

STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL ATTACHMENT IN DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBOURHOODS

EVALUATING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
INITIATIVES IN THE NETHERLANDS

COLOPHON

Title Strengthening the social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods:
evaluating community involvement initiatives in the Netherlands
Version P5 report
Date 22 October 2024

Student

Name Lyonne van der Vegte
Student number 4827384

University

Name Delft University of Technology
Faculty Architecture and the Built Environment
Master MSc Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences
Master track Management in the Built Environment

Supervisors

First mentor Dr.ing. G.A. (Gerard) van Bortel
Second mentor Dr. M.E.A. (Marietta) Haffner
Delegate board of examiners Dr.ir. D.A. (Daniëlle) Groetelaers

PREFACE

Before you lies my master's thesis about the effects of community involvement initiatives on the social attachment of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. This thesis is written to fulfil the graduation requirements of the MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences, from the track Management in the Built Environment at TU Delft. Over the past few months, I have been engaged in researching and writing my thesis, called *'Strengthening the social attachment of disadvantaged neighbourhoods: evaluating community involvement initiatives in the Netherlands'*.

I decided that I wanted to focus my graduation on a topic outside my comfort zone: the social domain. Therefore, my graduation research is also very socially oriented, bordering on sociology. I knew this could make it more complicated, but I am very pleased with what I have learned over the past few months. Contributing to the liveability of vulnerable neighbourhoods is something I find very interesting. Engaging in conversations with professionals has taught me many valuable lessons, both personally and professionally. I am very proud to present you the end result of my thesis journey.

I would like to thank my supervisors, Gerard van Bortel and Marietta Haffner, for their excellent guidance and support during this process. I am very grateful for their critical stance, inspiration, and encouraging words over the past few months. Additionally, I want to express my gratitude to all the interviewees who generously shared their time and insights with me. The conversations we had were not only enjoyable, but also pivotal in gathering the necessary data for this research. Your input has been invaluable, and I am thankful for your willingness to participate and contribute to this study. Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for all the support and love during my research process. Whether it was a listening ear, a word of advice, a fun day off studying, or a brainstorm session, your support has been crucial in helping me navigate through the whole process.

I hope you enjoy reading my thesis.

Lyonne van der Vegte
Delft, 22 October 2024

ABSTRACT

This research addresses the issue of low social attachment of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. These neighbourhoods face problems, such as high crime rates, poverty, and poor living conditions. Residents in these areas often feel disconnected from their surroundings, which can worsen issues like anonymity, reduced social cohesion and well-being of residents. While community involvement initiatives are widely believed to help increase social attachment, there is limited empirical evidence on which specific initiatives are most effective in achieving this goal. Therefore, the research question is: *What can be learned from initiatives focused on community involvement and their effect on social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands?* The study employs a mixed-methods approach, including quantitative data analysis of the social attachment over the years, and qualitative interviews with key stakeholders from Utrecht Overvecht, the disadvantaged neighbourhood that was selected as a case study for this research. Key findings indicate that successful community involvement initiatives do enhance social attachment by fostering social interactions and connections among residents. However, for these initiatives to yield sustainable results, they must be regularly implemented and structurally embedded into the community. Addressing broader social issues, such as poverty and mistrust in government, is essential for residents to move beyond "survival mode" and engage more fully in community activities and participation projects. The research highlights the low trust in governmental organisations in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and its importance of rebuilding trust between residents and governmental institutions through transparency, genuine engagement, and inclusive processes. Smaller-scale, regularly embedded projects and simultaneous efforts to tackle underlying social issues are critical for fostering strong social attachment, according to the expert interviews. The study concludes that while community involvement can significantly improve social attachment, its success is contingent on a multi-faceted approach that includes structural support and ongoing efforts in addressing broader social issues simultaneously.

KEY WORDS

social attachment – community involvement initiatives – disadvantaged neighbourhoods – residents – place attachment – participation – social cohesion – decision-making processes – Utrecht Overvecht

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary provides an overview of this research, including the introduction, problem statement, followed by the research questions and research goal. Then, the methodology and execution of the research are presented briefly, followed by the main findings, conclusions and discussion. Lastly, the recommendations for further research and for practice are shared.

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the Netherlands, several neighbourhoods are identified as disadvantaged, facing significant challenges such as liveability issues, high crime rates, widespread poverty, and unpleasant physical environments. These areas are often characterised by residents living in poor conditions (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2022). In these vulnerable neighbourhoods, residents are less likely to feel a strong connection to their surroundings, a concept known as place attachment (Van der Graaf, 2009; Livingston, Bailey & Kearns, 2008).

Place attachment is a multidimensional concept that reflects the emotional bonds people develop with their neighbourhood or local community. It encompasses both physical attachment, relating to the built environment, and social attachment, which is the connection to the community and neighbours (Van der Graaf, 2009). Research shows that residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands experience lower levels of both social and physical attachment compared to those in more affluent areas (Van der Graaf, 2009; Livingston et al., 2008).

Van der Graaf's (2009) study highlights the extent of this issue, revealing that 21.8% of Dutch residents do not feel attached to their neighbourhood. The situation is even more concerning in disadvantaged areas, where 39.6% of residents report low levels of social and physical attachment. This lack of attachment is most pronounced in the priority areas of the 30 largest cities in the Netherlands, particularly in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht.

Community involvement initiatives have been identified as a potential solution to this problem (Van der Graaf, 2009; Brown, Perkins & Brown, 2003; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). These initiatives aim to increase residents' participation in decision-making processes and increase social interaction among residents, thereby fostering stronger social bonds and increasing social attachment. Over the years, various strategies have been implemented in the Netherlands as part of urban renewal projects, such as the 'Nationaal Programma Leefbaarheid en Veiligheid' (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these initiatives in increasing social attachment has not been thoroughly evaluated, leaving a gap in our understanding of what works best in these contexts.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The issue of low social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is well-documented, with studies such as Van der Graaf's (2009) demonstrating the severity of the problem. Residents in these areas often feel disconnected from their surroundings, which can worsen issues like anonymity, reduced social cohesion and well-being of residents (Van der Graaf, 2009). While community involvement initiatives are widely believed to help increase social attachment, there is limited empirical evidence on which specific initiatives are most effective in achieving this goal.

Given that many urban renewal projects have been implemented over the past decade, it is crucial to evaluate their impact on social attachment. Despite the extensive efforts by municipalities and the national government to improve the liveability and safety of these neighbourhoods, we lack a clear understanding of which strategies have successfully strengthened the social attachment among residents.

RESEARCH AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary aim of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of various community involvement initiatives in increasing the social attachment of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. By analysing these initiatives, this study seeks to provide practical lessons and recommendations that can be applied in other neighbourhoods facing similar challenges.

The central research question guiding this study is:

What can be learned from initiatives focused on community involvement and their effect on the social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands?

The sub questions that are used to answer the main research question are:

1. *How have the different **dimensions of social attachment** of disadvantaged neighbourhoods changed over the past few years?*
2. *What is the perception of various actors on the **trend of social attachment** in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and what **factors influence** the social attachment the most?*
3. *What is the perception of various actors on what can be **learned from initiatives focused on community involvement** that have been implemented in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?*
4. *What is the perception of various actors on to what extent the **initiatives focused on community involvement contribute to developing stronger social attachment** in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?*

To address these questions, the research will employ a mixed-methods approach. A case study of a specific disadvantaged neighbourhood will be conducted, incorporating both quantitative data analysis and qualitative interviews with experts, such as policy makers from the municipality, housing associations, people working in the social domain and participation project leaders. These interviews will provide qualitative insights that complement the quantitative data, allowing for a deeper understanding of the factors influencing social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The interview questions are focused on the perception of the experts on the trend of social attachment over the past few years, the influencing factors of social attachment, perception on the community involvement initiatives and the relationship between community involvement initiatives and social attachment, all within the context of the disadvantaged neighbourhood Utrecht Overvecht as a case study.

This case study research will focus on a specific disadvantaged neighbourhood in the Netherlands, selected based on its relevance to the research question and the availability of data. The findings from this case study will be compared with existing literature to identify patterns and draw broader conclusions about the effectiveness of community involvement initiatives.

MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings include that according to all interviewees, successful community involvement initiatives significantly contribute to the development of social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. These initiatives foster stronger social attachment by increasing social interactions, and facilitating connections amongst residents. However, an important conclusion is that for these initiatives to yield sustainable results, the initiatives need to be structurally embedded within the community. An initiative that has been implemented once, is not likely to result in sustainable development of social attachment, but an initiative that is successfully organised regularly can little by little help to develop stronger social attachment according to the experts. Another lesson that came forward as very important, is that addressing broader social issues such as

poverty, unemployment, safety, and mistrust in governmental institutions is crucial, in order to pull residents out of 'survival mode' and for them to be able to contribute to the neighbourhood. A lesson learned is that by adopting a comprehensive approach that includes both community involvement and the resolution of underlying social issues, stronger and more sustainable social attachments can be achieved in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, according to the interviewees.

Important lessons learned to improve the success of community involvement initiatives are also focused on rebuilding mutual trust between residents and governmental institutions, which can be achieved by being open and transparent in all phases of projects, and making sure everyone has had the opportunity to be included and feels included. Genuine interest in the residents' opinions is crucial, especially in co-creation projects, and early and inclusive involvement as well. The success of initiatives also depends on the scale of projects; smaller scale projects work best.

These insights gathered from all expert interviews combined, emphasize lessons learned that result in a need for a multi-faceted strategy that combines transparency, genuine engagement, early involvement, small-scale projects, embedding of existing initiatives, and addressing broader social issues to foster stronger social attachments in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

DISCUSSION

This research explores the impact of community involvement initiatives on social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, with a focus on Utrecht Overvecht. Through interviews with eleven experts actively involved in the field, the study identifies key factors influencing social attachment and the effectiveness of initiatives. The findings reveal that trust in governmental organizations is a critical factor affecting resident engagement and the success of community initiatives. Despite the valuable insights provided by a diverse range of professionals, the single-case study approach limits the generalizability of the results. The study emphasizes the need to address broader social issues, such as the "survival mode" that some residents seem to be stuck in, which impedes their participation in community activities and participation. This aligns with existing literature on place attachment, highlighting the underestimated importance of trust and the ability to deal with problems. The research also identifies several limitations, including the lack of previous research in literature on social attachment, the lack of resident perspectives in the expert interviews, and potential biases among professional interviewees. The "invisibility" of opinions of vulnerable residents poses significant challenges in fully understanding their needs and opinions, and conclusions are therefore mainly based on other key stakeholders who spoke directly with residents. The implications of the research suggest that while community involvement initiatives can strengthen social attachment, they must be coupled with efforts to address underlying social issues for sustainable impact, and the importance of mutual trust between residents and governmental institutions is highlighted. Effective initiatives should build on existing efforts, ensuring structural support and avoiding redundant strategies. Policymakers are advised to integrate these lessons into new policies to improve resource allocation and collaboration among stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research also opens up avenues for further exploration, with new research questions that can build upon this research's findings. Three recommendations for further research are provided, and all of them are based on the conclusions and discussion of this study.

- How can trust in governmental organizations be improved in disadvantaged neighbourhoods to increase resident participation?
- How can "invisible" residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods be reached and engaged?
- What is the residents' perspective on increasing social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?

These research questions aim to deepen the understanding of the current challenges and contribute to more effective strategies for enhancing social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In Table 0.1, a list of recommendations for practice is summarised, formulated by the researcher, based on the interviews, and categorised into recommendations to increase place attachment. Social attachment consists of two dimensions: the involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood and social cohesion. Some of these recommendations are for only one of the two dimensions, and some of them are for both.

In Chapter 8, all recommendations are explained on what needs to happen and why it needs to happen. All recommendations are meant for policy makers, project leaders and other involved parties that are working on creating thriving communities, stronger social attachment and successful community involvement initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS for successful COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES and increasing SOCIAL ATTACHMENT in disadvantaged neighbourhoods	
Involvement with what is going on	Social cohesion
1. Enhance transparency and communication	6. Leverage existing successful initiatives
2. Foster flexibility in the process and sincere interest	7. Ensure structural embedding of initiatives
3. Encourage early and inclusive involvement	8. Balance social group dynamics
4. Focus on small-scale, tangible projects	
5. Promote ownership and responsibility	
	9. Address broader social issues simultaneously
	10. Organise low-threshold social activities
	11. Maintain a strong physical presence

Table 0.1: Recommendation for successful community involvement initiatives and increasing social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Own work, 2024).

TABLE OF CONTENT

COLOPHON	2
PREFACE	3
ABSTRACT	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
TABLE OF CONTENT	9
LIST OF FIGURES	11
LIST OF TABLES	12
1 INTRODUCTION	13
1.1 CONTEXT	13
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT	13
1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION	13
1.4 SOCIETAL AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE	14
1.5 READING GUIDE	14
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	15
2.1 DEFINITION OF PLACE ATTACHMENT	15
2.2 INFLUENCING FACTORS OF PLACE ATTACHMENT	16
2.3 DEFINITION OF SOCIAL ATTACHMENT	17
2.4 SOCIAL ATTACHMENT IN DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBOURHOODS	18
2.5 SOCIAL ATTACHMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	18
2.6 DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	19
2.6 CONCLUSION	19
3 METHODOLOGY	21
3.1 RESEARCH AIM, QUESTIONS & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	21
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN: METHODS & OPERATIONALISATION	22
3.3 DATA COLLECTION	24
3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	24
3.5 DATA ANALYSIS	24
4 CASE STUDY: UTRECHT OVERVECHT	26
4.1 CASE SELECTION: UTRECHT OVERVECHT	26
4.2 DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBOURHOOD: UTRECHT OVERVECHT	27
4.3 POLICY HISTORY OF UTRECHT OVERVECHT: SAMEN VOOR OVERVECHT	28

4.4	MEASURING SOCIAL ATTACHMENT IN UTRECHT OVERVECHT: THE VARIABLES	29
4.5	ACTOR PERCEPTIONS: INTRODUCTION OF INTERVIEWEES	30
5	RESULTS – QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS SOCIAL ATTACHMENT.....	32
5.1	OVERVIEW ALL VARIABLES SOCIAL ATTACHMENT: OVERVECHT, UTRECHT & ZUID WEST	32
5.2	CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS.....	38
6	RESULTS – ACTOR PERCEPTIONS	40
6.1	ACTOR PERCEPTIONS ON TREND OF SOCIAL ATTACHMENT	40
6.2	ACTOR PERCEPTIONS ON COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES.....	45
6.3	ACTOR PERCEPTIONS ON INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES ON SOCIAL ATTACHMENT.....	50
7	CONCLUSION.....	53
7.1	SUB QUESTIONS.....	53
7.2	MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION	59
8	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	60
9	DISCUSSION	63
	REFERENCES	66
	APPENDIX.....	68
	APPENDIX A: LIST OF FOCUS NEIGHBOURHOODS IN THE NETHERLANDS	69
	APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	70
	APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM	72
	APPENDIX D: DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN	75

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Social attachment and its variables.....	18
Figure 2.2 Community involvement initiatives and its variables	19
Figure 2.3: Theoretical framework with influencing factors of place attachment, social attachment and effects of stronger place attachment, concluding the literature review (Own work, 2024).	20
Figure 3.1: Conceptual framework (Own work, 2024).....	21
Figure 3.2: Research design overview (Own work, 2024).....	22
Figure 4.1: Neighbourhood Overvecht in the municipality of Utrecht (Echt Overvecht, 2024)	26
Figure 4.2: Example of streets in Overvecht (RTV Utrecht, 2021).	27
Figure 4.3: Example of 10-hoogflats in Overvecht (De Utrechtse Internet Courant, 2018).....	27
Figure 5.1: Residents involved in the formulation of municipality policies and plans (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)	32
Figure 5.2: Residents engaged in one or more neighbourhood activities (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023).....	33
Figure 5.3: Residents contributing to increased neighbourhood interaction (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)	33
Figure 5.4: Social cohesion score (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023).....	34
Figure 5.5: Residents who strongly agree with "People in this neighbourhood don't know each other well" (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023).....	35
Figure 5.6: Residents who strongly agree with "people in this neighbourhood interact with each other in a pleasant manner" (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)	36
Figure 5.7: Residents who strongly agree with "I live in a friendly neighbourhood" (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)	36
Figure 5.8: Residents who strongly agree with "people in this neighbourhood interact with each other frequently" (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)	37
Figure 5.9: Residents who strongly agree with "I feel comfortable with the people living in this neighbourhood" (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023).....	37
Figure 0.1: List and map of the twenty focus neighbourhoods in the Netherlands (green are the most recently added) (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2022)	69

LIST OF TABLES

Table 0.1: Recommendation for successful community involvement initiatives and increasing social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Own work, 2024).....	8
Table 2.1: Dimensions of place attachment (Van der Graaf, 2009, p. 47)	15
Table 3.1: Case study selection criteria for the empirical research part (Own work, 2024).....	22
Table 3.2: Coding framework used to analyse interview data (Own work, 2024).....	25
Table 4.1: Variables Social attachment Van der Graaf (2009) operationalised by database municipality of Utrecht (2024).....	29
Table 4.2: Variables social attachment database municipality of Utrecht (Own work, 2024).....	30
Table 4.3: List of interviewees (Own work, 2024).....	31
Table 5.1: Summary of quantitative data analysis social attachment (Own work, 2024).....	39
Table 7.1: Actor perceptions on trend of social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Own work, 2024).	54
Table 7.2: Summary of actor perception on influencing factors of social attachment (Own work, 2024).	56
Table 7.3: Lessons learned from community involvement initiatives (Own work, 2024).....	58
Table 7.4: Influence community involvement initiatives on social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Own work, 2024).	58
Table 8.1: Recommendation for successful community involvement initiatives and increasing social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Own work, 2024).....	60

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

In the Netherlands, several neighbourhoods are identified as disadvantaged, facing significant challenges such as liveability issues, high crime rates, widespread poverty, and unpleasant physical environments. These areas are often characterised by residents living in poor conditions (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2022). In these vulnerable neighbourhoods, residents are less likely to feel a strong connection to their surroundings, a concept known as place attachment (Van der Graaf, 2009; Livingston, Bailey & Kearns, 2008).

Place attachment is a multidimensional concept that reflects the emotional bonds people develop with their neighbourhood or local community. It encompasses both physical attachment, relating to the built environment, and social attachment, which is the connection to the community and neighbours (Van der Graaf, 2009; Livingston et al., 2008). Research shows that residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands experience lower levels of both social and physical attachment compared to those in more affluent areas (Van der Graaf, 2009).

Van der Graaf's (2009) study highlights the extent of this issue, revealing that 21.8% of Dutch residents do not feel attached to their neighbourhood. The situation is even more concerning in disadvantaged areas, where 39.6% of residents report low levels of social and physical attachment. This lack of attachment is most pronounced in the priority areas of the 30 largest cities in the Netherlands, particularly in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht (Van der Graaf, 2009).

Community involvement initiatives have been identified as a potential solution to this problem (Van der Graaf, 2009; Brown, Perkins & Brown, 2003; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). These initiatives aim to increase residents' participation in decision-making processes and increase social interaction among residents, thereby fostering stronger social bonds and increasing social attachment. Over the years, various strategies have been implemented in the Netherlands as part of urban renewal projects, such as the *'Nationale Programma Leefbaarheid en Veiligheid'* (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these initiatives in increasing social attachment has not been thoroughly evaluated, leaving a gap in our understanding of what works best in these contexts.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The issue of low social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is well-documented, with studies such as Van der Graaf (2009) demonstrating the severity of the problem. Residents in these areas often feel disconnected from their surroundings, which can worsen issues like anonymity, reduced social cohesion and well-being of residents (Van der Graaf, 2009). While community involvement initiatives are widely believed to help increase social attachment, there is limited empirical evidence on which specific initiatives are most effective in achieving this goal.

Given that many urban renewal projects have been implemented over the past decade, it is crucial to evaluate their impact on social attachment. Despite the extensive efforts by municipalities and the national government to improve the liveability and safety of these neighbourhoods, there is a lack a clear understanding of which strategies have successfully strengthened the social attachment among residents.

1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary aim of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of various community involvement initiatives in increasing the social attachment of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. By

analysing these initiatives, this study seeks to provide practical lessons and recommendations that can be applied in other neighbourhoods facing similar challenges.

The central research question guiding this study is:

What can be learned from initiatives focused on community involvement and their effect on the social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands?

To address this question, the research employs a mixed-methods approach. A case study of a specific disadvantaged neighbourhood will be conducted, incorporating both quantitative data analysis and qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, such as policy makers from the municipality, housing associations, people working in the social domain and participation project leaders. These interviews will provide qualitative insights that complement the quantitative data, allowing for a deeper understanding of the factors influencing social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

This case study research will focus on a specific disadvantaged neighbourhood in the Netherlands, selected based on its relevance to the research question and the availability of data. The findings from this case study will be compared with existing literature to identify patterns and draw broader conclusions about the effectiveness of community involvement initiatives.

1.4 SOCIETAL AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

This research holds significant societal relevance by directly addressing the complex challenges faced by residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. By investigating the impact of community involvement initiatives on social attachment, this study contributes valuable insights that could help break the cycle of the lack of social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and improve overall well-being in these communities.

For professionals involved in community development and policymaking, this research offers practical guidance on how to design and implement effective community involvement initiatives. By identifying lessons learned, the findings can help municipalities and policymakers refine their strategies to improve neighbourhoods by strengthening social attachment in disadvantaged areas. The insights gained from this study can inspire policymakers and other professionals in the field to improve the residents social attachment by focusing on the positively evaluated community involvement initiatives.

From a scientific perspective, this research contributes to the field of urban studies by advancing our understanding of place attachment and community involvement in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The interdisciplinary approach, which draws on sociology and urban planning, adds depth to ongoing academic discussions about the social dynamics of urban environments. The research methodology, including a literature review, case study analysis, including a quantitative data analysis, ensures the scientific validity of the findings. Moreover, the integration of qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews provides a richer understanding of the factors influencing social attachment.

1.5 READING GUIDE

Chapter 2 of this research provides an overview of the literature on the two main concepts of this study: community involvement initiatives and social attachment. Chapter 3 presents the methodology and conceptual framework. Chapter 4 explains the context of the case study. Chapter 5 goes deeper into the quantitative data analysis and results, and chapter 6 into the qualitative interview results. Chapter 7 contains the conclusion of the sub questions and main research question. Chapter 8 presents the recommendations for practice and Chapter 9 goes into the discussion of this research.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter delves into the theoretical framework of the research using a literature review, defining the core concepts central to the problem statement and research questions. These include place attachment, social attachment, community involvement, and the context of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Additionally, existing knowledge on these main concepts is presented, and the principal theories and models relevant to this study are critically analysed. The relationships between key concepts are clarified, offering a comprehensive understanding of how community involvement initiatives might influence social attachment within disadvantaged neighbourhoods in existing literature. A wide range of relevant and recent sources have been consulted to provide a summary of existing knowledge on the topic, highlighting how this research integrates with and contributes to the broader academic conversation.

2.1 DEFINITION OF PLACE ATTACHMENT

This research focuses on the social attachment of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which is part of a larger concept called place attachment. To start, the definition of place attachment is presented.

