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Using visualised narratives

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Fostering supportive interactions in the neighbourhood: Using visualized narratives

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Abstract

The use of art (e.g. visualized narratives) in social work may stimulate dialogue between community members about family support in their neighbourhood. The Visualized Narratives on Parenting Interactions in the Neighbourhood (VN-PIN) were developed in order to foster this dialogue. The aim of this study was to evaluate the implementation of the VN-PIN in social work practice and to gain insight in mechanisms that stimulate dialogues supported by visualizations. A qualitative process evaluation was conducted to explore the use of the VN-PIN in various urban settings. We observed meetings ($N = 14$) where the VN-PIN was applied and interviewed professionals and community members ($N = 81$). The results of this study show that the VN-PIN intervention gives parents a voice and allows them to recognize and reflect on their own parenting behaviour, thereby contributing to mutual exchanges in a supportive community. The conclusion of this study is that the VN-PIN is a useful intervention that social work professionals can use to foster dialogues about parenting within diverse contexts in super-diverse neighbourhoods. The intervention fosters a supportive structure to share experiences of various community members. Future research is needed to further evaluate the experiences and satisfaction of community members with the intervention.

KEYWORDS
community-based intervention, narratives, neighborhood, social support, visualization

1 | INTRODUCTION

Social work (SW) professionals have an important role with regard to strengthening supportive community structures for families and social relationships (Rodríguez & Ferreira, 2018; Rumping et al., 2022). Efforts to strengthen these structures are increasingly focussing on community interventions intended to promote supportive dialogue among community members (e.g. families and volunteers) with regard to parenting (Ponzoni & Kaulingfreks, 2021; Rumping et al., 2022), in addition to highlighting the importance of art as a tool for SW

professionals (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018; Ponzoni & Kaulingfreks, 2021). The use of visual art (e.g. photos and pictures) in SW and qualitative inquiry (Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2020) can foster neighbourhood dialogue among community members, including families (Beauregard et al., 2020; Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018; Keating, 2021; Leavy, 2015). Arts-informed formats provide a recognizable image of daily life, appeal to the imagination and may evoke a multiplicity of narratives from different people (Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2020).

Dialogue supported by visualization could provide community members with a better understanding of each other's living

environments and individual perspectives (including with regard to parenting), in addition to having a positive influence on the supportive interactions of families in neighbourhoods (Beauregard et al., 2020; Ponzoni et al., 2021; Rumping et al., 2022). Such dialogue can also help to address negative expectations or insufficient trust among neighbourhood community members (Ponzoni et al., 2021), thus potentially helping to develop supportive structures between community members (Beauregard et al., 2020; Doornbosch-Akse & Van Vuuren, 2019; Wilson, 1997) and to support conflict transformation (Bergh & Sloboda, 2010). This is especially important for families because, in addition to being raised at home, children are significantly influenced by other community members (e.g. grandparents, volunteers and peers) and stakeholders (e.g. social workers) in the neighbourhood (Hayslip et al., 2019; Rodríguez & Ferreira, 2018). A safe and positive environment at home, at school and also in the neighbourhood supports the healthy development of children (Geens et al., 2015; Rumping et al., 2021). Exchange between community members on upbringing in general and the importance of a safe and positive environment in particular is expected to stimulate supportive structures on parenting in the neighbourhood (Ponzoni & Kaulingfreks, 2021; Rumping et al., 2021; Spruijt et al., 2021).

Dialogue on parenting with community members is likely to be difficult, especially in neighbourhoods with diverse contexts (e.g. schools, playgrounds and on the street) and among a variety of community members (e.g. parents, grandparents, SW professionals and volunteers working with parents at playgrounds) from super-diverse backgrounds (e.g. ethnic or professional) and a diversity of parenting roles (Doornbosch-Akse & van Vuuren, 2019; Hayslip et al., 2019; Ponzoni & Kaulingfreks, 2021; Rumping et al., 2021). Such dialogue could also be jeopardized by differences in the experiences and frameworks within which various families and professionals act (Ponzoni & Kaulingfreks, 2021; Van Robaeys et al., 2018). For example, SW professionals working within super-diverse contexts (see Vertovec, 2007) face difficulties relating to the unpredictability of client participation in SW practice (e.g. showing up for appointments) (Van Robaeys et al., 2018). The same applies to peer-to-peer parent groups, as dialogue can be hindered by ongoing changes within such groups (Spruijt et al., 2021), thus making it difficult for SW professionals to facilitate these groups (Geens et al., 2015; Jackson, 2013; Spruijt et al., 2021).

