The Influence of Social and Symbolic Aspects on Perceptions of Spatial Transformation

The Case of Overschild

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Abstract

In the North-eastern part of Groningen gas extraction has led to recurring earthquakes (Gemeente Slochteren, 2018). These earthquakes cause material damage, and decrease the structural integrity of buildings in the area. Overschild is one of the villages in North-eastern Groningen suffering from earthquake damage. The villagers of Overschild are currently awaiting the earthquake reinforcement program, which aims to make the buildings in Overschild earthquake resistant. However, the villagers are unhappy with the current reinforcement program (DVO, 2018). Clarke et al. (2018) and IPCC (2012) have put forth three social and symbolic aspects, which can affect perceptions of spatial transformation like the reinforcement program. These aspects are place meanings, social relations, and norms. Through six individual interviews, it has been researched if the negative perceptions of the reinforcement program in Overschild, are caused by perceived changes to place meanings, social relations, and norms. It is found that changes in the place meanings tranquillity, and a forced meaning of iconic buildings, increased the negative perceptions of the reinforcement program. Based on interviews it is believed that social cohesion could change in the future, and that changes to social cohesion influence perceptions of the reinforcement program. The last aspect, norms, are not perceived to be able to change, or influence perceptions of the reinforcement program. The influence of place meanings and social cohesion provide relevant advice for changes to the reinforcement program. To avoid negative perceptions it should be more transparent, faster, find out place meanings before starting, and treat people within the same village equally.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This research focusses on the village of Overschild, in North-eastern Groningen, The Netherlands (Figure 1). It has 270 inhabitants and is located in the municipality of Slochteren (Dorpsportaal Overschild, 2018), that suffers negative consequences from being close to a gas extraction field (Gemeente Slochteren, 2018). Due to the gas extraction Overschild experiences earthquakes, which decrease the structural integrity of buildings. The villagers can either try to leave, or await the reinforcement program aimed at making buildings earthquake resistant. The villagers in Overschild have a negative perception of the reinforcement program (DVO, 2018). An issue that is currently debated is the process of the reinforcement program. One street (Meerweg), has received a reinforcement report earlier than other parts of the village (Dalen, 2018). Meerweg will be reinforced according to the NPR 9998:2015 (see Appendix 1). This is an elaboration on the guidelines for reinforcing buildings, which details what a building needs to be earthquake resistant (NEN, 2018). It is unknown if the rest of the village will be reinforced according to the same guidelines or the NPR 9998:2017 (see appendix 1) (DVO, 2018). Exploring the effects of such process and program choices, on the social and symbolic aspects of place identity, can potentially establish their effect on perceptions of the reinforcement program.
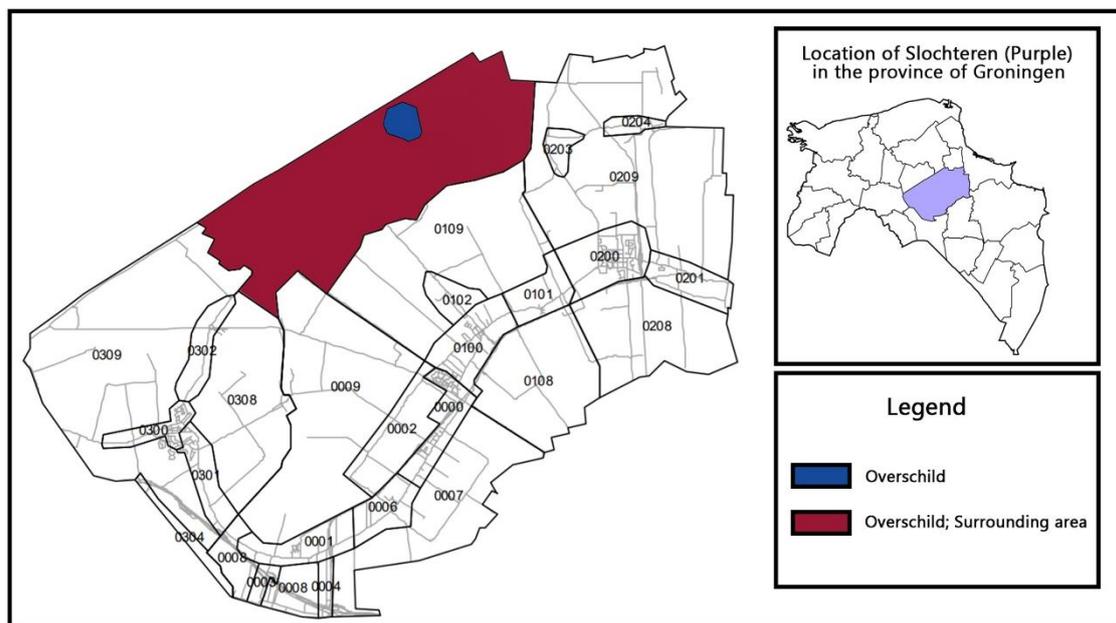

Figure 1: Location of Overschild and its surrounding area in Slochteren (CBS, 2011)

1.2 Research problem

For this thesis, research will be done using a theoretical framework of social and symbolic aspects, that are believed to influence perceptions of spatial transformation processes (Clarke et al., 2018; IPCC, 2012). These social and symbolic aspects, are place meanings, social relations, and norms (Clarke et al., 2018; IPCC, 2012). According to the authors people perceive their established place meanings, social relations, and norms to change during spatial transformations like the reinforcement program in Overschild. When people perceive place meaning, social relations, and norms, to change negatively, it influences their perception of spatial transformation. In this thesis research, these aspects are used to gain data about the meaningful relations (social cohesion) between the villagers in Overschild, the norms for behaviour present in Overschild, and the place meanings of individual villagers and the collective of villagers. The hope is that by understanding perceived changes to these aspects of place identity, negative perceptions of the reinforcement program can be understood. Thus, the aim of this thesis research is to discover the social and symbolic place identity, based on the place meanings, social relations and norms, and the effect of its change on perceptions of the reinforcement program (Clarke et al., 2018; IPCC, 2012). Understanding this can provide information on how to change the reinforcement program and process, to accommodate the social and symbolic place identity, and decrease negative perceptions of the reinforcement program. The following research question will be answered: "Does a perceived change of the social and symbolic aspects of place identity influence the perceptions of the reinforcement program in Overschild". This research questions has been divided into three sub questions, which are:

1. "What are villager's *place meanings*, are these expected to change, and how might this influence their perception of the reinforcement program?"
2. "What are villager's *social relations*, are these expected to change, and how might this influence their perception of the reinforcement program?"
3. "What are villager's norms, are these expected to change, and how might this influence their perception of the reinforcement program?"