This research is mostly based on the work of Van der Graaf (2009), who defines place attachment as an emotional bond or connection that individuals form with their neighbourhood or local community, encompassing both the physical and social aspects of attachment. He identifies various dimensions of place attachment, that are summarized in Table 2.1.

Dimensions of place attachment	
Place identity (Do you feel at home here?)	
Sense of place (How do you feel at home?)	Rootedness or Physical Attachment
	Bonding or Social Attachment
Place Affiliation (Why do you feel at home?)	Family-related
	Friend-related
	Community related / Community involvement
	Organisation related
Locus of Place Identity (Where do you feel at home?)	Dwelling-related
	Dwelling-based
	Community-based
	Region-based

Table 2.1: Dimensions of place attachment (Van der Graaf, 2009, p. 47)

Van der Graaf (2009) uses the concept of *place attachment* to explain the bond between people and places and to define the concept of feeling at home. Other literature also provides insight into the concept of place attachment, and various similar concepts are evident, such as community attachment, sense of community, sense of place, and social attachment. These concepts are related to each other or used interchangeably, complicating the definition of place attachment (Van der Graaf, 2009).

Other research, from Hummon (1993), underscores the distinction between local satisfaction and attachment, highlighting that they represent relatively separate dimensions. Some individuals may express high levels of satisfaction with their community without forming deep emotional ties to the locality, while others may develop strong feelings of attachment to places they perceive as less than satisfactory. So, attachment is not the same as neighbourhood satisfaction.

The concept of place attachment first emerged in the 1960s with phenomenological scholars such as Bachelard (1964) and Eliade (1959), who emphasized the emotional connections and bonds people form with places, especially homes and sacred places. Place attachment serves as a theoretical framework for understanding the emotional and cultural bonds individuals form with specific environmental settings.

Low & Altman (1993) describe place attachment as the bond between people and places, noting that it involves several inseparable, integral, and mutually defining features. Emotional or cultural attachment to places arises through interactions with others, transforming a 'space' into a meaningful 'place' through social actions and interactions. Hidalgo & Hernandez (2001) generally define place attachment as an effective bond between people and specific places.

Van der Graaf (2009) summarizes place attachment as places becoming symbolic and ideological references for communities, contributing to the construction of personal and social identities. Places are not just mental constructs; they also have a physical component that cannot be ignored. According to him, people are more likely to feel at home in their community if they have social ties there, a sentiment supported by Cuba and Hummon (1993), who found that local social ties are the best predictor of place attachment.

Place attachment, as defined by Low & Altman (1992), refers to "the bonding of people to places" and can be categorized into functional (or practical) and emotional attachment (Low & Altman, 1992; Livingston, Bailey & Kearns, 2010). Functional attachment meets practical and psychological needs, while emotional attachment supports self-identity through distinctiveness, continuity, and positive self-evaluation (Breakwell, 1986, 1992; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). These attachments often overlap, with emotional bonds stemming from the role a place plays in life experiences (Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992).

Place attachment is generally seen as positive, enriching lives with meaning and boosting mental health and well-being (Giuliani, 2003). Its significance can vary greatly between different people and change throughout their lives (Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz, 1996; Rojek & Urry, 1997). For communities, strong place attachment can encourage further social and financial investment in deprived areas. People who feel strongly attached to their neighbourhoods are more likely to respond to problems by trying to improve the area rather than leaving it (Lyons & Lowery, 1989).

The definition of 'place attachment' and his distinction between physical and social attachment, will be used in this research, because the problem statement is mainly focused on the conclusions of Van der Graaf (2009), and because he included very clear dimensions of place attachment in his research. So, the separation of place attachment into two dimensions: physical attachment and social attachment, and the dimensions of Van der Graaf (2009) will be used in this research.

2.2 INFLUENCING FACTORS OF PLACE ATTACHMENT

In literature, also a lot of influencing factors and effects of place attachment are described, for example in Livingston et al. (2010), personal characteristics come forward as strongly impactful, with length of residence as the most significant factor (Giuliani, 2003). Longer residence contributes to the development of stronger family, friendship, and associative ties, which in turn strengthens attachment. Additionally, being older, a homeowner, and having higher education levels are positively associated with place attachment (Woolever, 1992; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001). These factors are often less prevalent in deprived areas.

Residents of deprived areas may rely more heavily on their locality due to limited mobility caused by low income. While this can enhance practical or functional attachments, undesirable aspects of deprived areas can undermine emotional attachment. Woolever (1992) found that high density and sub-standard housing correlate with lower attachment levels. Sampson (1988) identified that urbanization, fear of crime, and high rates of serious crime victimization—common in deprived areas—negatively affect community attachment. Poor neighbourhood quality can thus diminish attachment levels, although restricted mobility and communication may make place attachment crucial for daily activities and quality of life. Individuals are more

likely to feel attached to areas where others also feel attached, where there are many long-term residents, and where there is high involvement in local organizations (Sampson, 1988).

According to Livingston, Bailey & Kearns (2010), family and friendship networks are pivotal in fostering place attachment. These networks exert both direct effects, such as emotional bonds, and indirect effects, such as providing support and coping mechanisms. Interestingly, the physical attributes of neighbourhoods play a minor role in influencing place attachment. Instead, psychological factors within the neighbourhood are more significant, with attachment being undermined by a perceived loss of control or predictability (Kearns & Parkinson, 2001).

Additionally, Livingston et al. (2010) suggest that place attachment is not static but evolves over time.

Quantitative studies show a basic link between length of residence and attachment, but qualitative research reveals that this duration is influenced by various factors: whether people moved to deprived areas by choice or necessity, their reasons for leaving previous areas, the socio-spatial ties they maintain with former residences, and their experiences and responses in the new area.

In summary, Livingston et al. (2010) argue that there are three critical aspects that influence place attachment:

1. Attachment is influenced by the proximity of other areas with which residents have connections. Strong local connections to other places often reduce attachment to the current residence.
2. The personal history of residents, including their biographical background and housing history, affects current place attachment. This includes whether the move was desired and the positive or negative events associated with it.
3. Attachment partly depends on individuals' personalities and their ability to cope with challenges in a new area, as well as their willingness to adopt a positive outlook and seek social connections.

2.3 DEFINITION OF SOCIAL ATTACHMENT

Building upon the earlier given definition of place attachment, this section delves into the definition of social attachment, one of the two dimensions of place attachment. Social attachment refers to the extent to which individuals form emotional bonds with others in their community. This type of attachment is crucial for creating cohesive and supportive communities (Van der Graaf, 2009).

Riger & Lavrakas (1981) introduced a dual-dimensional framework for understanding sense of place (one of Van der Graaf (2009) his dimensions of place attachment), distinguishing between physical attachment and social attachment. This distinction highlights the complexity of human connections to places and underscores the interplay between an individual's physical settlement in a neighbourhood and the formation of social ties within it. These dimensions were later utilized by Van der Graaf (2009) to explore social dynamics in neighbourhoods:

1. **Physical attachment:** Physical attachment refers to the degree to which individuals are settled or rooted in their neighbourhood. This dimension can be assessed by considering factors such as the satisfaction with their house and direct physical environment, and how long residents have been living there;
2. **Social attachment:** Social attachment measures the extent to which individuals have formed emotional bonds within their neighbourhood. This can be assessed through factor such as social cohesion and the involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood (Van der Graaf, 2009).

Research indicates a correlation between physical and social attachment, suggesting that individuals who are more physically rooted in a neighbourhood are also more likely to develop strong social bonds. This correlation emphasizes the interconnectedness of these dimensions in fostering a cohesive community (Van der Graaf, 2009).

Van der Graaf (2009) elaborates on the concept of social attachment by emphasizing the importance of social ties in creating a sense of home within a community. According to Van der Graaf, individuals who know other

people in the neighbourhood through friendships or work are more likely to feel at home and integrated into the community.

Supporting this view, Cuba and Hummon (1993) argue that local social ties are the best predictor of a strong sense of community. Their research highlights that interpersonal relationships within the neighbourhood significantly enhance social attachment, contributing to a supportive and cohesive community environment.

In this research the definition that is used for social attachment is defined by two variables, based on the research of Van der Graaf (2009) (Figure 2.1):

- Involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood (question for example: how involved do you feel with what is going on in the neighbourhood?)
- Social cohesion (question for example: how much contact do you have in your neighbourhood?)

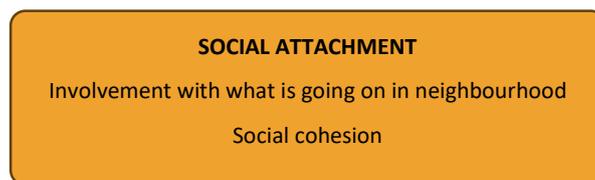


Figure 2.1 Social attachment and its variables

2.4 SOCIAL ATTACHMENT IN DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBOURHOODS

Van der Graaf (2009) researched how residents in the Netherlands are attached to their neighbourhood and in what way the different dimensions of place attachment are related to each other. He looked into disadvantaged neighbourhoods and non-disadvantaged neighbourhoods, analysing the emotional ties and the changes that occur during the process of urban renewal.

The results of this research are that the most common combination in the Netherlands is high social and high physical attachment. Around 36% of the residents living in the Netherlands feel at home in the neighbourhood that they live in and the people that live in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, a substantial group of 24% does not show any attachment to their neighbourhood or neighbours at all (Van der Graaf, 2009).

In order to be able to give more detailed information on the relationship between place attachment and geographic information, the next step was to look into the differences between the thirty biggest cities of the Netherlands, and the rest of the Netherlands. Within the group of biggest cities, the four main cities (Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht) were analysed separately. Also, a further distinction was made between the priority neighbourhoods in the big cities.

Conclusion of this analysis was that all four senses of place attachment (low-low, high-low, low-high, high-high physical and social attachment) are present in each of the locations, however, residents who show low attachment or only physical attachment are most likely to be found in the priority areas of the 30 biggest cities, and especially in the four main cities. In the disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, 39.6% of the residents does not feel socially or physically attached to their neighbourhood.

Other research confirms these conclusions. Livingston, Bailey & Kearns (2008) show that people are less likely to be attached to deprived areas than more affluent neighbourhoods, in their research about the influence of neighbourhood deprivation on people's attachment to places.

2.5 SOCIAL ATTACHMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Why people feel attached to certain areas is the next question that occurs. Van der Graaf (2009) presents findings that prove that community involvement contributes the most to developing stronger place attachment, especially social attachment. According to him, people who are actively involved in their

neighbourhood are fourteen times more likely to show strong attachment, than people who are marginally involved. More specifically: people who show little involvement are nine times more likely to show only physical attachment, and two times more likely to show only social attachment to their neighbourhood, compared to having strong physical and social attachments to their neighbourhood (Van der Graaf, 2009). It remains uncertain what this phenomenon is caused by, but van der Graaf (2009) suggests that it might have to do with the higher mobility rate in disadvantaged areas, resulting in insufficient time for residents to develop ties to their neighbourhood.

In his conclusion, Van der Graaf (2009) recommends policy makers to focus on increasing community involvement, in order to increase the social attachment of residents living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Van der Graaf, 2009).

Livingston et al. (2008) confirm this conclusion as well. They discovered that attachment to a place tends to be highest in neighbourhoods with strong social networks or social cohesion, and in places where crime perceptions are lower. Also, older people and those who have lived in an area for a longer period of time tend to experience stronger attachment to their neighbourhood. When residents experience strong attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods because of strong social networks, these can act as a defence against some of the issues that play a big role in the neighbourhood.

2.6 DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement refers to the active participation of residents in the social, cultural, and decision-making activities within their neighbourhoods. It is a crucial component for fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing the quality of life in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. This section explores the concept of community involvement and its indicators.

Van der Graaf (2009) identifies several indicators to measure community involvement, which reflect both individual participation in community activities and the overall social atmosphere of the neighbourhood. These indicators include being active in tenant, community or other social groups, feeling responsible for the viability of the neighbourhood and the amount of people that know each other and are nice to each other.

These indicators collectively provide a comprehensive picture of how residents engage with their community and perceive their social environment, resulting in a measurable social attachment.

When looking at initiatives that focus on increasing community involvement, literature describes different aspects. Most mentioned are the participation in decision-making processes (van der Graaf & Duyvendak, 2009; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Manzo & Perkins, 2006), bringing residents together to socialize and share their experiences (Brown, Perkins & Brown, 2003) and community meetings and events that are organised locally (Manzo et al., 2006; Scannell et al., 2010). Therefore, community involvement initiatives can be generalised into two categories: initiatives that focus on increasing social interaction among residents and initiatives that focus on involving residents in decision-making processes (Figure 2.2 Community involvement initiatives and its variables Figure 2.2).

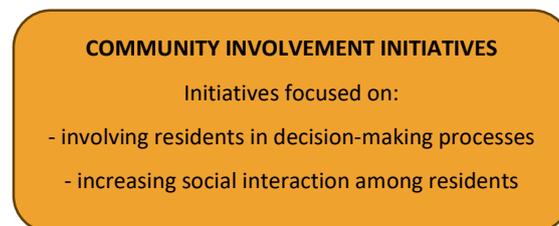


Figure 2.2 Community involvement initiatives and its variables

1.6 CONCLUSION

In the theoretical framework (Figure 2.3), a visual summary of this chapter is presented. In the top part, the influencing factors of place attachment are shown. In literature, not often a distinction is made between the influencing factors of social attachment and physical attachment, but only on influencing factors of place attachment in general. In the two researches that give the most detailed description on influencing factors of (social) place attachment, a strong predictor of social attachment is the community involvement within the neighbourhood (Van der Graaf, 2009; Livingston et al., 2008). More social interaction and involvement with in local organisations and decision-making processes positively contribute to the amount of social attachment that is experiences by residents. What is interesting, is the fact that the social interaction and involvement also come forward as positive effects of stronger place attachment, indicating that these factors are not only influencing factors, but also effects of stronger attachment.

However, this research only focuses on the yellow arrow: the effects of community involvement initiatives on the social attachment, because this connection was the strongest in literature.

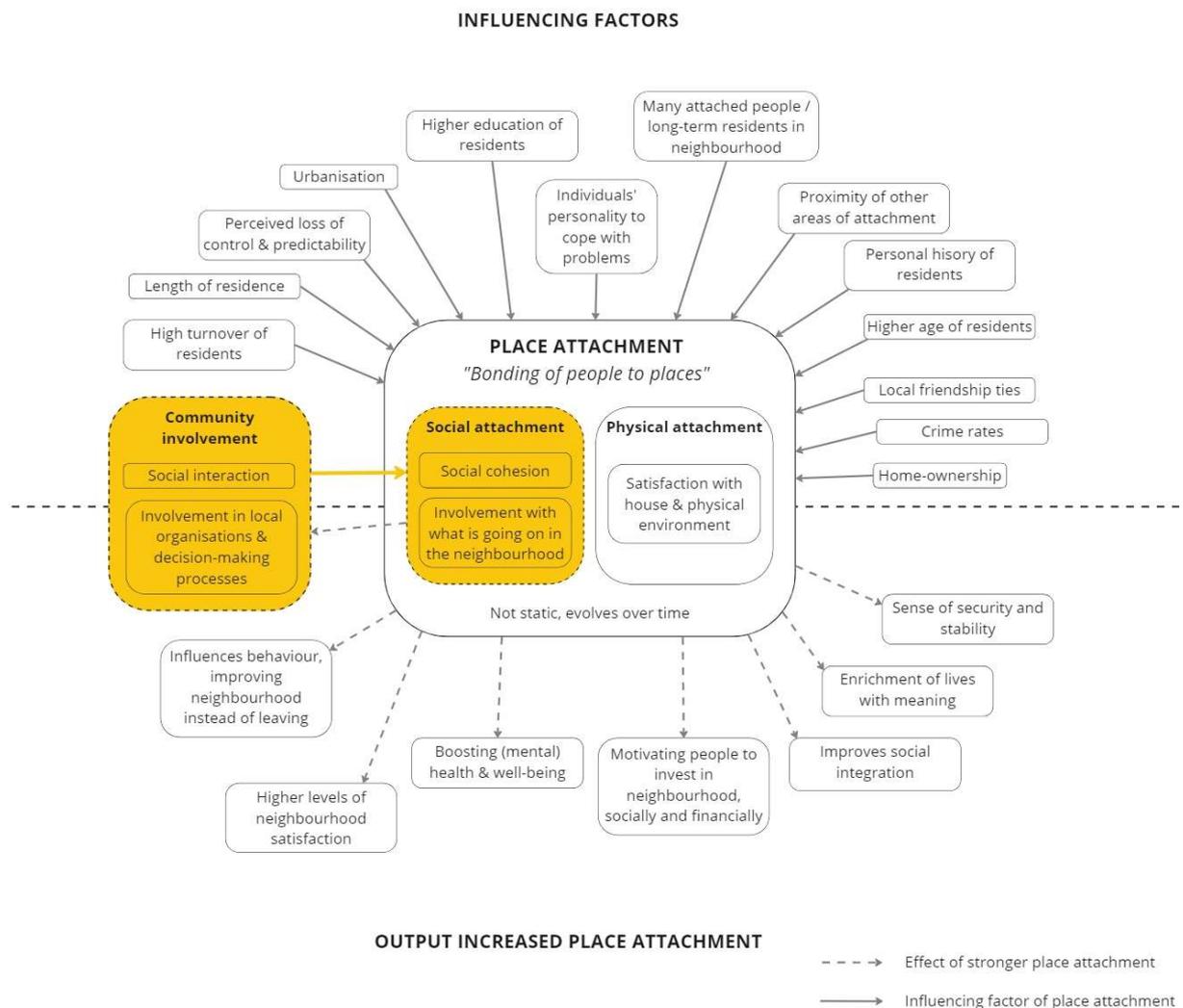


Figure 2.3: Theoretical framework with influencing factors of place attachment, social attachment and effects of stronger place attachment, concluding the literature review (Own work, 2024).

3 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology of this research is presented, focusing on the research questions, research design, research methods, case requirements, data collection, data plan, ethical considerations, operationalisation, data analysis and scope & limitations.

3.1 RESEARCH AIM, QUESTIONS & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The primary aim of this research is to evaluate various community involvement initiatives and their effect on increasing the social attachment of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. By analysing these initiatives, this study seeks to provide practical lessons and recommendations that can be applied in other neighbourhoods that face similar challenges. The central research question guiding this study is:

What can be learned from initiatives focused on community involvement and the effect on the social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands?

The sub questions that will be used to answer the main research question are:

1. *How have the different **dimensions of social attachment** of disadvantaged neighbourhoods changed over the past few years?*
2. *What is the perception of various actors on the **trend of social attachment** in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and what **factors influence** the social attachment the most?*
3. *What is the perception of various actors on what can be **learned from initiatives focused on community involvement** that have been implemented in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?*
4. *What is the perception of various actors on to what extent the **initiatives focused on community involvement contribute to developing stronger social attachment** in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?*

This results in the following conceptual framework (Figure 3.1). In the theoretical framework (Figure 2.3), the arrow also points from social attachment towards community involvement initiatives, indicating that higher social attachment contributes to more successful community involvement initiatives. However, this research focuses on the arrow that points in the other direction: the influence of community involvement initiatives on the social attachment.

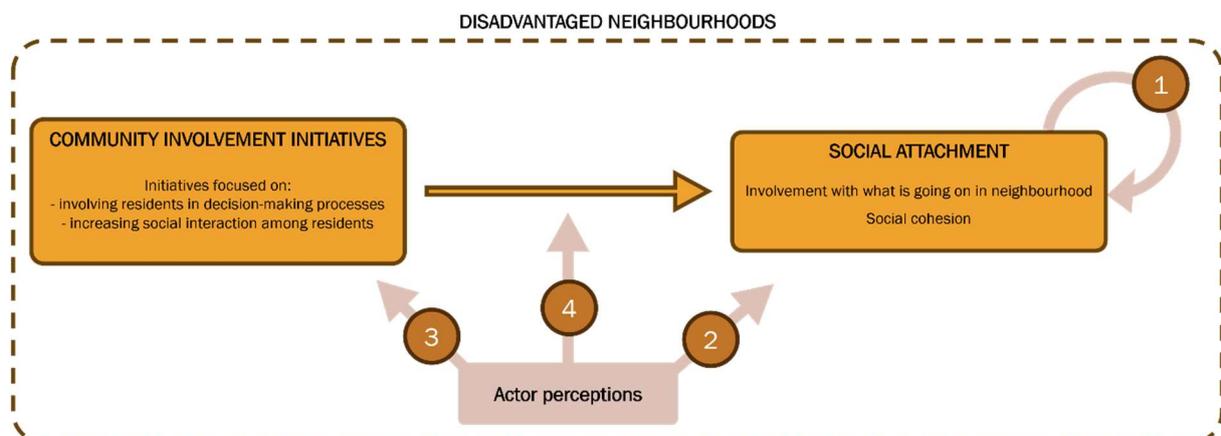


Figure 3.1: Conceptual framework (Own work, 2024).

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN: METHODS & OPERATIONALISATION

The research design is visualised in Figure 3.2 and can be divided into three phases: desk research, empirical research, and synthesis. Each phase contains different research methods, answers different sub questions and generates different output. In the next section, these different phases are explained.

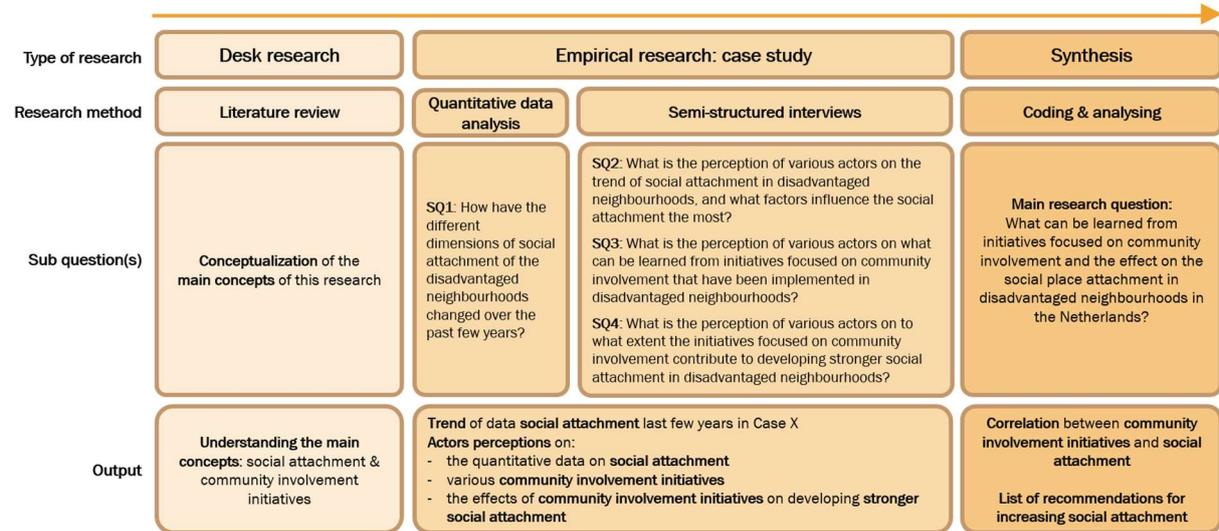


Figure 3.2: Research design overview (Own work, 2024).

