

The future of inclusive city events: Facing many (dis)abilities

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Acknowledgements

Dear reader,

With the writing of this thesis coming to an end, this brings about the opportunity to reflect upon my learning process. Whilst I strongly believe that a learning process will not stop after obtaining a Master's degree, my learning process at the Radboud University will end.

During the years that I have studied at Radboud University I have learned a lot. I have learned many things regarding Human Geography, but I have learned so many more things about myself. I have learned that I want to be in a world where the mentality is to put people first, no matter who those people are. This is what also motivated me to end my education on this note, by writing a thesis that puts people first.

For this opportunity I want to thank my supervisor dr. Alana Osbourne, who was always ready to discuss both literature and feedback. Furthermore, I would like to thank my internship advisor Marianne Dijkshoorn for all the knowledge and good talks we had regarding persons with disabilities. I want to thank my family and my boyfriend Thomas for keeping up with me these last months of thesis writing and my friends Tim and Sebastiaan for advising me on thesis decisions.

During my final months of this study I overheard a lecturer say that Human Geography students often want to change the world, while this is more often not possible. Well, here I am, trying to change the world in my own way. At least, I am still going to attempt it. With this thesis I hope to contribute to creating more equality in the event industry. As I overheard during an awareness meeting concerning inclusivity within the event industry "You do not have to strive for a 100% inclusivity at this moment, but you can strive to improve every year." (overheard, June 4th 2024). This is what I hope to do with this thesis, not to improve the event industry 100%, but to help improve it at least a little bit.

With that being said, I hope you will enjoy reading my thesis. Stay curious and enjoy saving the world!

Anouk Hofstee

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to understand which steps can be undertaken in the process of becoming an inclusive event city to stop persons with disabilities from being marginalized in the event industry. Therefore the following question has been formulated: *How can the municipality and event planners in Nijmegen work together to improve the implementation of inclusivity and accessibility of persons with disabilities within their event-organising process?* To find an answer to this question, the municipality of Nijmegen was compared to the municipality of Rotterdam, a frontrunner in the inclusive event industry. National as well as regional policies were assessed and interviews have taken place with policymakers to understand the thought process behind the current inclusivity practices in Nijmegen. An event in Nijmegen, as well as an event in Rotterdam have been visited to see what inclusivity currently looks like in these municipalities. The main difference found between the two municipalities is the willingness of the municipality of Rotterdam. They have a more top-down approach and this seems to be carrying over in the entire event industry. The municipality of Nijmegen has a more wait-and-see approach. However, they are improving by creating more awareness. In the future, the municipality of Nijmegen could learn from the municipality of Rotterdam and be more hands-on. Furthermore, they could focus (more) on creating awareness, co-creation with the target audience, provide clear instructions and allocate more subsidies.

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1. From awareness to responsibility to taking action

I recently overheard a quote that went somewhere along the lines of “Persons with disabilities do not have special needs. However, sometimes they need a different path, or different facilities to meet those needs.” (personal communication, 4th June 2024). This quote applies perfectly to, for example, my brother who wants to go out as other children and enjoy the world just as much. Unfortunately, often it is not possible to visit city events together, or my brother will have access to different parts of the event than I do. Furthermore, his disability, makes it, unfortunately, also easier for people to treat him differently. Regrettably, me and my family are not the only ones facing this problem. This problem is the reality of a lot of people with disabilities, and this includes many people as 25% of most countries’ populations is less abled, either above 65 years old or has a disability (Darcy, 2012). All these people should be able to experience fun city-wide events and therefore, the problem they are facing is a cause for action (Dijkshoorn, 2023).

The writers of *The Care Manifesto*, Andreas Chatzidakis, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, Catherine Rottenberg, and Lynne Segal (2020), posit that a solution to many problems that contemporary society faces can be found in what they call ‘universal care’. It is a utopian concept. Chatzidakis et al. (2020) pose that the world would be a better place, if care was made available to all. This includes not only people within your own kinship, but rather the entire society. Care should be available for everyone, including those who are lacking a caring family and caring friends and those who are unable to afford it. Care comes in many shapes and forms and the lack thereof, or perhaps the ‘uncare’ as Gebauer et al. (2021) call it, is made especially apparent, when I, the writer of this research, want to visit events with my brother who has a physical disability.

Keeping the utopian approach of Chatzidakis et al. (2020) in mind, there is a lot to gain still in caring for persons with disabilities. In recent years, many developments have been made regarding the inclusivity of persons with disabilities in different areas, including city design and within governmental legislation. More and more event organisers join hands with disability experts in order to create more inclusive events (Marianne, personal communication, December 14th 2023; Duignan et al., 2023). On top of that, Rivas et al. (2021) discovered that multiple different policy strategies are implemented globally to support the inclusivity of persons with disabilities. However, even though there are improvements being made, Rivas et al. (2021) also acknowledge that there is still a lot to gain in creating equal design and event opportunities for persons with disabilities. Following the different policy strategies, one can conclude that there is indeed an increased awareness amongst policy makers as it comes to inclusions of persons with disabilities. However, as Rivas et al. (2021) also conclude, there are still improvements to be made when it comes to the actual implementation of inclusive practices in the city and in the event design industry.

The importance of implementation in society is also seen by Ross et al. (2023). According to Ross et al. (2023) it is an absolute necessity for city planners to understand the way in which persons with disabilities have been overlooked in city planning processes and that these processes therefore have been normalized to be targeted towards abled-bodied people. Furthermore, he argues that diverse disability perspectives ought to be understood by planners, as well as the many possibilities that they can create in order to improve the

experiences of people with disabilities. If a city is designed adequately, this can help the inclusivity of events based in the city.

On top of changes in policymaking and event organising, the scientific field has also taken a renewed interest in disability studies in recent years. Ever since the plea of the United Nations at their Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2006, for more equality in all experiences of life for people with disabilities, it has been argued that research targeted towards access and inclusivity for people with disabilities should be added more frequently to the research agenda of those who research the event industry (Darcy, 2012). Indeed, after the convention more research regarding inclusivity and accessibility has been conducted.

Existing research combined with renewed interest of policymakers in changing policies regarding inclusivity and accessibility of events (Rivas, et al., 2021; Darcy, 2012), shows that there is an increase in awareness amongst the scientific community as well as the event industry as it comes to the importance of including persons with all different kinds of disabilities (Causin & McCarthy, 2017; Doshi et al., 2014; Darcy, 2012; Darcy, 2001). However, awareness is not the sole solution. *Care* is not restricted to thinking about inclusion, *care* is also about what people do and can be seen in social praxis (Gebauer et al., 2021). It can be seen as labour, as an act that civilians undertake for one another. It can be seen at the entrance of festivals where all visitors are being greeted and treated to an equal experience. To acquire this, action needs to be undertaken to show persons with disabilities that the society cares (Gebauer et al., 2021; Rivas et al., 2021).

This leaves the question of who *is* responsible for future-proof changes within the event industry when it comes to larger city events on the table (Figure 1). On top of that, the question of who *feels* responsible is also an urgent question. Awareness is one thing, implementing inclusivity and accessibility is a completely different thing.

Undoubtedly, after finding the responsible party, it is time to start implementing the care of persons with disabilities in the event industry. It has been almost 20 years since the UN treaty Handicap was signed in New York, stating how the rights of persons with disabilities all over the world, and thus also in the Netherlands should be improved (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2023). Unfortunately, often when visiting events they are not yet inclusive and accessible for all. The event industry must keep up with the global developments. Therefore, it is important to find out what should be done in order to implement and improve inclusive practices within the event industry. Enjoying all that life has to offer should be possible for all, let's make it possible for everyone to cross events off of their bucket lists, because after all, we all want the same thing, to carefree enjoy these events that bring us so much joy



Figure 1 Who do you think is responsible for his experience?

2. Research objective and research questions

As a result of the questions that still remain open in the city-event-industry, namely who *is* responsible for the implementation of accessibility and inclusivity for persons with disabilities during city events and regarding the question of who *feels* responsible for this implementation, as well as which steps need to be undertaken to actually see and experience a result, this research aims to explore where the municipality of Nijmegen is currently at and what can be improved regarding the implementation of inclusivity and accessibility of city-events for persons with disabilities. To get a better understanding of the current situation in Nijmegen this research focuses on a case study. The event that is researched takes place in Nijmegen and takes place during Kingsday (Cuijpers, 2024). The event can be seen as a family-friendly event. The event will be compared to an event in Rotterdam that does well in regards to inclusivity and accessibility. By focussing on these case-study examples, this provides the opportunity to dive deeper into the complex dynamics of responsibility and accountability of the implementation of inclusivity and accessibility of these specific city-events, and this, thus, suits the aim of this research.

Furthermore, the event sites that are being reviewed should be operationalized. The focus of this research will be on city events. Events that take place in the city, not on specially designed event sites, but moreover on sites that are also being used for daily city activities. Think hereby of parks and (market) squares and not of event sites that normally already require an entry fee, for example an event site within an amusement park or a theatre. The researched events are also free to attend.

As stated, the aim of this research, is to explore which steps can be undertaken in the process of becoming an inclusive event city. Eventually this will ensure that implementation takes place sooner rather than later. In line with the aim of this research, the following research question has been formulated:

How can the municipality and event planners in Nijmegen work together to improve the implementation of inclusivity and accessibility of persons with disabilities within their event-organising process?

To answer the main question of this research, the research will be split up into multiple sub-research questions that together create a multi-scalar approach. Via this multi-scalar approach different actors with different degrees of power can be analysed (Schiller, 2023), which is useful when determining who *is* responsible for the implementation of inclusivity measures and *according to whom*. Furthermore, these sub-questions will allow to dive deeper into the multi-faced aspects of creating an inclusive industry and provide the opportunity to look at the present as well as shine a light on the future of the event industry in Nijmegen. The sub-questions that are generated in line with this approach, include the following questions:

- What conclusions about accountability of inclusivity can be drawn from policy and legislation on both a national as well as a regional level?
- How do event planners consider the implementation of inclusivity and accessibility of city-events for persons with disabilities in their event-organising process?

- What lessons can be learned from current event organisation processes regarding the implementation of inclusivity and accessibility practices?
- What can be improved in the near future regarding municipal structures and event organisational aspects in regards to inclusive and accessible event planning?

What conclusions about accountability of inclusivity can be drawn from national policy and legislation?

This sub-question will provide a clear insight into current policy practices and nation-wide, Dutch, governmental legislation regarding inclusivity practices for persons with disabilities. On top of that, this sub-question will also focus on the meso-level of inclusivity practices, namely on the regional policy level. In case of this research, the regional policy that will be focussed upon will be Nijmegen in the province of Gelderland. In order to understand policies from local governments and current practices, it is deemed important to understand the macro-level of inclusivity practices, therefore this will be reviewed first and the meso-level will be reviewed second. While reviewing the policies, a distinction is made between visible and invisible disabilities and physical and mental disabilities.

On top of that, reviewing policies and legislations is needed to make it possible to understand how current inclusivity practices look like and who is responsible for these practices. It is important to understand what local policies have included about event inclusivity for persons with disabilities. These policies mainly include event-policies of municipalities.

What conclusions about accountability of inclusivity can be drawn from regional policy and legislation?

This sub-question will mainly focus on the meso-level of inclusivity practices, namely on a regional policy level. In the case of this research, the regional policy that will be focussed upon will be Nijmegen in the province of Gelderland. The inclusivity practices of this municipality and province will also be reviewed on the inclusion of different types of disabilities as visible and invisible disabilities, physical and mental disabilities. It is important to review the legislation and policies on different types of disabilities for multiple reasons, including that due to some disabilities being more visible or more known, they might be taken into account more in policy making. However, in order to create true inclusivity it is important to evaluate whether or not all types of disabilities are being included in policy and legislation. Furthermore, different types of disabilities can need different adjustments to achieve inclusivity, it is important that these are taken into account as well and therefore policy should be evaluated on these aspects as well.