Interventions aimed at supporting dialogue on parenting could help to lower the threshold to constructive conversations between and with parents (Ponzoni & Kaulingfreks, 2021; Spruijt et al., 2021). Interventions aimed at fostering dialogues, such as interventions in healthcare to engage community members for vaccinations (Karras et al., 2019), consist primarily of written text or include tools for professionals' conversation skills, and they are not supported with visualizations, which may not be suited to each participant, like people who speak another language (Wright et al., 2019). Little attention has been paid to the importance of the context (e.g. place, people, process and purpose) in developing interpersonal dialogue, even though it has been shown to influence dialogue (Doornbosch-Akse & van Vuuren, 2019) aimed at supporting families in highly diverse

neighbourhoods. The adoption of visual interventions in SW and its use to support inquiry into practices aimed at super-diverse neighbourhoods require more insight into the process (including organizational and SW professionals tasks and goals) of the application of dialogue-based interventions (Burke, 2003; Damschroder et al., 2009; Omlo et al., 2013; Rumping et al., 2022). Such insight would help to enhance theoretical understanding with regard to how community members actually do or could potentially build supportive neighbourhood structures (Doornbosch-Akse & van Vuuren, 2019; Rumping et al., 2022), in addition to further strengthening the use of art in SW (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018) and dialogue on parenting.

1.1 | Fostering supportive neighbourhood structures

The Visualized Narratives on Parenting Interactions in the Neighbourhood (VN-PIN) were developed in coproduction with parents and SW professionals, with the objective of fostering supportive dialogues between various community members with diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds in super-diverse urban neighbourhoods (see Methods section). The VN-PIN consists of 24 short narratives about typical parenting situations in the neighbourhood (e.g. going to the playground with your child and talking with other parents).

The theory of change of the VN-PIN intervention is based on the use of the combination of visualization and narratives (i.e. textual format) to engage parents in supportive dialogues, because these are an effective vehicle for mobilizing change (Bruner, 1986; Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018; Malchiodi, 2005) in the neighbourhood. The visualizations in the VN-PIN offer an inclusive format for the participants, which may be more comprehensible than verbal messages (Bos, 2019) at fostering understanding and dialogues among community members with different language backgrounds. The visualizations of the VN-PIN aim to stimulate the communication between people with different literacy levels and styles of self-expression (Malchiodi, 2005; Oosterberg et al., 2012). This is especially important for participants with low literacy levels and/or limited language capacity in diverse (or super-diverse) urban neighbourhoods (Bos, 2019; Oosterberg et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2019).

Narratives can facilitate the discussion of sensitive or controversial topics (Abma & Widdershoven, 2005; Keating, 2021), for example, concerning the diverse and complex aspects of contemporary society (Cruz, 2016). The sharing and discussion of narratives contribute to the depth of conversation (Keating, 2021), and they may also promote the development of role models (Dewar & MacBride, 2017). With the guidance of SW professionals during the sessions, participants' awareness with regard to parenting in the neighbourhood and the reflection on participant's own skills, emotions and norms and values may develop (Ponzoni et al., 2021). The VN-PIN has thus the potential to stimulate self-expression and their roles in dialogues and strengthen the confidence of participants (Bruner, 1986; Cruz, 2016; Keating, 2021; Malchiodi, 2005). Building supportive neighbourhood structures for families requires enhanced understanding of how the VN-

PIN could contribute to dialogue in super-diverse neighbourhoods and how visualized narratives contribute to SW practice.

1.2 | The present study

Dialogue among community members about parenting in the neighbourhood is intended to contribute to the well-being of children and their families. In practice, however, fostering dialogue can be a complicated process, due to the diversity of community members of differing cultural backgrounds and language abilities, as well as to the diversity of frameworks from within which people act (e.g. Ponzoni & Kaulingfreks, 2021; Van Robaeys et al., 2018; Wright et al., 2019). Multiple authors (e.g. Bos, 2019; Doornbosch-Akse & Van Vuuren, 2019; Oosterberg et al., 2012; Ponzoni et al., 2021) have suggested that narratives and visualization could potentially facilitate constructive dialogue, while also acknowledging that knowledge is still limited with regard to the successful development and implementation of such methods in actual SW practice.

The aim of this study is to evaluate whether the newly developed VN-PIN fosters supportive parenting dialogue among various adults in the neighbourhood and to explore the role of visualizations. This understanding may help to better meet the needs of community members and professionals in developing dialogues and building supportive structures for families. In this article, we report on a qualitative process evaluation of the VN-PIN in diverse urban contexts.

2 | METHOD

A qualitative process evaluation involving observations, group interviews and individual interviews was conducted to examine how the VN-PIN was used to conduct dialogue between SW professionals and community members (e.g. parents, grandparents and volunteers) from several neighbourhoods in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The study was conducted according to the standards for qualitative research developed by O'Brien et al. (2014). These standards involve 21 topics and, for example, techniques for ensuring credibility, were used as guidance for this paper.