2. Theoretical framework

The focus will be on the social and symbolic aspects of place identity. Clarke et al. (2018) and IPCC (2012) suggest that spatial transformation challenges the established place meanings, social relations, and norms in a place. This is thought to be the main driver behind negative perceptions of spatial transformation. During spatial transformation the perceived changes to these aspects are considered abrupt and involuntary. This causes changes to established relations between people and place, from the outside and abruptly, which leads to discontent from citizens. The people of Overschild are negative about a form of spatial transformation; the reinforcement program (DVO, 2018). Therefore, the relation between changes to the social and symbolic aspects of place identity and the negative perceptions, will be researched there. It is important to realize that in this article place identity is operationalized in accordance to the two-dimensional framework of place attachment (Stokels and Shumaker, 1981 in Davenport and Anderson, 2006). This two-dimensional model splits place attachment into place dependence and place identity. Place dependence is the belief that a certain place satisfies direct physical and psychological needs. Place identity is tied to the symbolic meanings given to place, rooted in a sense of belongingness. Here, place identity is rooted in the social and symbolic aspects.

The relation between the place meanings, social relations, and norms and place identity will be explained under the next headings. This theoretical framework serves as a structured literature overview, and at the end the overall conceptual model is depicted (figure 5). The next three headings will only show the part of the conceptual model relevant for the aspect described under that heading (figure 2; figure 3; figure 4).

2.1 Place meanings

Two types of place meanings are a part of the social and symbolic aspects of place identity (Clarke et al., 2018; Davenport and Anderson, 2006). The first are individual place meanings (Davenport and Anderson, 2006), and the second are group place meanings (Clarke et al., 2018). Individual place meanings are the symbolic meanings given to a place, by an individual. On the other hand, group place meanings are symbolic meanings held by individuals, but shared within a group (Clarke et al., 2018). Davenport and Anderson (2006) found – based on a case-study of meanings attached to a river area - that group place meanings could be found by extrapolating the individual place meanings. A correlation of 93% was found between the words used by individuals, when describing a place their overarching group was attached to (Clarke et al., 2018). In this way, individual place meanings can be used to find group place meanings. Clarke et al. (2018) found various examples of group place meanings – during research on spatial transformation in Clontarf – such as: aesthetic quality, social connectedness, and perception on the presence of recreational opportunities. Changes to these place meanings caused negative perception of the spatial transformation project. Devine-Wright and Howes (2010) also suggest that place meanings can be altered during spatial transformation, and that their change can lead to changing perceptions of spatial transformation. This suggests it is important to understand the place meanings inhabitants hold, to make sure change is perceived as non-existent, minimal, or positive. Assuming that symbolic place meanings can influence perception of the reinforcement program in Overschild, individual and group place meanings are included in theoretical framework (figure 2).
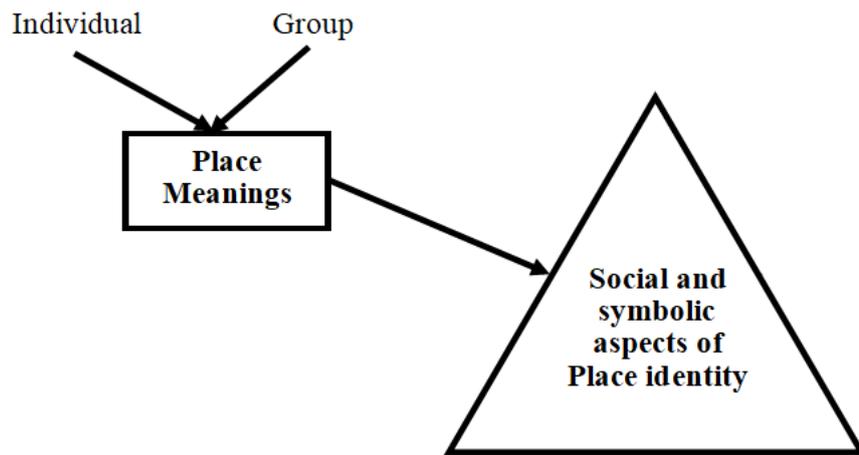
Figure 2: Place meanings linked with social and symbolic place identity