On top of that, reviewing policies and legislations is needed to make it possible to understand how current inclusivity practices look like and who is responsible for these practices, it is important to understand what local policies have included about event inclusivity for persons with disabilities. These policies mainly include event-policies of municipalities.

How do event planners consider the implementation of inclusivity and accessibility of city-events for persons with disabilities in their event-organising process?

In this sub-question the focus of possible accountable parties for implementation will shift from local governments to the event industry itself. To put it differently, the shift focusses from governmental legislation to practices to external non-governmental event organisers. The sub-question will highlight current inclusivity practices and future plans of further implementing such practices. A distinction is made between visible and invisible disabilities, physical and mental disabilities.

What lessons can be learned from current event organisation processes regarding the implementation of inclusivity and accessibility practices?

This sub-question will focus on not which party should be responsible for implementing inclusivity practices, it rather focuses on what the current inclusivity practices are during city events in Nijmegen. It aims to explore what parties are acting on inclusivity and what is still missing in Nijmegen in regards to inclusive events.

What can be improved in the near future regarding municipal structures and event organisational aspects in regards to inclusive and accessible event planning?

This sub-question focuses on the future of inclusivity practices in the city-event-industry and what is needed to improve these inclusivity practices. The themes responsibility, accountability, awareness and decisiveness will be largely present in the answer to this sub-question, but, on top of that, the practicalities of actually implementing inclusivity into the event industry has a big role within this sub-question as well

3. Relevance

To gain a better understanding of the relevance of the answer to the research question of this thesis, it is important to consider both the societal as well as the scientific relevance of this this research topic. Therefore, both the societal relevance and the scientific relevance are elaborated upon in this chapter. First, the societal relevance will be discussed and after the scientific relevance will be considered as well.

3.1. Societal relevance

An important feature of this research is the direct impact that this research aims to accomplish within the event experience of persons with disabilities. The main objective of this research is to explore what the event industry currently looks like when it comes to inclusivity practices and what can be improved in the near future.

As Chatzidakis et al. (2020) wrote in their CARE manifesto, a book full of guidelines for caring for people around us, it is important to care for everyone. This includes people that are have fewer friends or next of kin and people who have a harder time caring for themselves, due to financial or practical reasons. Persons with disabilities can be seen as a group of people that has a harder time in receiving care and advocating their own rights (Mitchell & Snyder, 2020). Having a disability often means exclusion from daily activities and leisure activities, but also exclusion from different parts of the city which is not in line with creating spatial justice (Jian et al., 2021). When rights for persons with disabilities are advocated better and equality is established, less pain from being a 'minority group' will be caused (Siebers, 2013), which is very important if we are to create a society that cares for everyone.

According to Ross et al. (2023), it is an absolute necessity for planners to understand the way in which disabilities have been overlooked in city planning processes and that these processes, therefore, have been normalized to be targeted towards abled-bodied people. Furthermore, he argues that diverse disability perspectives should be understood by planners as well as the many possibilities that they can create in order to improve the experiences of people with disabilities. In addition to that, Gleeson (2001) also speaks of making cities more hospitable. He argues that there is more and more movements rising that plead 'bottom-up' for changes in city policy. These disability-oriented movements are important agents to bring about change, since a lot cities are still often built on power relations in which the abled-bodied people have a head start on policy making in comparison to disabled people. In line with Siebers (2013), this means that in power relations there is still room for improvement as it comes to equality. Persons with disabilities are often still in the 'minority group'. If these power structures can be changed from able-bodied focused into a more inclusive focus, both in city council as well as in practical city design, these changes can eventually translate into better city-event-design inclusivity wise.

Exemplifying this, in 2023, Duignan et al. studied the differences between event planning for people with disabilities during the Olympic games in Tokyo 2022 and non-inclusive city planning practices. They argue that in previous planning strategies, the planning of the infrastructure came first, and the thinking of whom is going to use the place, came second. They plea for a user- or people-first approach in city planning- and event designing. If this would be implemented during policy development in Nijmegen, this would

force the municipality to also think about minority groups that are using the space first, before creating new city design. This will benefit persons with disabilities in overall city design and eventually in city-event-design as well.

On top of this plea, Duignan et al. (2023) also believe that mega-events could serve as an example for other events or host destinations. Mega-events have a bigger impact on the experience of life for people with disabilities than just experiencing that particular event in a more positive manner. As these mega-events are being experienced in a positive manner, other events or destinations can implement new inclusive measures and therefore, the mega-events can serve as an example of improved inclusivity in event design for people with disabilities. If municipalities are responsible for these larger events, they should understand that they have a large role to play in the life experiences of people with disabilities. Vice versa for event planners. Due to the positive impact that these events have on the mental wellbeing of people with disabilities, it is crucial to find the rightful party (or parties) to hold responsible for big city-event design processes as keeping these parties accountable could positively benefit the overall life experience of persons with disabilities.

Improving accessibility of city-events can only be done when those who can be held accountable for the implementation of inclusivity practices for persons with disabilities are identified. This objective can be directly translated into societal relevance, due to the need for action and actual implementation of inclusivity practices rather than solely the awareness of the need for such practices (Dijkshoorn, 2023). Furthermore, this implementation can add positively to a caring society. A caring society, namely, is one that acts upon caring, one where caring is seen in societal practices and one where care is seen in the spatial praxis (Gebauer et al., 2021). If the municipality is to be held accountable, they can be held accountable by the disability-oriented interest groups that Gleeson (2001) talked about. If it is the event organisers, the municipality of Nijmegen can write their policies in a way that makes sure these event organisers are being held accountable. After these structures are in place, the municipality of Nijmegen can move forward into being a more caring municipality that acts upon the wellbeing of their residents. Thus, moving forward, the knowledge of in how inclusivity should be established will benefit the community of persons with disabilities in Nijmegen to eventually be able to enjoy more city events.

In short, this research aims to positively contribute to society by helping to improve the implementation of inclusivity and accessibility practices within the event industry and to figure out who is responsible for the inclusivity of city events. Gaining a better understanding of who can be held accountable for inclusivity in city events will eventually help society moving forward as holding a party accountable will create better results for inclusive and accessible events. Governmental bodies as well as event organisers and the general public can hold each other accountable relating to creating inclusivity, with as main goal, the increase of this inclusivity. Lastly, improving inclusivity in the event industry will contribute to the society by actually creating the difference and showing what care looks like as a social praxis. This will benefit the community of persons with disabilities by being less marginalized.

3.2. Scientific relevance

Within this research, scientific relevance is considered to be of utmost importance as well. By This research, namely, in addition to the societal relevance, aims to add to the science by engaging and bridging debates in the fields leisure geography and to the geographies of care.

This research aims to add to this scientific field of geographies of care, by finding out who *is* responsible for making events inclusive. By having a responsible party, it will be possible to advocate the rights of persons with disabilities and hold the right party or parties accountable. Furthermore, it is important to add to literature ways in which it is possible to advocate rights for persons with disabilities better, as this will create more clarity and can be helpful into understanding how to be a more caring society.

To elaborate on the importance of adding research to the field of geographies of care, Ross et al. (2023), found that within planning processes, disabilities are under-theorized. This problem needs to be solved in order to reduce ableism in the daily street view. Ross et al. (2023) make the importance of theorization of disability inclusion within planning processes apparent. They argue for more research regarding persons with disabilities in everyday activities and within planning processes in order to be able to create designs that are feasible for everyone. On top of that, Jian et al. (2021) explain that creating a more inclusive city for people that experience 'health' in different forms, and therefore also disabilities, should become more important on the research agenda. Disabilities are complex and nuanced, however, as long as there is not enough research about it, there is no way to even have a good baseline or generic starting point of how to adjust (event) planning processes in a way that would actually benefit a lot of people with disabilities.

In addition to this, several authors have raised awareness about the need for inclusivity in both city design and event design (Duignan et al., 2023; Ross et al. 2023; Doshi et al., 2014; Darcy, 2012; Darcy, 2001, Gleeson, 2001). However, apart from the awareness, action also needs to be undertaken and if action is about to be undertaken to create more inclusive city events, it is important to have a scientific foundation of pointing towards the responsible party as well as to know what action can be undertaken (Marianne, personal communication, December 14, 2023).

This research will be contribute to literature within the geographies of care by focusing on the public urban space as this research aims to create a scientific foundation regarding responsibility and first steps within creating an inclusive event industry. In this scientific field, this research will add to the debate of social responsibility within the geographies of disabilities, advocating for people who are less advocated for, and it will add to the debate of spatial justice.

The debate of spatial justice, is about using space as means to justify (in)equality. A key thinker in this debate is Edward Soja. He writes about spatial and social factors, among other factors, simultaneously influencing each other (Huddleston, 2017). This means that social factors influence spaces and that spaces influence social relations.

Regarding disabilities in the debate of spatial justice, Wiesel and Van Holstein (2020) explain the feeling of being excluded as a possibility of contributing to a larger problem. They pose that since the 1990s, disability is often being considered as a shared form of oppression rather than a personal 'misfortune'. This idea was critiqued by more relational thinkers explaining that diversity amongst persons with disabilities should not be forgotten.

However, it does imply a way of thinking in which disabilities are not solely seen as a medical 'problem' but moreover as a shared feeling of mistreatment. This mistreatment can come about in different situations as Dorn and Keirns (2010) explain.. Dorn and Keirns (2010) explain that stereotypes of disabilities are used to justify unfair treatment. In their research they link it to immigration and employment regulations (p.2).

However, being or feeling excluded from an event as a form of social exclusion can also be part of this problem of spatial injustice. Therefore, this research regarding event accessibility for persons with disabilities will also add to the debate of spatial justice. It will showcase the levels in which events influence the experiences of persons with disabilities and also, how these events are designed to include or exclude persons with disabilities. This will help drive the debate towards more inclusive spatial practices in leisure spaces and events.

In addition to the geographies of care, this research also adds insights to the field of leisure geography as this research aims to, eventually, expand the number of possibilities in which people with disabilities have access to as it comes to finding pleasure in their leisure time. Events can have a great impact on the direct environment around the event space, but also on the people that work at the event space or visit the event space (Hall & Page, 2020). They can create positive experiences and generate hope, but as Waitt (2008) found within his research regarding urban festivals, events can also create helplessness when certain groups of people – in case of his research, members of the LHBTIQ+-community – feel unwelcome by the event. This research aims to add to this field of leisure geography by taking into account another group that might not have the experience or might even feel unwelcome in the event industry, namely persons with disabilities.

Levels of social inclusion in leisure are not yet where they should be as leisure is often targeted towards financially stable, independent mobile and physically able people. This calls for more engagement between leisure geography and disability studies to reach higher levels of social inclusion so that persons with disabilities have more options in finding pleasure in the future (Aitchison, 2009). This research aims to do exactly that.

Pleas for more inclusive research are also made within the event industry, an important subcategory of leisure geography. In 2006, the United Nations organised a Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In this convention, the United Nations have plead for equality in all experiences of life for people with disabilities. Therefore, this also includes events and is thus also targeted at the event industry. Darcy (2012) argues that research targeted towards access and inclusivity for people with disability should be added more frequently to the research agenda of those who research the event industry. The event industry can learn from other industries that already have enhanced their inclusive practices. Darcy (2012) calls for the event industry and academics to work closely together to solve the issue of disability discrimination within the event industry, therefore he pleas for more scientific research regarding the topic as well as a better implementation of the found results.

Overall, there is a calling for more research in the city event industry as it comes to inclusivity. While there is existing research bringing about awareness regarding marginalization, there is still a research gap in finding out who *is* responsible for this awareness and who is responsible for taking action. There is already research regarding geographies of care, however disabilities are still under-theorized. Many researchers have taken events as their special interests, however the experience of persons with disabilities

during events are yet not enough researched. The results of this research aim to add to the debates of spatial justice and social responsibility within geographies of care by focussing on responsibility, which has been under-theorized, and aims to bring about positive change in the social inclusion of a specific group, persons with disabilities, that deserve more attention in leisure studies.

