

# Resourceful places through community initiatives: *A case study in the city of Groningen*

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## Abstract

Tackling climate change requires a set of deeply intertwined geographical responsibilities whereby actors at and across different geographical scales are intimately connected. These new scalar politics include the local level parties and inhabitants. In this thesis, the focus lies on community initiatives in the city of Groningen and their ability to create and stimulate resourcefulness. The key question addressed is: What drives communities and the municipality to set up community initiatives and to what extent do social capital and leadership play a role in the creation of these initiatives. This main question will be answered by a mixed-method approach, including in-depth interviews and quantitative analysis. The results emphasize the critical importance of both leadership and social capital in different forms. Also, scalar politics have an essential influence on the creation of community initiatives and resourcefulness.

**Keywords:** Resourcefulness; Social capital; leadership; scalar politics; community initiatives

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## **1. Introduction**

Climate change is a worldwide problem, with rising temperatures and extreme weather conditions. Between 2030 and 2050 the world temperature will have risen by 1,5°C. This rising is mostly caused by humans and thus climate-related risks will be much higher through this (IPPC, 2018). These extremes affect the national, regional but also the local level, especially the Netherlands since large parts are below sea-level, located on a large river delta. Since mitigation is seen as an issue for the national government, adaptation measures are seen as local matters (Biesbroek et al. 2009). As local levels are often dependent on higher levels, it is important to include all these levels in the decision-making process and create a multi-level approach (Massey, 2004). This also includes the local level, which refers to not only the local government but also the inhabitants. Neighbourhoods must become more resilient regarding climate change and this can be enhanced by both mitigation and adaptation activities (McDaniels et al., 2008). Resilient explains the capacity of a system of community to adapt to change to reach a new equilibrium (Holling, 2001).

However, in this paper, the focus is not on resilience but on resourcefulness. Mackinnon and Derrickson (2012) critique the concept of resilience on three points, where the lack of scale and unequal power relations are most relevant regarding community initiatives. The authors state that resilience is a top-down strategy defined by state agencies, aiming to place the onus on communities. However, local levels have a dependency-relationship with higher levels which leads to inequality. Following the reasoning of Mackinnon and Derrickson, resourcefulness explains the problem, relating to recognition and redistribution (Young, 1990), and also works towards conditions in which communities can adapt to climate change. These conditions are resources, skills and technical knowledge, 'folk' knowledge and recognition. Relating to resources and knowledge, the local level face problems regarding interaction with different governmental layers and within the community itself. Resourcefulness relies on higher

degrees of local autonomy to enable communities to access the levers of social and adaptive change (Robinson & Carson, 2015).

Resourcefulness creates a shift from a top-down planning approach to an approach in which communities have the capacity to engage in dialogues to develop plans for their neighbourhood. This problem of spatial scale is illustrated by Shaw et al. (2018), who focusses on community gardens. The authors emphasize the importance of multi-scaler politics in tackling climate change problems. This is in line with the new 'scalar politics' of MacKinnon (2011), meaning that processes and practices are divided over different actors at different scales. The local level, including the inhabitants, encounters problems relating to a lack of knowledge, resources and recognition for action (Shaw et al., 2018). Inhabitants have to be involved in the new 'scalar politics' as they know the assets and characteristics of the place and understand what initiatives and policies can be implemented within the neighbourhood, also relating to adaptation. This explains the multi-scalar constraints regarding the distribution of knowledge and resources, as the state has to support and involve local governments and communities to make them able to become more resourceful and self-reliant (Massay, 2004). It is misplaced to view communities, regions, and cities as self-organizing units (MacKinnon & Derrickson, 2012). Support at higher governmental levels helps to empower a more bottom-up community agenda. However, top-down governmental actions are often not in line with bottom-up community initiatives (Shaw et al., 2018). All governmental levels and communities must collaborate as a coherent 'organisation' to make places more sustainable and resourceful. The local government, and indirect also the provincial and national government, have a crucial role in shaping levels of resourcefulness at the local scale.