2.1 | Development of the VN-PIN

The development of the narratives for the VN-PIN proceeded from three types of parental behaviour (i.e. authoritarian, authoritative and permissive), two types of child behaviour (i.e. internalizing and externalizing) and two types of location (i.e. around school and within the neighbourhood). These factors were based on a project using vignettes (i.e. fictive descriptions of neighbourhood situations, based on the three beforementioned factors) to explore attitudes towards parenting interactions in a neighbourhood (Rumping et al., 2021). The research provided insight into factors that generated response in neighbourhood interactions or that fostered discussion. These

vignettes were developed further through coproduction (see, e.g. Damschroder et al., 2009, 2015; Rumping et al., 2022) with parents, SW professionals (i.e. parenting experts), volunteers and intervention developers (N = 11), resulting in a prototype of a dialogue intervention tool.

The prototype for the VN-PIN consisted of 12 narratives, each describing a specific parenting situation in three types of neighbourhood locations (i.e. in the schoolyard, on the street [e.g. in a park] and on the playground) with three corresponding pictures in chronological order. To facilitate pilot testing, the narratives were presented in a PowerPoint file.

This prototype was piloted with parents of diverse ethnic backgrounds (N = 20) and parenting experts in SW (N = 9) working in Amsterdam, with the objective of refining the intervention (Damschroder et al., 2009, 2015). Several changes were made to the prototype, based on the pilot project and multiple discussions with SW professionals from neighbourhoods in Amsterdam. For example, more positive examples were included in the VN-PIN. Furthermore, parents suggested replacing a Black main character wearing a head covering with a White person wearing no head covering, as the original visualization could potentially evoke stereotypes and resistance based on skin colour and religious expression. In coproduction, the intervention developers (first and third authors) and professionals developed 12 new narratives to meet their own needs and those of the parents (e.g. to increase the choice of narratives corresponding to specific parenting situations), as well as to suit the diverse neighbourhood contexts. Based on the needs of professionals, two alternative formats for the narratives were developed: a set of cards (4.33 by 5.91 in. per picture) and posters (8.3 by 11.7 in. per picture), thereby enabling professionals to use the VN-PIN in sessions without a screen. Furthermore, some professionals needed posters for recruiting participants in public places and raising awareness among participants with regard to parenting in the neighbourhood.

The final version of the VN-PIN (in Dutch: *Opvoeden in de Buurt*) consisted of 24 short narratives (see Appendix A for an example) describing multiple types of parenting situations involving parents and children in three areas in the neighbourhood (i.e. the neighbourhood playground and on the way and around the school). The ethnic background of the main characters in the narratives was diverse, with various backgrounds distributed equally across the main characters.

2.2 | Participants

Our sample included 83 participants (i.e. 47 parents, 18 grandparents, 7 volunteers and 11 SW professionals). The mean age of the participants, excluding the professionals (i.e. parents, grandparents and volunteers, N = 72) was 46.9 years (SD = 14.1). Most of the participants were female (75%). The sample included a culturally diverse group of parents. Most (58%) were of African background (e.g. Morocco and Nigeria), with 17% of Dutch background, 11% of South American background (e.g. Suriname and Ecuador), 10% of Middle-Eastern background (e.g. Syria and Turkey) and 4% of European background

(e.g. Ukraine). The participants had different levels of language and literacy, ranging from native speakers, bilingual participants and participants who did not speak Dutch, and from high to low levels of literacy. The mean age of the professionals ($N = 9$) participating in the interviews was 38.2 years ($SD = 16.6$). Two other professionals did not participate in the interviews, either because of the recording or because of a lack of time. As was the case for the participants, most of the professionals were female (78%). The cultural background of the professionals was diverse. Professionals of Dutch or other European cultural background were most common (both 33.2%), followed by South American (22.2%, e.g. Suriname) and African (11.1%, e.g. Morocco).

2.3 | Procedure

Participants were recruited through six organizations in the urban region of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in the period from September through November 2021. The organizations involved in the study were highly diverse. Three focussed primarily on neighbourhood play rooms for families, one focussed on parental involvement and support in schools and two worked with support and discussion groups for fathers and for mothers. In two organizations, individuals participated in multiple or ongoing sessions with the same group, and the other four organizations worked with constantly changing groups. The goals of the sessions in which the VN-PIN was used were as follows: (1) to foster a dialogue about parenting in the neighbourhood, (2) to foster awareness about the parenting norms and values of the participants and other community members and (3) to foster awareness about the role of participants in parenting in the neighbourhood.