3.2.1 DESK RESEARCH: LITERATURE REVIEW

The first phase is the desk research, which consists of the literature review presented in Chapter 2. This phase does not answer a sub question yet, however it is very important. The literature review entails an analysis of relevant literature about the main concepts of this research, including place attachment, social attachment and community involvement initiatives. This is done by assessing academic literature, as well as policy documents from the Dutch national government and municipalities. The literature review serves as a foundational step to establish context and build upon existing knowledge. The goal of this step is to explore the context of the research and find the research gap; what is already known and what is not yet clear. In the end of Chapter 2, a theoretical framework (Figure 2.3) is presented with all influencing factors of place attachment and the effects that strong place attachment creates. This framework will later be used to compare the results of the research with the literature review.

3.2.2 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: CASE STUDY

The next phase is the empirical research, which is a case study. It consists of a quantitative method (a quantitative data analysis) and a qualitative phase (expert interviews). It is important to select a case that is relevant for answering the main research question. Various selection criteria are formulated in order to find a relevant case study for this research (Table 3.1).

Case study selection criteria	
1	The case must be a disadvantaged neighbourhood in the Netherlands where the municipalities and the national government have implemented various initiatives over the past few years to improve the neighbourhood (part of the National Program of Liveability and Safety or a ‘Vogelaarwijk’ for example, list is in Appendix A)
2	Variety of initiatives implemented focused on community involvement
3	Access to quantitative data about social attachment
4	Access to policy documents over the past few years
5	Access to relevant interviewees such as policy makers, experts on liveability or involved residents of the area

Table 3.1: Case study selection criteria for the empirical research part (Own work, 2024).

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The first research method in the empirical part of this research is the quantitative data analysis. The goal of this quantitative analysis is to answer the first sub question: *How have the different dimensions of social attachment of the disadvantaged neighbourhoods changed over the past few years?* The goal is to create an overview of the trend of data from the social attachment among residents of the chosen case. Therefore, it is important to look at the different dimensions of the social attachment, and how they can be operationalised.

In the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1), the two dimensions of social attachment are shown:

- involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood and;
- social cohesion.

Various databases provide variables that fit into those categories. Then, the variables that are most fitting to describe the two categories of social attachment are selected.

This step provides a lot of relevant information that forms the foundation of the interviews. It is important to know what the current status of the social attachment in the case study is, before asking the interviewees about their perceptions.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: EXPERT INTERVIEWS

The expert interviews take place after the quantitative data analysis. The goal of these interviews is to find answers to the second, third and fourth sub question, and in the end the main research question. Various experts will be interviewed, varying from both the municipality as well as housing associations or external parties actively involved in the case study.

The expert interviews will be semi-structured, following an interview scheme. Because all experts have a different expertise, it is important that there is space for follow-up questions when necessary, but it is also crucial to address all topics to all interviewees.

The goal of these interviews is to place the quantitative data analysis into a more qualitative context. In other words, in this step will be searched for the HOWs and the WHYs of the relation between social attachment and community involvement initiatives. The goal is not to find differences between the various experts, but to get an overview of what their perceptions are on the different topics, in order to add knowledge to the research gap on social attachment. The full interview protocol can be found in Appendix B. The structure of the interview is based on the conceptual framework and contains six main topics, with several sub topics.

1. Introduction of the role of the actor
2. Perception of actor on social attachment

** presenting findings of quantitative data analysis of social attachment **

3. Perception of actor on quantitative data social attachment & influencing factors
 - a. Involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood
 - b. Social cohesion
4. Perception of actor on community involvement initiatives
 - a. Involvement in decision making processes
 - b. Increasing social interaction among residents
5. Perception of actor on relation between community involvement initiatives and social attachment of residents
6. Conclusion & recommendations
 - a. Recommendations for the development of stronger social attachment

In the interviews, it is crucial to keep the actors potential bias in mind. Asking critical, open questions and follow-up questions is key to make sure that the answers are useable and as objective as possible.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

In this section, the collection of data of the case study is presented. In Chapter 4, the case will be discussed in more detail. This section gives a brief overview of the data collection methods.

3.3.1 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data analysis will analyse variables of social attachment that are chosen from the database of the case study. Most municipalities provide a database that is publicly available and provides all sorts of data about liveability, safety, inhabitants, satisfaction, participation and much more. The relevant variables will be selected, analysed over the past few years so the conclusions on the trend of social attachment can be drawn.

3.3.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS OF PROFESSIONALS

The semi-structured interviews will contain qualitative data that will be collected during a live or online interview with various actors working in the context of disadvantaged neighbourhood. The interviews will be recorded on a recording device, transcribed and analysed. It will be ensured that sensitive information is anonymised, and participants get the opportunity to say that they want to remain anonymous in the report. All recordings will be destroyed after completion of the transcripts, and transcripts will be destroyed after completion of the research (November 2024).

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To make sure all data is protected, the audio recordings of the interviews have to be taken care of properly. Asking for informed consent for recording is the first step. The informed consent form can be found in Appendix C. The audio recording will be stored on an offline external device as soon as possible after the interview. The recordings will be deleted, as soon as the transcripts are ready. The transcripts will be deleted after completion of the research (November 2024).

Regarding the personal and professional views of actors, participants will have the option to specify if they prefer to remain anonymous. Also, they are free to not answer a question if they are not comfortable doing that, and can withdraw their participation at any time.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

After all the data has been collected through the various methods, the data will be analysed to answer the sub questions and main research question. The quantitative data will be analysed through Excel, by looking at trendlines in the data and by looking at irregularities that might be interesting to discuss in the interviews.

The interviews will be transcribed, and analysed using Miro. All relevant answers will be categorised into the coding framework (Table 3.2), with each actor's answers in a different colour, to be able to see who said what. This way, it will be easier to draw conclusions on what lessons can be learned from the initiatives and their effect on the social attachment of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Trend of social attachment		Influencing factors social attachment		Community involvement initiatives		Community involvement initiatives & social attachment	Other valuable lessons or information
Involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood	Social cohesion	Involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood	Social cohesion	Involvement in decision-making processes	Social interaction		
<i>Only involvement</i>	<i>Only social cohesion</i>	<i>Only involvement</i>	<i>Only social cohesion</i>	<i>Only involvement</i>	<i>Only social interaction</i>	<i>Relation between the two</i>	<i>Other lessons</i>
<i>Both</i>		<i>Both</i>		<i>Both</i>			

Table 3.2: Coding framework used to analyse interview data (Own work, 2024).

4 CASE STUDY: UTRECHT OVERVECHT

The next chapter presents the chosen case study for this research about disadvantaged neighbourhoods, based on the case selection criteria mentioned in Chapter 3: Utrecht Overvecht. First, the neighbourhood characteristics and background information about policies over the past few years are explained. Then, the interviewees are introduced by explaining their relation to Utrecht Overvecht and its developments around social attachment of the residents.

4.1 CASE SELECTION: UTRECHT OVERVECHT

Following the case selection process, the case that will be used in the empirical research is Utrecht Overvecht: a neighbourhood in the fourth biggest city of the Netherlands that has been on the list of most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands for quite some time. Various initiatives have been implemented over the years, because it has been a priority neighbourhood since the early 2000s. In 2007, Ella Vogelaar (minister of 'Wonen, Wijken en Integratie') selected 40 problematic neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, and called them 'Vogelaarwijken' or 'Krachtwijken', because of the accumulation of social, physical and economic problems in these areas and neighbourhoods. The central government invested extra money in those areas to increase the liveability and safety of those areas. The intention was for local authorities and other bodies such as housing associations to work together in choosing how to spend this money and drawing up and implementing improvement plans (Gemeente Utrecht, 2019).

Also, a lot of quantitative data has been gathered over the years on liveability topics in Utrecht Overvecht. The municipality monitors statistics of the neighbourhood very closely in order to see whether there has been any improvement in the data. This data is openly accessible through a database and contains useful information.

Policy documents are openly accessible as well, starting with 10 years of policy documents under the 'Krachtwijkanaanpak', followed by three years of 'Versnelling Overvecht' and the last four years of 'Samen voor Overvecht'. This should contain enough useful input for the case study.

Lastly, access to relevant interviewees is very important for a successful case study. Through various internal contacts within the municipality of Utrecht, this can also be ensured.

Therefore, Utrecht Overvecht has been selected as a case study for the empirical research. Other cases might also be suitable for this research, but mostly because of the amount of relevant information and contacts available in Utrecht Overvecht, this case was chosen.

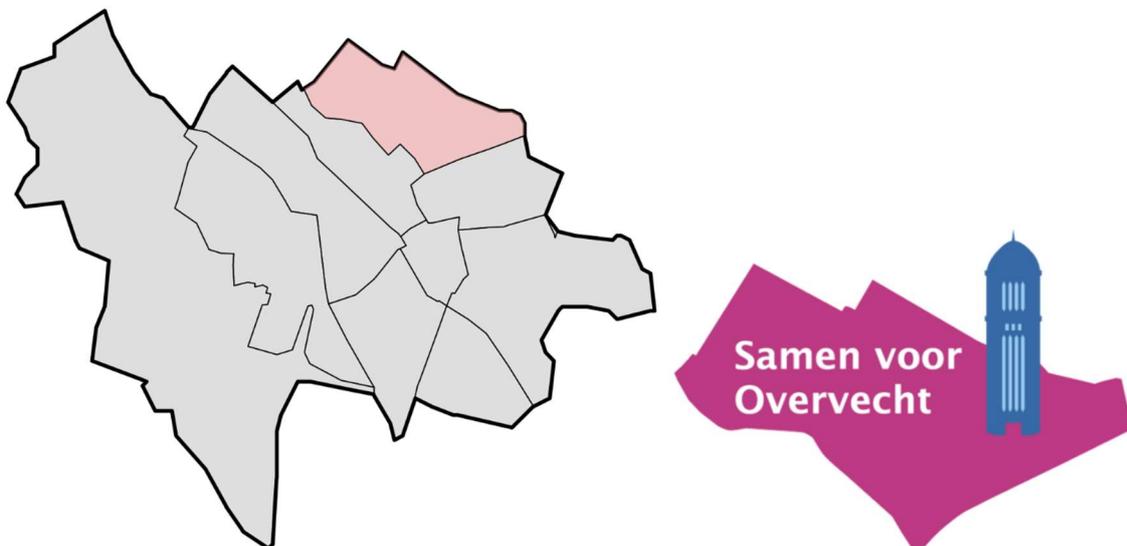


Figure 4.1: Neighbourhood Overvecht in the municipality of Utrecht (Echt Overvecht, 2024)

4.2 DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBOURHOOD: UTRECHT OVERVECHT

Overvecht is a diverse and dynamic neighbourhood in Utrecht, characterized by a unique blend of challenges and opportunities. With a population increase from 31,555 in 2013 to 34,910 inhabitants in 2023, Overvecht has seen a significant growth of 11% over the past decade, reflecting a steady upward trend. The neighbourhood comprises ten distinct areas, featuring a mix of 20% owner-occupied homes, 18% rental properties, and a substantial 62% of housing owned by housing associations (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek [CBS], 2023).



Figure 4.2: Example of streets in Overvecht (RTV Utrecht, 2021).

Overvecht contains mostly multi-family housing (79%) and a predominance of older buildings, with 84% of the housing stock being built before 2000, mostly consisting of typical 10-hoogflats, large apartment buildings of ten stories high. The housing stock includes a total of 16,865 homes, with an average WOZ property value of €301,000 in 2023. This value has almost doubled since 2013, when it was still €151,000 (CBS, 2023).



Figure 4.3: Example of 10-hoogflats in Overvecht (De Utrechtse Internet Courant, 2018).

Demographically, Overvecht houses a culturally diverse population. The residents of Overvecht contain a high percentage of residents with foreign backgrounds, with 54% of the population coming from outside of Europe

in 2023, up from 48% in 2013. The majority of the residents has a Moroccan migration background (38.9%), and 18% has a western migration background and 14.1% has a Turkish background (CBS, 2023).

Education levels in Overvecht show that 35,7% has a low education level, 34,7% medium and 29,7% high education level. The neighbourhood faces significant economic challenges, with the average gross income standing at €23,000, the lowest in Utrecht. A notable portion of the population of 27% struggles to make the ends meet, with 8% receiving welfare benefits, which is much higher than the average of the Netherlands that is 2%. Additionally, 17% of the households in Overvecht live below or around the social minimum, and 11% have a low income, compared to 4% nationally (CBS, 2023).

Social issues such as crime, health, and discrimination also affect Overvecht. The total number of registered crimes has decreased significantly from 3,533 in 2015 to 2,107 in 2023, but theft and other property crimes remain prevalent and higher than in other parts of Utrecht. In terms of health, 70% of the adults report good or very good physical health, but 56% are at moderate to high risk of anxiety or depression, and 58% experiences loneliness. In terms of mental health, Overvecht is struggling (Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu [RIVM], 2020). Also, social trust is relatively low, with only 56% of residents who believe that people can generally be trusted, compared to 71% in Utrecht overall. Discrimination is a pressing issue, with 29% of the residents who are feeling discriminated against, primarily due to ethnicity or religion (CBS, 2023).

All these factors that are mentioned above, result in Overvecht being one of the focus neighbourhoods of the Netherlands. A lot of vulnerable residents are living in Overvecht, and socio-economic issues in the neighbourhood are putting a lot of pressure on the liveability, which makes Overvecht a suitable case for this research about disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands.

4.3 POLICY HISTORY OF UTRECHT OVERVECHT: SAMEN VOOR OVERVECHT

Overvecht has been a priority neighbourhood for a long time now. The developments of Overvecht started with the *'Vogelaarwijken'* in 2007, where forty priority neighbourhoods were selected in the Netherlands that were dealing with liveability problems. Overvecht was one of those neighbourhoods that needed extra attention and a lot of efforts were put into improving the living conditions of residents in the neighbourhood. Since 2016, *'De Versnelling Overvecht'* started, a project where the municipality, residents, and social partners have made significant efforts to improve the liveability of Overvecht and the resilience of its residents. *'De Versnelling Overvecht'* deliberately chose to invest extra in the social and safety domains, and in recent years, hard work has been done to ensure residents can get organized, keep up, and move forward. Central to the approach were the pillars of Health, Living Together, Parenting and Growing Up, Work and Entrepreneurship, and Safety (Gemeente Utrecht, 2019).

In July 2018, with the coalition agreement *'Ruimte voor iedereen'* the municipality set a strong ambition for Overvecht. Since then, highly engaged residents, professionals from Overvecht, and the municipality have worked together to evolve *'De Versnelling Overvecht'* into the broader approach: *'Samen voor Overvecht'* (Together for Overvecht). *'Samen voor Overvecht'* aims to create a neighbourhood where residents live pleasantly together and which is attractive to new residents, visitors, investors, and entrepreneurs. It seeks to strengthen the resilience of residents and ensure everyone can participate. Through smart and sustainable coalitions and a broad perspective, the focus is on the ambitions of:

- Pleasant living in a more mixed neighbourhood;
- Safe neighbourhoods;
- Strengthening prospects for youth;
- Nearby and tailored care and support, and;
- Participation & entrepreneurship (Gemeente Utrecht, 2019).

Together with residents, housing associations, schools, entrepreneurs, investors, neighbourhood teams, health and welfare institutions, police, and many other parties, the municipality of Utrecht works on the development of the neighbourhood. They aim to strengthen the power of Overvecht, address problems neighbourhood and district-wide, and work on restoring norms where necessary. By combining all strengths and efforts, the result will be greater than the sum of its parts, is the idea behind these efforts (Gemeente Utrecht, 2019).

All efforts combined make this case perfectly relevant for researching the community involvement initiatives and the effects of the social attachment.

4.4 MEASURING SOCIAL ATTACHMENT IN UTRECHT OVERVECHT: THE VARIABLES

The municipality of Utrecht uses different variables in their database that can be used to describe the social attachment of the residents. The two categories of social attachment in the theoretical framework are shown on the left side, and the selected variables from the database are shown on the right side of Table 4.1.

Variables Social Attachment from literature review	Variables Social Attachment Database Municipality of Utrecht (2024)
Involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood	% betrokken bij maken van beleid en plannen van de gemeente % inwoners dat betrokken is in de buurt bij een of meer activiteiten % bijdragen aan meer contact in de buurt – ja, doe ik al
Social cohesion	Score sociale cohesie % de mensen in deze buurt kennen elkaar niet zo goed – (zeer) oneens % de mensen in deze buurt gaan op een prettige manier met elkaar om – (zeer) eens % ik woon in een gezellige buurt – (zeer) eens % de mensen in deze buurt gaan veel met elkaar om – (zeer) eens % ik voel me prettig bij de mensen die in deze buurt wonen – (zeer) eens

Table 4.1: Variables Social attachment Van der Graaf (2009) operationalised by database municipality of Utrecht (2024)

These variables were selected based on how well they describe the social cohesion and the involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood, and on the availability of relevant variables in the database of the Municipality of Utrecht (2024).

The variables of the database are in Dutch, so from now on they will be translated to English, as can be seen in Table 4.2, as well as the available years in the database of the municipality of Utrecht.

Nr.		Variable Social attachment - Dutch	Variable Social attachment - English	Available years
1	Involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood	% betrokken bij maken van beleid en plannen van de gemeente	% involved in the formulation of municipality policies and plans	2023
2		% inwoners dat betrokken is in de buurt bij een of meer activiteiten	% of residents engaged in one or more neighbourhood activities	2023
3		% bijdragen aan meer contact in de buurt – ja, doe ik al	% contributing to increased neighbourhood interaction – yes, I already do	2023
4	Social cohesion	Score sociale cohesie	Social cohesion score	2008-2023
5		% de mensen in deze buurt kennen elkaar niet zo goed – (zeer) oneens	% strongly agree with "people in this neighbourhood don't know each other well"	2016-2023
6		% de mensen in deze buurt gaan op een prettige manier met elkaar om – (zeer) eens	% strongly agree with "people in this neighbourhood interact with each other in a pleasant manner"	2016-2023
7		% ik woon in een gezellige buurt – (zeer) eens	% strongly agree with "I live in a friendly neighbourhood"	2016-2023
8		% de mensen in deze buurt gaan veel met elkaar om – (zeer) eens	% strongly agree with "people in this neighbourhood interact with each other frequently"	2016-2023
9		% ik voel me prettig bij de mensen die in deze buurt wonen – (zeer) eens	% strongly agree with "I feel comfortable with the people living in this neighbourhood"	2016-2023

Table 4.2: Variables social attachment database municipality of Utrecht (Own work, 2024)

4.5 ACTOR PERCEPTIONS: INTRODUCTION OF INTERVIEWEES

The actors that will be interviewed on their perceptions are related to the case in various ways. All interviewees and their role in Overvecht are shown in Table 4.3. Some of the interviewees only work in Overvecht, while others work in various disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. Some only have a few years of experience, while others have been working of resolving social issues for 40 years. And most of the actors are working for the municipality in different departments, but others are working for well-being organisations, such as DOCK, or for a housing association. Some of the actors are meeting with residents on a daily basis, while other residents are more involved with other parties that are active in the neighbourhood. All interviews are conducted in April and May 2024. In Table 4.3, all interviewees, their role and a more information about their work is summarised.

Nr.	Company	Role	About
1	Municipality of Utrecht	Process manager Masterplan Overvecht Centrum	Mainly focused on physical developments of Overvecht Centrum and the participation & co-creation with residents and owners Direct contact with team of residents and property owners
2	Municipality of Utrecht	Resident connector	Leads a team of 40 neighbourhood ambassadors that are involved in improving the neighbourhood A lot of direct contact with actively involved residents
3	DOCK	Social broker	Focused on community development A lot of direct contact with residents (not actively involved & actively involved residents) 1 year of working experience
4	DOCK	Social broker	Main project: social renovation of Tienhoogflats Multiple years of experience in the field A lot of direct contact with residents (not actively involved & actively involved residents)
5	Wijkbureau Overvecht	Neighbourhood advisor	Office in centre of Overvecht Walk-in location for questions One year of experience in field
6	Municipality of Utrecht	Data manager	Multiple years of experience in research about data of residents Quantitative data and qualitative data
7	Municipality of Utrecht	Former resident connector	Multiple years of experience in Overvecht Former resident of Overvecht for couple of years Organised many initiatives and direct contact with a lot of active residents
8	Housing association	Policy maker	Increasing liveability and living conditions of residents One of the projects: social renovation Direct contact with residents Multiple years of experience in the field
9	Municipality of Utrecht	Social architect	45+ years of experience at the municipality in different roles Focused on increasing liveability in Overvecht
10	Sport Utrecht	Social broker	Connecting residents to sports facilities for more social interaction and increased health Lot of direct contact with residents
11	Municipality of Utrecht	Former project manager developments Overvecht	Responsible for physical developments in Overvecht Multiple years of experience in Overvecht and Kanaleneiland (other disadvantaged neighbourhood in Utrecht) Mainly in contact with housing associations, developers, policy makers, well-being organisations, the province and other relevant parties

Table 4.3: List of interviewees (Own work, 2024).

5 RESULTS – QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS SOCIAL ATTACHMENT

In this chapter, the research results of the quantitative data analysis is presented, based on data from the municipality of Utrecht. The first sub question that will be answered in this section is:

1. *How have the different **dimensions of social attachment** of disadvantaged neighbourhoods changed over the past few years?*

Each variable is presented separately first, by looking into the quantitative data from Utrecht, Overvecht and as a comparison neighbourhood 'Zuid West'. Zuid West is also a neighbourhood with liveability issues in Utrecht, but is not part of the priority neighbourhoods of the Netherlands. It is used in this research to compare the data of Overvecht, Utrecht and Zuid West for more context.

5.1 OVERVIEW ALL VARIABLES SOCIAL ATTACHMENT: OVERVECHT, UTRECHT & ZUID WEST

First, the three variables that represent the 'involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood' will be looked into, and then, the five variables that represent the 'social cohesion' will be explored.

5.1.1 SOCIAL ATTACHMENT – INVOLVEMENT WITH WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The three variables that represent the **involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood** are:

1. % involved in the formulation of municipality policies and plans
2. % of residents engaged in one or more neighbourhood activities
3. % contributing to increased neighbourhood interaction – yes, I already do

This data is only available for the year of 2023, so it is not possible to look at the developments over the years for the involvement of residents, but only at the state in 2023.

VARIABLE 1: % INVOLVED IN THE FORMULATION OF MUNICIPALITY POLICIES AND PLANS

This variable shows the number of respondents who were involved in making municipal policy and plans in the past year, per 100 respondents. As can be seen in Figure 5.1, the percentage of respondents that are involved in Overvecht is 2% higher than in Utrecht in 2023. In Zuid West, the percentage is the same as in Utrecht.