These working across scales shapes the basis for place-based projects, meaning that a clear analysis and view of an area must be taken into account before starting projects. Place-based projects are more successful regarding climate change because they are area-specific and the effects of climate change are experienced locally (Measham et al., 2011; Turner, 2003). It explains the dilemma between top-down and bottom-up relating to interaction and resources. However, place-based projects are only possible when communities have a common interest and want to participate to create a better local environment. The image and perception of the neighbourhood are important to stimulate the common interest for initiatives, as without people are less willing to participate in community initiatives. Many scholars explain that local initiatives become more important and that interaction between top-down and bottom-up is crucial in making neighbourhoods resourceful and adaptive to climate change (Mees et al., 2019; Shaw et al, 2018; Ulug & Horlings, 2019). A critical building-block for these initiatives is social capital and related to it is leadership (Horlings, 2012). Social capital was brought into the social and spatial sciences by Robert Putnam and Pierre Bourdieu (Putnam et al., 1993; Bourdieu, 1983, cited by Petzold, 2016). It explains community' cohesiveness and the extent to which people within the community are willing to participate as a critical factor for climate change adaptation (Petzold, 2016). Leadership depends on sufficient resources and especially high-quality individuals who are willing to invest in the neighbourhood (Beer & Clower, 2014) The focus in this paper is especially on informal leadership which means that leaders at the community level act without formal authorization but with a clear sense of need (Peters, 2012). These persons have to bring cohesion and common interest in the neighbourhood and must have the power to activate others. This is reinforced by the importance of social capital (Brisson & Usher, 2005).

In this paper, the focus is on the existence and creation of community initiatives. The research gap is about the importance of leadership and social capital. Many authors explain the preference for bottom-up approaches and 'new scalar politics' (Robinson & Carson, 2015; Shaw et al., 2018). However, to what extent are communities able to fill in this role. What is the function of these two concepts in the creation of community initiatives and how can they be related to the different conditions of resourcefulness? Recognition increases social capital due to the common interest the people in the community have, however, the resources, knowledge, and skills in the form of multi-scalar constraints form a problem (Shaw et al., 2018). This research compares 3 neighbourhoods in Groningen on social

capital and leadership to explain community initiatives. This is important as the municipality of Groningen wants to shift from top-down to bottom-up, especially in Groningen as the municipality faces a lack of money and resources, which raises several questions. What is social capital and how is it related to community initiatives in the different neighbourhoods? How can leadership be explained and in what way is it interconnected with social capital and community initiatives? How can social capital and leadership form the basis for resourcefulness at the local level? The main question addressed in this paper is: *To what extent do social capital and leadership play a role in the existence of community initiatives in the city of Groningen?*

Social capital and leadership must both be present and of good quality to stimulate community initiatives and resourcefulness. It is expected that if one of the two is not present or too little present there will be fewer common interests and less successful community initiatives. To answer the main question and hypothesis this paper is divided into five parts. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework of the concepts of social capital and leadership. This will be followed by exploring the relationship between social capital and leadership. These concepts will be connected with community initiatives in becoming resourceful. Chapter 3 explains the methodology and the different neighbourhoods that are included in this research. Chapter 4 discusses the results regarding differences between the neighbourhoods and this will be connected to previous research to see patterns. Chapter 5 presents the conclusion and recommendations regarding the current multi-scaler constraints which local communities face.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### *Social capital*

Social capital is a broad concept that is applied across different fields. Its origins are found in sociology, but the concept has also gained interest in the fields of economic, social sciences and political science (Petzold, 2016). Especially the work of Robert Putnam has developed the basis for the introduction of social capital in the social and spatial sciences. He explained that social capital exists of features that explain social organization, like trust, norms, and networks (Putnam et al. 1993). He proposed that social capital is built through encouraging voluntary associations, which lower social inequality and stimulate cohesiveness and trust within the neighbourhood. I will explain social capital by investigating social cohesion, safety, and participation within the neighbourhood. This is in line with the features of Putnam, only participation is added, as this is important for community initiatives. According to Putnam, social capital can be seen as a building block for community cohesiveness and social stability within a neighbourhood to become self-reliant (Middleton et al, 2005). Social cohesion will be explored by investigating social binding, interaction, and social networks, this explains to what extent people within the community connect and accept one another. Safety will be explored using variables explaining social and public safety within the community. This is important as it stimulates people more to invest in a neighbourhood where they feel safe. Participation is explored using variables explaining involvement, cultures, and services within a community to see to what extent people are active within the neighbourhood and willing to participate. An overview of the themes and variables can be seen in table 1.

| <b>Social cohesion</b>                   | <b>Safety</b>                                | <b>Participation</b>           |
|--|--|--------------------------------|
| Social binding and cohesion              | Nuisance and disturbance in the public space | Socially active and involved   |
| Interaction, acceptance, and integration | Threat and violence                          | Services (social and cultural) |
| Social networks                          | Vandalism and property crimes                | Social-cultural participation  |