All of the organizations were involved in the development of the VN-PIN and related materials (e.g. the manual). All of the participating professionals received an extensive manual about the application of the VN-PIN in the sessions, as well as a brief description of the content of the manual, and the first author was available to answer questions and provide support. In addition, examples of dialogue questions for professionals were developed, based on the questions included in the 'SHOWeD guide' (Shaffer, 1983), with the goal of enhancing understanding of deeper structural issues and solutions in group discussions. These questions helped to identify both the power of and possible problems with the narratives, to facilitate the discussion of the underlying idea and to develop strategies to strengthen their use in real-life situations (Wang, 1999). As demonstrated in previous research (Keating, 2021; Wang & Burris, 1997), this guide offers a useful way to facilitate group discussions with photos, and it might be useful for discussions concerning the visualized narratives that were developed. The dialogue questions were as follows: 'What do participants see in the pictures?', 'How do participants relate the pictures to their lives?' and 'Why do/don't participants worry about what they see in the pictures?'. Other questions included: 'Why is this a strength?' and 'What could be done about it?' (see Shaffer, 1983).

In the period September–November 2021, 11 SW professionals conducted a total of 14 sessions ($M = 1.37$ h, $SD = 0.45$, min–max:

0.75–2.0). Parents, extended family and volunteers were invited to the sessions through flyers or personal contact. The first author was present at all sessions as an external observer and conducted unstructured observations during the sessions, in addition to taking notes and, when allowed, recording the session (three times). After the sessions, parents/grandparents ($N = 65$) and volunteers ($N = 7$) were interviewed about their experiences with the use of the VN-PIN. Professionals ($N = 9$) were interviewed by the first author after approximately 4 weeks. Both group interviews and individual interviews were conducted in order to generate discussions about the experiences of the participants and to reduce the likelihood of socially desirable answers. All participants gave informed consent to participate in the research. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (ref: 2021–005243).

2.4 | Coding and analysis

A three-layer coding scheme was developed (1) for the observations, (2) for the interviews with parents/grandparents and volunteers and (3) for the interviews with SW professionals. The qualitative data from the observations were analysed first, using a theory-driven observation coding scheme containing 33 main codes (e.g. value of visualizations, roles of professionals and type of group process), building on the interaction process analysis scale (Bales, 1950; Burke, 2003), active ingredients in parenting meetings in neighbourhoods (Geens et al., 2015; Jackson, 2013; Spruijt et al., 2021) and the use of visualization (Keating, 2021; Wang, 1999) in dialogue sessions with professionals, as well as the associated skills (e.g. Abma & Widdershoven, 2005; Rumping et al., 2021). The observations and interviews were coded by the first author using the qualitative coding program MAXQDA, version 2022 (see also Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019). A random selection (5%) of the interviews, along with the main codes and 19 fragments, was coded by a research assistant. The kappa coefficient was calculated across all categories, and intercoder agreement across-the-board was good (0.726) (Viera & Garrett, 2005).

We combined *thin* and *thick descriptions* with *thematic analysis*, as both similar and different themes emerged from the data. Thin description involved a general description of how the VN-PIN was used (Geertz, 1973; Ponterotto, 2006). In a complementary fashion, thick description was used to describe and interpret social interactions within their contexts, to explore individual observations and to provide detailed descriptions (Ponterotto, 2006). Thematic analysis was used to identify overarching themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). The first analysis resulted in a thin description of three main themes: the physical space/location in which the intervention was conducted, the type of participants involved in the group session and how the VN-PIN was used. This was followed by an analysis of facilitators and barriers in the application of the VN-PIN, resulting in thick descriptions and overarching themes. Finally, a third analysis focussed on the goals that were achieved by the professionals and intervention developers. Finally, as a member check, the main findings were presented on

PowerPoint slides and discussed with participants ($N = 9$) from each organization involved.

3 | RESULTS

This paragraph presents the main themes of this process evaluation study, including the spaces where the session took place, the participants and the use of the VN-PIN in different settings. We subsequently present the perceived value of the VN-PIN and some facilitators and barriers in the use of the VN-PIN. Finally, we present our results related to the achievement of the goals of the VN-PIN.

3.1 | Space

The 14 VN-PIN sessions were conducted in various places in the neighbourhood: neighbourhood playgrounds or public buildings nearby ($N = 5$), community centres ($N = 6$) and schools ($N = 3$). The presence of children in the same space during the sessions (e.g. at the neighbourhood playground; $N = 4$) caused some noise, which distracted parents from the dialogue, but also created an informal atmosphere. Spaces that were separated from children provided a peace of mind for the parents.

3.2 | Participants

In general, the group compositions were homogeneous in terms of gender: There were two male groups and 10 female groups. Two groups consisted of a combination of men and women. In four of the homogeneous groups, the cultural background was also homogeneous, with the other groups including participants of diverse cultural background. Grandparents were also involved in five sessions, with volunteers included in three session and only parents included in seven sessions.