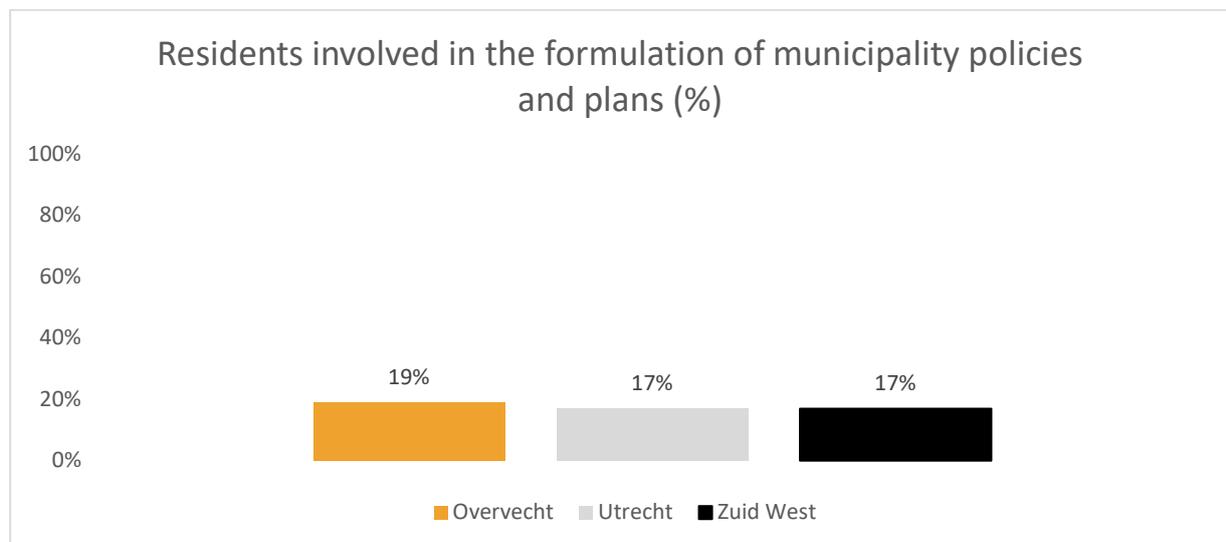


Figure 5.1: Residents involved in the formulation of municipality policies and plans (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)

VARIABLE 2: % OF RESIDENTS ENGAGED IN ONE OR MORE NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTIVITIES

The next variable shows the number of respondents who are engaged in one or more neighbourhood activities, per 100 respondents. As can be seen in Figure 5.2, the percentage of respondents is 2% higher in Overvecht than in Utrecht. The percentage of Zuid West is lower than Utrecht and Overvecht.

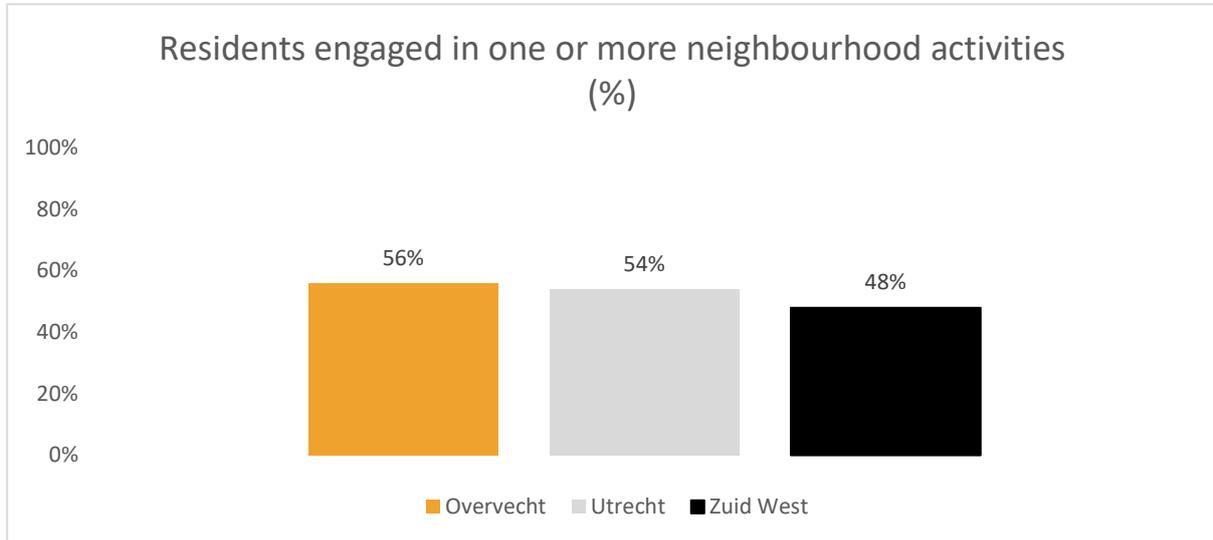


Figure 5.2: Residents engaged in one or more neighbourhood activities (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)

VARIABLE 3: % CONTRIBUTING TO INCREASED NEIGHBOURHOOD INTERACTION – YES, I ALREADY DO

The next variable is the number of respondents who contribute to increased neighbourhood interaction, per 100 respondents. As can be seen in Figure 5.3, the percentage of respondents in Overvecht is 3% higher than in Utrecht in 2023. The percentage of Zuid West is lower than Utrecht and Overvecht; 11%.

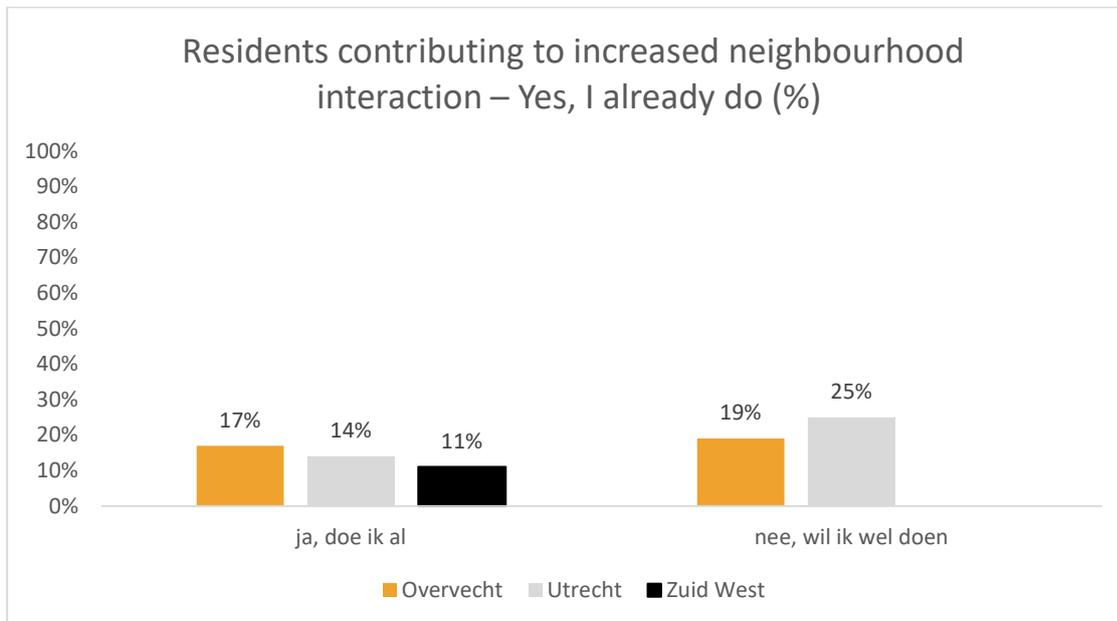


Figure 5.3: Residents contributing to increased neighbourhood interaction (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)

5.1.2 SOCIAL ATTACHMENT – SOCIAL COHESION

The other six variables of social attachment represent the **social cohesion**. The variables are:

4. Social cohesion score
5. % strongly agree with "People in this neighbourhood don't know each other well"
6. % strongly agree with "People in this neighbourhood interact with each other in a pleasant manner"
7. % strongly agree with "I live in a friendly neighbourhood"
8. % strongly agree with "People in this neighbourhood interact with each other frequently"
9. % strongly agree with "I feel comfortable with the people living in this neighbourhood"

VARIABLE 4: SOCIAL COHESION SCORE

The next variable is the social cohesion score, which is an indicator based on five statements. These statements are the next five variables (variable 5-9), that will be presented separately as well.

The social cohesion score of Overvecht has increased a little bit since 2008. It started at 4,7 in 2008, and ended up on a 5,0 in 2023. The same trend is visible in Utrecht, where it started on a 5,7 in 2008 and increased a little bit to a score of 5,9 in 2023. In Zuid West, the score is a bit higher than Overvecht, but lower than in Utrecht and remains quite constant as well.

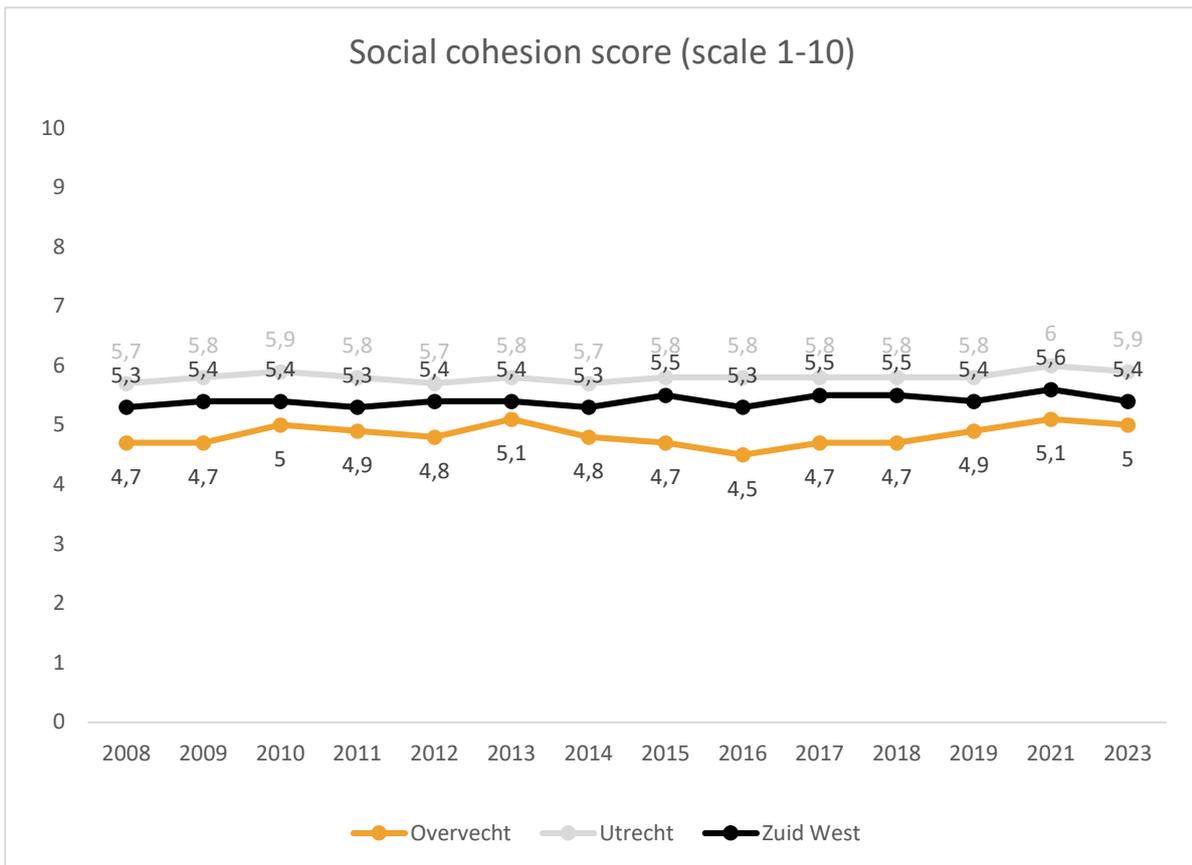


Figure 5.4: Social cohesion score (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)

VARIABLE 5: % STRONGLY AGREE WITH "PEOPLE IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD DON'T KNOW EACH OTHER WELL"

The next variable is the amount of respondents who agreed with the statement “People in this neighbourhood don’t know each other that well”, per 100 respondents. Because the goal of social attachment is to know more people in the neighbourhood, this is a negative statement where the percentage ideally should decrease.

In Overvecht, the percentage increases a bit, but then starts to decrease again. In 2016, it was 56% and in 2023 it was 55%. In Utrecht the percentage increased a little bit, from 44% in 2016 to 45% in 2023. So on the improvement of people getting to know more people, Overvecht is doing a little bit better, even though the percentage is still higher than Utrecht. In Zuid West, the percentage has increased slightly over the years, starting at 47% in 2016 and ending up at 51% in 2023, negatively influencing the social attachment.

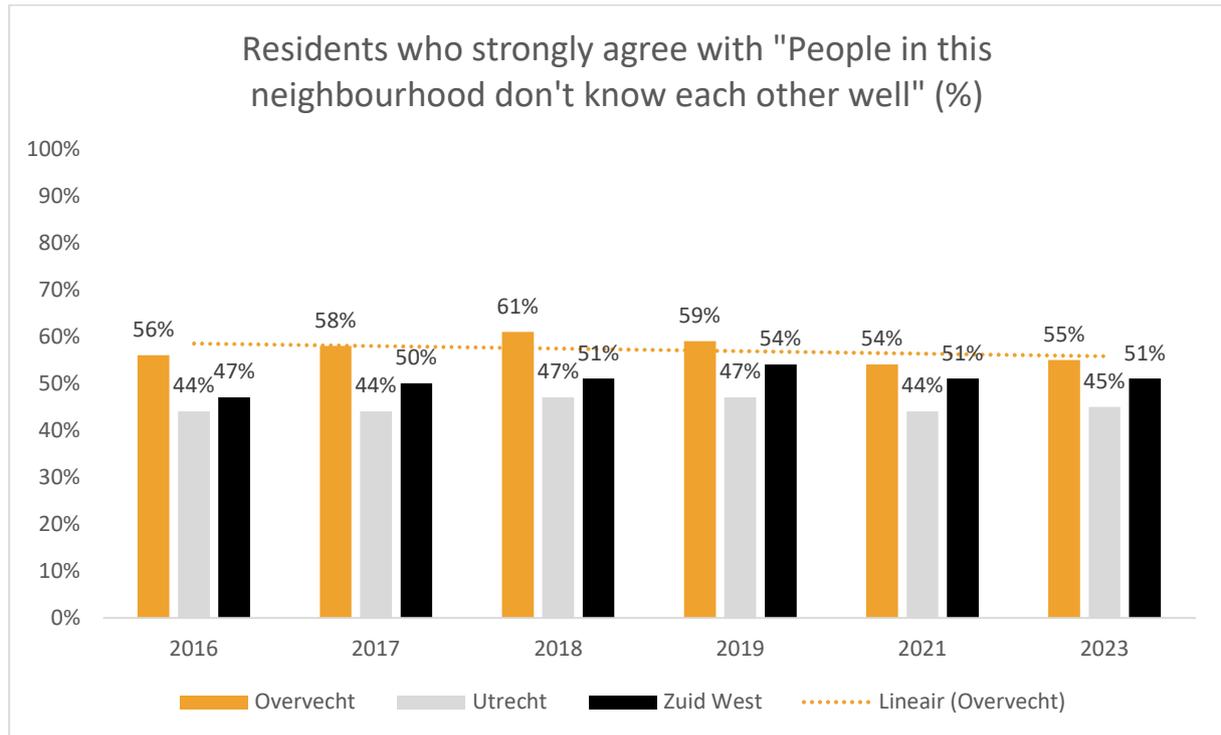


Figure 5.5: Residents who strongly agree with "People in this neighbourhood don't know each other well" (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)

VARIABLE 6: % STRONGLY AGREE WITH "PEOPLE IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER IN A PLEASANT MANNER"

The next variable is the number of respondents who strongly agree with the statement “People in this neighbourhood interact with each other in a pleasant manner”, per 100 respondents. In Overvecht, a strong increase is visible for this variable, from 37% in 2016 to 50% in 2023. In Utrecht the variable remains quite constant, starting at 66% in 2016 increasing up to 70% in 2023. So, for this variable Overvecht is increasing much faster than Utrecht. However, Overvecht still has a much lower percentage than Utrecht. In Zuid West, an increase is visible, starting at 56% in 2016, and ending up at 60% in 2023.

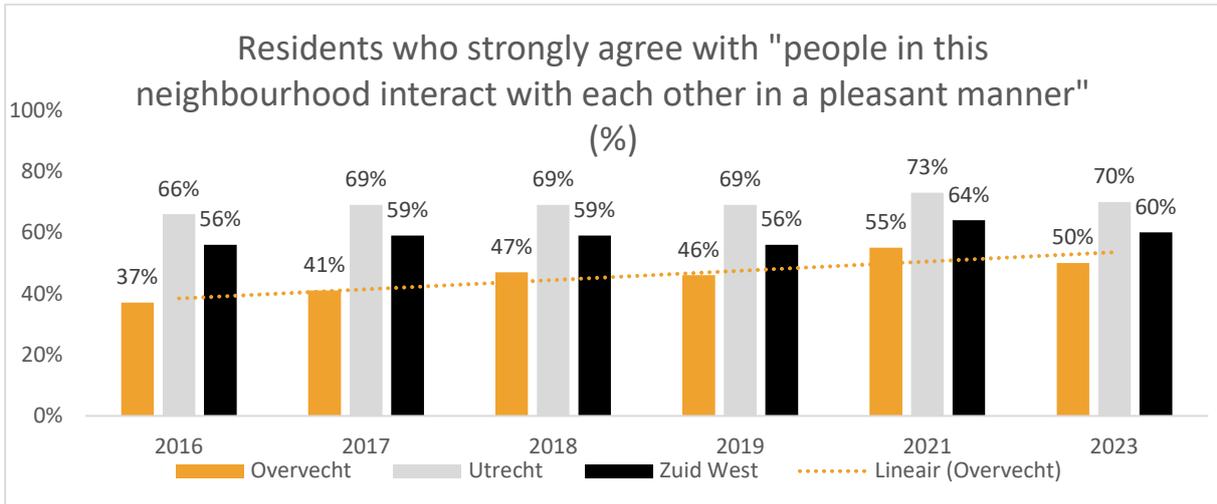


Figure 5.6: Residents who strongly agree with "people in this neighbourhood interact with each other in a pleasant manner" (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)

VARIABLE 7: % STRONGLY AGREE WITH "I LIVE IN A FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD"

The next variable is the number of respondents who agree with the statement “I live in a friendly neighbourhood”, per 100 respondents. When looking at Figure 5.7, there is a positive trend visible in Overvecht. The percentage in 2016 is 26%, and increases to 36% in 2023, with a peak in 2021 of 38%. In Utrecht, the percentage is much higher overall, but remains quite constant, starting at 55% in 2016, ending up at 59% in 2023. In Zuid West, an increase is visible as well, 38% in 2016 and 45% in 2023.

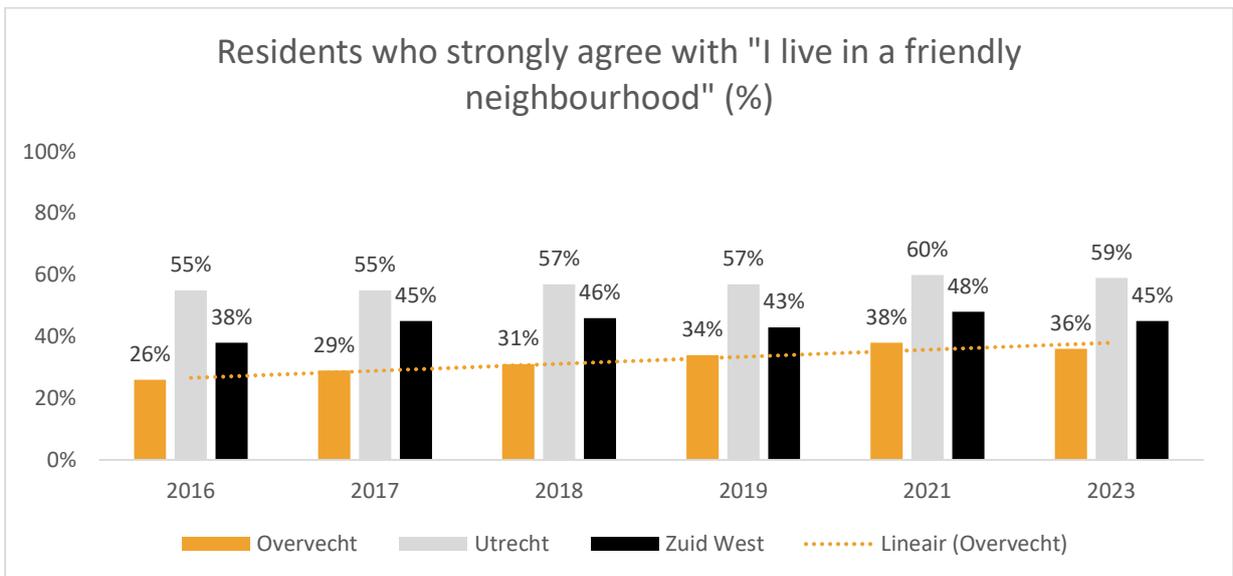


Figure 5.7: Residents who strongly agree with "I live in a friendly neighbourhood" (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)

VARIABLE 8: % STRONGLY AGREE WITH "PEOPLE IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER FREQUENTLY"

The next variable is the number of respondents who (strongly) agree with the statement “People in this neighbourhood interact with each other frequently”, per 100 respondents. In Overvecht, a positive trend is visible over the years. In 2016, the percentage was 13%, and in 2023 the percentage was 24%, with a peak in 2021 at 26%. In Utrecht, the percentage increases as well, but not as much as in Overvecht. It started at 25% in 2016, but ended up at 28% in 2023. The percentage of Overvecht is getting close to the percentage of Utrecht. In Zuid West, the percentage grew between 2017 and 2021, then dropped back to 25%, which is the same as in 2016, so no improvement visible.

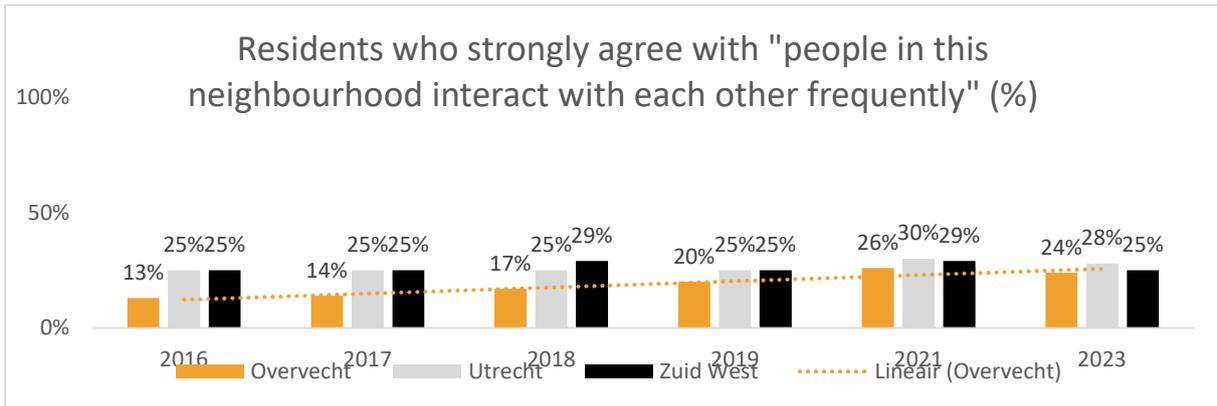


Figure 5.8: Residents who strongly agree with "people in this neighbourhood interact with each other frequently" (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023)

VARIABLE 9: % STRONGLY AGREE WITH "I FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH THE PEOPLE LIVING IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD"

The next variable is the number of respondents who strongly agree with the statement “I feel comfortable with the people living in this neighbourhood”, per 100 respondents. As can be seen in Figure 5.9, in Overvecht is a positive trend visible between 2016 and 2023. In 2016, the percentage was 28% and in 2023 this increased up to 41%, with a peak in 2021 of 44%. In Utrecht, the percentage is higher but the growth is slower, with 59% in 2016 and 63% in 2023. In Zuid West, the percentage increased slightly, starting at 45% in 2016, and ending up at 50% in 2023. So, not as much growth as in Overvecht, but overall a higher percentage.