2.2 Social Relations

According to Lee et al. (2005), social capital and place identity enumerate from individual social relations, because place identity is formed by social cohesion. Social relations lead to social capital, and social capital is a prerequisite for social cohesion, which influences place identity (Cloete, 2014; Uzzel et al., 2002). A lack of social capital would lead to a lack of social cohesion, which leads to diminished place identity. Social cohesion and place identity have an influence on each other and they can strengthen each other. Cloete (2014) explains the difference between social capital and social cohesion. Social capital refers to individual power relations, and social cohesion refers to a coherence within a society. Social cohesion is referred to as the bond or 'glue' that binds people, but this definition does not explain how it can be measured or found in a society (Cloete and Kotze, 2009). Social cohesion can be divided in 5 core dimensions (SMI; 2016); Belongingness, social injustice and equity, participation, acceptance and rejection legitimacy, and worth. The SMI-index is a broad (multi-dimensional) way to measure social cohesion, which will be slimmed down for the purpose of this thesis research. According to Jenson (2010) participation, acceptance and rejection legitimacy, worth, and equity are economic and political aspects that influence social cohesion. This article focusses on the social and symbolic aspects of place identity. For social cohesion this would be belongingness and equality (Jenson, 2010). Belongingness is the extent to which people feel they belong in their coherence (Overschild), and equality refers to an equal treatment between people in the same coherence (Overschild). Equality seems especially relevant for Overschild, due to the current issue where different parts of the village might be treated according to different reinforcement guidelines (DVO, 2018). The links between the concepts can be found in figure 3.
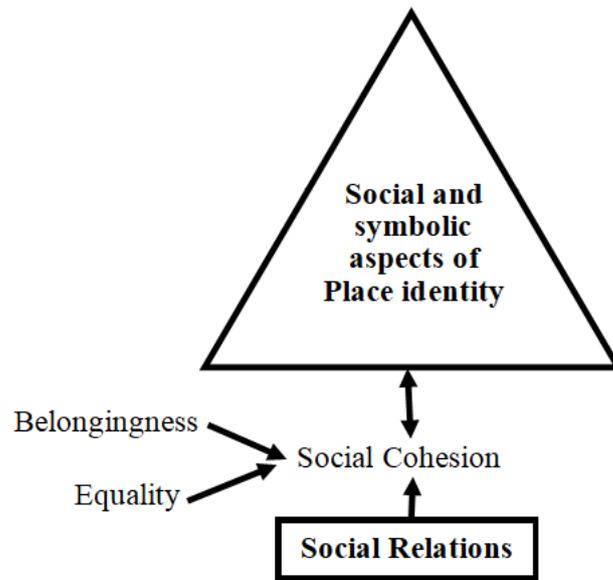
Figure 3: Social relations linked with social and symbolic place identity

2.3 Norms

Norms are the final aspect perceived to change during spatial transformation (Clarke et al., 2018; IPCC, 2012). An example is the implementation of flood defence measures at a promenade in Clontarf. These flood defence measures were seen as transformative to the extent that they change the existing landscape, norms of interaction, and behaviour between inhabitants, as reported by community groups (Clarke et al., 2018; Clontarf.ie, 2011a; Clontarf.ie 2011b; IPCC, 2012). Norms are what is considered normal in terms of behaviour and attitudes, within a social institution (Cook et al., 1995). For this thesis research, the social institution is made up of the inhabitants of Overschild. According to sociological research, norms are formed through primary and secondary socialization (Cook et al., 1995). Primary socialization refers to the most basic norms taught by relatives until the age of 6. Secondary socialization is an ongoing process in which norms are created and changed, throughout someone's entire life, in every new group or situation an individual enters (Cook et al., 1995). When a spatial transformation, like the reinforcement program, changes a social institution it can influence norms. This is called resocialization, which happens in every new group or situation (Cook et al., 1995). When norms change due to socialization it means the guidelines for attitudes and behaviour change. Thus, a link between social relations and norms, and the importance of norms have been established. Norms change through a change in social relations. If the norms are not perceived to change, an explanation could be that social relations and social cohesion are unchanged. Figure 4 shows the links between the aspects as well as relevant established concepts acquired from literature.
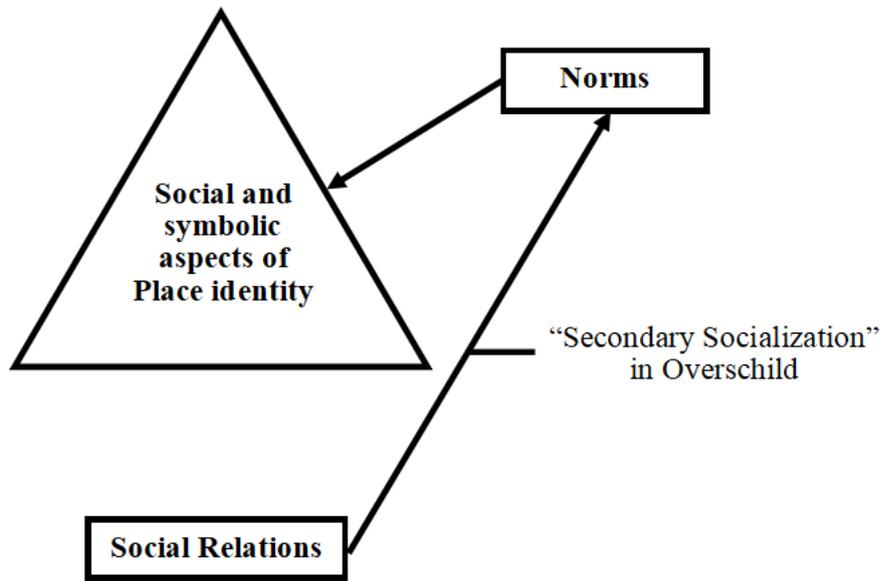
Figure 4: Norms linked with social and symbolic place identity

2.4 The conceptual model

Under the previous headings place meanings, social relations, and norms, have been described. All the concepts, related to the chosen influencing aspects, have also been explained. Including all of the relevant concepts will be too much, considering the length of the thesis and time constraints. The proposed way to operationalize the conceptual model, is by excluding concepts. The full conceptual model is shown in *figure 5*. The variables that have been removed are social capital and indicators of social cohesion, which are deemed less important to this research project.

