

# To what extent do revitalisation projects in urban intergenerational neighbourhoods influence place attachment?

*A research project in the Oosterparkwijk, Groningen*



*(Source: M. Sablerolle 2014)*

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## Abstract

Revitalisation projects in urban neighbourhoods can have positive or negative impacts on feelings of place attachment. Revitalisation projects can improve neighbourhoods that were previously considered to be problem areas. It has been found that when an area becomes physically and aesthetically more attractive, people are more likely to do their best in maintaining this quality, and therefore, become more attached. This research project aims to determine to what extent revitalisation projects in urban intergenerational neighbourhoods, like the Oosterparkwijk, influence feelings of place attachment. In order to answer this question, a case study, the revitalisation of the Wielewaalplein, has been analysed. By doing eleven in depth interviews with students and elderly people in the Oosterparkwijk, it has been found that elderly people welcomed the revitalisation of the Wielewaalplein with open arms. They had in fact become more emotionally attached to the Wielewaalplein because of the aesthetic and physical improvements. Students on the other hand, had no particular opinion on the Wielewaalplein revitalisation. They found the Wielewaalflat aesthetically displeasing, yet were very enthusiastic about the arrival of the Lidl supermarket. This shows that students became more functionally attached the new Wielewaalplein, but not necessarily emotionally attached. A difference in appreciation has been found between revitalisation projects. 'De Velden' is another revitalisation project in the Oosterparkwijk, which is apparently far less popular than the Wielewaalplein project. The reasons behind this difference in appreciation however need to be researched in more detail in a future research project.

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## Introduction

Hopkins et. al. (2010) state that the concept of intergenerationality is increasingly discussed within geographical research. Intergenerationality, according to Vanderbeck (2007) implies that there are a variety of different age-groups, or generations, living together within an area. Within the social sciences, a generation is a way of positioning people in relation to one another, but in a broader sense, a generation marks the position within a family lineage and attempts to sort people based on the time of their birth (Vanderbeck, 2007). Neighbourhoods can be listed as one of the most significant places where cohesion between different generations can be made or broken. According to Gardner (2011), neighbourhoods are physically and subjectively bordered spaces, which imply that they are geographies of materiality, meaning, wellbeing (or poor-being) and place. The neighbourhood can be a place to which people are attached socially as well as physically. This means that change in any shape or form will affect people's emotions, regardless of what their feelings towards the neighbourhood are in the first place (Graaf, van der & Duyvendak, 2009).

When change in the neighbourhood takes place through urban revitalisation or rebranding projects, inhabitants of revitalised neighbourhoods have to cope with social and physical change of their living space (Graaf, van der & Duyvendak, 2009). Revitalisation literally means to 'bring back new life' into an area that has previously known neglect (Voogd & Woltjer, 2010). Urban revitalisation is all about making the right interventions and decisions regarding both populated and unpopulated areas of a neighbourhood. Emphasis is placed on diversifying the types of housing as well as increasing the quality of these houses (Voogd & Woltjer, 2010). On top of this, focus is also placed on renewing and upgrading housing, improving traffic safety, social stability and enhancing green features.

The process of physical change can influence emotions and sense of place attachment of neighbourhood inhabitants. (Graaf, van der & Duyvendak, 2009). Place attachment can be described as the bonding between people to places, which can occur in two forms: functional and emotional place attachment (Livingstone et. al. 2010). People become attached to a place when they can connect memories or experiences to a certain place. It is a dynamic concept, because of changing situations (Rubenstein & Parmalee, 1992). Feeling connected to a place can make a person feel connected to a particular period in their lives. It can be said that the older a person gets, or the longer a person has lived in a specific place, the more attached he or she becomes to that place (Altman & Low, 1992).

The neighbourhood can therefore be seen as a significant place in people's lives, especially to those who have lived there for a long time. Revitalisation projects bring about physical change in an area, which can influence feelings of place attachment because people's memories and experiences are being altered (Graaf, van der & Duyvendak, 2009, Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). It will especially affect those ageing in place, because their deteriorating mobility implies that less time is spent going outside of their proximal living space, and more time is spent within the neighbourhood (Gardner, 2011).

The concepts of intergenerationality, place attachment and revitalisation are linked to one another in a certain way: physical change and intergenerationality influence place attachment. However, it is not yet known *to what extent* these concepts influence and affect each other (Graaf, van der & Duyvendak, 2009, Gardner, 2011). It could differ per neighbourhood, or per revitalisation project. Furthermore, intergenerationality is an under researched concept, especially the relationships

between older adults (65 and older) and young adults (18-25) have not received much attention (Vanderbeck, 2007). It is for these reasons that the following research question was formulated:

- *“To what extent do revitalisation projects in intergenerational neighbourhoods influence feelings of place attachment?”*

The Oosterparkwijk in Groningen is an intergenerational neighbourhood on the Eastern side of the city, (see Map 1 below) which has been experiencing significant amounts of physical as well as demographic change for the past fifteen years (Oosterparkwijk: op het goede spoor, 2013). The revitalisation projects in this neighbourhood commenced in 1998, when the old FC Groningen football stadium was demolished to make room for new, modern housing (Oosterparkwijk: op het goede spoor, 2013). According to a neighbourhood analysis done by the municipality of Groningen, the removal of the football stadium has led to a safer, more family friendly neighbourhood. Less football riots are occurring and new homes are of better quality whilst still being affordable. This improvement allowed an influx of new people to move into the area, consisting mostly of students and young families (Oosterparkwijk: op het goede spoor, 2013). To place more focus on intergenerationality within this research project, the following sub-questions were formulated:

