this idea. "I think this is only a temporary solution for the systematic problem we are facing." one of the staff members explains. Members of staff do not want to receive any more training in this field. They think the solution for mental help of confounded people or even drug use and homelessness should not be training library staff but should be attacking the problem at its roots and opening more mental help centres to get people the help they need. Therefore this is a problem for the municipality of Arnhem and not the library staff.

When asked which training is missing according to staff members the answers did not vary that much. Staff felt satisfied by the amount of training they received and did not feel the need for any new training. However, almost every staff member interviewed indicated that they do feel a strong need for refresher courses. Mostly in the area of protocols and resiliency training. Staff are aware of the gaps in knowledge they have when it comes to protocols and after a while the knowledge they have fades away. This is why they feel the need for refresher training. These kinds of training can also help staff to be more consistent throughout Rozet and operate with the same knowledge as their colleagues.

Another big part of staff training is onboarding . The principle of teaching new staff the knowledge needed to perform the job of being a librarian. Staff tells the onboarding is sometimes the root of issues regarding protocols. During interviews it came to light that older staff know more about protocols than the newer staff members. The newer staff members do not know to locate the emergency buttons, what to do when certain disturbances occur and know less about the protocols in general. When it comes to library layout onboarding also leaves some things to be desired. "The open store concept the library operates in is not always taught properly which leads to discrepancies" a staff member explains.

In conclusion, Onboarding is different from staff member to staff member and is lacking when it comes to protocols. There is a noticeable difference between experienced staff members, who are working at the library for more than five years and newer staff members. This gap in knowledge is something that needs to be looked into by management to make sure that there are no issues when it comes to following protocols. In terms of other kinds of training staff were mostly satisfied with the contents of training but did wish for some refresher courses on the topic of protocols and resiliency training to

5.5 Management and Municipality

As mentioned in the theoretical framework one of the keys to keeping Rozet running as a safe library is place management. Place management is working on by multiple management bodies. From administration to the staff manager, they are all involved in updating protocols, upkeep of the library layout, organizing cultural significant activities and setting the strategic course of Rozet. Each year Rozet publishes a management report which highlights the progress

and the struggles of Rozet. This report also gives insight into the monetary issues Rozet copes with each year. In this chapter this document, together with insight from the staff, is used to explain certain choices in place management and safety in Rozet.

When it comes to place management, Rozet noticed an increase in issues regarding safety in the past years. This is made clear in their report:

“Durable measures to continue providing clean, preserved and safe Rozet locations are demanding more and more from the organization. Safety issues combined with the toughening of society also requires a lot from Rozet” (Rozet, 2024).

Management is aware of the issues Rozet is facing when it comes to safety in the library. They want to keep Rozet clean and preserved which relates to natural surveillance and territoriality. Management also wants to keep Rozet safe according to the management report this is done through hiring security guards and posting the small rule signs at all the seating areas in Rozet. Management, however, acknowledges that major safety issues in the library are still rising. This means the interventions currently in place are not working perfectly. Rozet is currently in talks with the municipality to come up with more sustainable solutions for the library.

As previously mentioned, staff often try to come up with ideas to improve safety in the library as well. This is often not picked up on by management. This can be explained by the monetary situation most libraries in the Netherlands are in at this moment. Because of inflation and less money available in grants for libraries it is harder for library to turn a profit. Rozet has cut working hours of staff, tries to rent out more rooms and is looking for multiple other different ways to cut costs. This means new ideas to improve safety and get rid of disturbances are also hard to implement. According to the management report Rozet struggles with the burden of current safety measures, hiring security for example, because of the costs they come with.

Not having the funds to implement new ideas and having to cut staff hours can be logical and can be explained to staff. This is however not always the case. When asking staff why management does not implement the ideas they come up with or does not deal with some of the concerns they voice staff answer that they do not know. Staff thinks that their voices strand somewhere up the chain of management and no one deals with them. This means there is a lack of communication between staff and management.

One of the volunteers that was interviewed tells they used to be a manager and they sometimes feel like the management lacks communication within Rozet. “Some staff members are not aware of things they should be aware”. This is also noticeable when talking about the protocols, when things are shared by management it is usually done via email and can easily be missed or not convey the message as well. Messages management convey sometimes lack clarity.