Figure 5: Conceptual model

3. Methodology

3.1 Research method
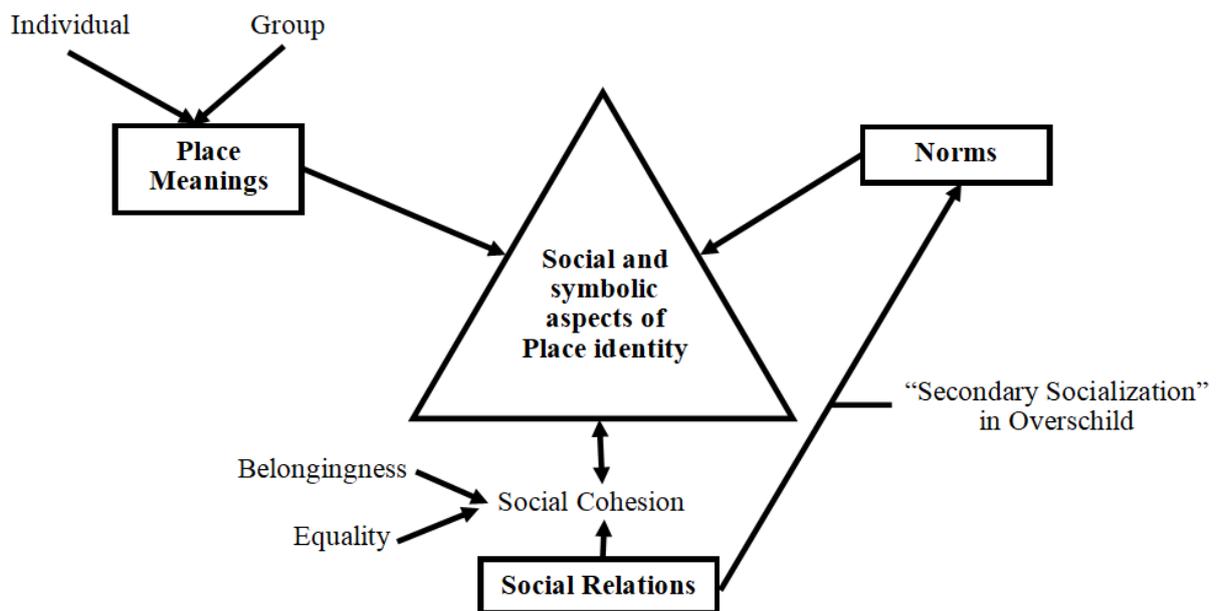
The method, chosen to answer the research questions, is individual interviews. This qualitative method was chosen because it gives a deeper insight in what the respondents mean, as well as the option to ask personalized questions (Clifford et al., 2016). With quantitative methods, the answers would be limited, provide less insight, but more generalizable (Clifford et al., 2016). The aim of this paper is to find out the villagers' perception of changes to their place meanings, social relations, and norms, and the influence of these changes on their perception of the reinforcement program. Qualitative methods were chosen to discover these personal perceptions, because they allow for a wide range of perspectives (Davenport et al., 2006). After choosing a qualitative approach individual interviews were chosen over a focus group discussion for several reasons. First of all, groupthink is a problem during focus groups (Mindlab, 2018). Due to a desire for uniform responses people withhold their opinions, leading to a loss of minority opinions (Mindlab, 2018; Ruyter, 1996). Secondly, people rarely provide input for which the response is tough to gauge, during focus groups (Ruyter, 1996). Third, meanings are very personal, and it was unknown if people would want to contribute their meanings in a group setting. Lastly, It was unknown if sharing answers within the group could cause harm to an individual, which should be avoided (Clifford et al., 2016). An example of a harmful effect is that the perception of less vocal participants could be changed through groupthink (Mindlab, 2018). For these reasons it was deemed better to do six separate interviews. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 2a (Dutch) and Appendix 2b (English).

3.2 Participants and data quality

The data quality is acceptable, but there are some drawbacks. All of the participants have been recruited through a family friend who lives in Overschild. This provided immediate access to six people willing to do interviews within a short amount of time, and this had to be done due to a last minute case change. All of the interviewees are villagers from Overschild, and one them is a chairman for DVO. The problem is that participants were clustered in Kanaalweg and Graauwedijk (Figure 6), so no participants were from Meerweg or the surrounding area. Through the chairman of DVO it is understood that the people from Meerweg and the surrounding area would give similar answers regarding place meanings, social relations, and norms. However, it cannot be said with certainty this is true. It might also be that people from Kanaalweg and Graauwedijk, including the DVO chairman, have not noticed social relations or norm changes that people from the other areas experienced.
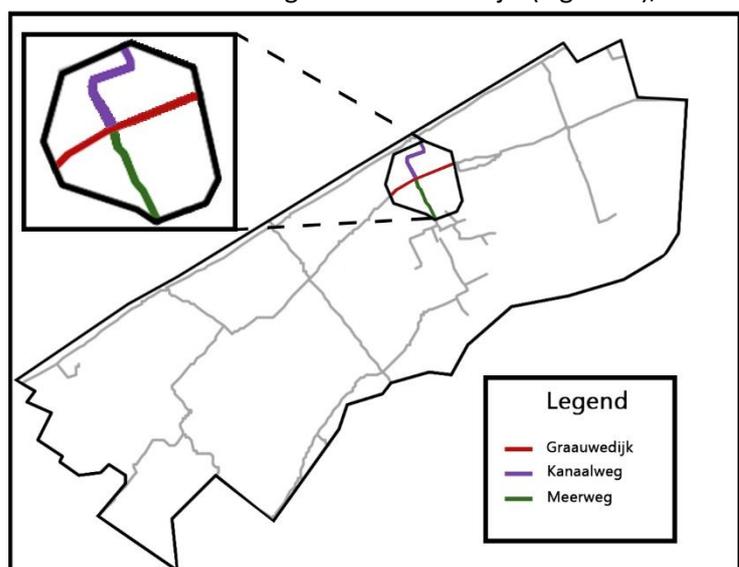

Figure 6: Location of the streets (CBS, 2011)

3. 3 Ethical considerations

Some ethical choices have been made during this project. First, ethical consideration of focus groups versus individual interviews have been discussed in the research method. Second, the interviewees have been debriefed on the purpose of the interview, and they were asked for consent before recording the interviews. Third, the connection between data and individuals has been removed from the results. It was deemed unnecessary to include the names for the villagers. The only person for whom a connection between the words and the person was kept is a chairman of DVO. This connection is kept, because the DVO chairman is more involved in the process, and gave information regular villagers could not. Namely he was more aware of the future issues in regards to NPR 9998:2015 and NPR 9998:2017, which will be explained under social relations in the result section. Lastly, some specific remarks that could lead to identification of the interviewees have been removed from the results. The historic use of an 'iconic' building was removed, because it would be easy to determine the identity of the interviewee otherwise.