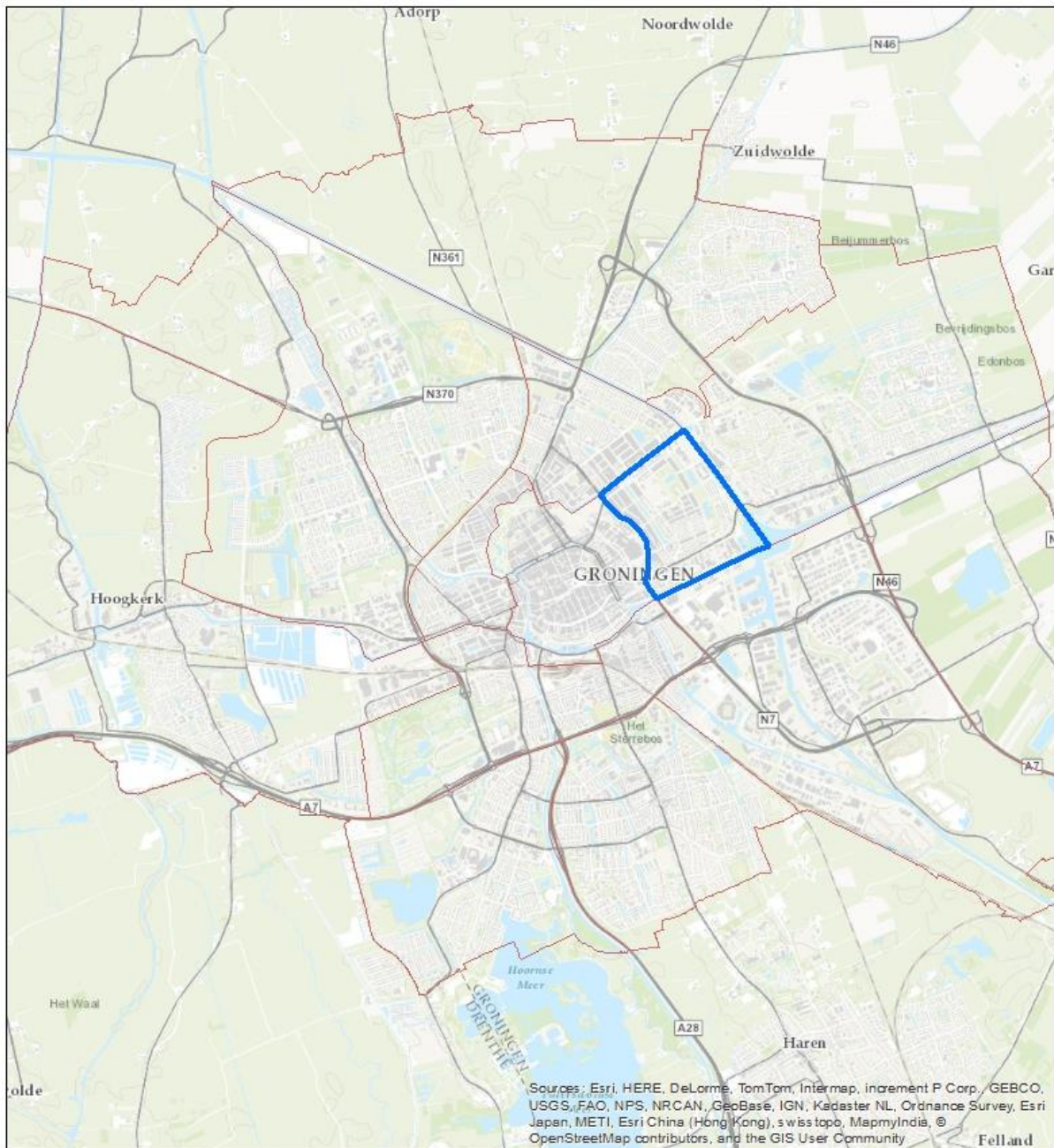
*“To what extent do revitalisation projects influence the feelings of place attachment of older adults in the Oosterparkwijk?”*

- *“To what extent do revitalisation projects influence the feelings of place attachment of students in the Oosterparkwijk?”*
- *“To what extent does the concept of intergenerationality play a role in influencing the place attachment of students and older adults in the Oosterparkwijk?”*

This introduction will be followed by a theoretical framework, discussing and analysing the concepts of intergenerationality, place attachment and revitalisation. Chapter two, methodology, will explain the used method for data collection. Data analysis, ethics and a reflection shall be included too. Closing off chapter two will be the Case Study of the Wielewaalplein revitalisation. Chapter three will discuss and analyse the obtained results. Data obtained through interviews shall be linked to academic literature in this chapter too. A conclusion and reflection shall round off this thesis.



# Research area within Groningen



## Legend

 Oosterparkwijk

0 0,5 1 2 3 4 Kilometers

Source: ArcGisOnline, M. Sablerolle (2014)

Map 1-Location of the Oosterparkwijk, research area, within Groningen .(ArgGisOnline, M.Sablerolle, 2014)

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The following chapter will analyse relevant theories related to the concepts of intergenerationality, place attachment and revitalisation based on academic literature. Section 2.2 will explain the concept of intergenerationality, followed by an analysis of age-segregation, a product of intergenerationality. Age integrated and age differentiated societies will be described, followed by a discussion of how barriers between generations can be broken down. Section 2.3 will discuss place attachment in its two forms, functional and emotional place attachment. The relationship between physical surroundings and place attachment will also be analysed, linking to section 2.4 where the concept of revitalisation is defined. Finally, this section will identify five important factors necessary to make revitalisation successful, using Voogd & Woltjer's (2010) model of successful planning

### **2.2 Intergenerationality**

The concept of intergenerationality has been researched only by a small group of geographers, mostly focussing on the parent-child relationship (Vanderbeck, 2007). The older adults, according to Vanderbeck (2007), been severely under researched. Age-based stereotypes continue to exist in everyday life, casting ageing and old people in a negative light. Ageing is often seen as an economic, social and political threat to younger generations (Vanderbeck, 2007)

#### **2.2.1 Age segregation in urban neighbourhoods**

Although the term segregation is often associated with racial or ethnic segregation rather than age, age segregation in urban neighbourhoods is a common phenomenon (Vanderbeck, 2007). It is sometimes viewed as natural, inevitable or even unproblematic, but increasingly, age segregation is occurring. Children and young people are separated from each other in schools and recreational areas, working age adults are put into work places entirely separated from children or older people, and the elderly are separated out of work places and into special care homes (Vanderbeck, 2007). In Groningen, age-segregation is possibly being encouraged because of a new rule, enabling no more than 15% of houses in certain areas to be inhabited by students. This could perhaps lead to less interaction between students and the elderly, because everyone will be living in separate bubbles, like an age-differentiated society (Vanderbeck, 2007).

#### **2.2.2 Age-integrated society and age-differentiated society**

According to Riley & Riley (2000) there are two contrasting types of social structures that neighbourhoods can follow: the age-integrated society and the age-differentiated society. In the age-integrated society, the concepts of education, work and leisure are not segregated by age and are not strictly bound to a specific stage in a life course. In contrast, the age-differentiated society is split up in three main blocks, linked to three main stages in a life course. The younger years are associated with educational activities, the middle portions of life are dominated by work and the years of retirement are characterised by leisure (Riley & Riley, 2000).