Another complaint staff lodges regarding management is that they simply do not get managed enough. “staff sometimes gets way to much freedom” says one of the staff members. Another staff members says “sometimes I want to do too much work, or it is not clear which tasks I should be prioritising”. Staff sometimes need more guidance in their work and need more clarity from their management in order to make place management more streamlined inside Rozet.

6. Conclusion

This chapter will answer the research question formulated at the beginning of this thesis: How do Dutch public libraries maintain their status as a public place and create a safe environment for everyone? This is done by first answering the sub-questions. These questions are answered by combining the literature on safety in public libraries and the findings of the case study in Rozet. The answering of the sub-questions help answering the main question of this research at the end of this chapter.

The first sub-question that needs to be answered is “what features characterize a Dutch public library?”. According to literature libraries are a social infrastructure. This is characterized by people being able to meet each other when they usually do not meet, encounters. Other literature from Ceccato et al (2022) suggested that a library its layout is also important. The building of Rozet is characterized by a lot of open space and windows that provide natural lighting. Open space was also kept in mind when furnishing the library, ‘the store concept’. To answer the first question: Dutch public libraries can be characterized as a homey peaceful space where people can feel safe to encounter each other. This is mainly due to the large open spaces, natural lighting and choice of furniture that the Dutch public library has.

The second sub-question is: ‘What do Dutch public libraries already do to accommodate everyone in the library?’. Literature suggests accommodating everyone inside a library has mostly to do with activity support. Activities inside a library can help people feel more at home and thus helps reduce safety issues and disturbances. Rozet offers a lot of activity support. However, some confounded, homeless or addicted people are offered no activity support and are often denied access of the public building when breaking the rules inside so not everyone is accommodated inside a Dutch public library but the majority of people are.

The third question ‘What are a Dutch public libraries safety interventions?’ Some of the interventions have already been answered in the first two sub-questions. Other safety interventions are mostly the rules a library enforces. However, protocols, staff training and access control are just as important. Rozet has 10 house rules they enforce with security guards, signs and library staff approaching simple rulebreakers. The protocols in place in Rozet are focused greatly on safety of the staff not of the visitors. The training staff have received are for their own safety. Dutch libraries have numerous safety interventions like rules and security to keep visitors and staff safe, but with protocols and training it is clear that some safety interventions prioritize staff over visitors.

This leads to the last sub-question: ‘What are the weaknesses and strengths in a libraries policy and what more can be done to accommodate everybody in the public libraries?’ This question can mostly be answered by looking at management and staff training in Rozet. literature suggests that poor management plays a key role in affecting visitors and staffs feeling of safety. In the case of Rozet there are more weaknesses than strengths in policies. Rules and protocols are described as too ambiguous. Results showed the protocols are also ineffective or are not being used by staff. So even though Rozet has a lot of rules, staff has had some training, and there are protocols in place which can be a strength. Almost all of these policies have weaknesses and need revisioning or refreshing with staff and visitors.

Now there is only one questions left to answer: How do Dutch public libraries maintain their status as a public place and create a safe environment for everyone? Dutch public libraries maintain a public place and create a safe environment by using environmental interventions, lots of different activities, clear rules, clear protocols and well trained staff. The common factor in all of these interventions is clarity and accessibility. By making the rules and activities clear and accessibly for all visitors you create a safe environment where less people cause disturbances or have to be kicked out of the library. Having well trained staff and security who have working and clear protocols to fall back on benefits the safety of libraries as well. In conclusion, Dutch public libraries maintain their public status and create a safe environment for everyone by using a multiple of different kinds of interventions. There are however still improvements to be made on all of these interventions inside libraries to get even more people to come to the library while maintaining a safe environment.

7. Discussion

This chapter will discuss and evaluate the results of this research. Where do the literature and empirical evidence overlap and where do they differ from each other? What were some of the unexpected results in this research? What are suggestions for further research? What practical solutions can be offered to the research problem of this thesis? And what are the strengths and weaknesses of these results? These are the questions that are answered in this final chapter.

The problem this research started out with was keeping libraries a public space while maintaining a safe environment for learning, making and socializing. This is what libraries are meant to do according to law. But also according to the library itself, staff and the visitors. The results of this study indicate that Rozet strives for a safe environment while wanting as many people to visit the library as possible. The case-study of Rozet also indicates that staff, just like a majority of visitors, want a respectful environment and lots of cultural activities inside the library.