4. Literature review & conceptual framework

This section showcases the theoretical framework where this research is based upon. Since the research is about the implementation of inclusivity and accessibility of persons with disabilities within event-organising processes, firstly, the definition of 'inclusivity' of persons with disabilities and what it means for this research specifically will be explained. This will help shape the concept of what the 'inclusivity' is that is being talked about. Secondly, politics of the public space will be discussed. The events that are being researched in this thesis are events that take place in public space. As public space can have different owners, it is important to consider the ownership of the public space on which the event takes place and which role ownership can play in the process of becoming more inclusive and accessible. Thirdly, motivators behind creating more inclusive events are laid out to help understand the current situation of event inclusivity and to understand what could be possible incentives to improve the future of inclusivity within the event industry.

4.1. Inclusivity of persons with disabilities

Inclusivity is very important in creating a pleased society and to add to scientific field of the geography of care (Chatzidakis et al., 2020). A more inclusive city shows the social praxis of care as equal opportunities are provided within this inclusivity. Inclusivity is important as society takes on social responsibility in advocating the rights of persons with disabilities (Darcy, 2012), but also to create better social justice. In order to research inclusivity within the event industry, it is important to have a clear definition of what inclusivity entails (Rebernik et al. 2020). There are different definitions in existing literature regarding inclusivity and what this could look like in a practical sense. There is, among other things, social inclusivity, economical inclusivity and various other forms of inclusivity. Within this research the main focus lays on social inclusivity, in this case it means that people are not included due to their social status of having a disability. They are not excluded due to their lack of finances or due to other factors. They are excluded due to their disability and disability can be viewed as a social construct (Reeve, 2006).

According to Reeve, disabilities should be considered: "as a social construction rather than as individual tragedy" (Reeve, 2006, p. 107). Disability is only seen as a disability "in the eye of the beholder" (Söder, 1989, p. 119). The disabilities as we know it nowadays, are created by the values and beliefs of what society chooses to be normal. However, disabilities cannot and should not easily be labelled, as persons with disabilities are equally different from each other than other human beings (Ross et al., 2023). Disabilities are complex and diverse and more normal than one might think as 25% of the people in every population have a disability or are above the age of 65 (Darcy, 2012). Taking this idea of disability as a social construct in mind, explains how excluding persons with disabilities from events can be viewed as a form of social inclusivity. Changing the way the public thinks about disabilities, for example by normalizing them, can help shift towards a more inclusive environment.

To pursue inclusivity and accessibility in events, the United Nations convention on Disability in 2016 has determined a set of rights for people with disabilities in various policy areas including recreation and thus, event planning. The basic principles named in this accessibility, equality, effectiveness and independence (Dijkshoorn, 2023). These are the rights that should be taken into account in making leisure more socially inclusive and are, therefore, taken into account when assessing inclusivity in this research. Based on these rights

it is possible to test events on their level of inclusion. This, thus, helps shape the definition of inclusion in this research. An inclusive event should be accessible, it should create an equal experience, it should be effective and a person with a disability should feel independent while visiting the event.

In short, inclusivity in this research means social inclusivity. Therefore, disabilities should be seen as a social construction and inclusion can, thus, be achieved through society. The basic rights of persons with disabilities include accessibility, equality, effectiveness and independence and these factors should be taken into account when creating inclusive events (Dijkshoorn, 2023). These are the factors that will be important in this research and will be advocated by this researcher and everyone who feels the social responsibility to do so, in order to create a caring society. These factors should also be taken into account when thinking about future implementation of inclusivity and accessibility practices in the event industry.

4.2. Politics of the public space

As the research objective of this project, is public city-events, it is important to consider which party is in charge of the space that the events take place in. Spatial justice, can only be obtained when finding out who *is* responsible for the space and holding them responsible for making their space inclusive (Jian et al., 2021).

In their book, Staeheli and Mitchell (2007) contest the idea of public space, by reviewing different case studies and determining that public space can have a different atmosphere depending on the geographical setting of the space. They highlight that making claims on public space by protesters or by organising events or by visiting the place with (large) groups of people, is a vital part of making the public the owner of the public space. They phrase it as follows:

“As activists and organizers have long known, being present in public space --- making claims to and becoming visible in the streets, sidewalks, squares and parks of the city --- is a vital, necessary step in making claims on the public as part of the public.” (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2007, p. xiv)

Based on this quote, one can conclude that public space does not always belong to the public. This can also depend on the definition of the so-called “public”. If “public” refers to the users of the space, they are often not the owners of the space. Depending on the geographical setting space owned by the “public” is often a space that is owned by the government (Low & Smith, 2005).

However, seemingly public spaces can also be privately owned (Low & Smith, 2005). The main difference between these spaces and completely public spaces are not the way in which they are presented, they often look open to all. However, these places have a different legal status in comparison to completely public spaces (Button, 2003). Rights of these seemingly public spaces could, namely, also belong to private or commercial actors. Public actors such as the government often have less to say in such places and thus, rules regarding this public-private space can be made up by the private sector. Nowadays, there are many public-private hybrid spaces, or quasi-public spaces (Zavar & Schumann, 2019).

In conclusion, there are many definitions of public space as well as there are many degrees of how public a space is. If a space is seemingly public, however privately owned, than the rules can be made up by the private sector. If a place is completely public,

governmental policy applies as the government acts as the public actor. Therefore, many different actors can be held accountable when it comes to spatial justice and thus finding out which party might be responsible for implementing inclusivity and accessibility within the event industry might not be straightforward. The difficulty in determining to what degree a space is public, can thus, result in nobody taking responsibility over making events in that certain place inclusive for all people.

4.3. Inclusivity: why should you incorporate it?

Persons with disabilities are often excluded from leisure activities as these activities are more targeted towards abled-bodied people. This is due to persons with disabilities being overlooked in (event) planning processes for a long time (Ross et al. 2023). The exclusion of persons with disabilities in public space or moreover during events can cause the feeling of helplessness (Wiatt, 2008). Events can have a huge impact on the visitors (Hall & Page, 2020) both positively as well as negatively. To turn this impact into a positive impact, a more inclusive discourse is needed. This should create more leisure opportunities for persons with disabilities (Aitchison, 2009). To create this opportunities, it is important to understand what existing motivators are amongst leisure activity organisers to incorporate inclusivity in leisure activities, in the case of this research: in city events.

In her book “Make Your Event Accessible for Everyone” Dijkshoorn (2023) discusses the various motivations that event organisers can have to make their event more inclusive. The motivations that she names are an increase in visitors, goodwill, increasing safety and lastly, corporal social responsibility. The last motivator, is not only a motivator for event organisers, but is also a motivator to research events in order to add to the debate of geographies of care in which social responsibility is an important topic.

An increase in visitors is a practical motivator, persons with disabilities often do not come alone and groups are more likely to choose other events or venues when it is apparent that one of the group members is not welcome, does not have safe access, or does not have an equal experience on the premises. In addition to that, approximately 25% of most countries population has a disability or is above the age of 65 (Darcy, 2012). So this group is not negligible at all. Not including persons with disabilities, will therefore cause a decrease in revenue. This could, therefore, also be considered as an external motivator.

The next motivator, goodwill, is based on the passion and the socially responsive feeling of the event organiser. It is in line with the emotional inclusiveness that Rebernik et al. (2020) and Reeve (2006) discuss. It is an internal motivation. Furthermore, the motivator ‘increasing safety’, is important in a practical sense. In case of an emergency, it is best if everyone can get away as quickly and safely as possible. This can be a good motivator for event organisers to be more inclusive as well (Dijkshoorn, 2023), as it thinking about safety should force the event organiser to also consider exit strategies for persons with disabilities.

Lastly, Dijkshoorn (2023) discusses the need for inclusiveness following corporate social responsibility as this often entails social entrepreneurship goals with companies, being inclusive can be viewed as social entrepreneurship. In case of governmental organisers, social entrepreneurship will most likely be translated into governmental policy. Furthermore, being socially responsible is not only socially relevant, but also scientifically relevant. As social responsibility is currently at debate in the field of geographies of care. Advocating for persons who are less advocated for is an important part in creating a caring society and therefore a happier world (Chatzidakis et al., 2020)

All in all, there are four main practical considerations for inclusivity. These include influx of visitors and thus more economic revenue, goodwill, increasing safety and social responsibility. Inclusivity, thus, is practically important for society, but on top of that, motivators to make events more inclusive should also be researched more to add to existing debates in geographies of care and leisure to create more opportunities of pleasure for persons with disabilities. These motivators could be the driving force for event planners or the municipality to create awareness and implement new inclusivity strategies within the event industry.

Internal and external motivators for creating an inclusive event can cause an increase in visitors and therefore the increase in revenue. On top of that, the goodwill of the organisation, the increase in safety and the social responsibility that an organisation or policy maker might feel also play a part as motivators. On top of motivators institutions, legislation and policies also play a part in the creation of an inclusive event for persons with disabilities. The government can create policies (based on the motivators) for public space as well as direct rules for event organisation. Furthermore, specific rules of the privately owned space can also play a role in the reasoning for inclusivity in city events. These factors altogether can contribute to shaping the future of the inclusive event industry.

5. Methodology, methods, techniques and internship

The aim of this research is to explore what inclusivity practices in the event industry in Nijmegen currently look like and how the municipality can work together with event organisers in order to improve this implementation in the future. In light of this research aim, a multi-method qualitative approach is best suited for this research (Morgan, 2014). This has provided the opportunity to use different methods for different sub-questions of this research. To find an answer to the research questions of this research, research methods include case-studies, a literature review and interviewing methods. In the remainder of this chapter the chosen research methods will be elaborated upon.

5.1. Case-studies and comparative studies

In order to create a feasible research, the city chosen for this research is Nijmegen. In Nijmegen one event will be researched specifically. This event is Koningsdag Nijmegen, a family-friendly event that takes place on April 27th throughout the entire city of Nijmegen as a celebration of the Dutch king his birthday (Cuijpers, 2024).

To understand what can be improved in Nijmegen regarding inclusivity practices, another case-study will be explored. This is the city of Rotterdam, which is a frontrunner within the inclusivity scene in the Netherlands according to inclusivity expert Marianne Dijkshoorn (personal communication, Marianne, March 8th 2024). On top of that, the celebration of the Toto Final in Rotterdam is being researched as well as this is an big event in Rotterdam public space. It took place on April 22nd, 2024. The event is also visited to check the accessibility in person and to talk to persons with disabilities about their experience.

A case-study approach provides the opportunity to dive deeper into these specific cases and therefore gives a better inside of all the different factors, actors and relations that are present in the discussion of who *is* responsible for creating inclusive city-events and *what* can be improved. However, it must be taken into consideration, while reading this research, that any conclusions are based on these two case studies. Therefore, other case studies might generate different results and the results of this research might not be true for every city-event in the Netherlands.

5.2. Policy assessment – inclusivity as written

The first step of the research process is a literature review. The targeted literature for this literature review in the case of this research is mainly focused on policies and governmental legislation, both on the macro and meso level, considering national as well as regional (city) policies and governmental legislation. This multi-scalar approach provides the opportunity to closer examine the viewpoint of different actors with different levels of power (Schiller, 2023), as it comes to taking responsibility for creating inclusive city-events for persons with disabilities.

The data in this literature review, was collected online by websites that publish policies and governmental legislation. In case of missing policies and governmental legislation, the parties responsible for these policies and legislation will be contacted and informed about the research and research objectives and will be asked to provide the policies and procedures regarding inclusivity practices within their governmental field. The provision of external data has taken place in the form that was most beneficial for the providing party, either by sending the policy directly via email, which was the preferred method as it makes it easier for data comparison. However, if no such policies existed, a conversation about the topic with policy-makers also belonged to the possibilities.