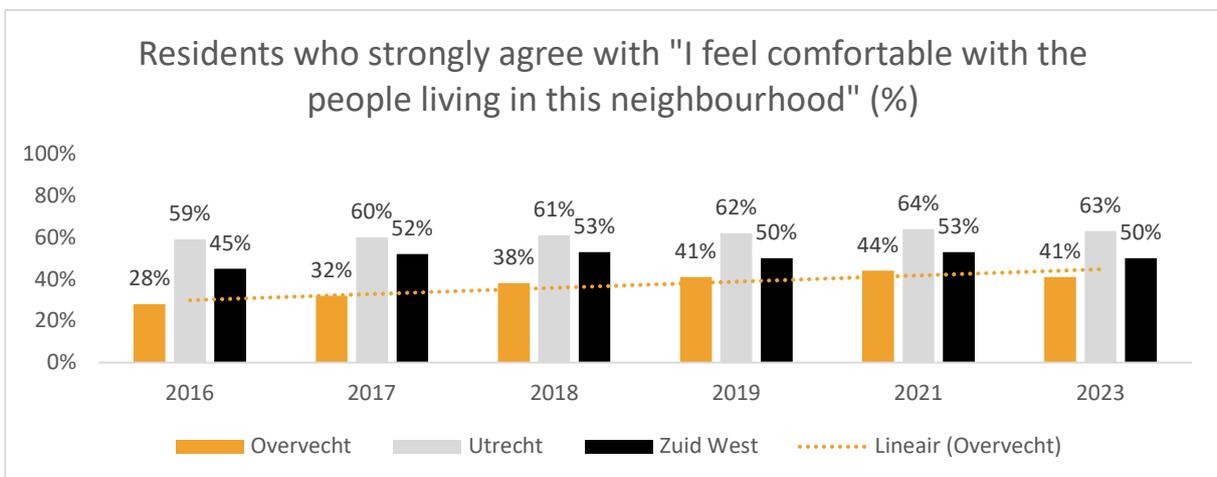


Figure 5.9: Residents who strongly agree with "I feel comfortable with the people living in this neighbourhood" (%) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023).

5.2 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, an overview is shown of the results of the quantitative data analysis answering the first sub question: *How have the different dimensions of social attachment of disadvantaged neighbourhoods changed over the past few years?*, looking into the involvement of residents and the social cohesion.

The overview of all variables and how they have changed over the past few years, compared to Utrecht and Zuid West is shown in Table 5.1. In the third column, the social attachment compared to Zuid West and Utrecht is shown. Minus (-) shows that the variable for more social attachment is lower than in Utrecht and Zuid West, +/- shows that the variable is similar to Utrecht and Zuid West, and a plus (+) shows that the variable of social attachment is higher than in Utrecht and Zuid West. The same is done for the growth of social attachment in Overvecht compared to Zuid West and Utrecht. For the first three variables this is not applicable, because the variables are only measured in 2023.

Summary of results quantitative data analysis Social Attachment				
	Variable Social Attachment	Conclusion	Social attachment in Overvecht compared to Zuid West & Utrecht	Growth of social attachment in Overvecht compared to Zuid West & Utrecht
1	% involved in the formulation of municipality policies and plans	Overvecht has the most involved residents, 2% more than Utrecht and Zuid West.	+	n/a
2	% of residents engaged in one or more neighbourhood activities	Overvecht has the most residents who are engaged in activities, 2% more than Utrecht and 8% more than Zuid West.	+	n/a
3	% contributing to increased neighbourhood interaction – yes, I already do	Overvecht has the most residents who already contribute to more contact in the neighbourhood, 3% more than Utrecht and 6% more than Zuid West	+	n/a
4	Social cohesion score	Overvecht has the lowest overall score, and increases with 0,3 over the years. Utrecht and Zuid West grow slower, with 0,2 and 0,1 between 2008 and 2023.	-	+/-
5	% strongly agree with "people in this neighbourhood don't know each other well"	Overvecht has the highest score, which is not preferable. However, there is a decrease visible of 1%. Utrecht and Zuid West are both growing, so Overvecht is doing better in the trend, even though the score is still higher than Utrecht and Zuid West.	-	+
6	% strongly agree with "people in this neighbourhood interact with each other in a pleasant manner"	Overvecht has the lowest percentage, but shows a strong growth over the years of 13%. Utrecht remains quite constant, and Zuid West grew with 4%.	-	++
7	% strongly agree with "I live in a friendly neighbourhood"	Overvecht has the lowest percentage, but shows a strong growth of 10%. Utrecht grew 4% and Zuid West with 7%.	-	++

8	% strongly agree with "people in this neighbourhood interact with each other frequently"	Overvecht has the lowest percentage, but shows strong growth, 11% from 2016 to 2023. Utrecht grew with 3% and Zuid West grew at first, but then went back to the same value as in 2016.	-	++
9	% strongly agree with "I feel comfortable with the people living in this neighbourhood"	Overvecht has the lowest percentage, but shows strong growth, 13% from 2016 to 2023. Utrecht grew only 4% and Zuid West 5%.	-	++

Table 5.1: Summary of quantitative data analysis social attachment (Own work, 2024).

The involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood is generally higher than in Utrecht on average, and also than Zuid West. In all three variables the involvement is 2% or 3% higher than Utrecht. The social cohesion score in general is lower than in Utrecht and Zuid West and not much growth is visible over the past few years. However, the separate variables are showing strong growth. They are still not on the same level as Utrecht in general, but the trend is showing positive results in terms of growing social attachment.

6 RESULTS – ACTOR PERCEPTIONS

In this section, the results of the interviews are presented. The sub questions that will be answered are about the perceptions of actors on the two main concepts of this research: social attachment and community involvement initiatives. Also, the perceptions of actors on the relation between the two is discussed, answering the second, third and fourth sub question, mentioned in Section 1.3.

6.1 ACTOR PERCEPTIONS ON TREND OF SOCIAL ATTACHMENT

In this section, the actor perceptions on the trend of social attachment and the most influential factors on social attachment are presented. The first aspect of social attachment, involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood, will be elaborated on first, following their perception on the social cohesion. The section answers the second sub question: *What is the perception of various actors on the trend of social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and what factors influence the social attachment the most?*

6.1.1 PERCEPTION OF INVOLVEMENT WITH WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Before showing the quantitative data analysis, there was already an overall consensus among the interviewees that the involvement of residents with what is going on in the neighbourhood is high. For example, eight of the eleven interviewees mentioned that the number of volunteers in the neighbourhood at different initiatives and organisations is high, and people are willing to put a lot of effort into making sure the neighbourhood is liveable. A neighbourhood platform and a resident platform (*'buurtplatform'* and *'bewonersplatform'*) are very actively involved in decision-making processes from the municipality, as well as the neighbourhood ambassadors (*'wijkambassadeurs'*). The neighbourhood ambassadors are a group of residents who actively contribute to improving the neighbourhood. They share real stories from the neighbourhood and participate in discussions about the plans of *'Samen voor Overvecht'*. The neighbourhood ambassadors focus on the following themes: clean neighbourhood, green neighbourhood, participation & entrepreneurship, and culture & interaction. They feel responsible for their neighbourhood and are actively involved in making sure the neighbourhood is and stays liveable for everyone.

An interesting thing that was mentioned by three of the interviewees that deal with residents in participation processes directly, was that the people that are involved in the neighbourhood usually have been living there for a long time, or recently moved to the neighbourhood. The people that have been living there for a long time, usually feel responsible for keeping the neighbourhood liveable, while the new residents are mainly curious about what is happening in the neighbourhood and focused on meeting neighbours, the social architect with lots of experience in initiatives stated (Personal communication, 2 May 2024).

Some of the actors mentioned that the involvement might be even higher than the numbers show, because a lot of people are represented by key figures (*'sleutelfiguren'*) in the neighbourhood, but they have a whole group of people supporting their statements. These key figures in the neighbourhood are usually related to mosques, churches, or for example sports associations and represent less talkative members of their group, they stated.

An interesting thing mentioned by multiple actors, is the fact that during the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the first initiatives organised by residents themselves, were in Overvecht. People were making meals for neighbours, and organising sport sessions in the courtyards of the apartment buildings, so that people could join from their balconies. The involvement in Overvecht in the beginning of Covid-19 was higher than in other parts of Utrecht. People took care of each other and were involved in all sorts of initiatives.

However, when the active group of residents is researched, it is striking that it contains a very small group of residents from Overvecht, that is not representative of the whole population of the neighbourhood. The actively involved residents are mostly highly educated, working professionals (sometimes even in the field of urban planning), of Dutch origin, and are residents that have been living in Overvecht for a long time. However, the population of Overvecht contains a huge amount of people living in poverty, are unemployed and with a

migration background combined with a low social-economical background. Therefore, the group that is representing the whole neighbourhood in these platforms, is not representative of everyone.

Another finding in the interviews is that the residents of the neighbourhood consists of two types of people: those who want to stay in the neighbourhood, and those who want to leave Overvecht as soon as possible. The difference between these groups is huge and their attachment to the neighbourhood differs a lot. The ‘stayers’ are proud of Overvecht and feel responsible for keeping the environment liveable, and the ‘leavers’ have no intention of contributing to the neighbourhood in any way, and they don’t feel responsible and experience low social attachment. This was a generalisation from people who talk directly with residents, during for example housing renovation projects. Then, the people who are usually not present at meetings become visible and share their insights.

A thing that was mentioned after showing the quantitative data analysis of the involvement was that the interviewees said that the involvement of residents differs per sub-neighbourhood and even per block. The numbers about the involvement are an average of the whole neighbourhood of Overvecht, consisting of over 35.000 inhabitants. Among these people, there are residents who are very actively involved, but also people who are not involved at all in the neighbourhood. The actors state that it is very difficult to draw conclusions from the average numbers of Overvecht, because the neighbourhood is simply too big to generalise. Social brokers meet uninvolved residents during home visits in the project called ‘Sociaal renoveren’. That is how they know what the uninvolved residents think and do in the neighbourhood.

Lastly, the actors state that the involvement in the neighbourhood is the highest on a smaller scale. Most residents are comfortable to invest into their direct surroundings, by being involved in decision-making processes for example, or by helping to clean up their street. But, they experience difficulties with being involved in larger projects that involve the whole neighbourhood of Overvecht, because it’s simply too complex to understand or they don’t feel responsible for the problems in other parts of the neighbourhood because they don’t identify with them, the resident connectors and housing association member agreed on.

6.1.2 INFLUENCING FACTORS OF INVOLVEMENT IN NEIGHBOURHOOD

The most important reasons mentioned by actors for strong involvement in the neighbourhood is the fact that Overvecht has been centre of the attention regarding their liveability problems. Over the past few years, a lot of investments have been made, in order to improve the liveability, safety and social networks in the neighbourhood. The program that they are working on now, is called ‘*Samen voor Overvecht*’, meaning that the municipality, housing associations, well-being organisations and other involved parties are working in close collaboration with each other as well as with the residents of Overvecht. Involvement of the residents has been one of the key objectives of the project, and the actors mentioned this as the most important factor for the positive numbers of involvement in the neighbourhood.

Another reason for strong involvement is the fact that people are proud of their neighbourhood, they identify as true ‘*Overvechters*’ and feel responsible for the liveability of the neighbourhood. Therefore, they are active in platforms, volunteering in various organisations and organising initiatives in the neighbourhood such as cleaning up the streets, and organising neighbourhood barbecues. Also, a lot of residents in Overvecht are unemployed or already retired, which can be pointed out as an important reason for being more involved in for example volunteering because they probably have more spare time, the social brokers and resident connectors mentioned.

Overvecht consists of numerous groups, with different cultures and religions, but one of the major groups in Overvecht is originally from Northern African countries. The culture that comes along with these groups, can be describes as a community oriented culture (*‘wij-cultuur’*)resulting in generally more involved residents, multiple actors mentioned. They tend to have large informal networks, via for example mosques and churches, and are involved in initiatives that belong to their culture.

On the other hand, one of the most important reasons that people are not involved in the neighbourhood is also related to the diversity of cultures that is present in the neighbourhood, heterogeneous neighbourhood, resulting in culture and language barriers. Actors mentioned that some people are very hesitant to join activities or to participate in decision-making processes, due to the fact that they are not comfortable with speaking Dutch or the different cultures that do not mix easily. Lowering thresholds for participation is important, one of the social brokers from the well-being organisation mentioned.

But, the biggest concern that was mentioned in the interviews with actors, is the fact that trust in governmental institutions is very low in Overvecht. Polarisation is a serious issue, and the feeling of *'us (residents of Overvecht) versus them (the government)'* is growing and growing. This causes problems in the amount of people that want to be involved in decision-making processes. The people that are not involved in decision-making processes are not involved due to low trust in institutions, some of the actors that speak directly with residents who are not actively involved for their job. There is a feeling of *"My opinion does not matter anyway, so why should I participate?"*. All actors mentioned this as one of the biggest reasons of why they think residents are not being involved in the neighbourhood.

On the other hand, it can also result in residents seeking more help from each other and in informal networks, instead of the government, and thus contributing to social attachment within the 'social bubbles', two of the actors said.

The other reason for not being involved is the fact that in Overvecht a significant portion of all houses consists of social housing. Due to the social housing policies in the Netherlands, the inflow of residents in social housing is very vulnerable, which means that many people struggle to manage independently in life. These residents are often stuck in *'survival mode'*, resulting in having no time to be involved in the neighbourhood. They are too busy with trying to deal with their problems, such as debt, health issues and disabilities. The data expert mentions that a correlation between vulnerability and involvement could be possible, and other interviewees confirm these thoughts.

Also, it is hard to build upon neighbours that want to move as soon as possible, because some residents do not feel responsible for the neighbourhood. The rapid flow of residents in the neighbourhood is one of the barriers for why people are not involved in the neighbourhood, according to the interviewees.

Lastly, the actors mentioned that it can be very difficult to approach the people who are not involved yet, because they are invisible. *"You don't know who you are not reaching"*, one of the interviewees said, and that is one of the main problems. Social brokers try to reach invisible people via various initiatives, such as the social renovations project, where housing associations go to the residents' houses before the renovations start to see who lives there and what their story is. The goal is to renovate the building, but also help the vulnerable people with other issues that might make their lives more difficult.

6.1.3 PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL COHESION

The actors' perceptions on the social cohesion in the neighbourhood varies a lot. The most mentioned statement regarding social cohesion is the fact that Overvecht is an exceptionally heterogeneous neighbourhood, that consists of numerous informal networks of clustered people, which were referred to as 'bubbles'. These bubbles are mostly divided by nationalities or religion. The fact that there are so many cultures and nationalities in Overvecht, makes people feel connected to those who resemble them. The social cohesion within most of these bubbles is very strong. People take care of each other, know each other by name, and feel at home within these bubbles. There are many informal networks within the neighbourhood. Almost all actors mentioned this.

On the other hand, there is little to no mixing between the different bubbles, which could be an explanation of the low social cohesion scores from the quantitative data analysis. The bubbles remain intact. One of the actors described the neighbourhood as: *"a diverse neighbourhood where many communities live pleasantly, but*

isolated from each other". Apparently, it is possible to feel attached to the bubble, but that does not necessarily mean that people feel attached to the whole neighbourhood, one of the other interviewees said.

Also, the amount of residents that experience loneliness in the neighbourhood is very high. Not everyone is part of one of the bubbles in Overvecht, and people can have a very small social network and experience anonymity and loneliness. The difficult part is that these people are invisible in the neighbourhood, because they are not in contact with the municipality, are not filling in the questionnaires from the municipality and do not attend social activities. Through initiatives such as the social renovations, these invisible people are reached and that is how for example social brokers from well-being organisations and housing associations sometimes find the opportunity to talk to these vulnerable people.

The same statement as for the involvement occurs here: the social cohesion differs per sub-neighbourhood and even per block, most actors agreed on.

6.1.4 INFLUENCING FACTORS OF SOCIAL COHESION

The social cohesion in Overvecht is lower than in the rest of Utrecht as can be seen in Chapter 5 in the quantitative data analysis, and actors mentioned various reasons for this phenomenon. The most important factor negatively influencing the social cohesion is the fact that Overvecht is an exceptionally heterogeneous neighbourhood with lots of different cultural 'bubbles'. People are very different, and therefore not mixing well between the different bubbles. Some people might not experience attachment to their neighbourhood, but do feel attached to their smaller community within the neighbourhood.

The same as for the involvement, the vulnerability of the inflow of residents in social housing could also be a reason for low social cohesion scores. In Overvecht, the liveability is under pressure. Residents are experiencing safety issues, poverty, unemployment, low socio-economic background, psychological issues and are therefore stuck in 'survival mode' and therefore do not have time to invest in social bonds with neighbours. Almost all actors mentioned this as one of the most important reasons for the low social cohesion in Overvecht.

Another important factor that negatively affects the social cohesion is the way the apartment buildings are built in Overvecht. The so called '*Tienhoogflats*' are preventing residents from meeting each other. Each floor consists of three apartments with an elevator going downstairs. If you don't want to, you won't meet anyone, which is not contributing to low threshold social contact or meeting neighbours. Living an anonymous life in one of these apartment buildings is fairly easy, and therefore not contributing to better social cohesion.

Also, one of the actors mentioned that in some parts of the neighbourhood, the amount of informal meeting spots for residents is insufficient. There are lots of parks and outdoor green spaces, but not many places where people can organise something indoors. In Overvecht, a few community centres are present, but for some parts of the neighbourhood these are too far away. A place where all different bubbles can come together, and organise activities, should be present in all sub-neighbourhoods in Overvecht, the project manager of Overvecht Centrum said. The representative of the housing association agreed, and said that their housing association is focussing on realising more informal meeting spots within their buildings, because the residents asked for it as well.

On the other hand, the social cohesion scores in the quantitative data analysis are going up, and the actors also shared their insights on that part. The most important reason for the improvements according to almost all actors is the fact that the neighbourhood has been invested in for so many years. A lot of budget has been available for initiatives related to social cohesion and the well-being of residents of Overvecht. All initiatives combined are part of the improvements that are visible in the neighbourhood.

On top of that, the composition of residents in the neighbourhood has also changed over time. The amount of social housing compared to non-social housing has decreased over the years, resulting in proportionally less vulnerable residents in Overvecht in total. This could also have a lot of influence on the data of social cohesion, the data expert, project manager of Overvecht Centrum and the housing association representative stated.

6.1.5 CONCLUSION SOCIAL ATTACHMENT: TREND & INFLUENCING FACTORS

In conclusion and to answer the second sub question: *What is the perception of various actors on the trend of social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and what factors influence the social attachment the most?*, the perceptions of various actors regarding social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are multifaceted and influenced by several factors.

Firstly, there is a consensus among actors that the level of involvement of residents in neighbourhood activities and initiatives is generally high. Residents, particularly those who have lived in the neighbourhood for a long time or recently moved in, actively participate in decision-making processes, volunteer for various organizations, and organize initiatives to improve the neighbourhood's liveability. However, it is noted that the active group of residents is not representative of the entire population, with predominantly highly educated, working professionals being involved.

The factors influencing residents' involvement include pride in the neighbourhood, a sense of responsibility for its liveability, cultural factors such as a strong community-oriented culture among certain groups, and available time due to unemployment or retirement. Conversely, barriers to involvement include language and cultural barriers, low trust in governmental institutions, social housing policies leading to vulnerable residents struggling to manage independently and being in 'survival mode', and a quickly changing population comprising both "stayers" and "leavers."

Secondly, perceptions of social cohesion in disadvantaged neighbourhoods vary among actors. While some note the existence of strong social bonds within certain cultural or religious "bubbles," , they also highlight a lack of mixing between these bubbles, resulting in a fragmented sense of community. Loneliness is also prevalent among residents who are not part of these social networks. Factors influencing social cohesion include cultural diversity leading to differences in socialization patterns, vulnerability due to socioeconomic challenges, physical aspects of housing hindering social interaction, and limited availability of informal meeting spots.

Despite challenges, improvements in social cohesion are noted, attributed to long-term investments in the neighbourhood, changes in resident demographics, and initiatives aimed at enhancing community well-being.

In summary, actors agree on the fact that disadvantaged neighbourhoods such as Overvecht face obstacles to social attachment. It is developing in the right direction, but there is still a lot of work to do. Obstacles include cultural diversity, socioeconomic challenges, and physical barriers. However, efforts to address these issues through community involvement, investments in the social domain, and policy changes are seen as contributors to social attachment over time.

6.2 ACTOR PERCEPTIONS ON COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES

In this section, the actor perception on the community involvement initiatives will be discussed. First, the initiatives focused on involving residents in decision-making processes will be elaborated on, then the initiatives focused on increasing social interaction will be discussed. The section will be concluded by answering the third sub question: *What is the perception of various actors on what can be learned from initiatives focused on community involvement that have been implemented in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?*

6.2.1 INITIATIVES FOCUSED ON INVOLVING RESIDENTS IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

The perception of actors on initiatives focused on involving residents in decision-making processes was very clear. The most mentioned theme in the interviews was the fact that transparency during the whole process was the most important factor for successful involvement of residents in decision-making processes. Transparency before participation, by expectations and limitations to the project, explaining the interests of the involved parties and the possibilities. But also, transparency during and after participation, by explaining what will be done with the input that is gathered during the process. Given the fact that most residents experience low trust in governmental institutions, being transparent about interests, expectations, possibilities, and limitations to the process is very important.

Another thing that most actor agreed on, is the fact that if a party wants to involve residents in decision-making processes, they should make sure that the organisation has the flexibility to do so. Parties should have a sincere interest in the opinion of the residents, in order to be successful. If you are sincerely interested, clear about boundaries, and you create the flexibility to really listen to the input of residents, the residents will be more involved and more useful input will be gathered.

Involving the residents as early as possible is also important, for example by doing a project in co-creation. This is a bottom-up approach, where the residents are involved in formulating the problem statement, as well as thinking about possible solutions and implementation.

Many actors mentioned that it is important to make sure that all opinions are heard, not necessarily by speaking to everyone in the whole neighbourhood, but also by for example involving 'sleutelfiguren' in the formulation of the problem statement. Otherwise, the risks is that only the already actively involved residents will speak up, because they are not a representative group of people in the neighbourhood. Make sure that everyone has had the opportunity to share their opinion by organizing different ways to gather input, making participation low threshold. Some people like to watch a video and respond via email, while others prefer to join a participation night in one of the community centres. However, to make sure everyone has had the opportunity to join, different timeframes and locations for participation are crucial. For example, placing a scale model of the plans for the neighbourhood in the shopping centre can be a great way to start the conversation with residents that otherwise would not have responded or joined a participation event. Personally approaching residents to join a committee can also work. So, making participation low threshold and actively approaching residents is key, and involving key figures from the start is important for successful involvement of residents.