3. 4 Method of analysis

For this research, theory from literature has been used to establish the presumed importance of place meanings, social relations, and norms. Because existing theory has been used, the thesis follows a deductive approach (Clifford et al., 2016). However, the difference between this research and a common deductive approach is that hypotheses were not used. This was done because the place meanings and norms could not have been hypothesized. Furthermore, it was deliberately chosen not to hypothesize the presence and types of place meanings and norms to avoid confirmation bias (Rosenberg, 2012). When asking questions while looking for a specific answer the dataset could have become subject to manipulation and bias-based misinterpretation. The interview responses have been added to the relevant aspect, compared, and contrasted. They were then used to determine the influence of perceived changes to the three aspects on perceptions of the reinforcement program.

4. Results

The interviews are used to answer the sub questions and the main research question. The first thing that has been determined is the respondents opinions of reinforcement program. All six of them are negative about the reinforcement program. The link between these negative perceptions and place meanings, social relations, and norms will be described under the next headings.

4.1 Place Meanings

During the interviews, questions were asked regarding the individual place meanings of inhabitants. One strictly individual place meaning and two group place meanings were found. The individual place meaning of connectedness to nature was shared by two people, but not the entire group (Clarke et al., 2018; Davenport & Anderson, 2006). Overschild offers people a walking distance to rural areas and this is perceived to be important. One villager said *"You have the ability to take good walks here which is important to me. I don't have to walk for kilometres to get outside the village"*, and another said *"It is really nice here. It feels like weekend every morning"*, when asked about nature walking. The small scale of the village allows people to leave the village behind, and walk through an unbuild environment. This place meaning is not perceived to change, and is not related to the negative perception of the reinforcement program. No other individual place meanings were found or affected. Thus, there is no reason to believe that individual place meanings influenced perceptions of the reinforcement program, which contradicts Clarke et al (2018) and IPCC (2012).

As mentioned before, two group place meanings were found. These are tranquillity and the idea of iconic, historic buildings. The first group place meaning is tranquillity. It is deemed important by all of the interviewees, and said to be important to all the villagers. One of the respondents said *"This is a village that has nothing going on. It doesn't have anything beautiful or special for people to come for, and that's why people live here. It is tranquil"*. There are two factors that caused the change in tranquillity since the reinforcement program. Firstly, there are the earthquakes themselves and the need for reinforcement. this detracts from the tranquillity and one of the interviewees said *"The decrease in tranquillity started in 2012, after the earthquake near Huizinge, which caused us damage"*. However, over time people have come to accept the fact that houses in Overschild will need to be reinforced. The earthquakes have had a temporary influence on the tranquillity in the village, which is subservient to the effects of the reinforcement process. The thing that decreased the tranquillity in Overschild more, and has caused negative perceptions of the reinforcement program, is said to be the reinforcement process. *"After 2012 our idea of tranquillity decreased, but during the reinforcement process it became way worse"*, and another respondent mentioned *"We are being harassed. The process is slow and the inspection was a complete disaster. I had 6 people in my house and 3 of them were doing nothing, touching my stuff without permission, and behaving rudely"*. Several process issues are said to decrease the feeling of tranquillity. The first is a perceived lack of safety. None of the people interviewed are afraid that their house is about to collapse, but most know someone who feels unsafe. The process is also said to be too slow, which interacts with the lack of safety, to decrease tranquillity during the process. *"Some of the people are just scared, they have a feeling their house might collapse on them and they have been feeling this way for years. In the meantime nothing has happened and they, and their 2 children are still living in an 'unsafe' house"*. The feeling of tranquillity is also decreased because villagers feel caught in the present. People are unable to work on their house, because they have no idea if their house will still be there in a year. *"Right now, I don't have a mind to do anything in my house. I don't feel like I'm able to look towards the future this way. Everything is about the next report that will drop through the letterbox and there is no point in spending money on my house. After all, it might not be here in a few years"*. The last thing mentioned to decrease tranquillity is the lack and unclarity of information. The respondents do not know when the next letter or report arrives. *"They should communicate with us*

more. The other street has already received their report and we don't know when it'll arrive. If they gave us a deadline and said it will arrive in x months, at least then we could be calm about it". Too summarize, what the inhabitants shared is two things. First of all, the nature of the reinforcement program decreased the tranquillity in the village, but the need for reinforcement has however been accepted over time. The change in tranquillity, that truly influences the perceptions of the reinforcement program, is caused by the process itself. The long duration coupled with a feeling of being unsafe, the feeling of being caught in the present, and a lack of communication, influenced the perception of the reinforcement program, through the group place meaning of tranquillity. This suggests that group place meanings can influence perception of spatial transformation, as stated by Clarke et al. (2018), Devine-Wright & Howes (2010), and IPCC (2012).