3.3 | Use of the VN-PIN

The VN-PIN was used in several different formats: posters ($N = 1$), PowerPoint slides ($N = 2$) and cards ($N = 10$). In one organization, where the session was conducted near the neighbourhood playground, both posters and cards were used. All sessions were conducted using a selection of narratives, varying from four to eight narratives per session. All of the participants were motivated and interested in parenting or involved with the neighbourhood. Professionals used the VN-PIN in three ways: the professional selected the narratives ($N = 5$), the narratives were randomly distributed ($N = 4$) or the parents chose the narratives ($N = 5$). Professionals selected narratives that were specifically related to their own goals or practice: 'I consider it (…) important to select the pictures first, because (…) because we are working in the schoolyard, and not on the bus or in

the park. (…) We would specifically like to change the behaviour of parents in the schoolyard' (Professional). When parents selected the narratives by themselves, the professionals mentioned that this was intended to create ownership and involvement among the participating parents.

It is important to note that both parents and professionals recognized the VN-PIN situations. In this regard, one professional noted, 'What I like about our conversations is that they are situations that everyone experiences' (Professional). This made it easier to start a dialogue. The observations further suggested that the dialogue might have helped participants to recognize parenting situations (in the neighbourhood), thereby fostering their confidence with regard to parenting and creating connections within the group. This was also mentioned in the interviews:

> 'I also saw it as a connection for parents who are somewhat isolated because they do not yet speak Dutch very well. It also provided a natural [informal] connection— for example, "Oh, do you also like gardening or walking? We could do that together". (…) This due to the fact that parents were willing to be open-minded (…) and to the fact that the setting for the game encouraged this' (Professional).

Furthermore, the analysis of the observations indicated that diversity in the age composition of the participants (e.g. parents of different ages and a combination of parents and grandparents) seemed to facilitate the exchange of parenting experiences and to enhance understanding of differences between the past and present, which was perceived as valuable.

3.3.1 | The value of visualizations

The use of visualizations during the sessions seemed to lower the threshold for participants to talk about parenting situations in neighbourhoods. This was the case when they did not know other parents in the session, as well as for participants who knew each other very well (e.g. 'The cards are helpful in this regard, particularly for people who don't know each other' [Parent]). Professionals saw the use of the visualizations as a valuable intervention to share stories and experiences:

> Personally, I see it as a very useful tool for eliciting stories from people. It's often difficult trying to do this (…) with words alone. One person might not understand the other very well. It's the same thing now: "What do you see, how does it affect you and what does it call to mind?" (Professional)

Analysis of the observations suggests that visualizations helped participants to understand the dialogue better, in addition to contributing to the discussion by allowing participants to express their

thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, parents often described what they saw in the visualizations, as well as what they thought about them. This might have had a positive influence on both the dialogue and awareness among the participants. The interviews with parents showed similar results: '(…) In my opinion, the pictures were truly helpful. I do not think that I would have arrived at this reflection [about child behaviour in the neighbourhood, and my own behaviour], if it had been only text' (Parent).

The visualizations also seemed to promote the development of general well-being on the part of the participants (e.g. by providing an opportunity to practice language skills). Analysis of the observations further suggests that discussion about what the participants saw in the visualizations created agreement within the group about the meaning of the visualizations, and it may have created equity within the group. Furthermore, the use of visualizations allowed participants to reflect on their own behaviour. This may have created a different relationship with professionals, as participants started the dialogue from their own perspectives, instead of professionals providing the information from their perspectives.

3.3.2 | Facilitators and barriers

Approaching participants

When professionals approach parents for involvement in the VN-PIN meetings, especially in groups that are not conducted every week (e.g. in play groups and at schools), it is apparently important for them to adopt a proactive, relaxed and flexible attitude. Both professionals and parents noted that informal talks may help to create a relaxed atmosphere. As mentioned by one parent: 'To be honest, it was a little scary at first. Once we had been talking for a while, however, I thought, "It's going to be okay". That works' (Parent). Professionals mentioned that a proactive attitude is also needed in order to encourage the participation of parents. For example, a professional showed the VN-PIN cards to parents at the neighbourhood playground, and this resulted in a relaxed conversation. Furthermore, according to professionals, 'forcing' parents to participate might create barriers for parents, thus possibly having a negative influence on the atmosphere:

> (…) we have a wide range of diversity. But when we tell our parents something like, "Hey, there's a discussion [with the VN-PIN] on Friday", they do not come. Our parents are quick to think that it's too much like school (…). They see the play room more as a meeting place where people can relax for a minute, where their children can play and where they can vent to other parents. If they notice that there's going to be an event (…) they are likely to feel obligated. (Professional)

Guiding the group dynamics

The group process of the observations was analysed in order to enhance understanding of how the group process may have influenced participation and the role of professionals. Two types of processes were identified in the observations: task-oriented process (i.e. how participants approached the tasks of the session) and social–emotional processes (i.e. how participants interacted with each other during the session). Most of the questions and answers of professionals during the sessions were task-oriented and concerned the content (e.g. the meaning) of the narratives. Professionals asked questions about what the participants saw when looking at the visualized narratives, and they asked for their opinions. In addition, professionals asked for information to clarify situations and gave suggestions about how to act in neighbourhood situations. Participants also gave suggestions about how to act in neighbourhood situations, made connections with their own behaviour or with familiar situations from their neighbourhood.