Age-integration needs to be promoted and attention should be given to break down existing age-barriers in intergenerational neighbourhoods like the Oosterparkwijk. Benefits of an age-integrated society include more and better interaction between generations, increased sense of belonging in the neighbourhood and decreased chance of conflict (Riley & Riley, 2000). In order to achieve this, Riley & Riley (2000) suggest that two things need to be done: structural barriers need to be broken

down and people of different ages need to be brought together. Removing structural barriers implies that 'flexible age criteria' need to be adopted in the areas of education, work and leisure, because it is in these areas that age segregation is often the norm (Riley & Riley, 2000). By bringing people of different ages together for activities and interaction, place attachment is also influenced. Social contact and interaction are seen as essential in feeling attached to a place (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001).

### 2.3 Place attachment

According to Rubenstein & Parmalee (1992) place is the geographical location to which people link their memories and experiences, and therefore become attached to that geographical location through their emotions. When meanings, experiences, values and memories are attached to space, people become emotionally attached, thus creating place and eventually place attachment (Rubenstein & Parmalee, 1992).

Place attachment is described by Livingstone et. al (2010) as the 'bonding of people to places', which can occur in two forms: functional attachment and emotional attachment. Functional attachment means that people feel bonded to a specific place which is useful to them, such as their office at work. Emotional attachment implies that the bond is forged by positive feelings towards a place, such as their homes or gardens. This is backed up by Hidalgo & Hernandez (2001), who state that there is an emotional bond between people and places, which is often a positive one.

Feelings of place attachment depend on the quality of life people experience in a certain place. This place can include the home itself, the neighbourhood or even a country (Livingstone et. al, 2010). Quality of life in the neighbourhood can be measured by crime rates, social heterogeneity, residential mobility, amount of green space and variety of amenities (Graaf, van der & Duyvendak, 2009, Livingstone et. al. 2010). According to Livingstone et.al (2010), inhabitants in physically and socially backward areas are likely to feel less attached to their neighbourhood, because people tend to form stronger bonds to a place if it meets their practical and psychological needs as well as matches their goals and lifestyle. In particular, it has been found that the presence of strong social networks and a sense of security are the two most important aspects in contributing to place attachment (Livingstone et. al. 2010)

However, it has been found by Hidalgo & Hernandez (2001) that place attachment is not just the relationship between a person and their environmental surroundings. Social contacts and relationships are argued to be important in place attachment. People become attached to a place because social contacts and relationships are formed within the context of that place (Altman & Low, 1992). According to Hidalgo & Hernandez (2001) the social dimension of creating feelings of place attachment plays a larger role than the physical dimension.. An example of this can be given through research done by Lucas & Purkayastha (2007), who conducted a study about transnational feelings of home among Canadian migrants in the United States. They interviewed Canadian nationals about their migration to the US, asking them what made them feel at home in the US and what they missed most about their home in Canada. They concluded that the majority of interviewees stated that they missed their friends and family in Canada most, but that their job made them feel most at home in the US (Lucas & Purkayastha, 2007).



## 2.4 What are revitalisation projects and what makes them successful?

As can be understood from Van der Graaf & Duyvendak (2009), people's attachment to their neighbourhood can be altered when their living area is physically changed, for example by revitalisation projects. Although these affect changes long-term residents the most, it isn't necessarily a negative change. People can find that their neighbourhood is changing for the better after facing revitalisation projects (Graaf, van der & Duyvendak, 2009). In order to fully comprehend the concept of revitalisation, it should be discussed in more detail.

According to Voogd & Woltjer (2010) urban revitalisation is about making the right interventions and decisions regarding both populated and unpopulated areas of a neighbourhood. Emphasis is placed on diversifying the types of housing as well as increasing the quality of these houses. But aside from diversifying housing through demolition, building new housing and replacing rent homes for sale homes, revitalisation is also about intervening in the neighbourhood itself. Increasing the amount of green space and improving traffic safety can also be seen as neighbourhood revitalisation. Allowing businesses to open up and therefore increase economic activity can be part of revitalisation projects too (Voogd & Woltjer, 2010). The latter is the case for the Wielewaalplein revitalisation project: a supermarket, the Lidl, has opened its doors and alongside with the reopening of a tobacco shop, a newsstand, a hairdresser and a flower stand, economic activity in the area has increased significantly as well as attracting more people to come and do their daily grocery shopping there.

Revitalisation projects in the Netherlands are broad because the focus is placed on renewing and upgrading housing, improving traffic safety, social stability and enhancing green features (Voogd & Woltjer, 2010). This is of importance, as safety, green areas and social stability can improve place attachment and feelings of belonging in the neighbourhood (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). The effects of revitalisation projects can therefore be positive, if done correctly. The question which now stands: what features make a revitalisation project successful? According to Voogd & Woltjer (2010) a good plan of what needs to be revitalised has to be constructed first. To be successful, a plan must be:

1. **Integrating** in terms of knowledge, goals and actions. Relationship between physical and social interaction should be emphasised
2. **Multi-formal**, meaning that one needs to be aware of the diversity of people involved in a planning process
3. **Normative**, focus must be placed on identifying, understanding and mediating between conflicting parties
4. **Action-oriented**, parties must be proactive, focus on making the plan a reality and ensure that everyone will benefit from the new plan.
5. **Sustainable**, be aware of short and long-term perspectives, problems and issues as well as being environmentally friendly.

Therefore, if the plan of the to be revitalised area is consistent, the revitalisation itself will be effective (Voogd & Woltjer, 2010). On top of this, construction needs to go smoothly, and the local community needs to be involved too. Allowing people to be involved in making their own neighbourhood a better place (physically and socially) will eventually increase place attachment. This means they will work harder to maintain and improve it (Hidalgo & Hernandez). The physical

appearance and social structure of a neighbourhood can greatly influence the way that people feel attached to their living space.

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## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Method

The goal of this thesis is to determine to what extent revitalisation projects in intergenerational neighbourhoods influence feelings of place attachment. When collecting data, focus must be placed on gathering information about people's opinions, emotions and personal experiences. According to Dunn (2010), in-depth interviews are a suitable way of collecting data when one is interested in finding people's opinions, emotions and personal experiences. They provide insight into differing opinions or debates within a group, but can also highlight agreement on some issues. It is for this reason that in-depth interviews shall be performed to collect data for this thesis (Dunn, 2010).