Table 1 Variables social capital

Within the concept of social capital, a distinction is made between bonding and bridging. Bonding explains social capital within the community. This happens among homogeneous populations, for example communities. Factors that explain bonding are tight bonds of trust, solidarity, and social cohesion. Bonding is only successful when communities can forge ties with others in the community but also outside the community. This is then called bridging (Putnam, 1993). Still, social capital is difficult to measure because many different factors are included. Added to this is that we live in the informational era which stimulates indirect socialising, which decreases the urge for social interaction within the neighbourhood. It is clear that the local scale, especially communities, are of great importance in the context of resourcefulness (Charles, 2012). Interaction between the local and national scale is difficult partly due to the slow processes of higher-level decision-making. Social capital is based on trust, safety, participation and above all social cohesion. This is

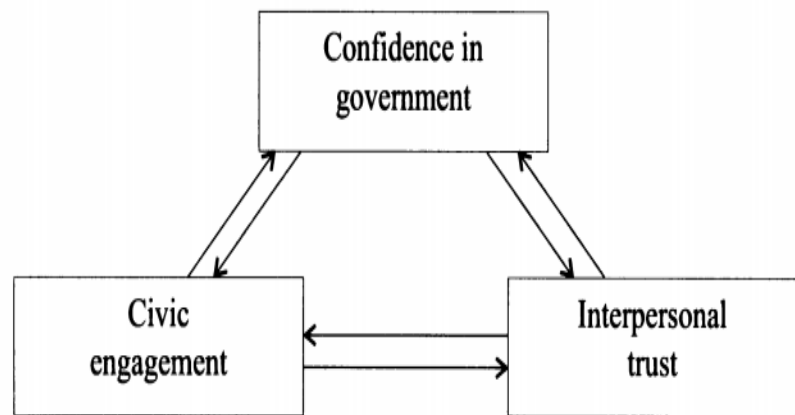


Figure 1 Structural model of Brehm and Rahn (1997)

explained in the structural model of Brehm and Rahn (1997) shown in figure 1. Social capital is something that exists between actors. There is a relationship between trust, civic engagement and confidence in the government. This can be related to the bonding and bridging explained by Putnam. The more people trust each other within a community, bonding, the more they will participate in their community which will also lead to participation with the government on different levels, bridging.

### *The connection between leadership and social capital*

The presence of high levels of social capital alone does not lead to collective action. Its miss understood that high levels of social capital directly leads to greater participation (Hurrelmann et al, 2006). The authors explain that a mediating agency is required to motivate people to play an active role in community initiatives. This agency can be a political party but can also be a individual from the community itself. Place-based projects increase the need for voices, that are not considered to be experts, to address the environmental actions to be taken. There must be leaders within the community or neighbourhood, people who are willing to invest in their living area. They have to be the ‘bringers of change’. The enthusiasm and power of these leaders have to activate others to get more people participating in local community initiatives. Leaders have a networking role within the community (Skelcher et al, 1996). Leadership is active both horizontally by linking and persuading people within in the community, as well as vertically by being representative to governmental levels. High-quality leadership is important as place-based leaders are often limited by context shaped by powerful sources

(Hambleton, 2015). Within the vertical interaction, leaders are supported by the neighbourhood council. Members of the neighbourhood council can be seen as community leaders as well because these councils are established as initiatives from communities or neighbourhoods. Leaders must be seen as the glue that holds communities together, and even improve them. It is important to investigate their motives and interest in starting initiatives. This is reinforced by the importance of social capital (Brisson & Usher, 2005). In potential social capital can create conditions for leadership, while leadership has the power to increase social capital by mobilising and activating people. Both stimulate and improve each other, they are intertwined. Leadership is often a collaborative process, which we refer to as shared leadership (Sotarauta, 2005). These leaders do not only look at what is good for themselves but also for the rest of the people living in the area (Horlings, 2012). Building on that, these initiators are the bridge between the formal policymakers and the informal initiatives (Sotarauta et al., 2012). Top-down national state initiators must partner up with local communities to tackle the main environmental problems that play within a neighbourhood.