The second group place meaning is iconic buildings, and it was forced top down (Roo, 2015). In appendix 3, two examples of 'iconic' houses can be found. This meaning is not created by villagers, but instead forced onto the villagers by the municipality of Slochteren. The iconic buildings are deemed to be important to the symbolic perception of Overschild (figure 7), and the municipality believes that changing them will affect perceptions of the reinforcement program. However, during the interviews it became clear that not all of these iconic buildings are important to the villagers. One person said: *"I don't know who decides what's iconic. Some weird commission from the municipality, but definitely not the villagers themselves"*. Moreover, the villagers do not want the symbolic perception of an unknown entity to influence the options of other villagers. When the reinforcement program continues, it is impossible to completely reconstruct an iconic building because they are protected. There are some people who are happy about this. One of the respondents said *"I am lucky that my house is an iconic building, that means it can't be changed completely"*. The chairman of DVO said that iconic buildings are not perceived as positive by everyone, others don't identify with this heritage and want their options for reconstruction to remain open. There is thus a divide in what the iconic buildings have done to the meanings of people. For some the knowledge of historic usage adds to their admiration for their house and for others it is a burden. The general trend is that people, even if they are happy with their own house being iconic, are unhappy that others will be limited in their options. In this way forcing symbolic meanings has increased negative perceptions of the reinforcement program. This suggests place meanings should be discovered with inhabitants, as is currently happening in Krewerd (Veen, 2018a; Veen, 2018b)

Figure 7: The 'iconic' buildings of Overschild

The information under this heading is related to the sub question: "What are villager's *place meanings*, are these expected to change, and how might this influence their perception of the reinforcement program?". Through the interviews one individual and two group place meanings, have been found. The individual place meanings were not perceived to change, but there was a change in the group place meanings of tranquillity and iconic buildings. Evidence has been found that perceived changes to group place meanings can influence the perception of the reinforcement program. Which supports claim that place meanings can influence the perceptions of spatial transformation (Clarke et al. 2018; IPCC, 2012)

4.2 Social relations

Two different indicators for social cohesion were used to ascertain if social cohesion is present, perceived to change, and if change influences perception of the reinforcement program. The first indicator is belongingness (Jenson, 2010; SMI, 2016). During the interviews, it became clear that the belongingness is unchanged, but the interviewees all acknowledged there are now more villagers who want to leave. According to the DVO chairman *"A significant portion of people want to leave, 9%"*. This is because *"Ideas are being sped up by the reinforcement program. People who are older might not want to stay here due to health care amenities, the size of their garden, or moving twice. Otherwise they would stay for another decade"*. There are also people who already wanted to leave but were unable. According to the DVO chairman the portion of people who want leave is historically high in Overschild, and this is caused by the reinforcement program. However, it is not a good indicator for belongingness. After all, people would have stayed for longer and still feel like they belong. Belongingness is not deemed changeable by any of the villagers, so it does not influence social cohesion or perception on the reinforcement program

Equality is the second indicator for social cohesion within the village (Jenson, 2010). There are two sources of inequality that were talked about during the interviews. The first is that one street in the village (Meerweg) has already received a reinforcement report, but the other two streets and surrounding area have not. All of the interviewees said they do not mind the other street receiving the report earlier. One of the interviewees mentioned *"The people from Meerweg are not that much further in the process. There are still a lot of things that need to happen before the first nail is put in or removed"*. However, according to another interviewee the village is not without friction after this incident. *"Of course you have to start somewhere, but we have no idea what we are in for now. If they would at least say when we'll receive our report it will provide some peace of mind"*. Yet another villager said that there is no friction as of yet, but it could happen in the future if the villagers are kept uninformed about when they will receive their report.

The second source of friction, based on equality (Jenson, 2010), is something that most villagers are unaware of. All interviewees said that they do not want others to receive disproportional support compared to themselves. One said: *"It is fine if someone with a house that costs 500,000, and that is bigger, receives more money as it will cost more to reinforce or rebuild it. What I don't want is for someone else to receive a golden tap, fancy driveway, and whatever else I won't get"*. What this means is that someone else can receive more, but only proportional to the value of their property. In the introduction, the NPR 9998:2015 and NPR 9998:2017 have been mentioned (Appendix 1). In essence, the NPR 9998:2015 expects more damage and thus requires more reinforcing and money, compared to the NPR 9998:2017 (NEN, 2018). The DVO chairman mentioned this might create future cohesion problems in Overschild. *"2015 is the strict one and 2017 less so, and 2017 is probably going to count for the houses outside of the village. Meerweg already falls under 2015, but for the other two, Kanaalweg and Graauwedijk, we are currently fighting to keep them under 2015"*. It is currently unclear if the entire village will be reinforced according to same guidelines, and the street that falls

under the NPR 9998:2015 could receive disproportional support. Reinforcing in this manner is perceived as unequal. It will decrease social cohesion, and increase negative perceptions of the reinforcement program, according to the interviews. This indicates that equality is a good measure for social cohesion (Jenson, 2010), and that changing social cohesion can influence the perceptions of spatial transformation (Clarke et al., 2018; IPCC, 2012).

The current situation is that social cohesion, based on belongingness and equality, has remained the same during the reinforcement period. Since there is no perceived change to social cohesion it has not affected the perceptions of the reinforcement program. However, based on the interviews, it can be expected that reinforcing streets according to different guidelines will change social cohesion, and negatively influence perceptions of the reinforcement program. To the question: "What are villager's social relations, are these expected to change, and how might this influence their perception of the reinforcement program?", the answer is that social cohesion is presently unchanged. But it was found that a negative change to social cohesion can negatively affect perceptions of the reinforcement process, and this should be avoided.

4.3 Norms

With the interviews two norms were found. The first is individual freedom and the second is noaberschap. The norm of individual freedom has been mentioned as important by all the interviewees. The villagers believe the norm to be created by type of individuals living in Overschild. A respondent described the people as following: *"You can see it in the people living here. Everybody loves freedom. When I was 20 I lived as a squatter and the ambience is the same here. Everybody is respectful to each other and people give each other the freedom to life their own life. You can see it while walking down the street, one person likes to have a neat garden and house, and someone else makes a mess out of it"*. In the village people give each other the freedom to be alone, life the way they want to, and help each other. The chairman of DVO said *"In this village we have a life and let life mentality. If you don't fit somebody else's standard that's not a problem. You won't get bothered or bullied"*. The second norm, noaberschap (helping your neighbours), is created through mutual understanding. People have respect for each other's situation and are willing to help each other. *"At the bar, you get to know a lot of people, and when someone comes in without money that isn't a problem. They will still get beer and fries. Everyone is without cash sometimes and we understand that"*. The presence of noaberschap as a norm contradicts findings by Gieling (2018), that noaberschap is currently no longer an unwritten rule (norm) in villages. Instead, it is steady and not perceived to change in Overschild. All of the respondents said they enjoy these norms of Overschild, and that there has been no change to these norms. The norms also aren't expected to be changeable. The sub question "What are villager's norm*s*, are these expected to change, and how might this influence their perception of the reinforcement program?", can be answered now. The norms are individual freedom and noaberschap. Both are perceived to be unchangeable because they are created by the type of individuals in the village. This means that changing norms have not influence perceptions of the reinforcement program in Overschild, and that changing norms are not expected to be relevant for the perception of spatial transformation. This contradicts the claim that perceived changes to norms can influence perceptions of spatial transformation Clarke et al, 2018 and IPCC, 2012.