For this thesis, semi-structured interviews shall be used, because this form of interviewing has some degree of predetermined order while still maintaining flexibility. This is useful, as it enables more freedom when asking questions, although still allowing a safety net in the form of an interview guide in case something should go wrong (Longhurst, 2010).

### 3.2 Ethics

When doing in-depth interviews, there are two concepts that must be kept in mind: confidentiality and anonymity (Longhurst, 2010). The respondent's must be reassured that their personal information, such as name and address will remain private. Prior to commencing the interview, permission must be asked to record it. During the interview, respondents have the right to pause the recorder or stop with the interview at any given time (Longhursts, 2010). It is of importance to handle the obtained data in a safe and private manner, which is why all respondents in this thesis were given pseudonyms. Furthermore, the interviewer is expected to handle a 'no harm policy' towards respondents. This includes being polite, making respondents feel at ease and avoiding steering, uncomfortable questions (Longhurst, 2010). In certain situations, the interviewer must carefully judge whether it is appropriate to continue asking questions about a certain topic without insulting the respondent. This was kept in mind whilst making an interview-guide.

### 3.3 Data collection

For this thesis, students and elderly people living in the Oosterparkwijk within 1km to the Wielewaalplein were approached. This proximity was chosen because respondents were highly likely to use and know about the Wielewaalplein. . Eleven respondents were recruited to participate. The six students that participated are between ages 20-24 and were mainly found through the researcher's personal network. A post was placed on Facebook, to which twelve people responded. The recruitment of older adults turned out to be more difficult, as there are no elderly people within the researcher's network. An email was sent out to the community centre, 'Treslinghuis', a residential care home, the 'Oosterparkheem' and to another community centre, 'Bij Bosshardt'. The people in charge at these institutions replied stating a list of names and telephone numbers. In this way, three people were found willing to help. The other three were encountered during a coffee and tea hour and a Bingo afternoon at Bij Bosshardt. All the interviews took place in the respondent's homes. The interviews with students ranged from twenty minutes to fifty minutes and interviews done with older adults from half an hour to almost two hours, discussing themes such as intergenerationality, revitalisation of the Wielewaalplein and feeling at home in the Oosterparkwijk.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

The data that has been found through in-depth interviews will be analysed by evaluating the transcripts. After each interview, the whole conversation was typed and printed. In this way, the answers given by each respondent can be read and coded. The analysis took place by using different colour highlighter pens, one colour for each sub-question. Whenever a given answer relates back to a sub-question, that bit of text was highlighted in the correct colour. The reason this method for analysis was chosen is because of the small (eleven) amount of interviews done. Computer programmes such as Atlas.ti are useful when more interviews are completed (Dunn, 2010).

### **3.5 Reflection**

Overall, most of the interviews were performed successfully, with the exception of the first two. This was because the research question was not formulated well at the time. Rather than focussing on place attachment, 'social cohesion' was used instead. The two respondents found this term confusing and it required much explanation during the interview. Therefore, the research question was changed to make it clearer and less broad.

### **3.6 Case study: Revitalisation of the 'Wielewaalplein'**

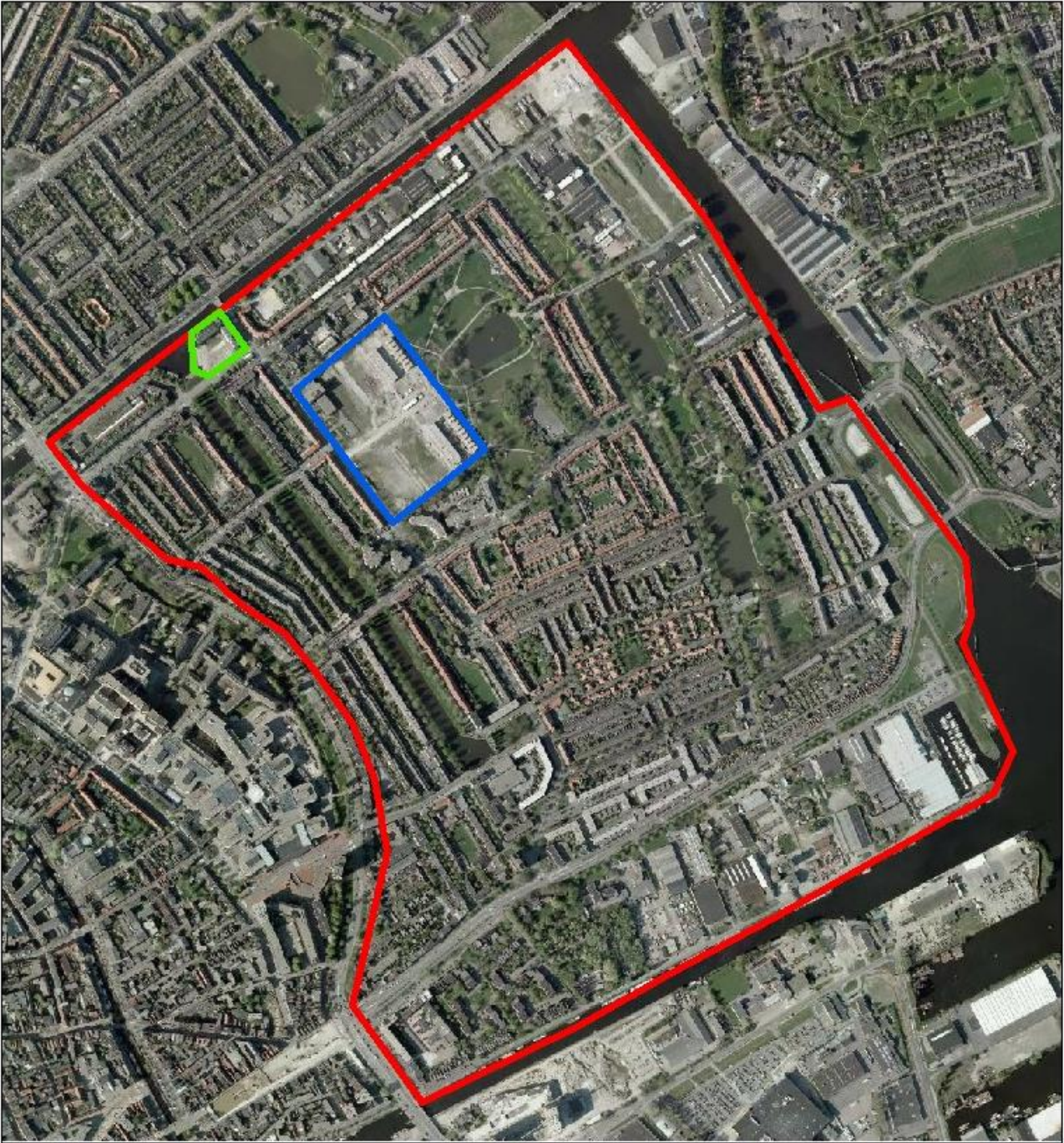
In order to answer the proposed research and sub-questions, a case study shall be included. This is the revitalisation of the Wielewaalplein in the Oosterparkwijk, because it is situated strategically within the neighbourhood with a supermarket and shopping area in close proximity, meaning it is a place where possible interactions occur between different generations. The Wielewaalplein, marked in green on map 2 below, is a current site for urban revitalisation, with plans made in 2011 to build a housing complex, known as the Wielewaalflat, for students and people with a physical handicap (Gemeente Groningen, 2013).