In general, the social–emotional climate (i.e. the process) in the sessions was positive. The atmosphere during the sessions was relaxed and safe. For example, professionals complimented participants: 'That's a good tip from P., to sit at knee height' (Professional). The observations further showed that participants agreed with each other's opinions (with both positive and negative stories/experiences), complimented each other and laughed about themselves or each other. Parents also dared to be open by asking emotionally oriented questions, and they sometimes expressed disagreement with each other.

The skills of professionals regarding group dynamics appeared to be important for creating a dialogue about parenting in the neighbourhood. According to professionals, it was important for the group to allow space for dialogue (i.e. for all participants to have their say) and for everyone in the group to feel supported. Professionals mentioned that this was especially the case when involving parents with low literacy, which required professional skills due to differences in the communication styles and ideas of the parents. The professionals further noted that some parents only wanted to tell their own stories or experiences. This was also evident in the observations, in which participants more often expressed their opinions about particular narratives than they were specifically asked about them by professionals or peers. This might have had a negative influence on the dialogue: 'When we did that in the past, the other parents would clam up' (Professional). Only one parent indicated the importance of the role of professionals in this group process. The parent mentioned that no attention was paid to the interactions in the group sessions and that this may have influenced the dialogue: 'At first, this lady started to discuss the pictures, and then it was one-to-one [parent–professional], but the whole group was not really asked about it. (…) Then I just started expressing my own opinion' (Parent). Attention to the voice of all parents in the group process thus appeared to be important.

The observations suggested that asking in-depth VN-PIN questions was important for participants, as it could deepen the discussion. This is illustrated by the following quotation:

> Sometimes, I try to dig a little bit. Then I have a feeling that the fathers could go a bit farther than simply saying "Yeah, there's no attention [in the picture]"—they

could say what that entails. (…) The children are playing under someone else's supervision. (…) But why are they there? What else happens when the mother is not paying attention? What else? Then they contribute more ideas about some things. (Professional)

The observations further suggested that professionals have an important role in the implementation of the VN-PIN. In sessions where parents selected their own cards, the VN-PIN was also used as an intervention to allow them to express their own parenting needs or to ask personal parenting questions in the group, which helped participants to be open with regard to tensions relating to parenting situations. This is illustrated in the following observation of a parent:

(…) [the child's demanding behaviour] 'It's constant, every day. (…) It irritates me, and I do not have much energy. (…) It can cause me to react in an irritated manner—not all the time, mind you. (…) When I hit the table, she understood that she had to stop, and I raised my voice. (…) I no longer knew how I should react'. (Parent) 'So, when you hit the table, that's it (…)' (Professional). 'Yes (…)'. (Parent)

Creating proximity with parents

According to professionals, working in a close relationship is needed in order to develop dialogue with participants who do not attend weekly meetings or who do not know each other. When using the VN-PIN cards, professionals often shared their own private or work-related experiences and feelings, in an effort to improve the dialogue and interactions between participants. As mentioned by one professional: 'In my work, I often use personal examples, so that we're equal at that point. I do this as a way of lowering the threshold' (Professional). Furthermore, proximity with parents seemed to create openness, recognition and safety within the group, which required a professional balance between releasing and directing the interactions within the group. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

None of the parents knew each other. What I really liked is that towards the end of the conversation, one parent became emotional, and everyone responded in a very nice, warm manner, making it seem as if we knew each other. This was obviously not the case. But you see, the presence of so many similarities automatically generates some level of trust as people enter the conversation openly and honestly [with the parents selecting the cards themselves]. They also asked questions among themselves. [I allowed] a great deal of space for that. (Professional)

The relaxed, positive atmosphere of the sessions also plays an important role in developing proximate relationships. As identified in the analysis of the observations, some professionals made jokes and provided parents with space to make jokes and laugh, which may have had a positive influence on the weight of the discussion. For example, in one session, a professional said, 'Well now. Here comes a man [in the visualisation] (…) He's going to have a hard time! Ha-ha' (Professional). This was followed by a long, complex discussion about the shared responsibilities between fathers and mothers in the session. Furthermore, professionals showed satisfaction with the contributions of the participants and enhanced the status of other people, as illustrated in the following observation:

'I'm just like, just talk to them' (Parent 1). 'It's nice that you also have that sense of responsibility!' (Professional) 'Yes. I want to do that with my children as well' (Parent 1). 'Yeah. It's exactly the same for me! My neighbour is on her own. (…)' (Parent 2).

The positive attitude of the professional may have fostered the discussion, thereby having a positive influence on the group process.