When communities want to become resourceful concerning for example climate change, both social capital and leadership are crucial. In this thesis, it is not about the interaction between local initiatives and formal organisations, but about the creation of local initiatives. The expectation is that with either lack of social capital in the community or lack of leadership there will be fewer interests of inhabitants to invest in the community. Both affect one another, so both have to be present in a community will there be strong community initiatives. When focusing on resourcefulness it's important to look at the power that communities have and how this is exercised (Robinson & Kiley, 2010). It must be recognised that communities in different situations, like spatial, political, and economic context, might have different capacities to adapt to climate change. Place-specific projects are then more appropriate than top-down policies into which resilience is built. Differences in social relations may lead to unequal distribution of resources and technical knowledge. Community initiatives are dependent on different governmental layers and on the leaders within the neighbourhood who form the link between these different levels. Social capital influences both 'folk' knowledge and recognition of problems that community initiatives address. The connection between all these concepts is illustrated in figure 2. The

internal dimension explains concepts within the community itself. The external dimension explains the interaction outside the community with different governmental layers and market bodies. When looking at the internal dimension for community initiatives both social capital and leadership are important, and both influence each other. This is affected by the external dimension where projects are influenced by the local government. The interaction between the community, the neighbourhood council and local government is important. Due to this technical knowledge, it's possible to create place-based projects which altogether are influencing community initiatives at the local level.

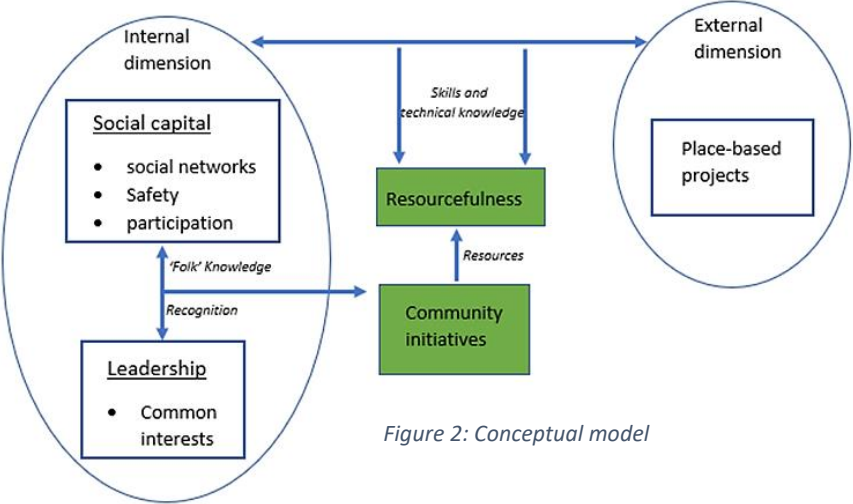


Figure 2: Conceptual model

### 3. Methodology

In this thesis, a mixed-methods qualitative approach is used to compare 3 neighbourhoods in the city of Groningen, which are the Oosterparkwijk, Vinkhuizen and Reitdiep. All three neighbourhoods differ greatly concerning building year and economic stability. Where Reitdiep is a modern neighbourhood with a high average income. The Oosterparkwijk is a pre-war neighbourhood with an average income and Vinkhuizen is a post-war neighbourhood with a below-average income, these differences form a good starting point to analyse and compare the neighbourhoods regarding social capital and leadership. To answer the question 'To what extent are social capital and leadership crucial in the existence of community initiatives in the city of Groningen', both social capital and leadership are investigated separately to see what the effects are on community initiatives. After that, the connection between the two can be made to get a clear view of the importance of both concepts regarding community initiatives and resourcefulness.

Social capital is analysed using secondary data from the basismonitor Groningen. The municipality has done a large-scale investigation among the citizens of the city of Groningen. People from all the different neighbourhoods have filled in the survey to check the liveability in their neighbourhood. The survey investigated 4 themes: the physical living environment, the quality of life, the social living environment and building and resident information. All these surveys are transformed into a single accessible digital point for making policy-relevant data available from the municipality of Groningen. With this data, the first sub-question can be answered. By selecting the cases of the Oosterparkwijk, Vinkhuizen and Reitdiep it is possible to describe social capital in the different neighbourhoods, using the variables in table 1. The number of respondents from the three neighbourhoods can be seen in table 2. The survey was anonymous and carried out by the municipality of Groningen. This makes the survey trustworthy and reliable and thus suitable to draw conclusions regarding social capital. As I am an outsider no neighbourhood is privileged over the other, which prevents this research from bias. In the data analysis, the focus will be on social cohesion, participation and safety within every neighbourhood as explained in the previous part. The results of the analysis will be explained in the next chapter.