The next step in the process of conducting this research, is an interim data analysis. The collected data has been analysed through comparative methods. However, the policies have first been analysed standing alone. Questions that have guided the data analysis process include:

- *Does this policy mention inclusivity practices?*
- *What does this policy have to say about inclusivity practices? What is the current status of inclusivity practices according to this policy?*
- *What does this policy mention about the responsibilities of inclusivity practices?*

After the policies had been individually analysed, a comparative study took place. During this comparative study, the focus laid on highlighting the differences and similarities between policies of different cities. On the other hand, when comparing the policies of the national government with the policies of regional governments, the focus laid on the level of implementation of the national policy, as well as focus points in regional policy that stood out by for example going beyond national policy.

As a researcher who does not have a physical disability it can be hard to grasp what it is exactly that persons with disabilities need as it comes to inclusiveness. Therefore, it has been helpful to consult with the internship organisation in deciding whether or not certain policies are 'sufficient' in the caring for persons with disabilities during city-events. However, it can still be possible that certain people with disabilities feel as if certain policies are 'insufficient'. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to understand everyone's point of view. Therefore, it has been attempted to review the policies according to the most well-rounded perspective as possible within the limitations of this research.

5.3. Interviews to dive deeper into the subject

Literature review and comparison are not the sole data collection and analysis methods of this research, on top of these methods another qualitative research method has been selected to benefit the outcome of this research, namely semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews offer the possibility to in depth cover the differences of the written policy to the daily practice of event planning processes. Furthermore, this interview method provides the opportunity to dive deeper into answers given by respondents by giving them more freedom in the course of the interview. On top of that, due to the structure not being a hundred percent set before the start of the interview, the interviews can be changed midway to reserve more time for certain answers and when a respondent has less to say about another topic, it is possible to cut a certain topic short (Adams, 2015).

These semi-structured interviews have taken place with mainly with policy makers as disability interest groups and persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, after reaching out to multiple event planners, the reactions were scarcely positive towards being interviewed. The

respondents of the interviews have been selectively chosen through online research as well as consultations with the internship organisation in order to find suitable policy makers and event organisers. The internship organisation has also been asked to provide contact persons in the field as they are experienced in the event organising industry and will have suitable contact persons.

The objective of the interviews is to gain an insight in the thoughts behind inclusivity-based policy making processes as well as inclusivity in practices. Furthermore, the respondents have been asked to share their thoughts and plans for the future of inclusivity practices in the city-event industry. The interviews have been conducted in Dutch, as this is the native language of the respondents and therefore the respondents were most likely to be most comfortable in speaking this language. This will lead to a safer space for respondents to express themselves and the expectation is that as a result of this, more information will be gained via Dutch interviews. The conclusions of the interviews will later be translated into English in order to suit this English research.

On top of the semi-structured interviews, informal conversations took place whenever the occasion arose. This happened on occasion, during an awareness meeting that was organised in Nijmegen, as well as during a National Congress for Events where many event planners as well as event advisors from municipalities came together to discuss all things regarding event organisation (Nationaal Congres Evenementen, 2023). Due to the spontaneity of some of the conversations, not all the names of all the interviewees or conversation partners are known.

An important note of critique on this method of collecting research data via fieldwork, is that it is difficult to create an accurate understanding of the perception of daily life by persons with disabilities. It is possible for policy makers as well as event planners to claim that they have taken into account the needs of the target audience of their policy, but as most policy makers and event planners, as well as the researcher of this research have not experienced (all) disabilities themselves, it can be difficult to obtain true knowledge of the perception of the events by persons with disabilities. Therefore, by interviewing solely policy makers and interest groups, it is hard to sketch a complete ethnographic picture of the problems within the field as well as the solutions (Jenkins, 1994). This has to be taken into account when handling the data and reading the conclusions of this research. One person with a (temporary) disability has been asked to further explore his feelings regarding Koningsdag Nijmegen as well as the experiences of persons with disabilities during the celebration of the Toto Cup Final were also investigated, which is an attempt to take the feelings with persons with disabilities also into account. It is an attempt to provide an insight on their experiences and will therefore provide the opportunity to create a more complete ethnographic picture of the problems and solutions of inclusivity practices within city event design. However, every person with a disability is different and has, as well as other human beings, different experiences from the persons before them (Ross et al., 2023). That is why, while reading this research, it must be taken into account that their conclusions regarding the current standings of inclusivity might not be the same experience as those of other people with different, or even similar, disabilities.

5.4. Welcome: accessibility & events

It is important to mention that this research has taken place under the guidance of an internship. The internship organisation that helped make this research possible is “Welkom: toegankelijkheid & evenementen” which translates to “Welcome: accessibility & events”. The organisation has a website “Geen Beperkingen Meer”. The organisation is founded by Marianne Dijkshoorn, who is also the author of the book “Make Your Event Accessible for Everyone” (Figure 2) . “Geen Beperkingen Meer” translates to “No More Restrictions” or “No More Disabilities”, since “beperkingen” is a Dutch homonym. The organisation works on inclusive event organisation (*English Information – Toegankelijkheid & Evenementen – Marianne Dijkshoorn, 2023*). The organisations offers a variety of options for those who are interested in event-inclusivity practices, the options include advice on accessibility, passability and exitability, guest lectures on accessibility as well as hospitality, training and practical solutions that can make a place or event more inclusive in an instant. Furthermore, the organisation provides an option on their website to report inaccessible events.



Figure 2 Make Your Event Accessible for Everyone (Dijkshoorn, 2023)

Welkom: toegankelijkheid & evenementen is an organisation focused on improving the event industry in terms of accessibility and inclusivity (*English Information – Toegankelijkheid & Evenementen – Marianne Dijkshoorn, 2023*) and therefore is directly in line with the research aim of this research, namely to understand who is responsible and who can be held accountable for inclusivity practices within the city-event-industry. The result of this research will help the internship organisation to better target their target audience in order to effectively change the current inclusivity practices within the city-event-industry. It will help confront those parties that are responsible for the inclusivity practices that are yet to be undertaken. In short, it will help to create the change that the founder of *Welkom: toegankelijkheid & evenementen* is looking for within the event industry.

All in all, there is a variety of research methods chosen to support this research. The aid of the internship organisation has helped with knowledge about the research topic as well as provided contact information of possible interview candidates. This has helped shape this research.

6. Inclusivity in Nijmegen now: The policy point of view

In order to understand the current situation in Nijmegen regarding how inclusivity and accessibility in public events are being handled, it is important to understand what factors play into account when creating the policy in Nijmegen. Therefore, in this chapter, different types of legislation and policies on different meta-levels will be discussed.

6.1. Ratification of UN treaty within the Netherlands

Starting off strong with the United Nations treaty Handicap, which was created in 2006 in New York, and had been installed in the Netherlands in 2016 (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2024). The goal of this treaty is to improve the position of persons with disabilities in society. All aspects of society that are important to these people should be improved, this includes the working environment, education, transportation, sports, cultural activities and leisure activities (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2023).

In order to ratify this UN-treaty in the Netherlands, the parliament installed a new law and changed another. The new law poses that there should be equal treatment on the grounds of disability or chronic illnesses (*wetten.nl – Regeling – Wet Gelijke Behandeling Op Grond van Handicap of Chronische Ziekte – BWBR0014915*, 2020). The Dutch government explains that it is mandatory to create accessibility for everybody and it is prohibited to treat people with disability differently. No distinction between persons with and without disabilities should be made, not directly – for example by not granting a person with disability access – and not indirectly – for example by not granting access to a person’s means of aidance, hereby can be thought of an assistance dog not being granted access to a building (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2023b). Furthermore, the parliament has adapted the Election law, posing that polling stations across the country should be accessible to all residents (Ministerie van Algemene zaken, 2023).

On top of changing laws, the cabinet installed a program called “Onbeperkt meedoen!” which translates into “Unlimited participation!” This program should make sure that there are fewer thresholds for persons with disabilities to participate in society (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2023).

6.2. Changing the constitution

Another way in which inclusivity has been taken into account in nationwide policymaking, is the fact that the constitution has recently been changed, at the beginning of 2023 (NOS, 2023) to benefit persons with disabilities. The change that has been made is that persons with disabilities are now being taken into account in – perhaps the most important article in the whole constitution, namely – article 1. The article now reads as follows:

“All persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in equal circumstances. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race or sex, disability, sexual orientation or on any other ground whatsoever shall not be permitted.” (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2023, p.5).

Prior to the change in the constitution, there was no mentioning of persons with disabilities in the constitution. It was an important change this, according to Boris van der Ham, who was a member of the Dutch House of Representatives and is currently the chairman of the Vereniging Gehandicaptenzorg Nederland (English: Association of Disabled Care in the Netherlands). People with disabilities have been forgotten in discussion of inclusivity and discrimination, because, often, the public does not have an idea of what such discrimination or inclusivity looks like. On top of that, there was a legal question of how to equally treat people with a mental or physical disability. According to Boris van der Ham, it is possible to ask the society to put in some extra effort to let persons with disabilities participate in society as well. Therefore, he decided to ask for that in 2010. This proposition was first taken into account by the government nine years later in 2019 (NOS, 2023). Thirteen years later after Van der Ham's proposition, the vast majority of the Senate voted in favour of the proposition to change the constitution (Vereniging Gehandicaptenzorg Nederland, 2023).

The change in the constitution implies that, from 2023 forward, persons with disabilities who feel discriminated against, can opt to file a lawsuit to the person or organisation they feel discriminated by. In the practical example of event organisation, when the event organisation does not take into account persons with disabilities or treat them unfair, the event organisation faces the possibility of being sued on grounds of article 1 in the constitution. While there are currently no rulings been made in court on the basis of this constitutional amendment, it certainly can change the landscape of inclusivity practices within the event industry (personal communication, Marianne, March 21st 2024).

All in all, there are a couple of nationwide legislation changes, including the ratification of the UN treaty in the Netherlands as well as the change in the constitution and a nationwide program that are meant to ensure equal treatment to persons with disabilities which could affect the event industry and policies of municipalities regarding event organisation in the public space. These changes furthermore can result in accountability on the basis of the law and could result in lawsuits when there is not adhered towards these changes in legislation.

6.3. Regional policy

Apart from understanding the nationwide policy, a meso-level analysis of regional policy in Nijmegen is conducted with the aim of understanding what is expected of the city and event makers when it comes to creating inclusive city-events. In order to understand what regional policies affect the event industry in Nijmegen, it is important to acknowledge that Nijmegen belongs to multiple 'regions' that have their own specific policies. Nijmegen is part of Provincie Gelderland, Veiligheidsregio Gelderland-Zuid and the municipality Gemeente Nijmegen.

6.3.1. Provincie Gelderland

Within the themes that Provincie Gelderland, which is the province in which Nijmegen is located, provides on its website, which are seemingly the most important theme to the province, inclusivity does not seem to have a high priority on the first glance. However, in an article published on the website, the province of Gelderland does imply that inclusivity is of importance to the province (*Werken Aan Een Inclusief Gelderland: Een Kijkje in De Keuken Bij De Provincie (Deel 1)*, n.d.). The province stresses the importance of involving the people

in the politics of the province. The greater the variety of people making decision about the province, the more diverse and inclusive the province will become. However, the province admits that there is still enough room for change. More talk about inclusivity is needed. They stress that change has to come, not only if it is easy, but also if it is difficult to bring about that change. It appears that the province is not yet enforcing inclusivity within the events that take place within the province and this thus probably will not affect the municipality of Nijmegen too much in regards to their inclusivity practices.

6.3.2. Veiligheidsregio Gelderland-Zuid

Nijmegen is also part of what is called a 'veiligheidsregio'. The Netherlands is divided into 25 'veiligheidsregio's', this can be translated to 'safety regions'. These safety regions are in charge of the safety in their region. This entails that a safety region has to work closely together with emergency services, civilians, companies and governments. On top of general safety, a safety region is also in charge of disaster and crises-management (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2023). The crises-managements is concerned with global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, but the safety region is also concerned with preventing crises, by, for example, making sure that events taking place in the safety region are organised safely. The Inspection of Justice and Safety supervises these safety regions.