3.3.3 | Goals of sessions

We examined to what extent the three goals of the application of the VN-PIN have been achieved, as this is an important step in the evaluation of interventions (Omlo et al., 2013). The first goal of the sessions was to foster a dialogue about parenting in the neighbourhood. According to participants and professionals, dialogue related to parenting in the neighbourhood did arise in response to the sessions The following quote from one of the sessions illustrates this:

'What do you think about it [VN-PIN illustration]?' (Professional) 'I often see it [brother babysitting sister], (…) in our street. (…) I want to supervise things myself, and sometimes supervision is necessary, things do not always go well.' (Parent 1) 'I would not want to put that [responsibility] on them because of the [my] sense of guilt if things go wrong.' (Parent 2) 'My children (…) are very responsible. (…) they could do it, but I want him to be able to be a child, and not put that responsibility on him … that happened to me [as a child].' (Parent 3) 'Otherwise he's the babysitter!' (Parent 1) 'Yes, that's it, and if something goes wrong ….' (Parent 3) (…) 'I do want them to keep an eye on each other (…)' (Parent 2) 'But not that one of them is responsible (…)'. (Parent 3)

The topics of the dialogue differed. For example, in some cases, the dialogue concerned how people act or perceive situations in the neighbourhood. As mentioned by one parent, 'About how we regard parenting in the neighbourhood, (…), not wanting to do it [themselves] or not wanting others to do it (…) we did mention that in connection with certain pictures' (Parent). Analysis of the observations revealed that, in other cases, the dialogue focussed on the participants' own parenting skills, sometimes leading to a dialogue about differences in

the neighbourhood. As noted by a professional said in one session, 'To summarise, then, you see a difference between the place where it [parenting] takes place: on the playground, at school, at home' (Professional). Professionals also highlighted the importance of fostering a dialogue about a participant's own parenting skills, as this is important in order to effect change in neighbourhoods: 'I consider my own parenting behaviour [important as well], because, if that isn't changed, there won't be any contribution to the neighbourhood' (Professional).

The second goal of the sessions was to foster awareness about the norms and values of the participants and other community members. According to the professionals, this goal was partially achieved. All of the professionals agreed that participants had become more aware of their own norms and values as they reflected on their own behaviour during the sessions. The extent to which parents became more aware of the norms and values of others nevertheless remained somewhat unclear to the professionals. Some participants noted that they had become more aware of the similarities and differences with other community members, as is illustrated by the following quote:

> The following example of an observation shows this: 'yes, I don't get involved in that [children arguing], (…) you have to look at your own child' (Parent 1) [others nod] 'Some parents (…) think, ooh I recognise that with my own child …' (Parent 3) 'I would interfere if someone hit my child.' (Parent 4) 'yes, of course … I would too in that case'. (Parent 3)

The final goal of the sessions was to foster awareness about the participants' own role in parenting in the neighbourhood. Professionals and participants gave varying answers about the extent to which this goal was achieved. According to professionals, participants might have become more aware of their own roles in parenting in the neighbourhood, due to the discussion of differences and conflict situations with other participants. Within this context, one professional said:

> In the past, you could just be corrected, and then I would come home and get another lecture from my mother about not running in the school. Now it's the case that, because it's not your child, you don't say anything. You don't want to have any conflict. (…) These things are brought up in conferences with parents. This is how they can also learn from each other. (Professional)

The use of the VN-PIN seemed to have helped to develop awareness among participants during the dialogue, although sustainable awareness probably requires more time. As one professional said: '(…) In my opinion, awareness-raising is achieved during the conversation' (Professional). Multiple parents and grandparents reported that they had become more aware about what they consider important in

conflict situations and about ways in which they can act (e.g. being a role model). This is illustrated in the following quotation from a parent:

> Right (…), that I do not interfere with others when there's a problem [between the parents] (…) We simply have to be like that [nice] with people. And we want to teach that to our children as well. If someone has done something to you, talk to them about it, but do not get angry right away.

In contrast, some parents mentioned that they had not become more aware (e.g. because they said that they already knew how to deal with certain situations).

4 | DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined how dialogue took place with the use of the VN-PIN, with the objective of fostering supportive neighbourhood structures for families. The VN-PIN sessions revealed rich discussions about parenting in super-diverse neighbourhoods. Parents recognized the themes from the VN-PIN and reflected on parenting behaviour in the neighbourhood (including their own), and this provided them with a voice in building supportive community structures. According to the findings, the three main goals of the VN-PIN (i.e. fostering dialogue, fostering awareness about community norms and values and fostering the participants' roles within the neighbourhood) were largely achieved during the sessions. Furthermore, the participants regarded the fostering of community structures by strengthening parental skills as an additional goal. This is in line with other community interventions (e.g. Stewart et al., 2018).