Another statement that actors made is that involvement on a small scale works best. Residents experience difficulties in participating in decision-making processes when the level of scale is too abstract. It can be very difficult to participate in decision-making processes for a whole neighbourhood, but it is easier to make decisions for your own street, park or block. Various actors recommended that for more involvement, the subjects that will be discussed should be small scale and understandable.

That leads to the next important thing to keep in mind: accessibility and understandability of the process. Policy documents from the municipality can contain very difficult bureaucratic language, which is not understandable for most residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. In order to be able to involve everyone in the process, it is crucial that this bureaucratic language is translated into accessible documents for all residents of the neighbourhood, actors mentioned in the interviews.

Lastly, the actors stated that it is important to connect the new developments to what is already present in the neighbourhood. Everyone keeps ‘reinventing the wheel’, which is not efficient and a loss of time. The focus should be on existing initiatives, and proven successful practices. These should be used as a starting point for new developments. Involve the active and successful initiative-takers and other key stakeholders in the neighbourhood and give them a lead role in formulating next step for the neighbourhood. They are much closer to what is actually happening in the neighbourhood and can be very capable of providing useful new insights. They can become ambassadors for the project, telling other relevant people about the new developments as well.

Another thing that was mentioned, was the fact that really being present in the neighbourhood is crucial for more involvement. Escaping the municipality’s or housing associations office is very important sometimes, to see what is the current state of the neighbourhood or building, and to talk to residents. This is also important for the development of trust in institutions. The people that decide on what is going to happen in the neighbourhood should have a clear view on what is actually happening in the neighbourhood, instead of only visiting once a year.

The developments of Overvecht Centrum are mentioned a lot as current good practices by the interviewees. Overvecht Centrum is under redevelopment, but all the plans are made in co-creation. A team of engaged residents and entrepreneurs from the neighbourhood, property owners, and the municipality have been working together since the summer of 2022 on a future plan for Overvecht Centrum. They implemented various ways of involving all sorts of people in the development of the plans, for example via digital platforms, a tool called ‘*swipocratie*’, passerby events with mock-up models of the developments, resident evenings with presentations and Q&As, collaboration with migrant organisations, and evenings for the neighbourhood to join. The project manager of the developments in Overvecht Centrum said something interesting: “Our goal is not to talk to everyone, but we do want to hear all voices in the neighbourhood”. This means that sometimes talking to representatives of groups is sufficient, but other times you need to actively reach out to those who are not yet represented in the plans.

Social renovations are also an example of how residents can be involved in a good way, according to interviewees. Social renovation combine the efforts of a physical renovation, with social aspects, by visiting all residents who are affected by the renovations. This way, the housing association and municipality gain insight into who are living there, what these people want, and it gets easier for residents to join participatory meetings for the renovation plans, because they already are in contact with the housing association through the social renovation program.

The lack of trust in governmental organisations is a huge barrier for people to participate in making plans for the neighbourhood, the actors mentioned in the interviews. Something that can help rebuild the trust, is by addressing short-term issues first, and then engaging in discussions about long-term plans, they stated. As a municipality or housing association, finding the balance between giving and taking is key. Residents and property owners can easily participate in plans for short-term, but long-term plans are always a bit more abstract and harder to identify with. Some interviewees also mentioned the fact that it is mostly about mistrust in institutions in general, which usually has nothing to do with the people working for them. Once they get familiar with their contact person within the housing association for example, the lack of trust disappears, or they say things such as: *“I do not trust the housing association, but you are okay”*.

Concluding, the lessons learned from initiatives that are focused on involving residents in decision-making processes are that transparency during the whole process is very important. It is crucial that as a municipality you are truly interested in what people have to say, when you decide to involve them. It is important to be clear about boundaries, and to create the flexibility within the process that makes it possible to implement the feedback of the residents. Involving residents and key figures as early as possible is important, for example by doing projects in co-creation. Make sure participation is low-threshold, so that everyone has the opportunity to share their opinion. Accessibility and understandability of documentation plays an important role in this. Also, try to connect the new developments to what is already present in the neighbourhood, then you reach a bigger

target audience and initiatives are more likely to be sustainable. Lastly, rebuilding trust by being present in the neighbourhood and by solving short-term issues, before engaging in discussions about long-term plans.

6.2.2 INITIATIVES FOCUSED ON INCREASING SOCIAL INTERACTION AMONG RESIDENTS

One of the most important things to focus on in initiatives for increasing social interaction among residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, is to organise low threshold activities that are easy to join by residents. These activities can include cleaning up the neighbourhood together, have a coffee in one of the community centres, organising a neighbourhood barbecue, joining a sports activity, children's activities, gardening in the parks or culturally related activities such as iftars during the Ramadan, the social brokers and resident connectors mentioned.

Combining multiple low threshold activities on the same moment and location can broaden the target audience. For example, a children's activity usually involved the parents as well. This way, it is easier to start a conversation with the parents and potentially inviting them for next initiatives. But also, the close collaboration between involved parties (municipality, social workers, housing associations, schools etc.) could broaden the target audience of initiatives as well. This way, more people will be reached. Diversity in social workers and members of the 'buurtteams' also leads to a diversity in the target groups that are reached. People are more likely to engage in activities that are organised by people that are similar to them, the neighbourhood advisor, resident connector and social broker stated.

Also, the project manager and housing association representative mentioned that it is important to facilitate in informal meeting spots for residents and places to organise activities. The community centres are used a lot, but there are only four in the whole neighbourhood. Informal places to gather with neighbours, friends or other people are crucial for being able to organise successful initiatives.

The next important thing to keep in mind according to the resident connectors and neighbourhood advisor is the structural embedding of successful initiatives. The Initiatives Fund plays an important role in the initiatives in the neighbourhood. The Initiatives Fund is a fund for large and small initiatives in Utrecht, provided by the municipality. For example, it can be used for renovating a small square in the neighbourhood, organizing an activity in a community centre, creating a facade garden, or establishing a meeting place for young people in the neighbourhood. Anyone with a good idea can apply for funding from the Initiatives Fund, including residents and organizations. The fund is meant to facilitate and stimulate the organization of initiatives that are related to social connections, but the rule is that the fund can only be used three times, then you have to find your own funding. That is why residents should be supported in making sure that their initiative is sustainable, and structurally embedded, so that it can be organised on a structural basis, three of the interviewees mentioned. This embedding contains a long term vision, volunteers that are able to organise the initiative themselves and a consistent cash-flow.

Lastly, the project manager of Overvecht Centrum, the social architect and former resident connector mentioned that a delicate balance should be found in strengthening existing 'bubbles' and forcing these bubbles to mix. Forced mixing is very time-consuming, and not likely to result in sustainable bonds when rushed. It involves more than just mixing housing types, which makes it a difficult goal.

According to the experts that were interviewed on this topic, a few things are important for involving residents in decision-making processes, but also for increasing social interaction. For example, the focus on what is already there is also important for increasing social interaction among residents, according to the project manager of Overvecht Centrum, the resident connectors and the social brokers. Some initiatives have been around for a long time, such as the 'voedseltuinen', the pet farm, 'buurtmaaltijden', 'buurtbuiik' and the ice skate club. Also, identifying thresholds of residents for not attending activities is important. When the thresholds are identified, it might be very easy to lower them, and therefore get more residents to certain events or activities, for example proposing to join them in an activity the first time, so they get familiar with the environment and Another important lesson is that the residents that are involved should be given ownership

over their initiative. The right amount of responsibility helps them to feel proud of what they established, which is very important for most residents. Also, showing appreciation to active residents or property owners can be helpful for making sure they stay involved. Being present in the neighbourhood and talking to people is crucial, instead of only being present online or over the phone, the interviewees stated. Collaboration with residents and key figures in organising initiatives can help. A bottom-up approach instead of top-down approach can be more appealing to residents. A pro-active, personal approach and face-to-face contact with residents helps to involve more residents. These are the most mentioned statements made by experts on the topic of involvement in decision making processes, and also increasing social interaction.

6.2.3 CONCLUSION OF ACTOR PERCEPTION ON COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES

The perception of various actors on the lessons learned from community involvement initiatives in disadvantaged neighbourhoods underscores several key insights, answering the second sub question: *What is the perception of various actors on what can be learned from initiatives focused on community involvement that have been implemented in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?*

Involvement in decision-making processes

- *Transparency and trust:* The most emphasized lesson is the importance of transparency throughout the decision-making process. Actors highlighted that clarity about expectations, limitations, interests, and how residents' input will be used is crucial for building trust. Given the prevalent low trust in governmental institutions, transparency before, during, and after participation is vital.
- *Flexibility and sincere interest:* For successful resident involvement, organizations must be flexible and genuinely interested in residents' opinions. This sincere interest, combined with clear boundaries and flexibility in the process, ensures more meaningful and useful input from residents.
- *Early and inclusive involvement:* Involving residents as early as possible, preferably through co-creation, ensures better engagement. It is important to hear all voices, not just those who are already active. Utilizing key figures ('*sleutelfiguren*') to gather diverse opinions and making participation accessible through various methods (e.g., videos, community nights, scale models in public spaces) helps achieve broader representation.
- *Small-scale and understandable processes:* Residents find it easier to engage with smaller, more tangible projects rather than large-scale abstract ones. Therefore, discussing manageable, small-scale subjects encourages better involvement. Additionally, translating bureaucratic language into accessible documents is essential for inclusivity.

Initiatives focused on increasing social interaction

- *Social interaction initiatives:* Organizing low-threshold activities that are easy to join, such as community clean-ups, barbecues, sports activities, and cultural events, fosters social interaction. Combining activities and collaborating closely with various stakeholders broadens the target audience and increases participation.
- *Sustainability and structural embedding:* For long-term success, initiatives need structural embedding. The Initiatives Fund in Utrecht supports both large and small projects, but long-term sustainability requires ongoing support, a consistent volunteer base, and continuous funding.
- *Balance between mixing and strengthening existing groups:* Strengthening existing social groups ('bubbles') while encouraging integration should be approached delicately. Forced mixing can work counterproductive; sustainable social bonds take time to develop naturally.

Both initiatives focused on increasing involvement of residents in decision-making processes and social interaction:

- *Building on existing initiatives:* Leveraging existing successful initiatives and involving active community members as ambassadors can enhance the sustainability and acceptance of new projects. Actors stressed the need to connect new developments to what is already present in the neighbourhood to avoid redundancy and increase efficiency.
- *Physical presence:* Being present in the neighbourhood helps build trust and pave the way for discussions about long-term plans. Decision-makers need to have a clear understanding of the neighbourhood's current state by engaging directly with residents.

Both for decision-making involvement and social interaction, actors stressed the importance of focusing on existing initiatives, lowering participation thresholds, giving residents ownership and responsibility, and appreciating their contributions. Proactive, personal, face-to-face engagement and collaboration with key figures are crucial for successful community involvement. In summary, the lessons learned from these initiatives highlight the importance of transparency, genuine interest, early involvement, small-scale projects, leveraging existing initiatives, and maintaining a strong, visible presence in the neighbourhood. These elements are essential for building trust, fostering engagement, and ensuring the sustainability of community involvement initiatives in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

6.3 ACTOR PERCEPTIONS ON INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES ON SOCIAL ATTACHMENT

In this section, the actor perceptions on the relationship between community involvement initiatives and social attachment will be discussed. The section will be concluded by answering the fourth sub question: *What is the perception of various actors on to what extent the initiatives focused on community involvement contribute to developing stronger social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?*

6.3.1 INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES ON SOCIAL ATTACHMENT

The actors mostly agreed on the fact that more community involvement initiatives lead to more social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Especially, the initiatives that focus on increasing social interaction, and facilitates residents meeting each other, was mentioned as successful. By means of these initiatives, people meet each other, and find each other more easily when they want to organise something themselves.

Another interesting thing that two of the interviewees mentioned is the fact that radical area developments can lead to stronger social attachment as well, because people will unite in resistance towards the changes. They will start resident committees, protest against the plans, collect signatures and sit down together to make sure the neighbourhood will stay the same. It is a bit controversial, but three of the actors mentioned that it could contribute to stronger attachment.

On the other hand, some of the interviewees mentioned the fact that the social attachment increased a little bit, but is still much lower than in Utrecht. The amount of investments that have been made into the liveability and social domain is a lot, so some of the actors said that they were disappointed with the relatively low results. There certainly is improvement visible, but they thought that the numbers would improve faster than they actually did. Apparently, there is more to it than focusing only on initiatives in the neighbourhood.

One of the interviewees said: *“For years there has been a focus on resident initiatives and them getting to know each other, which is very good and certainly contributes to a more pleasant neighbourhood, but in addition to these initiatives, the social issues in the neighbourhood need to be addressed simultaneously. Then, people are able to escape from survival-mode and broaden their view, and maybe have time to start investing in social ties. So, absolutely keep investing in social initiatives, but don't expect that those initiatives alone are going to lead to social attachment and residents pleasantly living together.”* – Interview social architect at municipality of Utrecht with 45 years of work experience, translated from Dutch to English (Personal communication, 2 May 2024).

The most important lesson that she wanted to share is that focusing solely on initiatives to involve the community in decision-making processes and increasing social interaction is not enough. The vulnerability of the neighbourhood needs to be tackled and therefore the focus should also be on solving the social issues within the neighbourhood simultaneously with the organisation of initiatives.

Two other interviewees agreed with this statement: initiatives help to strengthen the social attachment, but simultaneously, the other social issues need to be resolved, in order to be able to participate in the neighbourhood. The social issues that were most mentioned are:

- The lack of trust in governmental institutions;
- Safety within the neighbourhood and criminal activities;
- Poverty and unemployment issues.

When these issues will be tackled, the residents will hopefully be able to have a broader view and participate in neighbourhood, the interviewees said.

A great example of how this can be achieved is ‘*Sociaal renoveren*’ or social renovation, a strategy that housing association Woonin uses since 2019 as a way to improve the neighbourhood, in collaboration with the municipality of Utrecht, DOCK and ‘*Buurtteam*’. Four of the interviewees mentioned this strategy as a very successful way to reach otherwise ‘unreachable’ residents and find the barriers for the development of social attachment. A social renovation not only involves addressing and improving homes, but also actively offering residents more help before, during and after their homes are renovated. Physical renovation provides an opportunity to engage with residents that are otherwise invisible. The physical renovation offers opportunities to connect with residents in a natural and approachable way to see what help they need or what they can contribute to the neighbourhood. Many residents that live in Overvecht are struggling with debt, loneliness, mental health issues, and often they have lost trust in the government. Social renovation is a low threshold way to get in touch with these vulnerable residents, and helping them to move forward, while also improving the physical environment of the neighbourhood. A win-win situation for institutions and residents and the municipality.

However, a threat of this way of thinking, is that stronger community bonds will solve all problems in the neighbourhood. There is an assumption that strong community cohesion ensures that people take care of one another, and therefore reducing the necessity for formal care provided by the municipality. This perspective involves actively encouraging community members to support each other, a practice that has been established for years in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, this approach is unlikely to substantially increase to the point where formal care services are no longer necessary or the responsibilities of ‘*buurtteams*’ are significantly reduced. *“This presents a considerable risk associated with the budget cuts that the municipality must implement.”* – Interview social architect at municipality of Utrecht with 45 years of work experience, translated from Dutch to English (Personal communication, 2 May 2024). Other interviewees agreed with this statement. Stronger community bonds and social attachment need to be a goal by itself, instead of a means to solve other neighbourhood problems, three of the actors agreed on.

Another thing that is very important regarding the success of initiatives and their effect on social attachment is about trust. *“Trust is the basis, and that is reciprocal. The government must learn to trust the citizens and the citizens must learn to trust the government.”* – Interviewee former resident connector municipality of Utrecht, translated from Dutch to English (Personal communication, 29 April 2024). Trust should be rebuilt by properly involving the residents in decision-making processes, with transparent barriers and genuine interest of the institutions. He thinks that if you really want to help the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the balance lies in the government taking an active role while also allowing space for good initiatives from residents who genuinely have their hearts in the right place. It is essential to consider how it can be avoided that they obstruct these efforts and, instead, support them in achieving structural embedding of their valuable initiative.

6.3.2 CONCLUSION INFLUENCE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES ON SOCIAL ATTACHMENT

The sub question that was researched in this section was: *What is the perception of various actors on to what extent the initiatives focused on community involvement contribute to developing stronger social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?*

Community involvement initiatives significantly contribute to the development of social attachment among residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, most actors agreed on. The perception among various actors highlights that these initiatives foster stronger social bonds by increasing social interactions and facilitating connections among residents. However, for these initiatives to yield sustainable results, they need to be structurally embedded within the community.

Nonetheless, focusing solely on these initiatives is insufficient. Many residents are in ‘survival mode’ and unable to participate fully in neighbourhood activities. To address this, broader social issues such as poverty,

unemployment, safety, and mistrust in governmental institutions must be resolved simultaneously. Strategies like social renovations are particularly effective, as they help engage otherwise invisible residents and address their issues while improving the physical environment.

A significant barrier to developing social attachment is the lack of mutual trust between residents and municipalities. Rebuilding this trust is essential for the success of community initiatives. Additionally, actors agree that social attachment should be regarded as a goal in itself, rather than merely a means to address other neighbourhood problems. By adopting a comprehensive approach that includes both community involvement and the resolution of underlying social issues, stronger and more sustainable social attachments can be achieved in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

7 CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research is separated into the conclusions of the sub questions first, and then the conclusion of the main research question is presented.

7.1 SUB QUESTIONS

7.1.1 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The conclusion to the first sub question is presented first: *How have the different dimensions of social attachment of disadvantaged neighbourhoods changed over the past few years?*

These were some notable observations on the social attachment of residents in Utrecht Overvecht when looking at the quantitative data gathered by the municipality of Utrecht:

- The involvement in general was higher than in both Utrecht and Zuid West. This means in making policies and plans, as well as in neighbourhood activities, and contribution to more neighbourhood interaction, the involvement was 2% or 3% higher than in the municipality of Utrecht on average.
- The social cohesion shows a strong improvement over the past few years, although Utrecht shows higher scores compared to Overvecht. Most of the variables of social cohesion showed a strong growth, but in 2023 they are still (much) lower than Utrecht on average.

Overall, these findings suggest that although Overvecht is making progress in several aspects of social attachment, there is still room for improvement. The higher involvement of residents in policy making and neighbourhood activities adds to a higher social attachment, but there is still a need for more attention to the social cohesion of residents to further strengthen social attachment, because those scores are much lower than the average of the city according to the quantitative data analysis.

7.1.2 TREND OF SOCIAL ATTACHMENT AND INFLUENCING FACTORS

The conclusion to the second sub question is presented next: *What is the perception of various actors on the trend of social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and what factors influence the social attachment the most?*

The goal of this question was to gather perceptions of actors that are active in this field, to close the research gap about social attachment in literature. In Table 7.1, the actor perceptions on the trend of social attachment are shown and in Table 7.2 its influencing factors based on the results of the expert interviews are summarised and explained as well.

7.1.2.1 ACTOR PERCEPTIONS ON TREND OF SOCIAL ATTACHMENT

Some of the perceptions of the experts were only about the involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood or the social cohesion of residents in Overvecht, while others were about both, for example the differences per sub-neighbourhood or block in involvement and social cohesion.

When looking at only the involvement of residents, it can be concluded that experts agree on the fact that the involvement of residents in the neighbourhood is high, but they also state that the actively involved residents are not representative of the whole neighbourhood. There are many volunteers involved, and key figures play an important role in the involvement within the neighbourhood. The residents that are most involved are usually the ones that have been living there for a long time, or the ones that recently moved into the

neighbourhood. They also stated that involvement is higher on a smaller scale than on the whole neighbourhood level.

When looking at only the trend of social cohesion, the experts mentioned that they agreed that the cohesion is low in Overvecht. They mentioned the fact that the neighbourhood is very heterogeneous, containing clusters of groups that they refer to as ‘bubbles’. Within these ‘bubbles’, the social cohesion is strong, but there is not much overlap between the bubbles and they are barely mixing. The disadvantaged neighbourhood contains many informal networks, but they also mentioned the fact that loneliness and anonymity play a big role in the area.

Actor perceptions on trend of social attachment		
Actor perceptions on:	Involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood	Social cohesion
Trend of social attachment	Involvement & social cohesion differs a lot per sub-neighbourhood or even per block A lot of ‘invisible’ people who do not attend events or fill in questionnaires	
	High involvement, but active people not representative for whole neighbourhood Many volunteers Key figures important Most involved: long-term residents & recently moved Higher involvement on small scale	Low social cohesion Heterogeneous neighbourhood, clusters of groups called ‘bubbles’ Within ‘bubbles’ strong social cohesion, but ‘bubbles’ are not mixing Many informal networks Loneliness & anonymity issues

Table 7.1: Actor perceptions on trend of social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Own work, 2024).

When these expert perceptions are compared to the first sub question, it can be concluded that the actors agree with the quantitative data about the involvement of residents being high in the neighbourhood, and the social cohesion lower than in Utrecht. The data was placed into context by their explanations for why this is the case.

7.1.2.2 ACTOR PERCEPTIONS ON INFLUENCING FACTORS OF SOCIAL ATTACHMENT

Actor perceptions on positively influencing factors of social attachment

Both involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood & social cohesion

The next part of the first sub question is about the influencing factors of social attachment, both positively and negatively. The results of the expert interviews on this topic are summarised in Table 7.2. Here can be seen that the changes in demographics of residents, meaning proportionally less vulnerable residents in the neighbourhood, positively contributes to both the involvement of residents and the social cohesion. Another thing that was mentioned a lot by the interviewees, was that the results of years of investments in liveability, safety and social networks is finally starting to show positive results on the involvement and social cohesion of residents in the disadvantaged neighbourhood.

Actor perceptions on positively influencing factors of social attachment

Involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood

When looking only at the involvement, the experts mentioned various factors that positively influenced the variables, for example the community oriented cultures that are living in the neighbourhood, the fact that

residents are proud of their neighbourhood and the feeling of responsibility of residents. Another interesting thing was the fact that a lot of residents are unemployed or retired in the neighbourhood, which could have a positive influence of the involvement of residents because they simply have more time for all kinds of activities.

Actor perceptions on positively influencing factors of social attachment

Social cohesion

Then only the social cohesion and its influencing factors are examined, it shows that the experts think that the initiatives that are focused on bringing people together is the main influencing factor that positively contributes to social cohesion scores of the social attachment.

Actor perceptions on negatively influencing factors of social attachment

Both involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood & social cohesion

However, the experts also mentioned negatively influencing factors on both dimensions, for example the vulnerability of the inflow of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. This vulnerability causes residents to be stuck in 'survival mode', due to the amount of problems they are experiencing in their daily lives, such as unemployment, health issues and trauma. The cultural differences and language barriers could also negatively influence the social attachment, and the rapid flow of residents was also mentioned as a negative factor that influences the involvement and social cohesion.

Actor perceptions on negatively influencing factors of social attachment

Involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood

When looking only at the involvement of residents, the experts mention the lack of trust in governmental institutions as a negatively influencing factor. They mention that a lot of residents are not interested in joining participation meetings organised by the municipality for the neighbourhood due to their lack of trust. They do not feel heard, and experience feelings such as: *"My opinion does not matter anyway."*

Actor perceptions on negatively influencing factors of social attachment

Social cohesion

Reasons for low social cohesion that were mentioned by the experts have to do with the lack of informal meeting spots, such as community centres, and the fact that the neighbourhood has a very heterogeneous character. A lot of different cultures are living together in this area, and people speak different languages as well. This can make it difficult for people to form stronger relationships with their neighbours, when they do not have a lot in common. Lastly, the building floorplans were mentioned as a negatively influencing factor of the social cohesion. The 10-hoogflats are built in a way where each floor contains only two or three apartments, and an elevator to the ground floor. This way, it can be really hard to meet your neighbours spontaneously.