Nijmegen is part of the safety region that is called Gelderland-Zuid. On the website of Veiligheidsregio Gelderland-Zuid, the safety region presents a policy plan regarding event safety. The policy plan has an appendix, regarding risk-analysis and an appendix regarding an event safety plan (De Laat, 2014). In the policy plan, words as "disability, "inclusivity" and "wheelchair-safety cannot be found. The policy plans speak more generally of creating a safe event for everyone involved or visiting the event. It does not propose specific measures that could be taken into account to create a safe event for persons with disabilities. It does not include advice on accessibility, passability and exitability for persons with disabilities, which are important themes when creating an equally inclusive event for persons with disabilities (Dijkshoorn, 2023) that is in line with the national legislation.

The risk-analysis that comes along with the policy plan asks the event organisers questions regarding the audience of the event. It asks questions such as "What type of visitors does the event get?" "What is the condition/health status of the visitors of the event?" "What is the status of the mental and emotional health of the visitors of this event?" (De Laat, 2014). In another part of the risk-analysis, questions about the accessibility of the space where the event take place are being asked. The answers to these questions could lead to a better understanding of what needs to be changed about an event regarding the inclusivity of every person that is wanting to attend the event.

However, some 'gaps' following this logic could be found as well. For example, how can an event organiser know which types of visitors are coming to their event, if persons with disabilities have not come to their event in years due to the lack of accessibility and inclusivity or due to no information about inclusivity being present on the event website? This increases the risk of persons with disabilities being forgotten in the crisis management of the coming editions of the event. The exception would be if persons with disabilities would report the event themselves to a reporting point for inaccessible events (*English Information – Toegankelijkheid & Evenementen – Marianne Dijkshoorn, 2023*) or to the event organisation itself, so that they make their selves known as part of the possible audience of the event. Furthermore, not naming persons with disabilities specifically in the risk-analysis might imply

to persons with disabilities that they are not important to take into account as, for example, cultural background *is* named specifically in the report (De Laat, 2014). Not naming persons with disabilities could, on top of that, also contribute to event organisers forgetting to take these groups of people into account.

In another document provided by the Veiligheidsregio Gelderland-Zuid, the safety region does name disabilities as a possible property of the audience (*Evenementen*, n.d.). It is named in a file meant for event organisers to analyse the risks of their event in a different manner. This can result in a more positive effect on the event organiser. As now the event organiser is obliged to think of safety risks for persons with disabilities which require well-thought solutions. As well as, this document could serve as a reminder for event organisers that persons with disabilities should be taken into account within the entirety of their event, not only the safety.

In short, the safety region provides a couple of documents regarding analysing safety risks of events. However, in these documents persons with disabilities are often not mentioned which could lead to forgetting this group of people while thinking of the organisational aspects of the event and does not provide clear guidance to organisers regarding inclusive safety practices. In one document, persons with disabilities are named, which could serve as a useful reminder to event organisers.

6.4. Gemeente Nijmegen

Outside of the regional policies, the municipality of Nijmegen has its own policies and initiatives as well. Among other things, there is a national guidance regarding event safety that directly impacts the mayor and therefore the municipality. Based on article 174 Gemeentewet, the mayor of the municipality in which the event takes place is charged with overseeing events that take place in the public space of that municipality. Article 174 paragraph 1 states the following:

“The mayor is responsible for supervising public meetings and entertainment as well as buildings and associated yards open to the public.” (De Laat, 2014, p.4)

This law puts the responsibility of the events, which are public meetings, in the hands of the mayor in service of the municipality. This could result in a couple of questions. If the mayor is charged with the responsibility of supervising all events that take place in the public space, does that imply that the mayor is also responsible for the safety of persons with disabilities? Does this imply that the mayor is also responsible for the inclusivity and accessibility of these events? Perhaps this implies that we can hold the municipality accountable for changing the event industry in the municipality to better cater towards the needs of persons with disabilities.

The municipality of Nijmegen is not only influenced by the macrolevel nationwide and regionwide policies, but is also influenced by organisations within the municipality itself. The municipality of Nijmegen names multiple programs on their website when it comes to inclusivity practices within the municipality.

6.4.1. JMG

The municipality of Nijmegen has installed an advisory committee that advises the board of directors of the municipality on youth, social care and disability policy. They give wanted and unwanted advice and speak on behalf of Nijmegen residents with a physical, mental or psychological disability (*JMG Nijmegen, 2024*). One of the topics that the advisory committee advises the municipality on, is on the evaluation of the progress of creating an inclusive public space in Nijmegen. Therefore, this committee could be of importance when creating inclusive events in public space, as not only the event can be made inclusive, but moreover the event site could be made inclusive as well. It is easier to host an inclusive event when the event site is already inclusive.

6.4.2. Zelfregiecentrum

Like many other municipalities, Nijmegen also has its own interest group. Similar to the JMG, they also give wanted and unwanted advice to the municipality and on top of that they concern themselves with policy as well as implementation (personal communication, Els, May 14th 2024). To give advice that benefits the target audience best, the Zelfregiecentrum works closely together with many volunteers who have a variety of disabilities themselves (*Zelfregiecentrum Nijmegen, 2024*). These volunteers can advise on different topics as housing, daily life, cultural events and public space. Furthermore, these volunteers can test public space and events in order to see whether or not it is inclusive. At the Zelfregiecentrum, they also organise tours in which it is possible to experience the city through the lense of a disability in order to understand the difficulties that a person with a disability may face on a daily basis.

6.4.3. 'Nijmegen van iedereen'

On their own initiative, the municipality aims to create a Nijmegen that belongs to everyone and offers access to everyone. They understand that nobody is the same, but strive to give everyone living in Nijmegen equal opportunities and equal treatment (*Nijmegen Van Iedereen, 2024*). According to their website, the municipality has created a special attention for people with a disability, members of the LHBTIQ+-community and for people with a migration background.

In order to make sure that Nijmegen belongs to everyone, the municipality has created a programme for action that is called 'Inclusion', This programme is installed to make sure that the municipality acts accordingly to the UN-treaty Handicap (*Nijmegen Van Iedereen, 2024*).

6.5. Status quo in Nijmegen

Over the years, different initiatives have been developed both on the national level as well as the regional level. There has been an important UN Treaty and a change in de Dutch constitution which have lead municipalities to sharpen their policy regarding inclusivity of people with disabilities. The municipality of Nijmegen is being influenced both top-down as well as bottom-up with local initiatives also being present. These influences coming from local interest groups as well as the municipality is interesting, as by interpreting the law it is possible to assume that the mayor of the municipality is already directly responsible for the

safety and wellbeing of all Nijmegen citizens. Is the need for interest groups implying that Nijmegen is not yet where it should be in regards to inclusivity measures? On the other hand, it is argued by Gleeson (2001) that bottom-up approaches could work to bring about change within power relations in municipalities with the result of planning less able-bodied focused. This could translate into more inclusive city-event-design.

All in all, on paper there are a couple of initiatives present in Nijmegen, which could imply that the inclusivity in Nijmegen is well taken care of. However, the policies that are in place, remain slightly vague, not yet stating very clearly what is to be expected from the municipality and from event organisers. It appears as if the recent changes in national policy, concerning the UN treaty as well as the change in the constitution, have not completely transferred into the municipal policies in Nijmegen. Having said this, it is important to understand whether or not the initiatives that currently are in place in Nijmegen, accomplish what they are meant and if they are in line with the nationwide policy of the installation of the UN treaty. Therefore, in the next chapter, chapter 7, it is assessed how the policy of Nijmegen looks like in practice for city events attended by persons with disabilities.

7. Inclusivity in Nijmegen now: The practical point of view

To further explore what inclusivity in the event industry in Nijmegen currently looks like, it is important to not only review the policy side, but also to check what is actually happening. This could differ from what is written down in the national and regional policy as reviewed in chapter 6. Therefore, in this chapter, the focus will be upon exploring what is happening regarding inclusivity in Nijmegen in practice.

7.1. Role of civil servants

There are a number of initiatives previously mentioned that could influence the landscape of inclusive events in the public space in Nijmegen. However, before organising such an event one has to apply for a permit directly from the municipality. It is important to understand what the current process is if you want to organise an event in Nijmegen, to understand what role inclusivity and accessibility at events play in these processes.

At this moment, when an event organisers knocks on the figurative door of the municipality, saying 'I want to organise an event', there is no direct link with any sort of inclusion of accessibility department. In other words, one can apply for a permit and get one without inclusion of accessibility practices coming into play. For every event location in Nijmegen, there is a location profile (*Stadspark De Goffert*, 2023). This states what the site looks like and states what is needed to host an event on those sites. It explains where electricity is, where big stages should be placed and also state what is to be expected of the event host in regards to accessibility. All of those location profiles ask for accessibility during events. However, what this means to the municipality of Nijmegen remains unclear so far, at least in formal wording.

Advice will be given, though, to those who seek it. Event organisers can ask the municipality of Nijmegen for advice regarding the process of making their event more inclusive. If this question is asked to the department that is in charge of the events, they will forward the question to colleagues that have more knowledge on the matter. The event coordinator will serve as an intermediary (personal communication, Pim, April 18th 2024). The event organiser, thus, is seen as the initiator in this situation.

When a question regarding inclusivity and accessibility is asked and the event organiser is linked up with the colleagues who know more on the matter of inclusivity, they attempt to link the event organiser with different organisations who are experts on inclusivity and accessibility (personal communication, Maartje, April 18th 2024). Another party comes into the play. There is not yet a manual created serving the purpose of helping event organisers with creating inclusivity. The municipality does, however, work together with the Cultuur Academy (*Cultuur Academy*, n.d.), an organisation that has created a manual, or rather a checklist, helping event organisers with creating inclusively (personal communication, Maartje, April 18th 2024).

On top of that, the municipality is also currently already working on creating inclusivity in the future. At an awareness meeting the department of wellbeing and inclusion as well as the department of culture announced that they are working on making various subsidies

available and introducing a new subsidy regulation (in person announcement, June 4th 2024). It will take at least a couple of months to install these new ideas and they still need to be approved by the council of aldermen. The new subsidies will be to support entrepreneurs and companies in adjusting their building or their website to cater to the needs of persons with disabilities. The subsidy regulation will be to ensure that the municipality can impose requirements on the accessibility of, for example, an event, as a condition for receiving a subsidy. In short, there are developments taking place within the municipality with regard to inclusivity.

All in all, there appears to be a shift going on in the municipality of Nijmegen in regards to creating a more inclusive city. When at first the municipality seemed to not have an active role in establishing inclusivity, as event organisers had to actively seek aidance from the municipality when wanting to create an inclusive event, the municipality is now more actively trying to help event organisers with financial support as well as practical guidance.

7.1.1. Awareness meeting

As previously mentioned, the municipality is catering towards more practical guidance. One way in which they are trying to establish this is by creating an awareness meeting. To help organise this awareness meeting the municipality has asked different organisations that have knowledge on both the cultural sector as well as on organising inclusively to help create the awareness meeting. One of those organisers is the Cultuur Academy,

Cultuur Academy has helped event organisers in Arnhem already, for example by helping to create accessible platforms with music and persons with disabilities. The municipality of Nijmegen has seen this as an example and has invited the Cultuur Academy to a meeting regarding inclusivity. If this seems to gain interest amongst event organisers, the municipality is considering working together. To this meeting, the Zelfregiecentrum Nijmegen has also been invited to attend (personal communication, Els, May 14th 2024; personal communication, Paul, April 18th 2024). The Zelfregiecentrum works closely with persons with disabilities (Zelfregiecentrum Nijmegen, 2024), who have also asked to give their opinions during the meeting.