7.1 Correlations between literature and empirical evidence

Empirical evidence gathered during the semi-structured interviews correlates closely with the literature from chapter 2. Especially the literature about environmental interventions from Ceccato et al. (2024) related closely to this research, Natural surveillance, activity support, access control and territoriality all related to the case study of Rozet. However some of these interventions spoke more to the vision of Rozet than others.

Natural surveillance and territoriality is something Rozet knows how to work with. Empirical evidence in the form of observations and semi-structured interviews suggested Rozet is well aware of what the physical design of a library should do to make people feel at home and create a sense of ownership. Almost all staff members described Rozet as a peaceful and homey place where they like to come and most visitors do as well. The building of Rozet is characterized by a lot of open space due to the 'open store concept' and many windows that provide lots of natural light. Literature advocates these kinds of spaces inside a library and it was good to see these suggestions work in practice in the Netherlands.

Another example of literature and practice overlapping were the warnings about poor management from Ceccato (2022) and Eck (2019). Poor management leads to few rules, lax rule enforcement and poor training. When it comes to safety inside Dutch public libraries empirical evidence showed staff were not fully trained on the correct protocols. Besides this, the rules and protocols are ambiguously formulated which made it hard for staff to intervene because they were unsure if rules were actually being broken and in what cases they should intervene in or call security. These factors are all leading away from a safe environment inside public libraries.

7.2 Unexpected differences between literature and empirical evidence

The most surprising difference between literature and practice was the difference in activity support described in literature and the way it happened in practice. According to literature activity support is the facilitation of events in a library that help prevent problematic behaviour. Although Rozet offers a lot of activity support in the form of cultural events or digital support there was no help for troubled people which are, according to staff, the cause for a lot of disturbances in a library. So not all problematic behaviour is prevented inside the library.

Because of the public status and recent reforms of the library, homeless, addicted or confounded people also find the library more often. They are just as welcome as anyone as long as they do not break any rules staff say. This vulnerable group of people usually uses the library for warmth, to sleep or to have roof over their heads. According to library staff these people are welcome but the help these people seek should not be found in libraries. Dutch government and municipality should do more for these people to make sure they can rehabilitate this in turn also helps libraries to be a safer space.

The library cannot help these people because of multiple reasons. When asking staff why they do not help confounded people they tell they do not have the training of education to do so. However, the deeper reason staff and management documents revealed was money. This has not been discussed much during the rest of this paper because of the relevance but the inflation and rising of housing cost are giving Rozet some monetary issues which makes it hard for Rozet to conjure bigger projects like hiring a social worker to deal with confounded people or train its own staff to do more social work. This is why Rozet lays this problem down at the municipality who should be responsible for protecting vulnerable people.

7.3 Practical solutions and suggestions for further research

As stated in the conclusion of this research a practical solution is that the protocols and rules inside a library should be clear and accessible and staff should be well trained. This is, however, more easily said than done. Further research is needed to suggest what rules and protocols need to be in Dutch public libraries. There is empirical evidence needed for Dutch public libraries to find out what rules and protocols positively affect a public library and what rules and protocols do not work.

Another practical solution mentioned above is the hiring of social workers. In theory social workers can help greatly relieve the stress of library workers by dealing with the confounded people inside the library and at the same time make sure these vulnerable people are not kicked out of the library by security but instead get help. Some libraries in bigger cities already have social workers in their service and it would be interesting to look into if their role works as is described or if there are difference in reality.

This research has limited itself to one library in the east of the Netherlands. The library is located in a bigger city which means the library itself is bigger and more visited. This means results of this research can generally be applied other big libraries. The libraries mentioned in the news sources of the introduction for example. But there are all different sorts of libraries inside the Netherlands. Libraries in smaller towns who do not have security, a lot of staff or management. It could be interesting to see how these libraries with more limited resources handle activity support, access control, territoriality and other safety interventions mentioned in this research.

7.4 Limitations

As stated before, this research is limited to only researching the case of one public library. This is because of time constraints and the fact this research is done by one person. The results of this research however can still be generalized to other libraries in the Netherlands or other places in the world. This is because Dutch public libraries all mostly operate in the same way thanks to the WSOB.