All of the influencing factors of social attachment, both positive and negative, are summarized in Table 7.2.

Actor perceptions on influencing factors of social attachment		
Actor perceptions on:	Involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood	Social cohesion
Positive factors influencing social attachment	+ Changes in demographics of residents (less vulnerable people proportionally) + Results of years of investments in liveability, safety and social networks	
	+ Community oriented cultures + Proud of neighbourhood + Feel responsible + Many unemployed / retired residents with time for volunteering	+ Initiatives focused on bringing people together
Negative factors influencing social attachment	- Vulnerable residents in ‘survival mode’ have no time to invest in social bonds or involvement - Cultural differences - Language barriers - Rapid flow of residents	
	- Low trust in governmental institutions	- Insufficient informal meeting spots - Heterogeneous neighbourhood → too many different cultures and languages - Building floorplans are preventing people from meeting each other

Table 7.2: Summary of actor perception on influencing factors of social attachment (Own work, 2024).

7.1.3 LESSONS LEARNED FROM COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES

The third sub question that has been answered is: *What is the perception of various actors on what can be learned from initiatives focused on community involvement that have been implemented in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?*

The most important lessons for successful community involvement initiatives, both focused on involving residents in decision-making processes and increasing social interaction, are presented in Table 7.3. Here can be seen that some lessons learned are only about involving residents in decision-making processes, and some only about increasing social interaction, or about both at the same time.

Actor perceptions on lessons learned from community involvement initiatives *Both involvement in decision-making processes & increasing social interaction*

When looking at only at lessons learned from community involvement initiatives in general, four main topics came forward in the expert interviews. Firstly, the experts stated that it is important to build on existing successful initiatives, instead of trying to reinvent the wheel each time a new initiative arises. If an initiative

works, try to strengthen the it and build upon the success. There is already so much happening, it would be a shame to put effort into something that could be combined with an already existing initiative, some experts said. Another thing that was mentioned, was the importance of physical presence in the neighbourhood. It is crucial to be interacting face-to-face with the residents in order to create successful initiatives. This is also important for the third lesson: focusing on rebuilding trust between residents and institutions. In the previous sub question, one of the conclusions was that experts mentioned the lack of trust as one of the negatively influencing factors of social attachment. For community involvement initiatives, the same conclusion can be drawn according to the expert interviews. Trust is crucial for successful initiatives. Lastly, combining initiatives for a broader audience can be used as a method to reach more people. This relates to the first lesson, to build upon existing initiatives. Combining children activities with an activity for parents, means that both target groups are present at the same time.

Actor perceptions on lessons learned from community involvement initiatives

Involvement in decision-making processes

When focusing solely on the lessons learned from initiatives focused on involving residents in decision-making processes, the actors mentioned a few things. Transparency and trust in the process is crucial when you want people to be involved, they stated, as well as flexibility in the process and sincere interest. Therefore, in early and inclusive involvement of residents is important. Involving them too late negatively influences the willingness of residents to help. For residents to be able to be involved, small-scale and understandable processes work best. Making the processes too broad or vague decreases the amount of people that are involved, according to the expert interviews. What can also help, is focusing on addressing short-term issues first, before starting long-term participation processes. This also relates to the trust of residents in governmental organizations, they mainly see the issues that are present in the neighbourhood and not being solved, and not all the efforts that are happening at the same time to solve long-term issues.

Actor perceptions on lessons learned from community involvement initiatives

Increasing social interaction

When looking only at the lessons learned from initiatives focused on increasing social interaction among residents, the most important lessons learned is the fact that these initiatives should be low-threshold in order for them to be successful. Especially for first-time joiners, it has to be easily accessible by for example dropping by in a community centre, or when a social broker comes with you for the first time. Usually, once the first step has been taken, it gets easier for participants to join again. Next, the structural embedding of initiatives and sustainability is important. An initiative that has been successfully organized will not benefit the neighbourhood on the long-term. Finding ways to make sure the initiatives can be organised repeatedly is important, the experts said. Lastly, striking a balance between strengthening the existing 'bubbles' and forced mixing is crucial, according to the interviewees. Forced mixing is hard work and not likely to result in sustainable bonds, but strengthening existing 'bubbles' comes with the risk of polarisation in the neighbourhood. Finding a balance between the two is important to the interviewees. All lessons learned are summarised in Table 7.3.

Lessons learned from community involvement initiatives	
Initiatives focused on involving residents in decision-making processes	Initiatives focused on increasing social interaction among residents
Building on existing successful initiatives Physical presence in neighbourhood important Rebuilding trust between residents and institutions Combining initiatives for broader audience	
Transparency and mutual trust Flexibility in process and sincere interest Early and inclusive involvement Small-scale and understandable processes Addressing short-term issues before long-term participation	Social interaction initiatives with low threshold Sustainability and structural embedding initiatives Balance strengthening existing ‘bubbles’ and mixing

Table 7.3: Lessons learned from community involvement initiatives (Own work, 2024).

7.1.4 INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES ON SOCIAL ATTACHMENT

The last sub question that has been answered is: *What is the perception of various actors on to what extent the initiatives focused on community involvement contribute to developing stronger social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?*

In Table 7.4, the conclusion of the actor perceptions on the influence of community involvement initiatives on the social attachment of residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods is summarised. Almost all actors stated that community involvement initiatives definitely contribute to stronger social attachment among residents. However, focusing solely on these initiatives is insufficient. Due to the fact that so many vulnerable residents are living in these neighbourhoods, the broader social issues need to be resolved simultaneously. The residents need to be helped out of ‘survival mode’ in order to be able to contribute to the neighbourhood in any way. Another barrier that needs to be resolved is the lack of trust in governmental institutions. That way, residents are able to grow stronger social attachment and contributing to the neighbourhoods liveability, according to the experts in the interviews.

Influence of community involvement initiatives on social attachment
Community involvement initiatives contribute to social attachment Initiatives focused on increasing social interaction contribute the most Important that initiatives are structurally embedded for sustainable results Focusing solely on initiatives is insufficient: broader social issues need to be resolved simultaneously Rebuilding trust is important for success of initiatives

Table 7.4: Influence community involvement initiatives on social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Own work, 2024).

7.2 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

In this section, the main research question is answered: *What can be learned from initiatives focused on community involvement and their effect on social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands?* The insights gained from the four sub-questions provide a comprehensive view of the various factors influencing these initiatives and their outcomes.

It can be concluded that according to the interviewees, successful community involvement initiatives definitely contribute to the development of social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. They foster stronger social attachment by increasing social interactions and facilitating connections among residents. However, for these initiatives to yield sustainable results, they need to be structurally embedded within the community, which is not always the case. Also, addressing broader social issues such as poverty, unemployment, safety, and mistrust in governmental institutions is crucial, in order to pull residents out of 'survival mode' and for them being able to contribute to the neighbourhood.

Another important lesson learned according to the interviewees is that rebuilding mutual trust between residents and governmental institutions is essential for the success of community initiatives, which can be achieved by being open and transparent in all phases of projects, and by making sure that everyone feels included. Also, interviewees mentioned that social attachment and living pleasantly together should be regarded as a goal in itself, rather than merely a means to address other social neighbourhood problems. A lesson learned is that by adopting a comprehensive approach that includes both community involvement and the resolution of underlying social issues, stronger and more sustainable social attachments can be achieved in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, according to the interviewees.

These insights gathered from all expert interviews combined, emphasize lessons learned that result in a need for a multi-faceted strategy that combines transparency, genuine engagement, early involvement, small-scale projects, embedding of existing initiatives, and addressing broader social issues to foster stronger social attachments in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the research results and provides practical recommendations. These are formulated as a conclusion of the expert interviews, that can be used in practise in projects that want to improve community involvement initiatives, and increase the social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. In Table 8.1, the list of recommendations is summarised, and categorised into recommendations to increase the involvement with what is going on in the neighbourhood, recommendations to increase social cohesion, and recommendations that apply for both the involvement and social cohesion. Afterward, all recommendations are explained on what needs to happen and why it needs to happen. All recommendations are meant for policy makers, project leaders and other involved parties that are working on creating thriving communities, stronger social attachment and successful community involvement initiatives, but also for the academic world.

RECOMMENDATIONS for successful COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES and increasing SOCIAL ATTACHMENT in disadvantaged neighbourhoods	
Involvement with what is going on	Social cohesion
1. Enhance transparency and communication	6. Leverage existing successful initiatives
2. Foster flexibility in the process and sincere interest	7. Ensure structural embedding of initiatives
3. Encourage early and inclusive involvement	8. Balance social group dynamics
4. Focus on small-scale, tangible projects	
5. Promote ownership and responsibility	
	9. Address broader social issues simultaneously
	10. Organise low-threshold social activities
	11. Maintain a strong physical presence

Table 8.1: Recommendation for successful community involvement initiatives and increasing social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Own work, 2024).

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE THE INVOLVEMENT OF RESIDENTS

1. ENHANCE TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION

The lack of trust in governmental institutions results in lower involvement of residents with what is going on in the neighbourhood, this is one of the conclusions from the interviews of this research. Increasing trust will get more people involved, as interviewees mentioned this as one of the main barriers for uninvolved residents. Trust can be increased by enhancing transparency and communication in the process of participation or co-creation. Project managers, and other stakeholders who interact with residents or owners for example, have to be open and transparent throughout the decision-making process, and communicate clearly about the steps, expectations, limitations and interests of all parties involved. This will help build trust and clarity among the involved parties and residents. Regular updates on the progress and outcomes of initiatives and meetings will keep residents informed and maintain and build trust.

2. FOSTER FLEXIBILITY IN THE PROCESS AND SINCERE INTEREST

This next recommendations also has to do with the barrier of the lack of trust in governmental organisations that is a pressing issue according to interviewees, and recommends policy makers and project manager to foster flexibility in the process and show sincere interest in residents' opinions. Many residents experience a lack of trust, because they think their opinion does not matter. Demonstrating a genuine interest in residents' opinions and providing flexibility in incorporating their feedback into plans and projects will make residents

more willing to think along in participation and co-creation projects. Adaptable processes that allow for real-time adjustments based on the resident input and changing circumstances is key.

3. ENCOURAGE EARLY AND INCLUSIVE INVOLVEMENT

Encouraging early and inclusive involvement is another important recommendation according to the expert interviews, because involving residents too late, results in less input that can be incorporated into the new design for example. Involve residents as early as possible in projects through co-creation, where they help formulate problem statements and potential solutions. Many choices have already been made, and residents can feel left out. Inclusive involvement is also important, because interviewees mentioned the fact that often the same people are involved in participation projects. Therefore, use diverse methods to gather input, such as videos, community nights, and public displays like scale models in shopping centres, to reach a wider audience and make it low-threshold to join.

4. FOCUS ON SMALL-SCALE, TANGIBLE PROJECTS

Focusing on small-scale, tangible projects is important because residents can easily get overwhelmed with the amount of information, and complex decisions, the experts mentioned in the interviews. Prioritising small-scale, tangible projects makes it easier for residents to engage and understand. In disadvantaged neighbourhoods, using accessible language is also crucial, so translate bureaucratic language into clear, accessible documents, or use other methods such as explanation videos, to ensure all residents can participate fully.

5. PROMOTE OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

Lastly, promoting ownership and responsibility is crucial in order to get more people involved with what is going on in their neighbourhood, some of the experts mentioned in the interviews. Encourage residents to take ownership of initiatives by giving them meaningful responsibilities and recognising their contributions. Showing appreciation is also important, appreciating active residents and initiative leaders to maintain motivation and pride in their work.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE THE **SOCIAL COHESION**

6. LEVERAGE EXISTING SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES

Leveraging existing successful initiatives is important because experts mentioned the fact that many new initiatives try to 're-invent the wheel' by trying out initiatives that are similar to already existing initiatives, which can result in a waste of energy and money. Building on success would be more beneficial: utilise successful existing initiatives as a foundation for new projects, avoiding redundancy and leveraging proven practices. Engaging community members as ambassadors to promote and strengthen new initiatives can help a lot, and provide valuable insights.

7. ENSURE STRUCTURAL EMBEDDING OF INITIATIVES

Providing sustainable support, including funding, resources, and volunteer training, to ensure initiatives can be sustained in the long term can help to provide more sustainable results of initiatives, according to the interviewees. The initiative fund is now funding initiatives with a maximum amount, and the focus should be on teaching initiative takers ways to build an embedded initiative. Develop a long-term vision for initiatives, ensuring they are structurally embedded within the community.

8. BALANCE SOCIAL GROUP DYNAMICS

Because of the existing ‘bubbles’ of groups in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods, it can help to encourage natural integration of social groups, interviewees mentioned as a recommendation in the interviews. Forced mixing is hard work and not likely to result in sustainable bonds. Therefore, support existing social networks and provide opportunities for these groups to interact with others gradually.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE BOTH INVOLVEMENT AND SOCIAL COHESION

9. ADDRESS BROADER SOCIAL ISSUES SIMULTANEOUSLY

While all of the other recommendations are important for increasing social attachment, this might be the most important recommendation according to the interviewees: address broader social issues simultaneously. A lot of residents living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are stuck in ‘survival mode’, due to the multifaceted issues they are facing in their daily lives. A holistic approach, by addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, safety, and mistrust in governmental institutions simultaneously with community involvement initiatives is key. Social renovations are a way to do this: improving both the physical environment and the social fabric of the neighbourhood will get vulnerable residents out of ‘survival mode’, making it easier for them to engage in activities and build social ties.

10. ORGANISE LOW-THRESHOLD SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Organising low-threshold social activities is important, according to the interviewees, because it can help to involve more people, both in decision-making processes, participation or co-creation projects, or in social activities. Planning inclusive, low-threshold activities such as community clean-ups, barbecues, sport events, and cultural activities such as iftars will encourage social interaction. Combining activities can also help: multiple activities at the same event will attract a broader audience and foster interaction among diverse groups.

11. MAINTAIN A STRONG PHYSICAL PRESENCE

Lastly, maintaining a strong physical presence is important for both the involvement and social cohesion of residents, according to the interviewees. Regularly being physically present in the neighbourhood, and engaging directly with residents helps to build trust and gain a clear understanding of local issues. What can also help, is focusing on short term wins: address short-term issues promptly to (re)build credibility and create a foundation for discussing long-term plans. A side benefit: inviting them to other social activities is easier.

9 DISCUSSION

In this discussion, the results of this research are evaluated and critically analysed, the validity will be discussed, interpretations, limitations and implications are presented, followed by recommendations for future research.

9.1 VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this research was to identify lessons learned from community involvement initiatives and their impact on the social attachment of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. Through expert interviews, eleven professionals with various roles and expertise related to the improvement of these neighbourhoods were asked about their perceptions on social attachment, the success of community involvement initiatives, and the relationship between the two. The diverse backgrounds of the interviewees, ranging from those focused on increasing social cohesion to those involved in co-creation in urban renewal projects, provided a broad perspective on the topic.

Despite the differences in viewpoints, the interviewees generally agreed on the trends in social cohesion, influencing factors, and the success of community involvement initiatives. Specific expertise sometimes led to stronger opinions on particular aspects, such as the co-creation project leader his insights into inclusive participation or the social brokers' knowledge of social interaction and cohesion between 'invisible' residents. The convergence of these expert opinions supports the validity of the research methods and sources used in this case study.

However, while the results are somewhat generalizable due to the variety of experts interviewed, the research's focus on a single case study limits this generalizability. Comparing multiple disadvantaged neighbourhoods could have enhanced the generalizability of the findings, as the conclusions drawn might be specific to the location and participants involved. Nonetheless, some interviewees with experience in other disadvantaged neighbourhoods offered broader insights, contributing to the general applicability of the research findings.

9.2 INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

A significant finding of this study is the lack of trust in governmental organizations within disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which heavily influences the success of community involvement initiatives and the level of resident engagement, a key dimension of social attachment, according to interviewees. Although trust was not a prominent focus during the preparation phase, it emerged as a critical factor in the interviews. This finding aligns with policy documents from municipalities and the national government, which highlight low levels of trust in disadvantaged communities as a barrier to civic participation, such as voting.

Looking back, it is understandable that trust played such a central role, especially since most interviewees were associated with or funded by governmental organizations. This regular encounter with trust issues in their work explains the emphasis on trust in the conclusions of this study. Initially, I underestimated its importance, but the interview data underscored its relevance.

Another notable result is the experts' emphasis on resolving broader social issues as a way to foster social attachment. The "survival mode" of some residents prevents them from participating in community activities or initiatives, as their time and mental energy are consumed by personal challenges. This barrier to building relationships and connecting with neighbours is a critical hindrance to social attachment. The literature also supports this, indicating that individuals' ability to cope with problems can influence place attachment.

Overall, the theoretical framework and qualitative findings are closely aligned, though the role of trust proved to be more significant than initially expected.

9.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This research has several limitations. While there is sufficient literature on place attachment, the focus of this research is solely on one of the two dimensions: social attachment. The available literature on social attachment was limited, and its definitions were not clear. Consequently, an own definition of social attachment, based on the available literature, has been formulated for this research. Different definitions could lead to different results, as I also selected variables for the municipal database of Utrecht based on my chosen definition.

Another limitation is the single-case study approach, which limits the generalizability of the findings across all disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Some interviewees, with experience in other areas, provided comparative insights, but multiple case studies would yield more reliable and generalizable results.

A further limitation is that only professionals were interviewed regarding their perceptions of social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The residents themselves did not have the opportunity to confirm or challenge the study's conclusions. Including residents' perspectives would have strengthened the reliability of the findings. Due to time constraints and the vulnerability of the residents, there was opted to interview only professionals. However, most professionals interviewed are in close contact with (vulnerable) residents, offering credible insights into their experiences. Actor bias is another concern, but the diversity of the interviewed actors helps mitigate this.

For instance, the prominent role of trust in the study's conclusions can be linked to the fact that most interviewees were associated with governmental organizations—the very entities that residents distrust. Interviewing more market parties or residents themselves could provide a broader view of the issue.

Lastly, the "invisibility" of the most vulnerable residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods poses a significant limitation. These residents do not attend municipal meetings, complete questionnaires, or engage with institutions, making it challenging to understand their needs and opinions. Part of this study relied on social brokers, who interact with these residents as part of the municipality's social renovation strategy, to account for this group. However, without direct input from these residents, drawing definitive conclusions about their needs is difficult.

9.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This research concludes with lessons learned about the effects of community involvement initiatives on social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and offers recommendations for practical application. While community involvement initiatives contribute to stronger social attachment, the experts indicated that addressing broader social issues simultaneously is crucial. Building mutual trust between the government and residents is essential for effective involvement. When organizing initiatives, it is important to build on existing efforts, strengthening or expanding them to achieve sustainable outcomes. Structural support, both financial and in terms of volunteer engagement, is necessary for these initiatives to succeed long-term.

These lessons should be integrated into new policy documents for disadvantaged neighbourhoods. A major issue with current policies is the tendency to "reinvent the wheel," despite the numerous experiments conducted over the years. Failing to apply these lessons learned would be a missed opportunity, potentially leading to wasted resources on ineffective strategies or initiatives. Many disadvantaged neighbourhoods have received substantial financial support to improve liveability and social cohesion, yet significant improvements are lacking. This may be due to insufficient collaboration among the various parties involved. While the "Samen voor Overvecht" initiative is addressing this issue, there is still much work to be done. The right mindset is present, but execution needs improvement, as some parties continue to operate on their own, probably with the best intentions, but unaware of previous efforts.

9.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research also opens up avenues for further exploration, with new research questions emerging from the study's findings.

For example, the lack of trust in governmental organisations turned out to be an important influencing factor on the involvement of residents in decision-making processes. Therefore, it might be interesting to look at how the trust in governmental organisations can be improved in disadvantaged neighbourhoods to increase resident participation. Another important conclusion is that a lot of residents living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are 'invisible'. They do not attend meetings, fill in questionnaires or know other people in the community. It could be interesting to research how these 'invisible' residents can be reached and engaged. Lastly, the residents' perspective on successful ways of increasing social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods was not part of this study. An interesting question for further research could be: "What is the residents' perspective on increasing social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?"

These proposals for further research aim to deepen the understanding of the current challenges and contribute to more effective strategies for enhancing social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

REFERENCES

- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bachelard, G. (1964). *The poetics of space*. New York: Orion.
- Breakwell, G. M. (1986). *Coping with threatened identity*. London: Methuen.
- Brown, B., Perkins, D. D., & Brown, G. (2003). Place attachment in a revitalizing neighbourhood: Individual and block levels of analysis. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 23, 259-271. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944\(02\)00117-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944(02)00117-2)
- Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek. (2023). *Gemeente, wijk, buurt regionale cijfers*.
- Cuba, L. & D. Hummon (1993). A place to call home: Identification with dwelling, community and region. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34(1), 111-131
- Daverveld, S. (2006). *Thuis voelen in de sociale mix van geherstructureerde voormalige achterstandsbuurtten*. De heterogene wijk, voor iedereen een thuisbasis? Doctoraalscriptie sociologie over de achtergronden van thuis voelen in Amsterdam Nieuw West. Amsterdam.
- De Utrechtse Internet Courant. (2018). *Dagtip: De versnelling van Overvecht*. Retrieved June 18, 2024., from <https://www.duic.nl/uitgaan/dagtip-de-versnelling-van-overvecht/>
- Echt Overvecht. (2024). *Samen voor Overvecht*. <https://www.echtovervecht.nl/samen-met/samen-voor-overvecht/>
- Eliade, M. (1959). *The sacred and the profane*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.
- Gemeente Utrecht. (2019). *Actieprogramma Samen voor Overvecht*. <https://www.utrecht.nl/wonen-en-leven/wijken/wijk-overvecht/wat-gebeurt-er-in-de-wijk/wijkaanpak-overvecht>
- Gemeente Utrecht. (2023). *Inwonersenquête 2023*. <https://www.utrecht.nl/bestuur-en-organisatie/publicaties/onderzoek-en-cijfers/meedoen-aan-onderzoek/resultaten-inwonersenquete>
- Giuliani, M. V. (2003). *Theory of attachment and place attachment*. In M. Bonnes, T. Lee, & M. Bonaiuto (Eds.), *Psychological theories for environmental issues* (pp. 137–170). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Graaf, P. van der & Duyvendak, J.W. (2009). Thuisvoelen in stedelijke vernieuwing. Buurthechting in Nederlandse achterstandswijken. *Sociologie* 5, 261-276.
- Graaf, P. van der (2009). *Out of Place? Emotional Ties to the Neighbourhood in Urban Renewal in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom*. Amsterdam: uap.
- Graaf, P. van der en J.W. Duyvendak (2004). *De koersresultaten van Emmen Revisited: 5 jaar integrale herstructurering*. Emmen: Emmen Revisited.
- Hannerz, U. (1996). *Transnational connections: Culture, people, places*. Oxford: Open University, Oxford University Press.
- Hidalgo, M. & Hernandez, B. (2001). Place attachment: conceptual and empirical questions. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 21, 273-281.
- Hummon, D. (1992). Community Attachment. Local sentiment and sense of place. In: Low, S.M.& D. Lawrence-Zuniga. *The Anthropology of Space and Place*.