|             | Oosterpark-<br>wijk | Vinkhuizen | Nieuw-<br>west |
|-------------|---------------------|------------|----------------|
| Respondents | 326                 | 317        | 330            |
| 18-25 years | 86                  | 65         | 52             |
| 26-44 years | 141                 | 100        | 113            |
| 45-64 years | 73                  | 74         | 131            |
| 65+- years  | 26                  | 78         | 34             |
| Male/Female | 152/174             | 167/150    | 171/159        |

*Table 2 Secondary data social capital*

To make statements about leadership in all 3 neighbourhoods, in-depth semi-structured interviews were held. A total of 6 interviews were held, 5 divided over the neighbourhoods and 1 interview with a representative of the municipality of Groningen. All interviewees signed a consent form and information letter included as appendix 1 and 2. By analysing the interviews, the second- and third sub-question can be answered. Regarding leadership, it's very important to know the feelings and the motives of the leaders and neighbourhood councils to start or act in a certain way.

In all 3 neighbourhoods, a person from the neighbourhood council or neighbourhood association was interviewed. This is important as the neighbourhood council is an intermediary between the municipality and the community leaders. In this way, the interaction between different scales and their effect on resourcefulness is explored. Besides, the neighbourhood council knows the neighbourhood and its initiatives. Important here are the four conditions of resourcefulness mentioned by Mackinnon & Derrickson (2012). Secondly, interviews will be held with leaders from 2 community gardens. These gardens are viewed as having important potential in the development of more sustainable places (Ulug & Horlings, 2019). Community gardens enhance social cohesion within a neighbourhood and introduce a new food system through which places can become more self-reliant. Added to this, do community

gardens bring more green into the neighbourhood and it enhances the infiltration rate of water. So, community gardens contribute to resourcefulness. By interviewing project leaders, I get a bottom-up view, which explains the reasons why people, leaders, invest in the quality of the neighbourhood. Lastly, an interview is held with the green department of the municipality, which allows looking at community initiatives from both sides, bottom-up and top-down. The names of the interviewees will be replaced by a pseudonyms\*, so statements and opinions can be used without violation of their privacy. The interviews will be analysed with the use of Atlas.ti. It will be stored on a save drive which is only accessible for authorized people involved in this thesis or mentioned in the consent form. The standard interview questions and coding themes are included as appendix 3. The interviews are combined with the analyses of social capital to see in which ways they increase each other and stimulate community initiatives.

## Results

This results section will be divided into three parts. In the first part, social capital is analysed based on the variables shown in table 1. The numbers explain the level of social capital within the neighbourhoods and can be linked to the level of community initiatives. In the second part, leadership will be analysed by making use of the interviews and comparing the similarities and differences between Reitdiep, Vinkhuizen and the Oosterparkwijk. I show how leadership is linked to social capital, community initiatives and scalar politics. In the last part, the strong and weak points regarding resourcefulness are laid out.

### *Social Capital*

Putnam (1993) proposed that social capital is built through encouraging voluntary associations, which lower social inequality and stimulate cohesiveness and trust within the neighbourhood. In this research, all three themes discussed by Putnam are investigated using different variables. The results of this analysis are shown in table 3. The themes about the physical and social living environment and the quality of life are ordered with traffic light colours. They show how far the neighbourhood score deviates from the municipal average. The municipal average is set on 100 and the higher a neighbourhood scores above 100 the ‘more favourable than average’ it performs. The results in table 3 show a connection between social capital and the type of neighbourhood.

|   | Vinkhuizen | Oosterparkwijk | Reitdiep   |
|---|------------|----------------|------------|
| <b><u>Social Cohesion</u></b>                   | <b>80</b>  | <b>101</b>     | <b>116</b> |
| <i>Social binding and cohesion</i>              | 91         | 95             | 112        |
| <i>Interaction, acceptance, and integration</i> | 68         | 100            | 95         |
| <i>Social networks</i>                          | 82         | 108            | 121        |
|   |            |                |            |
| <b><u>Safety</u></b>                            | <b>91</b>  | <b>90</b>      | <b>114</b> |
| <i>Nuisance and disturbance in public space</i> | 95         | 92             | 120        |
| <i>Threat and violence</i>                      | 90         | 88             | 101        |
| <i>Vandalism and property crimes</i>            | 88         | 91             | 120        |
|   |            |                |            |
| <b><u>Participation</u></b>                     | <b>89</b>  | <b>98</b>      | <b>101</b> |
| <i>Socially active and involved</i>             | 85         | 95             | 116        |
| <i>Services (social and cultural)</i>           | 103        | 100            | 80         |
| <i>Social-cultural participation</i>            | 78         | 100            | 107        |