The meeting took place on June 4th 2024 at the Vasim, which is an event site, in Nijmegen. During the awareness meeting multiple people with disabilities had the opportunity to share their experiences with the event industry in Nijmegen as well as to share what they like about events that take place elsewhere. They had the opportunity to explain what they need from event organisers. Furthermore, event organisers in Nijmegen got the opportunity to explain what they are already doing with regards to creating inclusive events and had the possibility to ask questions about what they could improve. During the afternoon, multiple examples of what inclusivity and accessibility might look like, were displayed. There was an audio descriptor who wrote down everything that was being said for people with auditive disabilities. Furthermore, there was a translator for persons with visual impairments that could translate what could be seen. He explained his function as “I lend my eyes to someone else for the day” (overheard, June 4th 2024). On top of that, there was someone present to take care of the Activities of daily living, for people who have a difficulty performing these actions by themselves. Event planners explained that they felt inspired by the different examples to start their path to inclusivity within their events or venue (personal communication, June 4th 2024).

During the second part of the meeting, there were also workshop tables with moderators that guided conversations between the municipality, event planners and persons with disabilities or experts by experience, which were meant to help stimulate knowledge

exchange. Event planners did highlight that this exchange of information was rather short and they would have liked some more practical tips or ideas of where to start their road to inclusivity (personal communication, June 4th 2024). The exchange of information was later concluded in some practical tips for event planners. However, the host explained that for more in depth tips and tricks, after the festival season in 2024, the Cultuur Academy and the Zelfregiecentrum will host consultation sessions for event planners to advise them on inclusive event planning.

All in all, the meeting had a variety of input to show event planners what inclusivity during events could look like. Many event planners left the meeting feeling inspired by it, however they also felt unsure of which steps to take next, except for visiting the consultation sessions hosted by the Cultuur Academy and the Zelfregiecentrum. There is still many things that could be arranged to ensure that the start, the implementation or the improvements of an inclusive event industry in Nijmegen goes smoothly.

7.2. Inclusivity during Koningsdag Nijmegen

It is now clear what the municipality has written down in their policy in regards to inclusivity, it is clear from their own words what they say they do and what they plan to do. Furthermore, it is important to take into consideration the practical side of inclusivity, a lot can be written down in legislation, this does not always guarantee that it will be put into practice. In order to further assess, where Nijmegen is currently at when it comes to inclusivity and accessibility during public events, a public event was assessed. The public event that was assessed in regards to this topic was Koningsdag or Kingsday in Nijmegen in 2024.

Koningsdag Nijmegen 2024 took place on the 27th of April on diverse locations throughout Nijmegen. Generally the events can fall into two categories: the evening before there are mostly concerts and more festive activities and on the day itself the parks in the city are filled with flea markets (Cuijpers, 2024).

The flea market in Goffertpark (Cuijpers, 2024) could be considered as one of the bigger Koningsdag events. A large portion of the park is filled with the flea market starting from 10 in the morning until 4 in the afternoon. The location profile of the Goffertpark as dictated by the municipality of Nijmegen states regarding inclusivity and accessibility the following: "The event should be accessible to all." (*Stadspark De Goffert*, 2023).

To assess the current state of the flea market in Goffertpark Nijmegen, a wheelchair user was asked to provide photos of the experience visiting the market in order to get an expert from experience to properly assess the location and event according to their needs. Thomas had the following to say about his experience strolling around the flea market at the Goffertpark:

(Note: this text is directly written by Thomas, who had heard this research was written down in English. Thomas normally speaks Dutch, but decided to write this note in English. Therefore, it is advised to disregard spelling or grammatical errors.)

"Hi! I'm Thomas, I'm 28 years old and live in Zaandam. This piece will be about my experience regarding accessibility during an event-day in Nijmegen. A few weeks ago I had suffered an injury in my lower back/ buttox which caused me to spend little over a week in a wheelchair. During this time I still wanted to go outside and do as much of the things I would normally do. My girlfriend was very supportive during this time and would help me get around

for example by pushing the wheelchair and carrying items I couldn't hold myself. One of the things me and my girlfriend did was go to a flea market in "Goffert park" in Nijmegen on the 5th of may (which is Liberation Day in Holland). This is a big event where people come together, set up stands and are able to sell their belongings no longer worthy to possess to other visitors. As I was in a wheelchair I will write about the things I noticed which went wrong, went right, weren't thought of or things that could've been approved. Upon arrival there were many entry points to the park, this was a good thing as it scattered the crowd trying to enter. For a person in a wheelchair this meant easier access.

When we started to ride around a bit (walking for my girlfriend) we'd notice that the paths laid out were particularly small to access with a wheelchair. This also meant that the amount of people there would be crammed up on each other causing me not being able to move in the slightest bit. For "able-people" it's easy to walk around somebody or step aside quickly. For me, as I was in a wheelchair this was not possible. Therefore we'd have moments standing in the same place differing from 5 to 10 minutes. Also we noticed that there were a lot of high curbs which I could not get up on with my wheelchair. This meant we were having to walk around to find a spot where I could access the next area with my wheelchair. To find accessible spots we'd had to, again walk through small, overly crowded passageways.



Figure 3 Paved pathway in Goffertpark



Figure 4 Unpaved pathway in Goffertpark

So to speak the crowd management and accessibility is a huge point ready for improvement.

It's a good thing I had my girlfriend there, because when we were getting some food I noticed that none of the stands were reachable from my wheelchair. Only a person standing up would be able to grab their food from the counter. The people working the stands were very helpful though, they would come out of their stand and ask if I needed any help. The atmosphere of the people surrounding us in the small walkways was indecisive. Some were nice and made space as they saw us and others weren't keen on letting us through and wanted to get by as quick as they themselves could. All-in-all it was a fun day out because we got to look at a load of stuff for sale. When I come to think of this being an event which is completely scaled to host able and disabled people I am very doubtful."

In line with the pictures provided by Thomas could be driven that certain aspects work well during the event and certain aspects of the event could be further improved in the future. For example, some paths are paved while other paths are not (Figure 3, Figure 4). At some height differences on the site accessibility was taken into account, while other height differences appeared to be disregarded. There were some cable covers in place that made going over cables more accessible (Figure 5).



Figure 5 Cablecover

However, on other sides of the park, there were curbs without without aids such as wheelchair ramps (Figure 6), which made it almost impossible for the experiencer to enter certain areas of the park. Thomas had to take a different route to access certain areas, which were time-consuming due to



Figure 6 There is no way to get on this curb with this medium-sized wheelchair

the large crowds and slowly strolling people attending the event. could be cause for agitation. A wheelchair ramp situated near the curbs could have easily resolved this agitation. All in all, there were some practical inconsistencies in the layout of the park during the Koningsdag event, some of which appear to be easily fixable.

These inconsistencies in the layout of the site are not in line with the location profile of the Goffertpark (*Stadspark De Goffert*, 2023), as this prohibited the experiencer to access all areas of the event. The event was thus not completely accessible to all. It is necessary to make improvements to meet the requirements that are in the current policy

7.3. Improvement is necessary

Within the municipality of Nijmegen it is noticeable that the civil servants concern themselves with inclusivity and accessibility. However, within the event industry in Nijmegen there is still room for improvement when it comes to said inclusivity and accessibility in practice.

Currently the municipality mostly forwards questions regarding accessibility to experts. On top of that they attempt to stimulate accessibility by asking to create an inclusive event for all in the location profiles of event sites. The main focus of the municipality at this moment is to create awareness amongst event organisers to get them to initiate inclusive practices within their event(s). They do this by organising meetings with event organisers and inclusivity and accessibility experts. However, after these meetings the future of the inclusivity industry in Nijmegen remains largely uncertain.

After reviewing a case-study of an event in public space in Nijmegen, many improvements can be found. There is still room for improvement in creating inclusivity and accessibility in Nijmegen, both within creating awareness and clarity as well as in shaping the inclusivity and accessibility in the actual events. To see how Nijmegen could improve, it is important to understand how other municipalities are tackling inclusivity within their events.

8. What an inclusive event industry looks like

By now, it is possible to cautiously conclude that Nijmegen can still improve in regards to hosting inclusive events in their city. To further examine the ways in which Nijmegen might improve, the case study of Rotterdam will be explored. Rotterdam can be considered a frontrunner within the inclusive and accessible event industry according to Marianne Dijkshoorn who is an expert in the field (personal communication, Marianne, March 21st 2024). Why these events can be considered frontrunners within this industry, can be read in the remainder of this chapter.

8.1. Take a look at Rotterdam

According to Marianne Dijkshoorn, a frontrunner of creating an accessible city, is the municipality of Rotterdam (personal communication, Marianne, March 21st 2024). Therefore, it was decided to compare Nijmegen to Rotterdam on the subject of inclusivity and accessibility. This is done to provide an insight into what Nijmegen might learn from a city in the Netherlands that is a bit further ahead in the process of hosting inclusive and accessible events. The information on the municipality of Rotterdam is gathered during an interview with the man behind the inclusivity programme of Rotterdam, namely Willem Philipsen, and during an observation during an event hosted by the municipality of Rotterdam, namely the honouring of the Rotterdam club Feyenoord for winning the Toto Cup, situated in the inner city of Rotterdam.

A main difference that can be found in the approach of Nijmegen and the approach of Rotterdam is that in Rotterdam, the municipality undertakes more action. According to Willem (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024), the main responsibility of creating an inclusive event, is for the event organiser. However, it is dependent on the event itself. Location and size of the event play a role in that question, but in the end it is the event organiser that wants to organise the event, and therefore, should be responsible for the event. The municipality is more a facilitating party.

Willem explains that, in Rotterdam, he is on top of every situation and on top of every event. He states that everyone knows him and will contact him and if they do not and Willem deems it necessary, he will reach out to the organisation by himself (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024). Therefore, the contact with the organisation will be more hands-on. Because of the approach in Rotterdam, Rotterdam could be considered a caring society, or rather a caring municipality. They act upon caring for their residents with taking on this hands-on approach and a society in which caring is seen in societal practices can be considered a caring society (Gebauer et al. 2021). Whereas in Nijmegen, the municipality has a more hands-off approach. The municipality of Nijmegen awaits the request of the event organiser wanting to create a more accessible event and is, thus, perhaps unknowingly, requiring the event organiser to be aware of a possible inclusivity and accessibility problem.

Furthermore, Willem explains that he believes that the municipality, or in this case Rotterdam Onbeperkt, has another important role to play. They ought to create awareness for the need of inclusive spaces and, where deemed necessary, provide funds to help establish the inclusivity and accessibility of the events. On top of this, Willem adds, there is still room for the municipality to grow. They can for example, think of stating clearly in their general local

regulation document what it is that they expect from the event organisers (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024). This differs from the current situation in Nijmegen, where there are location profiles in place that only ask for accessibility, but not state what this would look like (*Stadspark de Goffert*, 2023).

On top of that, Willem adds that the event site itself needs to be accessible and this requires the municipality to act upon old and new planning initiatives and make sure that these are designed inclusive and accessible (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024). By holding the municipality responsible for the actual event site, when it is in their possession, the municipality gains a bigger responsibility in creating inclusive events as well.

Apart from asking the municipality to improve upon their inclusivity practices. Willem currently helps the municipality in more way than one. In the same way in which Duignan et al. (2023) propose that the inclusivity during the Olympic games in Tokyo 2020 should set an example for smaller events, Willem tries to promote inclusivity in Rotterdam by taking the bigger events that are organised within the municipality and turning them into an example for the smaller events in the city. He carries the same train of thought as Duignan et al. (2023): if the bigger events in the city promote inclusivity, the smaller events will hopefully follow. On top of that, smaller events can, when they ask bigger events for advice, be sent to Rotterdam Onbeperkt, which is the organisation that Willem works for. Via this way, the events can, again, create more accessible events by the helping hand of Willem (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024).