- Jordaan, T., & Puren, K. (2014). "We love this place": Place attachment and community engagement in urban conservation planning. *Habitat International*, 44, 38-47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2014.05.002>
- Lewicka, M. (2011). Place attachment: How far have we come in the last 40 years? *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 31, 207-230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2010.10.001>
- Livingston, M., Bailey, N., & Kearns, A. (2010). Place attachment in deprived areas: evidence from the North of England. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 25(4), 409–427. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-010-9196-3>
- Low, S. & Altman, I. (1992). *Place Attachment*. New York: Plenum.
- Lyons, W. E., & Lowery, D. (1989). Citizen responses to dissatisfaction in urban communities. *Journal of Politics*, 51, 841–868.
- Manzo, L. C., & Perkins, D. D. (2006). Finding common ground: The importance of place attachment to community participation and planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 20(4), 335-350. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0885412205286160>
- Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties – Volkshuisvesting en ruimtelijke ordening (2022). *Nationaal Programma Leefbaarheid en Veiligheid*. <https://www.volkshuisvestingnederland.nl/onderwerpen/programma-leefbaarheid-en-veiligheid/documenten/publicaties/2024/02/05/nationaal-programma-leefbaarheid-en-veiligheid>
- Riger, S. en P. Lavrakas (1981). Community Ties: Patterns of Attachment and Social Interaction in Urban Neighbourhoods. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 9, 55-66.
- Rijkinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu. (2020). *Gezondheidsmonitor regionaal*.
- Rojek, C., & Urry, J. (1997). *Touring cultures: Transformations of travel and theory*. London: Routledge.
- RTV Utrecht. (2021). *Raad Utrecht: "Omarm bewonersinitiatieven in Overvecht"*. Retrieved June 16, 2024, from <https://www.rtvutrecht.nl/nieuws/2132520/raad-utrecht-omarm-bewonersinitiatieven-in-overvecht>
- Rubinstein, R. L., & Parmelee, P. A. (1992). *Attachment to place and the representation of the life course by the elderly*. In I. Altman & S. M. Low (Eds.), *Place attachment* (pp. 139–160). London: Plenum Press.
- Sampson, R. J. (1988). Local Friendship Ties and Community Attachment in Mass Society: A Multi-Level Systemic Model. *American Sociological Review*, 53: 766-779.
- Scannell, L., & Gifford, R. (2010). Defining place attachment: a tripartite organizing framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2009.09.006>
- Twigger-Ross, C. L., & Uzzell, D. L. (1996). Place and identity processes. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 16, 205–220.
- Woolever, C. (1992). A Contextual Approach to Neighbourhood Attachment. *Urban Studies*, 29(1), 99–116. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43083584>

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: LIST OF FOCUS NEIGHBOURHOODS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Stad	Gebied/wijk
Amsterdam	Zuidoost
Amsterdam	Nieuw-West
Arnhem	Oost
Breda	Noord
Delft	West
Dordrecht	West
Den Haag	Zuidwest
Eindhoven	Woensel-Zuid
Groningen	Noord
Heerlen	Noord
Leeuwarden	Oost
Lelystad	Oost
Nieuwegein	Centrale-As
Roosendaal	-stad
Rotterdam	Zuid
Schiedam	Nieuwland-Oost
Tilburg	Noordwest
Utrecht	Overvecht
Vlaardingen	West
Zaandam	Oost



Figure 0.1: List and map of the twenty focus neighbourhoods in the Netherlands (green are the most recently added) (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2022)

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTIE

- Kunt u zichzelf voorstellen en vertellen wat uw werk precies inhoudt?
- Wat waren uw verwachtingen van Overvecht?
 - o En klopten deze verwachtingen?

SOCIALE BUURTBINDING ALGEMEEN

- Wat voor rol speelt het begrip ‘sociale buurtbinding’ in uw werk?
- Als iemand die werkzaam is in Overvecht, hoe zou u de sociale buurtbinding van Overvechters over het algemeen beschrijven?

SOCIALE BUURTBINDING TREND

Wat is de **perceptie** van verschillende actoren over de trend van **sociale buurtbinding** in kwetsbare wijken de afgelopen jaren?

Ik ga u zo een aantal cijfers laten zien over de sociale buurtbinding van Overvechters. Ik ben benieuwd naar uw reactie op deze cijfers.

Betrokkenheid bewoners

- Betrokkenheid is groter in Overvecht dan in Utrecht gemiddeld en dan Zuid West
 - o Hoe kijkt u aan tegen deze cijfers?
 - o Wat denkt u dat er invloed zou kunnen hebben gehad op het feit dat Overvechters meer betrokken zijn dan Utrechters?

Sociale cohesie

- Sociale cohesie laat een sterke stijging zien over de afgelopen jaren, maar is nog steeds lager dan het Utrechtse gemiddelde
 - o Hoe kijkt u aan tegen deze cijfers?
 - o Wat denkt u dat er invloed zou kunnen hebben gehad op het feit dat de sociale cohesie zo gestegen is?
 - o Waardoor is het nog steeds lager dan het Utrechtse gemiddelde?

INITIATIEVEN GEFOCUST OP HET BETREKKEN VAN DE GEMEENSCHAP

Wat is de **perceptie** van verschillende actoren over de effecten van initiatieven gericht op het versterken van de **betrokkenheid van bewoners** van kwetsbare wijken die de afgelopen jaren zijn geïmplementeerd?

Wat voor rol spelen ‘initiatieven die zich focussen op het betrekken van de gemeenschap’ in uw werk?

Betrekken bij besluitvorming

- Wat zijn volgens u initiatieven die veel bijdragen aan het betrekken van bewoners bij besluitvorming?
- Wat zijn dingen die jullie geleerd hebben over initiatieven die hebben bijgedragen aan het betrekken van bewoners bij besluitvorming?
 - o Wat werkte heel goed?

- Wat werkte helemaal niet?
 - Waarom wel of niet?
- Hoe zorgen jullie ervoor dat ‘iedereen’ de kans krijgt om betrokken te worden in Overvecht?
 - Werkt dat?
 - Wat hebben jullie de afgelopen jaren hierover geleerd?
 - Wat gebeurt er met de mensen die niets van zich laten horen?

Sociale interactie

- Wat zijn volgens u initiatieven die veel bijdragen aan het versterken van sociale interactie?
- Wat zijn dingen die jullie geleerd hebben over initiatieven die gericht zijn op het versterken van sociale interactie?
 - Wat werkte heel goed?
 - Wat werkte helemaal niet?
 - Waarom wel of niet?

- Wat zijn dingen die jullie anders zouden aanpakken om de bewoners zo veel mogelijk te betrekken op basis van wat jullie hebben geleerd de afgelopen tijd?

RELATIE TUSSEN INITIATIEVEN GEFOCUST OP BETREKKEN GEMEENSCHAP EN SOCIALE BUURTBINDING

*Wat is de **perceptie** van verschillende actoren over de mate waarin de initiatieven die zich richten op het versterken van de **betrokkenheid van de gemeenschap** hebben bijgedragen aan een sterkere **sociale buurtbinding** in kwetsbare wijken?*

Sociale buurtbinding

- Hoe denkt u dat de sociale buurtbinding van Overvechters nog meer versterkt zou kunnen worden de aankomende jaren?
- Wat ziet u als potentiële gevaren voor het ontwikkelen van de sociale buurtbinding van Overvechters?

CONCLUSIE

- In welke mate denkt u dat de initiatieven die zich richten op het versterken van de **betrokkenheid van de gemeenschap** hebben bijgedragen aan een sterkere **sociale buurtbinding** in Overvecht?

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM



Delft, 2 mei 2024

Betreft: Geïnformeerde toestemming

Geachte heer/mevrouw,

U wordt uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan een onderzoek genaamd ‘*Versterken van de buurtbinding van kwetsbare wijken in Nederland*’. Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd door Lyonne van der Vegte, een studente aan de TU Delft, als onderdeel van de afstudeerscriptie voor de MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences, van de track Management in the Built Environment.

Aanleiding

Uit onderzoek blijkt dat bijna 40% van de bewoners van kwetsbare wijken zich weinig verbonden voelt met hun buurt, zowel fysiek als sociaal. Recente kwantitatieve data van de Gemeente Utrecht toont aan dat de buurtbinding van bewoners van Overvecht zich de afgelopen jaren weliswaar positief heeft ontwikkeld, maar helaas nog steeds later ligt dan het Utrechtse en landelijke gemiddelde. Uit literatuur is gebleken dat er een positief verband bestaat tussen een betrokken gemeenschap en een sterke buurtbinding. Gezien initiatieven zoals ‘Samen voor Overvecht’ actief de gemeenschap betrekken bij besluitvorming, ben ik benieuwd naar het effect van deze initiatieven op de buurtbinding, en de bevindingen van verschillende actoren over dit onderwerp.

De hoofdvraag die in mijn onderzoek centraal staat is: *Wat kan geleerd worden van initiatieven die zich focussen op het betrekken van de gemeenschap en het effect op de sociale buurtbinding van bewoners van kwetsbare wijken in Nederland?*

In dit onderzoek zal onderzocht worden in hoeverre de buurtbinding van kwetsbare wijken in Nederland de afgelopen jaren versterkt is, en hoe verschillende actoren aankijken tegen de verschillende geïmplementeerde initiatieven en hun effect op de sociale buurtbinding van bewoners. Dit onderzoek zal specifiek plaatsvinden in Utrecht Overvecht; een van de 20 wijken in Nederland met de grootste leefbaarheids- en veiligheidsproblemen, waar al jaren wordt gewerkt aan het versterken van de kwetsbaarheid van de buurt en inwoners actief betrokken worden bij het maken van de plannen.

Het interview

De vragen die aan u gesteld zullen worden zijn ontworpen om inzicht te krijgen in de ervaringen van beleidsmakers van de gemeente Utrecht, initiatiefnemers en bewoners van Overvecht, op het gebied van buurtbinding en het betrekken van de gemeenschap. Het gesprek zal 45 – 60 minuten duren. Doel is om antwoorden op de volgende deelvraag in dit gesprek te vinden: *“In welke mate hebben initiatieven gefocust op het betrekken van de gemeenschap bijgedragen aan het ontwikkelen van sterkere sociale buurtbinding in de wijk Utrecht Overvecht?”*.

Protocol

Uw deelname aan dit onderzoek is volledig vrijwillig. U bent ten alle tijden vrij om vragen niet te beantwoorden, en kunt zich elk moment terugtrekken zonder daarvoor een reden op te geven.

Wanneer u daarmee akkoord gaat, zal het gesprek worden opgenomen, om het achteraf het gesprek te kunnen verwerken. De opname en het transcript worden onder een code bewaard. Mocht u anoniem willen blijven, dan kunt u dit in de bijgaande verklaring aangeven. Als u kiest voor anonimiteit, wordt de informatie uit uw interview geanonimiseerd en zullen geen persoonlijk identificeerbare gegevens worden vrijgegeven. Indien u niet aangeeft anoniem te willen blijven, gaat u ermee akkoord dat u met naam, toenaam en functie genoemd kunt worden in het onderzoeksrapport.

Het eindrapport van dit onderzoek zal naar verwachting worden gepubliceerd in November 2024 in de TU Delft repository en zullen worden gepresenteerd op de faculteit Bouwkunde. Na afronding van het rapport, zullen zowel de opnames als de transcripties zorgvuldig worden verwijderd, zodat de vertrouwelijkheid van de gegevens wordt gewaarborgd.

Contactgegevens

Mocht u vragen hebben over dit onderzoek, kunt u contact opnemen met mij:

Lyonne van der Vegte

Contactgegevens eerste begeleider:

Gerard van Bortel

Indien u akkoord bent met de voorwaarden voor deelname aan dit onderzoek, wilt u dan de bijgaande verklaring invullen en ondertekenen?

Alvast veel dank.

Met vriendelijke groet,

Lyonne van der Vegte

- | | Ja | / | Nee |
|---|-----------------------|----------|-----------------------|
| (1) Ik heb de informatie over het onderzoek gedateerd _____ gelezen en begrepen, of deze is aan mij voorgelezen. Ik heb de mogelijkheid gehad om vragen te stellen over het onderzoek en mijn vragen zijn naar tevredenheid beantwoord. | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| (2) Ik doe vrijwillig mee aan dit onderzoek. Ik begrijp dat ik kan weigeren vragen te beantwoorden en weet dat ik mij op elk moment kan terugtrekken uit het onderzoek, zonder daarvoor een reden op te hoeven geven. | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| (3) Ik begrijp dat het geluidsmateriaal (of de bewerking daarvan) en de overige verzamelde gegevens uitsluitend voor analyse en wetenschappelijke presentatie en publicaties zal worden gebruikt. | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| (4) Ik begrijp dat het meedoen aan dit onderzoek betekent dat mijn antwoorden worden bewaard tot het onderzoek is afgerond, en daarna vernietigd zullen worden (verwachting: juli 2024). Ik begrijp dat de opgeslagen gegevens onder een code worden bewaard en – indien gewenst – anoniem worden verwerkt. | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| (5) Ik geef toestemming om mijn antwoorden, ideeën of andere bijdrages anoniem te quoten in resulterende producten. | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| (6) Ik blijf graag anoniem. | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| (7) Ik ontvang graag na afronding van het rapport de resultaten per mail. Om deze reden verleen ik toestemming om mijn naam- en contactgegevens tot het eind van het onderzoek te bewaren. | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |

Ik heb dit formulier gelezen of het formulier is mij voorgelezen en ik stem in met deelname aan het onderzoek.

_____	_____	_____
Naam deelnemer	Handtekening	Datum

Ik, de onderzoeker, verklaar dat ik de informatie en het instemmingsformulier correct aan de potentiële deelnemer heb voorgelezen en, naar het beste van mijn vermogen, heb verzekerd dat de deelnemer begrijpt waar hij/zij vrijwillig mee instemt.

Lyonne van der Vegte	_____	_____
Naam onderzoeker	Handtekening	Datum

APPENDIX D: DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Plan Overview

A Data Management Plan created using DMPonline

Title: Strengthening the social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Creator: Lyonne van der Vegte

Affiliation: Delft University of Technology

Template: TU Delft Data Management Plan template (2021)

Project abstract:

The problem statement of this research is that 21,8% of the Dutch residents experiences low social and physical attachment to their neighbourhood. The residents who exhibit low attachment to their neighbourhood are most often found in the disadvantaged areas of the four main cities of the Netherlands. In these disadvantaged neighbourhoods, 39,6% does not feel socially or physically attached to the neighbourhood. In policy documents focused on improving the liveability of disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, one of the main goals mentioned is that everyone is able to feel at home. Various literature states that community involvement is strongly related to social attachment. In the past few years, several initiatives have been implemented that were focused on increasing community involvement among residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands.

The aim of this research is to evaluate various community involvement initiatives and their effect on the social attachment of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, and thereby adding to the field of knowledge around making sure everyone is able to feel socially attached to their neighbourhood. This research aims to provide practical lessons and recommendations related to community involvement initiatives for municipalities, policy makers and other professionals, that will be useful for other disadvantaged neighbourhoods that deal with similar problems. The main research question is: *What can be learned from initiatives focused on community involvement and the effect on the social place attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands?* This will be researched through a quantitative data analysis, document analysis and semi-structured interviews.

ID: 142023

Start date: 04-09-2023

End date: 07-07-2024

Last modified: 08-03-2024

Strengthening the social attachment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods

0. Administrative questions

1. Name of data management support staff consulted during the preparation of this plan.

My faculty data steward, Janine Strandberg, has reviewed this DMP on 30 January 2024.

2. Date of consultation with support staff.

2024-01-30

1. Data description and collection or re-use of existing data

3. Provide a general description of the type of data you will be working with, including any re-used data:

Type of data	File format(s)	How will data be collected (for re-used data: source and terms of use)?	Purpose of processing	Storage location	Who will have access to the data
Personally Identifiable Information (PII): participants' name, email, mobile number, company name	.pdf, .xlsx	Contact information for participants taking part in interviews, received from professional network	For administrative purposes: obtaining informed consent and communicating with participants	Encrypted storage system	Lyonne van der Vegte, Gerard van Bortel, Marietta Haffner
Audio-recordings of interviews with policy makers, resident connectors and neighbourhood ambassadors of Gemeente Utrecht	.mp3 files	Interviews are conducted during on-site visits to Utrecht Overvecht. Audio-recordings are made on an external device, before being moved to Project Storage. Recordings are deleted after transcription.	Capturing the opinions on strategies implemented by municipalities focused on community engagement initiatives from participants	Temporarily on (offline) recording device, then Project Storage	Recording device: the researcher; Project Storage by Lyonne van der Vegte, Gerard van Bortel, Marietta Haffner
Anonymous transcriptions of interviews	.txt	Anonymous transcriptions created manually based on audio-recordings. Participants are asked to review the transcriptions of their interview before the transcript is finalised.	Privacy-preserving data on strategies implemented by municipalities focused on community engagement initiatives from participants	Project Storage	Lyonne van der Vegte, Gerard van Bortel, Marietta Haffner
Anonymised data on professional opinion on the effect of various community involvement initiatives on the social attachment of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods	.csvs files	Data obtained from coding anonymised transcriptions using Atlas software. TU Delft has a campus licence for employees.	Privacy-preserving data on strategies implemented by municipalities focused on community engagement initiatives from participants	Project Storage	Lyonne van der Vegte, Gerard van Bortel, Marietta Haffner
Signed consent forms	.pdf files	.pdf files	Ethics	Encrypted storage system	Lyonne van der Vegte, Gerard van Bortel, Marietta Haffner

4. How much data storage will you require during the project lifetime?

- 250 GB - 5 TB

II. Documentation and data quality

5. What documentation will accompany data?

- Data dictionary explaining the variables used
- README file or other documentation explaining how data is organised
- Methodology of data collection

III. Storage and backup during research process

6. Where will the data (and code, if applicable) be stored and backed-up during the project lifetime?

- Another storage system - please explain below, including provided security measures
- OneDrive
- Project Storage at TU Delft

Temporary storage of audio recordings on external recording device, then transferred to Project Storage

Digital informed consent forms and contact details, are stored separately from research data, by encrypting them separately from the research data in Project Storage.

IV. Legal and ethical requirements, codes of conduct

7. Does your research involve human subjects or 3rd party datasets collected from human participants?

- Yes

8A. Will you work with personal data? (information about an identified or identifiable natural person)

If you are not sure which option to select, first ask your [Faculty Data Steward](#) for advice. You can also check with the [privacy website](#) . If you would like to contact the privacy team: privacy-tud@tudelft.nl, please bring your DMP.

- Yes

8B. Will you work with any other types of confidential or classified data or code as listed below? (tick all that apply)

If you are not sure which option to select, ask your [Faculty Data Steward](#) for advice.

- No, I will not work with any confidential or classified data/code

9. How will ownership of the data and intellectual property rights to the data be managed?

For projects involving commercially-sensitive research or research involving third parties, seek advice of your [Faculty Contract Manager](#) when answering this question. If this is not the case, you can use the example below.

The data from the in-depth interviews will be anonymised. When participating in the interview, the participants will get an ID name, for example 'participant 001'. All personal data will be deleted after the project, and only the anonymised and aggregated data remains. This data can be safely shared.

10. Which personal data will you process? Tick all that apply

- Other types of personal data - please explain below
- Telephone numbers
- Email addresses and/or other addresses for digital communication
- Names and addresses
- Data collected in Informed Consent form (names and email addresses)
- Signed consent forms

Audio recordings

Occupation

Company name

Professional opinion on the effect of various community involvement initiatives on the social attachment of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods

11. Please list the categories of data subjects

Policy makers of municipality of Utrecht, specifically Overvecht

Resident connectors actively engaged in the community of Overvecht

Neighbourhood ambassadors of Overvecht

12. Will you be sharing personal data with individuals/organisations outside of the EEA (European Economic Area)?

- No

15. What is the legal ground for personal data processing?

- Informed consent

16. Please describe the informed consent procedure you will follow:

All participants of the in-depth interview will be asked to fill in a form in which they are asked to give their informed consent. You can only participate when you agree to the terms.

17. Where will you store the signed consent forms?

- Other - please explain below

OneDrive

18. Does the processing of the personal data result in a high risk to the data subjects?

If the processing of the personal data results in a high risk to the data subjects, it is required to perform [Data Protection Impact Assessment \(DPIA\)](#). In order to determine if there is a high risk for the data subjects, please check if any of the options below that are applicable to the processing of the personal data during your research (check all that apply).

If two or more of the options listed below apply, you will have to [complete the DPIA](#). Please get in touch with the privacy team: privacy-tud@tudelft.nl to receive support with DPIA.

If only one of the options listed below applies, your project might need a DPIA. Please get in touch with the privacy team: privacy-tud@tudelft.nl to get advice as to whether DPIA is necessary. If you have any additional comments, please add them in the box below.

- None of the above applies

22. What will happen with personal research data after the end of the research project?

- Personal research data will be destroyed after the end of the research project
- Other - please explain below
- Anonymised or aggregated data will be shared with others

Full anonymised interview transcripts will be stored, but not shared openly.

Audio-recordings of interviews are destroyed after completion of anonymised interview transcriptions. All other personal research data will be destroyed at the latest 1 month after the end of the project.

Necessary personal data will be stored for the duration of the project + 1 month (for clean up)

23. How long will (pseudonymised) personal data be stored for?

- Other - please state the duration and explain the rationale below

Data is anonymised, and thus pseudonymised personal data is not stored.

24. What is the purpose of sharing personal data?

- Other - please explain below

Research data is anonymised: personal data is not shared.

25. Will your study participants be asked for their consent for data sharing?

- Yes, in consent form - please explain below what you will do with data from participants who did not consent to data sharing

Although data will be anonymised, all participants will be asked for their consent for data to be shared anonymously with open access in an online data repository. Participants who do not consent to data sharing will not be included in the research project.

V. Data sharing and long-term preservation

27. Apart from personal data mentioned in question 22, will any other data be publicly shared?

- No other data can be publicly shared - please explain below why data cannot be publicly shared

29. How will you share research data (and code), including the one mentioned in question 22?

- My data will be shared in a different way - please explain below

The anonymised dataset will be included in the appendix of the MSc thesis, which is made available in the TU Delft Educational repository.

30. How much of your data will be shared in a research data repository?

- 100 GB - 1 TB

31. When will the data (or code) be shared?

- As soon as corresponding results (papers, theses, reports) are published

32. Under what licence will be the data/code released?

- Other - Please explain

Data shared in MSc thesis

VI. Data management responsibilities and resources

33. Is TU Delft the lead institution for this project?

- Yes, the only institution involved

34. If you leave TU Delft (or are unavailable), who is going to be responsible for the data resulting from this project?

My supervisor Gerard van Bortel will be responsible for the data after I leave the TU Delft.
G.A.vanBortel@tudelft.nl

35. What resources (for example financial and time) will be dedicated to data management and ensuring that data will be FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Re-usable)?

4TU.ResearchData is able to archive 1TB of data per researcher per year free of charge for all TU Delft researchers. We do not expect to exceed this and therefore there are no additional costs of long term preservation.