What should be considered is an alternative explanation for the absence of resocialization, or changing norms. Resocialization occurs when social relations change (Cook et al., 1995). Social cohesion is formed by social relations (Cloete, 2014; Uzzel et al., 2002), and social cohesion is currently unchanged. This mean social relations are unchanged, and thus the prerequisite for

resocialization is absent (Cook et al., 1995). Norms are deemed unchanged and unchangeable by the villagers, but this could be because theoretical requirement for resocialization is not fulfilled.

4.4 Suggested process changes based on results

The negative perception of the reinforcement program is largely influenced by the process. Through group place meanings it affected the perception of the reinforcement program, because the process is perceived as too slow, disregarding safety, and non-transparent. The tranquillity change is hard to avoid. The speed of the process is hard to change, but it could be more transparent. The bureaus working with people should make their clear deadlines and stick to them. Additionally, trying to establish, a top down (Roo, 2015), group place meaning of iconic buildings backfired. This is another part of the process that should be changed in the future. Presently, in Krewerd an attempt is made to find out the actual place meanings of villagers beforehand (Veen, 2018a; Veen 2018b), and this could help prevent negative perceptions. The findings of this research support discovering the meanings of villagers before making decisions related to those meanings. Lastly a change in social relations and norms was not found. However, if social cohesion changes it would be perceived as negative. It has been established this could happen through inequality, by reinforcing different parts of Overschild according to different guidelines. The results suggest that sticking to one guideline in a village will help maintain social cohesion, and avoid (further) negative perceptions of the reinforcement program. A summary of suggested process changes, based on this research, is given (table 1).

Aspect	Suggested change to the strengthening process
Place meanings	1. Make the strengthening processes more transparent 2. The process should be faster 3. Do not try to force group meanings in a top down manner. Instead discover what the group meanings are before starting. What would people like to maintain?
Social relations	4. Do not treat people within the same village differently

Table 1: Suggested process changes

5. Conclusion

For this article the social and symbolic aspects of place identity in Overschild, have been analysed for their presence and effect on the perceptions of spatial transformation. The spatial transformation is the reinforcement program in Overschild. The social and symbolic aspects are place meanings, social relations and norms (Clarke et al., 2018; IPCC, 2012). The individual place meanings of proximity to nature is created by the size of the village, and not perceived as changeable. However, there are two group place meanings which are perceived to have changed, and their change has a negative effect on the perception of the reinforcement program. The first is tranquillity, which was decreased by process factors such as a lack of safety combined with duration of the reinforcement program, a feeling of being caught in the present, and a lack of communication. The decrease in tranquillity negatively influenced the perception of the reinforcement program. The second changed meaning is the top down appointment of iconic buildings (Roo, 2015), which decreases the options of villagers, and increased negative perceptions of the reinforcement program. The next aspect is social relations, measured as social cohesion through belongingness and equality (Jenson, 2010; SMI, 2016). Belongingness is not perceived as changeable. The high number of people who want to leave (9%) is caused by an accumulation of people unable to leave and sped up decisions due to the reinforcement program, according to the DVO chairman. Equality, has not changed yet but could change in the future. If some villagers receive more than others under the NPR 9998 guidelines this will cause friction, a decrease in social cohesion, and also increase negative perceptions of the reinforcement program. Changing social relations can thus influence perceptions of the reinforcement program. Lastly, there is the aspect of norm. Noaberschap and a heavy focus on individual freedom are present in Overschild. These two norms have not changed and are deemed impossible to change. The norms are perceived as a result of the type of people living in Overschild. It is also possible that norms have not changed because social relations are unchanged, preventing resocialization (Cook et al., 1995). Norms are thus not perceived possible to change, and they do not influence perceptions of the reinforcement program.

This research contributes to political and scientific debate. Several process changes have been mentioned in section 4.4, and summarized in table 1. The findings of this research support a more transparent, faster, and participative process, that establishes a guideline for equal treatment of the villagers. It has shown that place meanings and social cohesion can affect perception of the reinforcement program, and norms cannot. The importance of place meanings and social relations are supported by these research results, which supports claims by Clarke et al. (2018) and IPCC (2012). Furthermore, the results of this research show that noaberschap is still a norm in smaller villages, which contradicts the claim by Gieling (2018) that it is not. This opens up a possibility for future research to discover what influences the disappearance of noaberschap in some villages, but its persistence in others. As this research has only been done on a small scale, within a village, it would also be interesting for future research to discover what inequality does to social cohesion on a larger scale. It is for instance possible that reinforcing according to different guidelines changes the relations between people who life in different villages. Future research should also focus on the influence of time on perceptions of the reinforcement program. It has been noted that the earthquakes originally decreased tranquillity, but the effect was voided over time. This could be discovered by doing longitudinal research in the Groningen earthquake area.