Aside from the Wielewaalflat being built, space was also cleared for a Lidl Supermarket to open its doors. Smaller businesses that were there prior to the revitalisation, such as a tobacco shop, a newsstand and a flowerstand, have also been allowed to return, but have been given new buildings and new facilities (Gemeente Groningen, 2013). The arrival of the Lidl could mean a potential change in people who use and visit the Wielewaalplein, and therefore lead to more interactions between generations living in the area.

Other than the Wielewaalplein revitalisation, 'De Velden' is another area within the Oosterparkwijk being revitalised. For this reason it is marked on map 2 below in blue. De Velden used to be the location of the old FC Groningen stadium. Now, it is a prime land location where two streets of new houses have already been built, with more new homes expected within the next 5 years (Gemeente Groningen, 2013).



# Research Area Oosterparkwijk



0 0,050,1 0,2 0,3 0,4 Kilometers

### Legend

-  Oosterparkwijk
-  Wielewaalplein
-  De Velden

Source: ArcGisOnline, M. Sablerolle (2014)

Map 2: Research area within the Oosterparkwijk, with case study Wielewaalplein in green. ( Source: ArcGisOnline, M.Sablerolle, 2014)



## 4. Results and analysis

### 4.1 Introduction

Throughout this section the data that were obtained will be analysed and linked with relevant theories of place attachment, urban revitalisation and intergenerationality from chapter two. In paragraph 4.2 the concept of intergenerationality in the Oosterparkwijk shall be discussed. Following this, section 4.3 will discuss two types of place attachment: functional and emotional place attachment, relating it to students and older adults in the Oosterparkwijk. After this, the effects of the Wielewaalplein revitalisation on place attachment of students and elderly shall be discussed. Finally, an analysis of the revitalisation of the Wielewaalplein using Voogd & Woltjer's (2010) five points of how to make a successful revitalisation plan will be given.

### 4.2 Intergenerationality in the Oosterparkwijk

As was said in chapter two, Riley & Riley (2000) are of the opinion that age integration can be achieved by breaking down structural barriers and bringing people of different ages together. This will allow inter-age interaction, thus strengthening social networks. In turn, better social contact and larger social networks will lead to people feeling more attached to their neighbourhood (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). Some older people in the Oosterparkwijk are trying hard to get students or young people to participate in community activities or council meetings. They have a desire to interact with young people because they believe that they themselves and neighbourhood will benefit.

*"We've been thinking of ways to get students to join in our activities, because we would all really like that here. They hardly ever come. The activities that we organise here are fun for everyone and we as a neighbourhood we can get to know each other better."* (Jan, 78)

*"I used to be a member of the 'klankbordgroep' in the neighbourhood, and we were always talking about getting students involved. There's so many of them out here, surely some of them will want to join. It's important you know, for young people to participate in these things. It keeps me young too"* (Renske, 76).

*"I've got this really sweet girl coming over doing the cleaning for me. She's a student too, psychology I think. Yes, I look forward to her coming over, we have nice chats, oh yes we talk about everything. Things like this keep me fresh in the head."* (Johanna, 82)

Linking this back to Riley & Riley (2000), the Oosterparkwijk can be categorised as an age-integrated society rather than an age-differentiated society. Activities are being organised for people of all ages, no activity is specifically for one age group. Although older adults are enthusiastic about having contact with students, the issue remains about how to get into contact with them. Students are facing the same problem: they feel an age barrier between themselves and the older adults. Issues include how to approach older adults, how to make conversation and how to behave around them. Some students were very clearly not interested in contact with older people, though others were keen to try, but again, didn't know where to begin.

*"I'm just not really sure what to talk about with them. Their lives are so different to mine. I've got plenty of other things to do"* (Merel, 21).

*"It's not exactly cool to go to like a community event organised by old people"* (Sandra, 21)

*"I would like to join in with their activities I guess...But I just don't know where to go. People here are so segregated; I think something like a café in the area would really help. You know, you could make it a neighbourhood initiative, with old people baking cakes for the café, and the children over there, they've like got their own vegetable patch. Use the vegetables from there for meals in the café. Then you've got young and old interacting. I would certainly like to be a part of something like that" (Heleen, 22).*

*"Sure, I'd love to join a community meeting or participate in an activity. I think it's very important to give something back to the neighbourhood I live in. I already tried joining the 'Voedselbank' down there, but they didn't need any new volunteers. The thing is, I don't really know where to start." (Anna, 24).*

The above stated quotes express well how the opinions of students differentiate. Some are definitely interested in having social contact with older people, but for the sake of the neighbourhood, not for their own benefit, unlike older adults. Others are not interested because it's not cool, but all students had in common that they did not know where to go and were apprehensive to make conversation. The concept of intergenerationality is of less importance for students than it is for the older adults. Students have lives outside of the Oosterparkwijk, whereas the elderly are bound to their neighbourhood, making students less attached than older adults.

### **4.3 Functional and emotional place attachment**

As was explained in chapter two, place attachment is described by Livingstone et. al (2010) as the 'bonding of people to places', which can occur in two forms: functional attachment and emotional attachment.