Another limitation of this research was the willingness of people to be interviewed. The staff and staff manager of Rozet were very willing, open and kind during the interviews and also thanks to them this research has been possible to complete. Their stories and experience helped greatly. Other people mentioned in this research were unfortunately less willing to be interviewed or simply did not have the time to be interviewed. This is of course always okay and their own choice but this has led to less variety of sources. This is luckily made up for by the years of experience and stories the interviewed staff members had to offer which made the results of this research valid nonetheless for the purpose of answering this research question.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 interview guide (Dutch)

Interview Guide Safety in Libraries

Allereerst wil ik je van harte bedanken voor het deelnemen aan dit interview. Het interview duurt ongeveer 30 minuten. De antwoorden die je geeft tijdens dit interview worden opgenomen en anoniem verwerkt. De enige die deze opname terug kunnen horen zijn ik en mijn begeleider. Mocht je tijdens of na dit interview bedenkingen hebben of niet meer mee willen doen aan dit onderzoek mag dit altijd dan wordt de opname zonder enige problemen verwijderd.

Als je benieuwd bent naar het eindresultaat kan ik aan het eind van mijn onderzoek de resultaten naar je opsturen. Ben je hier akkoord mee en/of heb je hier nog vragen over?

Intro

1. Hoelang bent u al werkzaam bij deze bibliotheek?

follow up:

Hoe vind u het werk hier?

Wat is uw favoriete bezigheid

Wat doet u minder graag tijdens uw dienst in de bibliotheek?

2. hoe zou je de algemene sfeer in rozet omschrijven?

follow up:

Hoe komt deze sfeer tot stand?

Gevoel van veiligheid

3 Heeft u zich wel eens onveilig of onprettig heeft gevoeld in de bibliotheek?

follow up:

Hoe kwam dit?

Wat deed dit met u?

Heeft u hierna stappen ondernomen om dit probleem op te lossen?

Zijn de leidinggevenden hiervan op de hoogte?

4. Zijn er momenten waar u zich juist wel veilig of prettig heeft gevoeld in de bibliotheek?

follow up:

Hoe kwam dit?

Wat deed dit met u?

Heeft u hierna stappen ondernomen om deze situatie te behouden?

Zijn de leidinggevende op de hoogte?

Protocollen en regelgeving

De bibliotheek heeft natuurlijk regels om iedereen zich zo prettig mogelijk te laten voelen

5. Merk jij dat deze regels wel of niet worden deze nageleefd?

Wiens taak is het om te controleren dat iedereen zich aan de regels houdt?

Zo nee, waarom niet?

Zo ja, waarom wel?

Welke regels zou je graag zelf willen toevoegen aan de bibliotheek?

6. Heeft de bibliotheek andere protocollen om de veiligheid te waarborgen in de bibliotheek die jullie als bibliothecaris leren?

follow up:

Zo ja, wat zijn deze protocollen

en worden deze uitgevoerd?

Zo nee, waarom niet?

Welke protocollen die je wel graag zou zijn?

Trainingen van medewerkers

7. wat doen jullie als bibliotheek medewerkers om zoveel mogelijk mensen zich gewenst te laten voelen in de bibliotheek?

follow up:

Welke feedback ontvangen jullie van bezoekers hierover?

Merken jullie een verschil tussen de bezoekers in de laatste jaren?

8. Wat doen jullie als bibliotheek medewerkers in het geval van ongewenste gasten in de bibliotheek?

follow up:

Wanneer is een gast ongewenst volgens jou?

Ondernemen jullie ook stappen om deze gasten wel welkom te laten voelen?

9. Zijn er specifieke training vanuit de bibliotheek om jullie voor te bereiden op bepaalde gasten of situaties.

follow up:

Zo ja, Hoe zit dit programma in elkaar?

Heeft dit programma jullie geholpen om een veiliger en open klimaat te creëren?

Zo nee, Zou u een meerwaarde zien in een extra training vanuit de bibliotheek?

Hoe zou zo'n training er volgens u uit moeten komen te zien?

Appendix 2: Observatie protocol

Waar: Rozet, Alle verdiepingen.

Wanneer: Een keer 's ochtends 's middags en 's avonds.

Hoelang: 15 minuten per verdieping

Waar moet er naar gekeken worden op elke verdieping:

1. Wie zijn er op de verdieping?
2. Wat doen ze op deze verdieping?
3. Zijn er vormen van overlast?
4. Wat doen de werknemers?
5. Wat doet de beveiliging?
6. Wat doen de vrijwilligers?
7. Hoe ziet de ruimte er uit?
8. Welke vormen van ruimtelijke interventies zijn er te zien?