6. Reflection

There are several aspects of the process that could have been done better. First of all, the interviewees are all from the inner part of Overschild, and none were from the surrounding area. Those people could have had different answers or insights. Secondly, it was possible to get a higher amount of respondents. However, due to switching cases close to the draft deadline this was not doable. If the case was switched from Krewerd to Overschild sooner it would have been possible to get more interviewees. Lastly, the theoretical framework is still too broad after slimming it down. It would have been better to focus on just social cohesion, or leave it out, because it is a broad, multidimensional topic.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Abbreviation shortlist

DVO	This is the interest group active in Overschild. The full name is 'Dorpsbelangenwerkgroep Versterking Overschild', which can be translated into 'interest workgroup for the reinforcement of Overschild'. This interest group does not represent all of the villagers, and not all of the villagers feel represented by the interest group. The interest group attempts to provide as much individual freedom, in every step of the process, for every inhabitant.
NPR 9998	A brief overview of the Nederlandse Praktijk Richtlijn (NPR) has been given during in the article but here the explanation is more detailed. It is an elaboration for the Dutch 'Bouwbesluit 2012'. 'Bouwbesluit 2012' provides guidelines for building, usage, and destruction of buildings (Rijksoverheid, 2018). As the guidelines in 'Bouwbesluit 2012' are insufficient for earthquake resistant building, the extension NPR 9998 was made. NPR 9998 can be divided into NPR 9998:2015 and NPR 9998:2017. The former was created in 2015 and valid until 2017, and the latter was created in 2017 and in effect presently. Both provide calculation methods and practical methods for earthquake resistant building, but the underlying assumptions changed over time NEN (2018). In practice this change in assumptions brings along a decreased investment costs, and a decrease in the assumed seismic activity and strength. It has been described that one street (Meerweg) will be reinforced according to NPR 9998:2015, and the other parts of Overschild are will likely be reinforced according to NPR 9998:2017. The relevance for equality is that one street would, if this situation continues, receive more funding and a reinforcement according to more beneficial guidelines than the others (NEN, 2018).
IPCC	This refers to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which is a United Nations scientific body which provides objective, scientific views on climate change.

Algemene informatie

Vraag 1: wat vindt u van de verstevigingsoperatie in Overschild
➔ Doel is vooral uitvinden of dat positief of negatief.

Vraag 2: Waarom bent u positief / negatief
➔ Doel is om alvast relevante dingen te vinden die buiten mijn eigen denkwijze vallen of juist op een van mijn factoren in te kunnen vallen wanneer deze worden benoemd.

Specifieke vragen (Place meanings / plaats betekenis)

Vraag 3: Wat vindt u belangrijk aan wat Overschild te bieden heeft.
➔ Doel: uitvinden welke betekenissen mensen aan het leven in Overschild en de plaats Overschild vinden. Uit de antwoorden worden specifieke thema's gehaald

Vraag 4a: Is er, in de dingen die net zijn benoemd, iets veranderd door de verstevigingsoperatie
➔ **4b (indien ja)**: heeft deze verandering iets te maken met waarom u negatief bent over de versterkingsoperatie (indien negatief bij vraag 1)

Specifieke vragen (social relations / sociale relaties)
→ Het idee is hierbij het meten van de factor **belongingness** (tot in welke mate voel je je thuis). Iedereen wil lid van een groep zijn en tot in hoeverre is groepsidee van Overschild, de verbondenheid tussen mensen, afgenomen.

Vraag 5: Voelt u zich thuis in Overschild? Zou u bijvoorbeeld liever op een andere plek wonen?
➔ Doel: voelt deze persoon zich thuis in Overschild
➔ **Vervolgvraag**: Kent u iemand die wel weg wil? En waarom?

Vraag 6: Is hier iets in veranderd door de verstevigingsoperatie?
➔ **6b (indien ja)**: Heeft invloed gehad op uw mening over de versterkingsoperatie?

Vraag 7: Heeft het geven van een rapport aan één straat invloed op de relaties tussen bewoners?
➔ Invloed van gelijkheid (equality) op de social cohesie)
➔ **7b (indien ja)**: heeft dit invloed gehad op uw mening op de verstevigingsoperatie?

Specifieke vragen (Norms / normen)

Vraag 8: Zijn er regels voor hoe je met elkaar omgaat en elkaar behandeld binnen Overschild?
➔ Lastig te omschrijven zonder te sturen maar dingen die hierbij horen zijn informele normen (in de wetenschap). Denk aan: elkaar helpen, bereid zijn de planten te wateren e.d.

Vraag 9: Is hier iets in veranderd door de verstevigingsoperatie?
➔ **9b (indien ja):** heeft dit invloed gehad op uw mening over de versterkingsoperatie?

General information

Question 1: What do you think about the reinforcement program in Overschild
➔ Goal is finding out if someone is positive/negative

Question 2: Why are you negative about the reinforcement program?
➔ The goal is to find relevant factors, which people might not think of if I start with my own research, and can possibly be linked to the concepts.

Specific questions (Place meanings / Plaats betekenis)

Question 3: What does Overschild have to offer you? What do you think is important in Overschild
➔ The goal is to find out which place meanings people mention on their own and inductively finding themes.

Question 4a: Did any of the things you just mentioned, change because of the reinforcement operation?
➔ **4b (if yes)**: Does that change have anything to do with the negative perception?

Specific questions (Social relations / Sociale relaties)

Question 5: Do you still feel like you belong in Overschild?
➔ **Follow up:** Do you know somebody else who wants to leave? And why?

Question 6: Did your sense of belonging in Overschild change due to the reinforcement program?
➔ **6b (if yes)**: How and is this part of the reason you are negative about the reinforcement program?

Question 7: Did the process do anything to the relation between inhabitants by giving one street a report quicker?
➔ Goal: find out the influence of equality on social cohesion
➔ **7b (if yes)**: did this influence your perception

Specific questions (Norms / Normen)

Question 8: Are there any norms for how you treat each other in Overschild?

Question 9: Was there a change to these rules during the reinforcement program?
➔ **9b (if yes):** is this influence your perception of the reinforcement program?

Appendix 3: Pictures of iconic buildings in Overschild

The following two pictures show iconic houses in Overschild. As mentioned in text the owners must always maintain this outside appearance from the street, which also means the building cannot be rebuild from scratch.