Functional attachment means that people feel bonded to a specific place which is useful to them, such as their office at work. In this research project, mostly students showed signs of functional attachment to a place, usually the Lidl supermarket. The supermarket was newly built in 2013 as part of the Wielewaalplein revitalisation project, and since then, students like Anna, Bram and Heleen have acknowledged to visiting the Wielewaalplein more often, specifically to use the supermarket.

*"I'm so happy that the Lidl has come to this area. For the rest I don't really use the Wielewaalplein much, I just go, get my groceries and go home again. But it's not like I go there for fun or something.. or meet up with people there.. It's purely functional I guess" (Bram, 22, has lived in the Oosterparkwijk for 2 years)*

*"Well, before they changed the Wielewaalplein, I used to make detours after college or something to shop at Albert Heijn, because I don't like the Spar (Wielewaalplein), but now that the Lidl has arrived, I do visit the plein more often to shop at Lidl. It's amazing, what a supermarket can do to an area. Such a small change and the plein has become so much more lively and busy." (Heleen, 22, has lived in the Oosterparkwijk for 1 and a half years)*

It has been made apparent that while students appear to be more functionally attached to this neighbourhood, older adults experience a more emotional attachment to the Oosterparkwijk. Emotional attachment implies that the bond is forged by positive feelings towards a place because

of memories or experiences (Livingstone et. al, 2010). Willem (78) admitted that he has been coming to the Wielewaalplein for such a long time, that he doesn't care if there is a new supermarket.

*"Yes...well I just go along with it...I've been going there for such a long time, I 'm used to going there, so yeah, I just automatically go there, I just go along with it"* (Willem, 78, has lived in the Oosterparkwijk for 40 years)

This shows that Willem is using the Wielewaalplein out of habit, rather than because he likes what's going on there. Johanna (82) showed signs of emotional attachment too:

*"So much has changed here...they renovated those houses back there, and then everything changed. This was some 35 years ago. Slowly, all the shops moved away, all went bankrupt...everyone went bankrupt. Such a shame, my baker, my butcher, my hairdresser...all gone.. all the 'gezelligheid' just disappeared"* (Johanna, 82, has lived in the Oosterparkwijk for 60 years)

When asked why she didn't move away when all the 'gezelligheid' disappeared, she replied:

*"Oh no, no way that I would move. I'm an Oosterparker, and Oosterpark is Oosterpark. When you have lived in the Oosterparkwijk, you don't want to leave. People do, but they all come back in the end. Oosterpark has got something other area's don't"* (Johanna, 82).

This is proof of being emotionally attached to an area. Even when all of Johanna's shops disappeared, she remained in the Oosterpark because she felt Oosterparker, she had experienced so many positive things and feelings there that change didn't matter. Being emotionally attached to a place, according to Altman & Low (1992) comes with time, because the longer one lives in an area, the more memories and experiences can be attached to that place, thus making it more special. This could be a reason why students feel less emotionally attached, but more functionally attached.

#### **4.4 Effects of the Wielewaalplein revitalisation on feelings of place attachment of the elderly**

All five older adults that were interviewed were very accepting of physical changes in their neighbourhood. Most of them were welcoming and embracing the change, because they only saw it as an improvement for their neighbourhood. Johanna (82) was not too sure about all the changes going on, but saw that change was inevitable. When asked what she thought about the physical changes in the Oosterparkwijk, including the Wielewaalplein revitalisation, she replied:

*"What does it matter what I think? It's going to happen anyway. They will change it no matter what, whether I like it or not. Change is inevitable, I may not like it, but it's going to happen anyway. Its been happening for the last 35 years."* (Johanna, 82)

The following quotes show that most older adults people are very open to change in the area and are very happy with living in the Oosterparkwijk because of all these changes.

*"The renewal of the Wielwaalplein is such an improvement for the neighbourhood. It looks so much tidier. Yes, it has become more accessible too, and much more colourful. Before, it was like, what should we do with this?! But now everything is so much neater. Even the pavement is better. Yes, I really love going there. I already did, but now even more."* (Renske, 76)

*“The ‘Gemeente’ is doing such a good job. I love the new Wielewaalplein, even that big flat, because it makes the neighbourhood look more modern. Everything is livelier too, because of the students that have moved into the flat. The whole area is becoming younger, livelier, more modern.”* (Jan, 78)

*“A lot has changed in the Oosterpark...but it’s all been positive. Everything just looks so much better than it used to, in the past this area was quite poor. But now....it looks pretty, its green, they’re building a pond over there, the whole Wielewaalplein has improved, yes...everything is so much better than it used to be.”* (Willem, 78)

**Place attachment has changed in a positive way, because older adults visit the Wielewaalplein more often, they enjoy coming there and the area has changed for the better. Graaf, van der & Duyvendak (2009) stated that revitalisation projects in urban neighbourhoods could influence feelings of place attachment both in a positive and negative way, depending on what kind of change it would be. In this case, feelings of emotional place attachment have definitely changed in a positive manner. In paragraph 4.5 it will be discussed to what extent the Wielewaalplein revitalisation has been a success.4.5 Effects of the Wielewaalplein revitalisation on feelings of place attachment of students**

All interviewed students were positive about the revitalisation of the Wielewaalplein, although for them, it presented more of a functional change rather than emotional, as it did for the older adults. Mostly the positive change for them focused on the arrival of the Lidl and more parking spaces rather than the area having improved aesthetically. In fact, most of them commented on the area looking less attractive because of the new Wielewaalflat.

*“This Wielewaalflat, it’s like a thorn in my eye. It’s so ugly, it doesn’t fit in with the rest of the buildings here in the area. But yeah I do go there for the Lidl. Yes I can definitely say that I go to the Wielewaalplein more often. Not because its so nice or anything, but I’m just so glad the Lidl is there”* (Bram, 22)

*“The rest of the houses here in this area are like 1950’s/1960’s. And then suddenly there’s this massive flat there. I guess it’s modern, but it just doesn’t blend with the rest of the area. But the Wielewaalplein...yeah...for the rest I can’t really say much about it, I just go there for the Lidl.”* (Jarno, 21)

The Wielewaalplein revitalisation for the students, looking at the above quotes, only proved to be a change aesthetically, but not much emotionally. . This means that their feelings of place attachment were not specifically affected, because they are not as impressed by the changes as the older adults, whose place attachment was emotional rather than functional. Students are attached functionally to the Wielewaalplein because of the new Lidl. They don’t like much how the flat has changed the area, but it doesn’t matter to them because the Lidl is there.