Recently this idea of setting the example has gained more attention within the municipality of Rotterdam when they had a council meeting with the hope of using an upcoming event, Tour de Femmes, to be a worldwide example of an inclusive event. This shows that Rotterdam Onbeperkt is not only concerning itself with creating awareness amongst event organisers, but moreover with creating awareness amongst the municipality as well. "It has to be supported at every layer, at every level" (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024). It has proven to be successful as well, as one of the councilors has included inclusivity into his portfolio. According to Willem the civil servants have to see the urgency as well, as inclusivity is a topic that touches upon virtually all policy themes (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024). To generate more awareness amongst civil servants, Rotterdam Onbeperkt creates sessions and workshops with the aim of informing civil servants how to apply inclusivity into their daily tasks.

Outside of networking with civil servants and other key actors within the event industry, Rotterdam praises itself for co-creating with the target audience itself as well. Willem believes it is important to work together with the people who need the inclusivity, as they can best advocate their needs (Siebers, 2013) and what they need to see changed about a city or a public event. "Nothing about us without us", Willem explained while reciting the main motto of the UN Convention (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024). By bringing together the target audience with planners, this will change the perspective from being able-bodied focused into focused on all users of the space and this will make cities and events more hospitable, just as Gleeson (2001) described.

Willem recalls an example of a Route in Hofbogenpark where young people with disabilities together with young people without known disabilities together walked through the

park and discussed their ideas, with the aim of creating a more inclusive Hofbogenpark (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024). This inclusive practice is taken into action by the municipality as the moodboards created by the young people after the walk, are now used as an inspiration, or goal, for landscape architects to create a real design. The route in Hofbogenpark, when finished, is ought to set as an example for the entire city of Rotterdam of what inclusivity can look like.

Social inclusion, in Rotterdam, stays a challenge. Due to the lesser degree of tangibility, social inclusion remains a topic that Rotterdam Onbeperkt wants to work more on. However, it is unclear still, what this should look like (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024).

Seeing how the municipality of Rotterdam aims to work together and to create together with the target audience, showcases that at the municipal level in Rotterdam, key actors suggest that responsibility is shared in between event organisers, civil servants and the target audience. This is purely based upon practical actions undertaken by the municipality and the words of key actors in Rotterdam. Since Rotterdam is a frontrunner when it comes to organising inclusive events in the Netherlands, perhaps it is possible to cautiously take away that in a successful inclusive event industry, it is important to share the responsibility. However, it is also important to note that in the case of Rotterdam, it appears that more often the municipality is the party that is reaching out to establish that inclusivity.

Therefore, inclusivity can be obtained by sharing the responsibility, while the municipality is taking matters into their own hands to ensure that the responsibility actually is shared as they have, among other things, the financial means to help establish inclusivity for all. The target audience brings the wishes and the knowledge of their needs to the table. Together they can create an inclusive event industry.

As displayed in this paragraph, there is a lot of practical output coming from the municipality in Rotterdam in which they actively reach out to event organisers and the target audience to co-create inclusive events. There is still room for improvement, however it appears that Willem and his teams are on top of making sure these improvements will happen in Rotterdam. While there is so much happening in Rotterdam that helps improve inclusivity within the municipality, the question remains how this is all (financially) possible.

8.1.1. (Financial) aid

In Rotterdam, Willem believes, money should not be the issue that leads to a non-inclusive events. Rotterdam Festivals has generated a budget for which event organisers can apply. The innovationbudget is meant for event organisers that want to apply measures to improve inclusivity, for example. However, this subsidy is not widely known yet (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024). It could be compared to the subsidy that Nijmegen is trying to install regarding inclusive and accessible changes in buildings and website (overheard, June 4th 2024). However, the main difference is that in Rotterdam, the money is specifically allocated towards the event industry and in Nijmegen the subsidy is meant for all organisations that want to improve inclusively.

On top of this innovationbudget, Rotterdam Onbeperkt can sometimes be in the position to provide a small subsidy as well. In addition to this small subsidy, Rotterdam Onbeperkt is in the possibility to aid event organisers by providing meaningful contacts. During the Rotterdamse Dakendagen, a festival that has the Rotterdam rooftops as their main 'stage', Willem had aided by thinking of a different route for the festival, a more

accessible one. He provided a subsidy to make this possible as well (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024). On top of that, when one of the elevators broke down at the last minute, he provided the contacts to a bus company that could help persons with physical disabilities reach the tops of the buildings as well.

Within Rotterdam, Rotterdam Onbeperkt stays on top of both the practical side of creating inclusive events as well as the financial side, making sure that all the necessary changes are possible so that as many people as possible can enjoy the many events that Rotterdam hosts. However, it is also important to consider what this will look like, as aspirations from the municipality not always come true when an actual event is hosted in the city.

8.2. An inclusive Bekerfinale Feyenoord in Rotterdam

According to Marianne Dijkshoorn, the reason for Rotterdam being an exemplary municipality regarding inclusivity, is the fact that the municipality actively tries to intervene in creating inclusive events within the city (personal communication, Marianne, March 21st 2024). This is confirmed by understanding the work of Willem Philipsen, a foreman in creating inclusivity within the municipality in Rotterdam (personal communication, Willem, April 26th 2024). To experience whether or not Marianne and Willem are right in saying that Rotterdam does well in the inclusive event industry, an Rotterdam event has been visited.

The visited event was the previous celebration of the Rotterdam football club Feyenoord winning the Toto Cup final, in the city centre of Rotterdam at the town square Binnenrotte. This event showcased an example of how inclusivity is being accomplished by the municipality of Rotterdam.



Figure 7 The atmosphere from the miva-vak

During the festivities a viewing platform was created which was named a “miva-vak” by the organisers (Figure 7). This is short for platform for persons with disabilities. The viewing platform entailed a section of the event space being specifically designed to create a safe watching space for persons with disabilities. The miva-vak had space for approximately 300 wheelchair-users with their friends and family. In addition to that, there was also space created for 12 wens-ambulances – terminally ill patients on stretchers, who could apply to get a final wish granted. Although there were not nearly 300 persons in wheelchairs who showed up together with 4 wens-ambulances, it was interesting to witness the created plan that had a space designed to be free for everyone with a physical disability who wanted to visit.

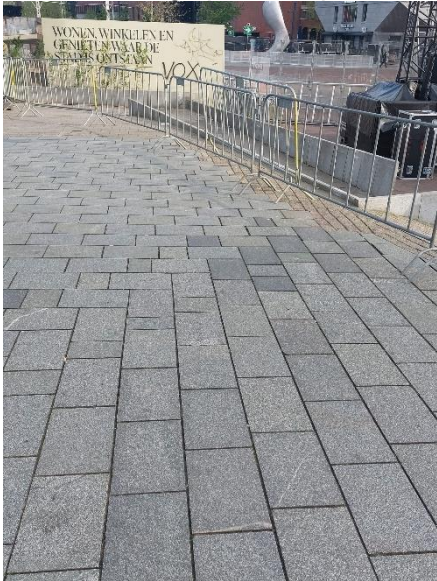


Figure 8 Exits were safe, spacious and wheelchair-friendly

The municipality took into account both safety as well as experience. The miva-vak was designed in a way that the users could enjoy the views just as good as the people who were standing in the other sections of the public space. On top of that, they could safely leave if something were to happen during the celebrations which would result in a quiet exit of the space (Figure 8). Furthermore, there were also inclusive toilets on the premises, close to the miva-vak, which made the access to be easily attained.

The space that was chosen for the miva-vak did not need a lot of work. The municipality took the natural environment of the square on which the event took place, into account when creating the miva-vak. The miva-vak was situated naturally higher than the rest of the square, which created a better viewing experience for wheelchair-users who are usually smaller in height than standing people (Figure 9). On top of that, the miva-vak was already (wheelchair) accessible for daily-use, and thus more safe to exit. By using the natural environment in this way, the municipality of Rotterdam shows that inclusivity and accessibility need not to require a large budget.

Furthermore, users of the miva-vak were generally very positive (personal communication, miva-vak users, April 22nd 2024). However, some users noted that the communication of the miva-vak pre-celebrations could be improved as a lot of them were not aware of the location and the presence of the miva-vak, while it was communicated via the website of the municipality of Rotterdam (*Huldiging Feyenoord*, n.d.). This could be further improved. Important to note is that the celebrations were only certain to take place a day before, as that was the moment that Feyenoord won the competition and therefore, the event was only announced a day before, which already made the general communication strategy more difficult.

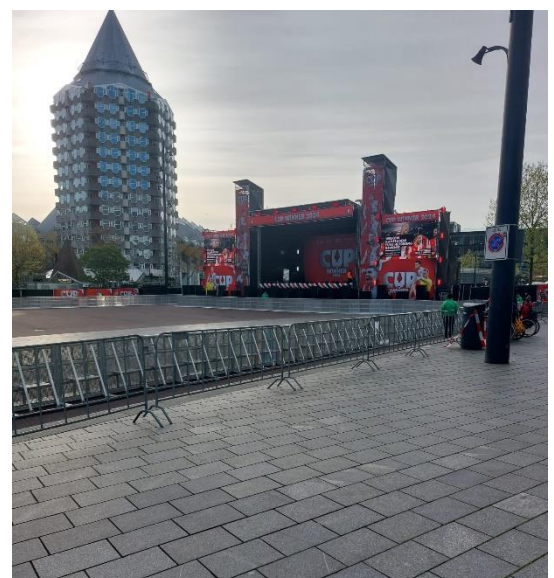


Figure 9 The miva-vak was situated naturally higher than the square of the celebrations

Overall, the experience of the celebrations of the Toto Cup final was positive. It was well organised and the

users of the miva-vak were generally very positive. It showcases that a public event in Rotterdam can be well organised if key actors work together co-create in order to establish inclusivity. There was budget to make this happen and experienced people helped out, ensuring that the event site was actually accessible to persons with disabilities. All in all, Nijmegen could learn from Rotterdam at the organisational site when attempting to become a municipality with more accessible events.

9. Conclusion and suggestions

In order to improve the quality of event experiences of persons with disabilities, the aim of this research was to explore which steps could be undertaken in the process of becoming an inclusive event city. Therefore a case study in Nijmegen was being researched and compared to the municipality of Rotterdam. Furthermore, this research explored which parties have the largest responsibility in creating inclusive events. This was necessary to find out in order to hold a party accountable for future improvements. To reach the aim of this research, the following research question had been formulated :

How can the municipality and event planners in Nijmegen work together to improve the implementation of inclusivity and accessibility of persons with disabilities within their event-organising process?

Within this research, we've talked about persons with how persons with disabilities are being marginalized. They can feel excluded by being denied access to certain places (Jian et al, 2021), institutions or in the case of this research: events. According to Siebers (2013) and Gleeson (2001) this could be explained due to places having been designed for abled-bodied people for a long time. This needs to be changed into a more inclusive approach.

Furthermore, Staeheli and Michell (2007) talked about the complications of places not always having the same owner. Places can be both public as well as private (Zavar & Schumann, 2019, Low & Smith, 2005; Button, 2003). This makes it more complicated to determine who is responsible for the space and who is responsible for events taking place in this space. When no clear responsible party is being present, public space not always being as inclusive and open to the public as someone might expect. This is an important dilemma, as inclusivity in events can already start when the space itself is accessible and inclusive. This can be established for example be defining the common destination of a space. This common destination exists from the daily destination, what is the space used for in the daily life, and the event destination, how often do events take place in this space and what do these events look like. Thus, there are two destinations for a certain space and these two destinations combined should influence what the space looks like. Different actors can be brought together to discuss how to optimally design the space for the common destination. This can result in well-placed electricity points or hardened paths wherever there is a lot of flow. These alterations could be used for one or more destinations of the place, they could be multifunctional (personal communication, Willem VVEM, April 17th 2024). In Nijmegen, Els van der Ploeg, employee of the Zelfregiecentrum, suggests adding permanent accessible toilets to frequently used event sites such as Goffertpark (personal communication, Els, May 14th 2024). However, the responsibility to make these changes in these spaces lays within the owner of the space.