The findings emphasize that the visualizations used in our intervention helped all types of participants to express their feelings and deepen the dialogue in diverse groups regarding parenting interactions within the neighbourhood. This was apparent from both the live observations of the meetings and the self-reported experiences of both participants and SW professionals. The VN-PIN provided structure to the session, and the shared experiences from the sessions were often based on the content depicted. These observations are in line with the literature (Beauregard et al., 2020; Bos, 2019; Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018; Keating, 2021; Leavy, 2015), which suggests that visual art may help participants to express emotions and to find other ways of seeing or thinking within the context of fostering connections in the neighbourhood (Ponzoni & Kaulingfreks, 2021). Our intervention also contributed to the inclusion of participants of various cultural and linguistic backgrounds in group sessions. In combination with the visualizations, the use and recognition of predefined narratives developed in coproduction helped to address both sensitive topics (e.g. conflicts) and positive topics that occur in the neighbourhood. This appeared to act as a catalyst for discussing neighbourhood interactions, and it could be a vehicle for mobilization and change (Bromfield & Capous-Desyllas, 2017; Bruner, 1986; Huss & Sela-

Amit, 2018). At the same time, however, a few participants regarded the diversity of main characters as negative, which may have influenced their attitudes, and such examples could potentially perpetuate stereotypes (Ponzoni & Kaulingfreks, 2021). When developing visualized interventions, it is crucial to be continually alert to the extent to which stakeholders are able to identify with the visualizations and to reflect on and evaluate the process of implementing the visualizations and their use (Damschroder et al., 2009, 2015).

The findings indicate that SW professionals play an essential role (see also, e.g. Rodríguez & Ferreira, 2018) with regard to creating dialogues, matching the differing needs of all participants in the group and creating inclusion. The results of this study also demonstrate the importance of flexible professional skills, as not all people wish to participate in SW practice (sessions) regularly (see, e.g. Spruijt et al., 2021; Van Robaeys et al., 2018). Attention to the importance of professional skills and related strategies (e.g. training and feedback) might help to further the implementation of community-based interventions (Leeman et al., 2015). Furthermore, professionals who created ownership for parents (e.g. by allowing them to select their own narratives and tell their own stories) may have empowered participants to participate more actively (see, e.g. Greene et al., 2018).

We found that sharing experiences as a professional ('disclosure') can contribute to proximate relationships with community members. This finding is in line with the increasing attention to the importance of proximity with families in social youth policies and SW practice (De Jonge, 2020; Ponzoni et al., 2021). At the same time, however, proximity and sharing personal experiences is often seen as a benefit of volunteers, but not of paid workers (Hoogervorst et al., 2016), like SW professionals. It might therefore be difficult to strike a balance between professionality and proximity, especially with groups of parents of differing ethnic backgrounds (Distelbrink & Aarts, 2021; Ponzoni et al., 2021). Increasing attention to the importance of reflection on proximity and distance relationships (Van Ewijk, in De Jonge, 2020) in groups, including within the context of SW education (e.g. Geens et al., 2015; Jackson, 2013), may help to achieve this balance and contribute to the development of supportive relationships.

4.1 | Limitations, future research and implications for practice

Although this study has generated positive preliminary results with the VN-PIN in SW practice, it is subject to three important limitations. First, as a result of the group interview, participants might have given socially desirable responses with regard to the use of the VN-PIN. Although the interview may have reduced this bias as a complementary measure, our findings may have been affected by this tendency, as some participants knew the intervention developer. Second, creating awareness takes time and requires long-term attention (Rumping et al., 2022). Third, the use of the VN-PIN was conducted with various types of sessions, in multiple formats and with diverse groups of participants within an urban context. Further research in national and international contexts is needed in order to identify how the use of

the VN-PIN is influenced by the multiple formats. The VN-PIN intervention includes various vignettes and, possibly, the application in different national contexts may require some changes or additional content. Perhaps new specific narratives and/or contexts may be added based on different needs of parents in different neighbourhoods. The flexible basic structure of our intervention allows addition, deletion and/or substitution of individual vignettes, and it would be interesting to see which additions are needed in other European, American, Pacific, and in other nationalities' contexts.

An important role is reserved for SW organizations and professionals in the further implementation of the VN-PIN and related arts-based or visually supported interventions. Learning networks (see Sloep et al., 2011) could be used as a tool to foster the use of the VN-PIN, including learning from each other and dealing with challenges in the application of the VN-PIN. Specific attention should be paid to the role of the facilitator and learning network aims because these are crucial elements in developing learning networks (Sloep et al., 2011), which may support the implementation of the VN-PIN in the long term. The visualization of daily events from the neighbourhood could inspire members of a local community to share their stories and to build supportive structures for families.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was approved by the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences Research Ethics Committee (ref. no 2021–005243).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research data are not shared

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APPENDIX A

An example of three accompanying pictures about a parenting situation in the neighbourhood