## 4.6 The Wielewaalplein revitalisation: success or failure?

This next section will be about the Wielewaalplein revitalisation. According to Voogd & Woltjer (2010) five points are essential in guaranteeing the success of revitalisation projects. Plans must be integrating, multi-formal, normative, action-oriented and sustainable. This research has found that the Wielewaalplein renewal was actually a very welcome revitalisation project, and that most of the elderly as well as student are pleased with the results. Students commented on how the Lidl Supermarket had improved the plein for them, and that the general atmosphere had improved, while the older adults were most pleased with the improved accessibility to the plein. A new bus stop was placed there, everything was re-paved, making it easier to walk for older adults, and more parking places were built.

*“I think it’s a good improvement. Not specifically because the Lidl came, but I just like the place a lot. The accessibility has improved so much too, there used to be these little curbs around the place, with lots of loose lying stones, very easy to trip on...Now they’ve flattened everything out and paved it again. It’s so much easier for old people to come there with their walkers again” (Jan, 78)*

*“I suppose I like the way they changed the place up... But I mostly like the new bus station there, I always had to walk, but now I can take the bus, or get my son to drive me, because they have new parking spaces too” (Johanna, 82)*

The above quotes point out that the revitalisation plan has been successful in terms of being integrating, action-oriented and sustainable. Plans need to integrate knowledge, action and goals in order to balance the relationship between physical and social aspects. Plans also need to be action-oriented, to make the revitalised space open for use as quick as possible. They also need to be sustainable to be aware of short and long term demand (Voogd & Woltjer, 2010). All of these points have been implemented at the Wielewaalplein revitalisation, because it looks more attractive and neat, it is more functional, practical and accessible, and only took a year to build. The changes that have been made will be effective for a long time, such as the new bus stop and sewage system, meaning that the plan is sustainable too.

Although both groups were satisfied with the revitalisation, older adults were more perceptive of the changes that were happening, students were not paying much attention to what was going on and only cared about the finished result. Some older adults also attended a consultation meeting with Gemeente Groningen about the Wielewaalplein revitalisation.

*“They really did their best with this whole thing, I often walked over, just to see the progress they made. Yeah, I even took some pictures when it was being built and stuff.” (Jan, 78)*

*“I was invited to join a meeting with the Gemeente, about the Wielewaalplein, and well, of course I went. It’s so important to give your opinion. Change is inevitable, if you want your neighbourhood to look nicer, sometimes change is the only option. So yes, I went...they produced a whole book about that meeting, it’s on their website” (Renkse, 76)*

These two quotes show that people were invited to take part in consultation meetings about the revitalisation, linking back to Voogd & Woltjer’s (2010) point that successful revitalisation plans must be normative. This plan certainly was normative, because it enabled local people to share their



opinions and ideas, therefore reducing the chance of dissatisfaction and conflict. Students, on the other hand, were not too bothered with the revitalisation process:

*“I mean, I like the way they changed everything up, with the new tiles and stuff, but it’s not like I’m that bothered...I just go there for the Lidl” (Anna, 24)*

*“I don’t really care that they changed the Wielewaalplein. Yeah, I guess it’s nicer now, and tidier, but I’m just happy the Lidl came there” (Bram, 22).*

This does not necessarily mean that the revitalisation plan was not good, but that students just were not as interested as the older adults. In general though, it can be concluded that the Wielewaalplein revitalisation was a success.

## **5. Conclusions**

The goal of this thesis was to determine to what extent revitalisation projects in urban intergenerational neighbourhoods, like the Oosterparkwijk, influence feelings of place attachment. In order to answer this question, a research project was carried out in the Oosterparkwijk using the revitalisation of the Wielewaalplein as a case study. Six students of age 18-25 and five older adults, age 65 and older were interviewed about their experiences of the Wielewaalplein revitalisation, about the Oosterparkwijk in general and about the concept of intergenerationality.

There are two types of place attachment: functional and emotional place attachment. Students were found to be more functionally attached to the Oosterparkwijk. They are much more mobile, have a social network largely outside the Oosterparkwijk and only live in the area during their studies. Older adults, on the other hand, were much more emotionally attached to the Oosterparkwijk. This is

because they have been living there for a long time and have therefore created many memories and experiences, thus binding them to the area. The older adults also have their social network mainly within the Oosterparkwijk, giving them fewer reasons to leave the area. However, it has been found that to a certain extent, there is an overlap between functional and emotional attachment. Older adults are more emotionally attached, but they are also attached functionally, because they do use the Wielewaalplein for doing groceries too. There should not be such a hard line between functional and emotional place attachment, because the two influence each other.

It was also found that older adults were very embracing of revitalisation projects in the area. Because the Oosterparkwijk used to be quite poor in the past, the elderly experienced their neighbourhood only changing for the better. The revitalisation of the Wielewaalplein was seen as an improvement rather than breaking down of memories from the past. Students did not mind the Wielewaalplein changing either, but were less impressed than the older adults. For them, the most noteworthy change was the arrival of the Lidl.

A final conclusion is that older adults were very pleased with the way the Oosterparkwijk is becoming younger. They like having students around because it makes the area livelier. However, they do think that students should be more participatory in neighbourhood activities or council meetings. Students, on the other hand, have quite divided opinions. Some are willing to participate in these activities, but don't know where to go or where to start. Others are not interested at all because they experience age-barriers, like not knowing what to talk about.

Generally, it can be concluded that revitalisation projects in the Oosterparkwijk, like the Wielewaalplein revitalisation, influence feelings of place attachment, but in a positive way rather than negative as was expected. Students have become more functionally attached and older adults have become more emotionally attached.

Something that was not taken into account in this research project is that the Wielewaalplein was not the only project that was being revitalised. A lot of respondents started talking about the revitalisation of 'De Velden', where the old football stadium was located. This project is much less loved than the new Wielewaalplein, because many elderly are of the opinion that the football stadium was an essential piece of the Oosterparkwijk identity. New modern homes have been built there instead, and students as well as the elderly dislike them. They are quite expensive, and some old people from nursing home 'The Oosterparkheem' are set to be relocated to some of these new homes in De Velden, but cannot pay the rent from just their pension. This revitalisation project could be interesting for further research, because opinions are so different to the Wielewaalplein revitalisation. Comparing the two projects in this thesis would have allowed for an interesting set of results.