To find the responsible party and help stop marginalization of persons with disabilities during events, policies have been assessed on both national as regional level. The changes in the national policy, implementing the UN treaty and changing the constitution have been quite recent (2016 and 2023). Therefore, the carry-over to regional policy has been different in different municipalities. Some municipalities are further along in the process of becoming inclusive than others. Within the case-studies of this research, the municipality of Rotterdam

and the municipality of Nijmegen, the main difference lies mainly in how willing the municipalities are to bring about change in the inclusiveness of the municipality. Rotterdam is further in wanting to bring about change than Nijmegen is. Regional policy in Nijmegen is a more wait-and-see approach with event organisers needing to take the first step. While the municipality of Rotterdam takes on a more hands-on approach. There are however some regional initiatives in place that help develop the municipality of Nijmegen into becoming more inclusive, these initiatives include 'Nijmegen voor Iedereen', JMG and Zelfregiecentrum. Furthermore, the municipality of Nijmegen has organised an awareness meeting to raise awareness amongst event organisers to create more inclusive events.

As the policies are still quite vague, in this research we have also looked at what is actually happening in the municipalities when events are being organised. When does inclusivity play a role? We have found that despite the difficulties in determining who the place belongs to, based on the findings of this research, it is possible to cautiously conclude that when there is a set of clear guidelines present from the municipal level, this will directly influence the private sector within the event industry as well. This eventually influences overall access to public space. It affects overall inclusivity.

Therefore, taking the future of inclusive city events in mind, responsibility needs to be worked into public institutions. This would be a great first step, moving forward in the inclusive event industry. Els of the Zelfregiecentrum Nijmegen, said about this:

"I do not care at all who is the initiator, as long as it happens."(personal communication, Els, May 14th 2024).

This is worded beautifully and in theory this could be very true. As Smith (2015) explained, someone, a party has to eventually take the initiative to achieve a shift in inclusivity and accessibility. However, to hold a party responsible, is to have a party that has answerability. Therefore, despite this quote being worded beautifully, the problem arises when no-one takes the initiative, or no one is directly responsible, no party can be held accountable for when there is a lacking in inclusivity and accessibility. No party can answer for mistakes that are being made or for further improvements. Therefore, it might be wise to consider a responsible party after all.

Article 174 of the Gemeentewet holds the mayor directly responsible for all public meetings (De Laat, 2014) and thus for event. This implies that the mayor is also responsible for the inclusivity and accessibility of these events. As the mayor is the chairman of the municipal council and on top of that responsible for the general safety of the municipality (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2024), he has a big role to fulfil when it comes to inclusivity, accessibility and moreover exitability (Dijkshoorn, 2023).

Drawing from the analysis of this research, it can also be considered true that the municipality should take responsibility over the inclusivity and accessibility of public events. This can be showcased via the example of the municipality of Rotterdam, where it was possible to make many improvements can throughout the entire municipality due to them having a clear initiator. This initiator in the case of the municipality of Rotterdam is Rotterdam Onbeperkt as part of the municipality of Rotterdam.

This claim can further be supported by drawing the comparison between the municipality of Rotterdam and the municipality of Nijmegen. The main difference between these municipalities, is how willing these municipalities are to bring about change to establish inclusivity within the events taking place in their municipality. Where Nijmegen is still

discovering how to start implementing changes and currently has a more bottom-up policy in which they let event organisers come to them whenever they seek aidance, in Rotterdam the policy is more top-down. Rotterdam Onbeperkt actively contacts event organisers to make sure the events will be organised inclusively. In Rotterdam thinking through inclusivity is a mission and this transfers directly into the event organisers of the municipality as well.

After the responsibility is established, Nijmegen could take further steps into creating a more inclusive event industry. They could then continue their way into creating more awareness. This path, they have already started on by creating an awareness meeting. This is a great step to reach the result that is wished for. However, as this event still left some event planners unsure of what to do next, awareness of what steps could be taken is also necessary to achieve the goal of inclusivity. Furthermore, during the awareness meeting not all big event organisers in Nijmegen were present (overheard, June 4th 2024), therefore, probably not all smaller event organisers as well. This could imply multiple things. Namely, that the awareness meeting was during an unfortunate time, June 4th can be considered to be at the start of the festival season, which makes it difficult for event planners to attend the meeting.

Another possibility for the municipality of Nijmegen, is that they could opt to take more after the example of the municipality of Rotterdam, where the municipality is actively contacting bigger city events and helping them become more inclusive to turn them into examples for smaller city events. This is in line with the findings of Duignan et al. (2023) who pose that bigger events could more often be used to inspire smaller events as well.

Furthermore, Nijmegen can start working towards more co-creation with the target audience. Siebers (2013) explained that whenever rights for persons with disabilities are advocated better and equality is established, persons with disabilities will experience less pain from feeling as if they are in a 'minority group'. To advocate for persons with disabilities it is possible to create a bottom-up approach as Gleeson (2001) suggested. This could include interest groups that advise the municipality. This is currently happening in Nijmegen with JMG and the the Zelfregiecentrum who advises the municipality on all topics regarding inclusivity. Another option would be, to actually involve persons with disabilities directly into the planning process as the example of Hofbogenpark in Rotterdam where persons with disabilities could think of ways to improve the park that are currently being realized.

Another positive result of having the municipality of Nijmegen as the responsible party, would be that they would be able to provide more clear instructions as they would feel obliged to let event organisers meet the goals of the municipality. Currently the location profiles in Nijmegen are vague. They put "events have to be inclusive for all" as a demand. "What do you mean by that?" Willem asks, "what do I have to do?" These instructions are unclear and need to be better specified (personal communication, Willem VVEM, April 17th 2024). If the municipality would demand certain inclusive features to be present, this would more likely reach the desired result. However, these demands should be realistic and achievable (personal communication, Els, May 14th 2024). Event organisations without a large budget should still be able to reach the desired level of inclusivity and accessibility, otherwise the municipality should be able to make more budget free by, for example, creating more subsidies to help these smaller organisations. Examples of an achievable goal might be accessible and true information regarding inclusivity. Dijkshoorn explains the importance of this pre-event communication in her book: "It is frustrating to need a wheelchair-accessible

toilet only to find out that none is present.”(Dijkshoorn, 2023, p.49). Changing pre-event information into truthful information, even when the event is not accessible, will help prevent future disappointments. This could all be established if the municipality would take more responsibility and demand this from the event organisers.

A difficulty that the municipality might face while creating policy for inclusivity is the enforceability of the policy. “Everything that is put into a permit, should be enforceable, you should be able to check whether or not it is actually happening.” (personal communication, Pim, April 18th 2024). As all the policy is derived from the general local regulation documents, it should be enforceable. However, “Of course it is not possible to visit every event with Surveillance and Enforcement to check whether or not the [inclusive] toilet is actually there, if the pathways are wide enough...” (personal communication, Pim, April 18th 2024). However, when the municipality is responsible for implementing the UN treaty, they ought to find a way to implement it. Therefore, a solution to this problem regarding enforcement is to be found.

Lastly, to make sure that all these changes come about, it is important to allocate budget as well. This budget could go towards installing people in charge of kickstarting the inclusivity process of events in Nijmegen, towards shared resources hosted by the municipality and towards subsidies to inspire event planners to invest in inclusive practices. However, even if budget is scarce it is still possible to think out of the box and create more inclusive events.

All in all, Nijmegen still has a way to go in order to host completely inclusive events. However, first steps are being taken into implementing better practices in the future. Based on the findings of this research, the municipality and the event industry can in the near future work together more effectively if the municipality takes responsibility and turns inclusivity into a priority. This has worked for Rotterdam, and although not all municipalities are the same, this approach seems to be very effective and is worth implementing as this will give the pathway to inclusivity a clearer direction. Hopefully, this research will contribute to guiding Nijmegen towards a more inclusive event industry as everyone should be able to enjoy events

10. Reflection and discussion

With all research, it is important to acknowledge that there is much to improve upon and much to further explore in the future when diving deeper into the world of inclusive events. In this chapter, I aim to explain the most important aspects that I would improve upon in future research and what I would consider of interest to research in the (near) future.

First of all, it would be interesting to start implementing some (suggested) inclusive strategies within the event industry in Nijmegen. In future research, it would be interesting to evaluate these practices and consider what could be improved. Perhaps, Nijmegen could even serve as an exemplary municipality in a couple of years.

Secondly, during the process of interviewing, no event organisers were willing or able to participate in the interviews. While approaching multiple event organisers in Nijmegen, there were often no responses or negative responses. This is unfortunate, as this results in no direct conclusions from the event organising side. It makes it more difficult to understand what they need from the municipality in terms of aid. To make up for this loss in information, Nijmegen is being compared to other case-studies. However, in future research it would be interesting to be able to provide the event organiser's perspective as well, instead of solely the event organiser's perspective that is located within a different municipality. Having the event organiser's opinion regarding the topic of this research could shine an interesting light on the topic and will view the topic from the more practical, organisational side.

On top of this, the case-studies were all events that took place in public space. However it was not three times the exact same event and every event was hosted in a different place. Looking back, it is possible to learn from these events, however it is difficult to compare these events one on one. As explained, not every person with a disability is the same (Ross et al., 2023), not one event and not one place is the same as well. The events reviewed in this research all took place in different places, which implies that there is a different *genius loci*, a different spirit of the place (Vecco, 2020) that could change the way that people experience an event and changes the approach that is needed by event organisers to create inclusivity within the space. There is not one blueprint or panacea to create an inclusive event.

Keeping this in mind, not every policy is the same as well. While the national policies and the change in constitution applies to both Rotterdam and Nijmegen, they can have different regional policies. The conversation with Willem Philipsen from Rotterdam Onbeperkt showed some insights into the Rotterdam policy. However, it was not researched fully. In future research, it would be interesting to completely compare to municipalities to each other by also comparing the policies.

While the findings of this research will hopefully contribute to improvements in the inclusive event industry in municipalities that are more or less at the start of their journey to inclusion, it is of importance to remember that every municipality is unique. Every event calendar is unique, every municipalities goal is unique and therefore no approach can be easily adapted without taking into account the characteristics of the municipality. Therefore,

when trying to implement new inclusive strategies it is of importance to consult with the event industry in the region first.

Thirdly, the aim of this research was to explore how the event industry in Nijmegen could improve their inclusivity practices. This can only be achieved, when many types of disabilities are taken into account. Every person with a disability has different needs, no disability is alike and no human is completely alike either (Ross et al., 2023). However, at this point in time the disabilities that are taken mostly into account are the physical disabilities as these disabilities are often most visible and are easiest for people to understand. In this research, this has led to most information being mostly aligned with the needs of persons with physical disabilities. This is in line with most research regarding ableism, the focus is more often on the most visible disabilities (Kattari et al., 2018), which are often the physical ones.

During this research, it became apparent when most interviewed people came up with examples regarding people with visible disabilities and as a researcher, I have not asked enough questions regarding people with invisible disabilities. This shift in focus can help with understanding the current position of event industry in Nijmegen regarding inclusivity and accessibility, as it is possible to conclude cautiously that where the focus and awareness is present, it is mostly present for the people with visible disabilities. The focus of this research, however, shifted mostly towards physical accessibility and had also a partial focus on information accessibility, resulting in a smaller focus on social accessibility. For future research, it would be interesting to see what improvements can be made in the event industry to also take into account the large group of people that has an invisible disability. While the numbers are often not completely sure, it is estimated that around 80-90% of people with disabilities have an invisible disability (Hester, 2023; Wagner, 2021; *Invisible Disabilities: They Are More Common Than You Think*, 2021). These people should not be forgotten.

All in all, there is as much to consider while reading this research as there is to improve upon and to further explore in future research. By staying curious regarding inclusivity practices in the event industry, I believe that a difference can be made to ensure more positive event experiences for persons with disabilities.

12. References

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