## **6. Reflection**

A point of self-criticism is the fact that most students that I interviewed were people from the same course, Human Geography. This was useful on one side, because I could use terms such as 'intergenerationality' and 'revitalisation' without having to explain them. On the other side though, it gave me the impression that they took it less seriously, because they already knew me personally. However, the interviews done with older adults went well, were useful to my research and proved

to be a great learning experience. It was easier than expected to find older aged respondents. Because I'm not typically Dutch-looking, I thought people would be hesitant to allow me into their homes. This posed to be no problem however.

What could have influenced the results, especially those on intergenerationality, is the fact that the older respondents were very welcoming to students. They enjoyed contact with students, which could be the reason why they participated with the interviews. Older adults who are not interested in contact with students are less likely to participate with a research project like this, because it is done by a student.

All in all, this thesis has enabled me to apply what I had learned to being 'out in the field'. I enjoyed doing the interviews and found it interesting to link it back to literature and theories. It has been a challenge to write this thesis, but I learned many things which I can apply to further research projects in the future.

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**Attachments**

**Attachment 1- Interview guide**

Inleiding:

Hallo, ik ben Myrthe en ik ben 4<sup>e</sup> jaars Bachelor student in Sociale Geografie en Planologie aan de Rijksuniversiteit hier in Groningen. Op het moment ben ik bezig met het schrijven van mijn Bachelorthesis, waar ik interviews voor moet afleggen in uw buurt, de Oosterparkwijk. Door middel van deze interviews wil ik graag te weten komen of revitalisatieprojecten in uw buurt de sociale cohesie beïnvloeden. Met sociale cohesie wordt voornamelijk bedoelt of u zich thuis voelt in uw buurt, of u zich veilig voelt, of u zich emotioneel verbonden voelt met uw buurt, of u goed met uw burens kunt opschieten enz.



De informatie die wordt verzameld door middel van dit interview zal vertrouwelijk worden behandeld. Echter, om de volledigheid te kunnen nagaan is het handig voor mij als dit interview wordt opgenomen. Heeft u hier bezwaar tegen? U heeft het recht om tijdens het interview de taperecorder stop te zetten, uw antwoord te wijzigen of geheel te stoppen met het interview. De data die ga verzamelen zal geanalyseerd, gecodeerd en verwerkt worden in mijn thesis. Heeft u verder nog vragen? Dan beginnen we nu met het interview

### **Introductie vragen: achtergrond informatie respondent**

1. Kunt u iets over uzelf vertellen? (Probe: leeftijd, geboren, thuissituatie, kinderen/familie)
2. Wat zijn uw dagelijkse bezigheden en wat voor hobbies heeft u?

### **Sleutelvragen: thuisgevoelens, sociale cohesie, Wielewaalplein**

*De volgende vragen gaan over het concept 'thuisgevoel'. Uit wetenschappelijke literatuur is gebleken dat thuisgevoel de 'emotionele en fysieke banden zijn die men voelt met betrekking tot een plaats'. Dit kan uw huis zelf zijn, maar ook de buurt waarin u woont*

Wanneer Oosterparkwijk komen wonen?

Waar woonde u daarvoor?

Waarom Oosterparkwijk?

Als in 1998, hebben ze iets van de Oosterparkrellen meegekregen

3. Zou u de buurt waarin u woont voor mij kunnen beschrijven? → vervolgvraag: Wat vindt u prettig aan het wonen binnen de Oosterparkwijk en wat vindt u minder prettig?
4. Op welke plekken binnen de Oosterparkwijk komt u graag en welke plekken komt u minder graag? Waarom? (probe: het park, de supermarkt, buurthuis etc) → vervolgvraag: voelt u zich veilig op deze plekken? Waarom wel/niet? (Probe → straat, burens etc)

#### **Wat vindt u prettig aan het wonen in de Oosterparkwijk en wat niet?**

5. Heeft u contact met buurtbewoners van andere leeftijden? Waarom wel/niet? (probe: gesprekken, elkaar begroeten, of alleen noodzakelijk) → vervolgvraag: zou van u dat contact meer of minder mogen plaatsvinden? (buurtbewoners: mensen verder weg en burens) (probe: → activiteiten samen doen, sleutels bij elkaar vertrouwen etc)
6. In hoeverre bent u betrokken bij buurtorganisaties of buurtverenigingen? (welke activiteiten, waarom, rol voor de buurt)
7. In hoeverre voelt u zich trots om in de Oosterparkwijk te wonen? (probe: veel groen, goed onderhouden woningen, hechtheid van de buurt)
8. Vindt u dat de wijk op bepaalde punten verbeterd zou kunnen worden? (probe: meer groen, meer aandacht voor veiligheid etc)

*De volgende paar vragen gaan over de herinrichting van het Wielewaalplein. Uit wetenschappelijke literatuur is gebleken dat fysieke veranderingen en aanpassingen in een wijk, dus het bouwen van nieuwe woningen, winkelcentra, herinrichting van buurten etc. kunnen zorgen voor emotionele*

*veranderingen bij mensen die al in die buurt woonden (Graaf, van der & Duyvendak, 2009). Ook kan het thuisgevoel afnemen.*

9. Kent u het Wielewaalplein? Op welke manier bent u bekend met het plein? Zou u het voor mij kunnen beschrijven? (Probe: wie wonen er, hoe ziet het eruit, wie gebruiken het plein, in hoeverre is de omgeving mee veranderd?)
10. Wat is de betekenis van het Wielewaalplein voor uzelf of voor de buurt?
11. Want vindt u van de herinrichting van het Wielewaalplein?
12. Kunt u mij vertellen of de herinrichting van het Wielewaalplein uw buurt heeft veranderd? → vervolgvraag: op welke aspecten is uw buurt dan veranderd?
13. Kent u ook andere vernieuwingsprojecten in uw buurt? Hoe kijkt u daar tegenaan?

### **Conclusie vragen**

14. Heeft u nog iets toe te voegen aan dit interview?
15. Kent u misschien nog mensen die eventueel ook geïnteresseerd zouden zijn om ook mee te werken aan dit interview?

Dat was het einde van het interview. Heel erg bedankt voor uw tijd, moeite en medewerking, ik ben u erg dankbaar. Mocht u geïnteresseerd zijn in de resultaten van mijn onderzoek in uw buurt, dan kunt u mij uw mailadres geven, dan krijgt u ze doorgestuurd als mijn thesis afgerond is.