Table 3 Results secondary data social capital



As Reitdiep is a high-income homogeneous neighbourhood, social capital is much higher than in the other neighbourhoods. Here, people bond more with each other than the other neighbourhoods, as people within the neighbourhood can be seen as a homogeneous population with the same income, higher levels of trust and safety (114) and better social cohesion (116). This can be seen back in the number of community initiatives, where the neighbourhood themselves have set up committees who are engaged in social cohesion projects, energy projects and sustainability projects. Vinkhuizen, on the contrary, is deficient in social capital. Vinkhuizen is a multicultural neighbourhood with many different nationalities, according to the neighbourhood council. People differ regarding income, values, and culture. The social cohesion (80) and especially the interaction and integration (68) is much less favourable than average. Also, safety (91) and participation (89) are lower than average, while at the latter the number of services within the neighbourhood is above average. The number of community initiatives is much lower. This is explained by Richard\* of the neighbourhood council, he explained:

*'The weakness lies in the one-sidedness of the inhabitants, especially in terms of income. There is no cohesion, partly because there is a large flow of people coming in and leaving the neighbourhood. This makes that there is no public support for community initiatives, and most people don't want this either.'*

The Oosterparkwijk scores on average according to the numbers of the Basismonitor Groningen. Safety scores lower than average (90), but according to Ellen\* from the neighbourhood council, this is strongly improving. This is priority number 1 within the neighbourhood. Social cohesion (101) scores slightly above average, mainly because of the high score of social networks. This is because of many community initiatives within the neighbourhood, like the community garden of Kelly\*, she mentions:

*'We try to activate the neighbourhood. We find it important to involve people in our projects. In this way, we create a place in which different generations can meet. This makes that social cohesion in our neighbourhood will grow.'*

There is a connection between the quantity and quality of initiatives and the level of social capital. Especially the role of bonding within the neighbourhood can be seen as a cause for the creation of those initiatives, as Putnam stated. When social capital within a neighbourhood is higher people are more willing to invest in their living area and it is easier for initiatives and projects to find public support. However, as Brisson & Usher stated, social capital is intertwined with leadership (2005).

### *Leadership and scalar politics*

Leadership and social capital are inextricably linked to the establishment of community initiatives and partnerships (Purdue, 2001). Both are necessary to create citizen participation (Hurrelmann, 2006). The question that arises is how leadership is connected to community initiatives and indirectly to resourcefulness. Leaders have a networking role within the community (Skelcher et al. 1996). They have to activate and mobilise others and involve them within the project, as Kelly\* mentioned:

*'I address them often. I am very busy in the neighbourhood. Talking to people works best and sometimes someone wants to join. There must be someone to take this task. You should not wait for the municipality to do something.'*

This networking role is important as many people have to be convinced. Many times, people do not know about the initiative or state that they do not have the time and knowledge or simply do not want to participate. This can be linked to 'folk' knowledge and recognition within the themes of resourcefulness. This again, makes the interplay between social capital and leadership visible. Social capital can create conditions for leadership. When comparing this assumption to Vinkhuizen, it's possible to verify it. In Vinkhuizen social capital is low and this is visible in the number of initiatives.

Richard\* from the neighbourhood council explains that the council is the most important initiative, it was set up by residents themselves. Next to that, he states

*'The number of initiatives is far too low. Most of the time the district team or the municipality is behind it. The residents show less interest in their neighbourhood. We have noticed that residents do not want to participate and certainly do not want to start a project, which makes the framework for new projects within the area very tight.'*

When finding an explanation for the low number of people who want to start a project, it's necessary to look at the new 'scalar politics' as explained by MacKinnon (2011). The municipality of Groningen shifted governance to a bottom-up approach concerning projects in the neighbourhood. They stated that a point is reached in which it's up to the citizen. Marc\* of the municipality mentioned:

*'We do and can do less and less; it really must come from them.'*

The responsibility shifts from the municipality to the leaders of projects. Both the leaders and the people from the neighbourhood council from all three neighbourhoods researched confirm this. When initiatives can handle this responsibility, this does not have to be a problem. But especially Vinkhuizen and the Oosterparkwijk are not able to fully cover the responsibility. Considering the conditions of resourcefulness, explained by McKinnon & Derrickson, problems arise concerning recognition and resources. During the interview Ellen\* from the neighbourhood council of the Oosterparkwijk clearly stated:

*'The responsibility for the project lies with the leaders, but they must have a long breath. They have to understand that their idea cannot be launched the way they want, it is always complicated. As a result, many leaders drop out earlier.'*

The municipality aims for a bottom-up approach in which the citizens are in control. For many projects, this can be an interesting move. However, this depends on the kind of project and the kind of neighbourhood. In Reitdiep the number of leaders and people who are willing to participate in community initiatives is high, they are all volunteers with a passion for creating a better living area. Megan\* from the neighbourhood association mentions:

*'It is often a long process. As leaders ensure short communication lines with the neighbourhood and also with the municipality, it's easier for the municipality to cooperate. Reitdiep has strong leaders and a larger arsenal of volunteers.'*

The municipality must make a distinction between different neighbourhoods. What works in Reitdiep, does most of the time not work in Vinkhuizen. A neighbourhood with higher social capital and stronger leaders is more ready for a bottom-up approach with a lot of responsibility. A neighbourhood which is not that far needs a better combination between top-down and bottom-up with a lot of support from the municipality, where all the conditions of resourcefulness need to be taken into account. Both Vinkhuizen and the Oosterparkwijk explain that the municipality needs to be closely involved and must not only have a coordinating role but also must take responsibility. Lauren\* from the neighbourhood garden in Vinkhuizen mentions:

*'Together with another leader we are in close contact with the municipality. I think the municipality must have a more stimulating and responsible role within this neighbourhood, especially this neighbourhood. The municipality must not expect the people to take initiative, it's their task.'*

The biggest problem faced concerning community initiatives is partly the willingness of people to invest in the neighbourhood, but it is also the interaction between top-down and bottom-up perspectives. The municipality has transformed into a bottom-up perspective because of financial reasons, according to Marc\*. The municipality has initiated so-called 'empowerment workers'. Their job is to take care of the bonding between the municipality and the neighbourhood leaders. In this way, there are 3 parties

involved and it is easier for the leaders to get in contact with the municipality, still in all 3 neighbourhood it is unclear who this person is. The neighbourhood council and the leaders take care of this bonding, the problem that is faced here is that of resourcefulness. A community leader must also have technical knowledge regarding for example governmental procedures, instead of only leading his or her project.

### *Resourcefulness*

Creating a support base in the community is primarily a matter of information and communication. The basic principle is to achieve consensus between the objectives, resources and interests of different social groups and institutions (De Roo, 2003). This is in line with the four conditions of resourcefulness explained by MacKinnon & Derrickson and the role these play within community initiatives. All three neighbourhoods have sufficient skills and technical knowledge at their disposal. The neighbourhood leaders are in close contact with the municipality and have political and legal expertise. When this is not the case, they are supported by the neighbourhood council or associations who are also in close contact with the municipality. Megan\* explains:

*'Our association has built up a lot of contacts and we know how to get to money pots. We keep the lines of communication with the municipality and neighbourhood tight. I think that's our strength.'*

When it is about resources, 'folk' knowledge, and recognition more problems are brought up, but this, of course, depends between the neighbourhoods. These conditions are closely linked to social capital and that is reflected during the interviews. The problem with resources in terms of resourcefulness lies with the maldistribution between low-income communities and wealthier communities. As social capital is lower in Vinkhuizen the organizing capacity, spare time and public investments are lower. Also, the state is not investing enough in the neighbourhood. In the Oosterparkwijk it is mentioned by Kelly\* that the focus regarding resources lies with the people from the project or sponsors. This is in contradiction to Reitdiep were Megan\* explains:

*'The municipality is well willing to invest in the neighbourhood as the citizens show initiative and take care of organizing capacity and social capital themselves'*

According to her most of the people living in Reitdiep are in the same phase of life and are in the same income group which makes them have a shared interest and motive to invest in the neighbourhood. This makes Reitdiep score high on folk knowledge, what is exactly missing in Vinkhuizen and Oosterparkwijk. Where in Vinkhuizen a lot of migrants live with different backgrounds who are most of the time not willing to invest, in the Oosterparkwijk are big income differences and the people with a lower income do not participate. This creates a lot of different interests and different values which makes public support and participation more difficult. This again is crucial according to Marc\* from the municipality as he explains:

*'When an idea comes up, we will first jointly examine whether there is support for the idea within the community. That is important. If not, the project will not go ahead. Otherwise, it is difficult for us as municipality to estimate if it will work and we cannot take that risk in the current financial status.'*

This maldistribution of the government and the different values people have, create a situation in which there is a great difference in recognition between Vinkhuizen, Oosterparkwijk and Reitdiep. In Vinkhuizen there is no sense of confidence and community-affirmation. Because of different values and interests, there is no shared understanding and trust in the neighbourhood and they do not receive the same state resources. The Oosterparkwijk was in the same situation as Vinkhuizen, however, the Oosterparkwijk is making steps regarding social capital and leadership as more initiatives are set up and more people participate within these projects. This leads to a situation in which leaders and the municipality stimulate more people to invest in their neighbourhood. More people are willing to invest

in the public good of the neighbourhood and this self- and community affirmation is the fuel to mobilize others. This can be seen in Reitdiep. Recognition is widely present. Social capital and leadership are on a high level and the community is able to make plans to further develop the neighbourhood. Megan\* explains that the neighbourhood association want the Reitdiep neighbourhood to be fully electric by 2030.

## **Discussion**

This study was a case study in the city of Groningen. Three neighbourhoods were compared based on average income and building year. Because of time limits, other variables are held constant. Income and building year of the neighbourhood are most important in the analysis on community initiatives but other variables like age, nationalities and public health may play a role. In further research, these variables need to be incorporated. In this way, a clearer image of different neighbourhoods can be created. Surprisingly, modern neighbourhoods score higher regarding social capital then old neighbourhoods which were built according to 'the neighbourhood idea'. This was stimulated in post-war neighbourhoods to increase social cohesion. However, results show different. Vinkhuizen is such a post-war neighbourhood, but social cohesion is far below average, while Reitdiep is not built according to the 'neighbourhood idea' and there social cohesion is far above average. More research is needed to incorporate other important variables of social capital. These need to be analysed also with the help of qualitative research to explore the fields of trust, motives, and social cohesion in a more extensive way. It's important to know the feelings, interests, and motives about social capital as has been done with leadership in this research.

This research was conducted during the COVID-19 virus which influenced the data collection process. Physical interviews and conversations were no longer allowed, which made it harder to find participants. It also made it impossible to visit the neighbourhoods to check the projects. In this way, the results became more biased as less interview could be held. It's essential to expand and broaden the research to make general statements related to community initiatives and resourcefulness.

## **Conclusion**

Community initiatives become more important, not only for local benefits like social cohesion and participation but also for (inter) national benefits like climate adaptation. This calls for place-based projects and working across scales. A well-considered alignment between top-down and bottom-up approaches is needed to achieve these benefits. Since mitigation is seen as a matter for the national government, adaptation measures are seen as local matters (Biesbroek et al. 2009). Community initiatives form the building-block for adaptation but are also in its infancy. When including the local level and inhabitants in the decision-making process, it's important to analyse the image and perception of the neighbourhood beforehand. How willing are people to participate in initiatives and is there a common interest to improve the neighbourhood? Here, the four conditions of resourcefulness come in, as explained by MacKinnon & Derrickson (2012). To answer the main question of this paper it's important to explore the role of social capital and leadership within communities to make statements about the ability of neighbourhoods in becoming resourceful. It does not work when a municipality shift to a universal bottom-up approach for the whole city, every neighbourhood has different abilities. The municipality of Groningen must go beyond the 'one-size-fits-all' approach, to a more place-based approach. Every neighbourhood demands a different role for the municipality to play.

This research showed that Reitdiep is better able to become resourceful as social capital is high and the community form a coherent front. This creates a building block for shared interests, resources, and recognition, which in their turn increases the uprising of leaders. The municipality can take a supporting role here. When social capital is low as in Vinkhuizen, a community experiences a negative spiral. There

is low social cohesion, lots of different motives and interests and maldistribution of resources. As social capital and leadership are intertwined, the number of community initiatives is low. This makes Vinkhuizen less resourceful. Here, the municipality must have a leading role, by means of a more top-down approach. The Oosterparkwijk has breached the negative spiral with the help of leaders. They are the bringers of change and can create conditions to improve social capital as leadership has the power to increase it. The role of scalar politics and the different roles the municipality have to adopt are important. Higher governance levels have to invest and bring resources and recognition into the neighbourhoods. Resourcefulness relies on increasing local autonomy with the aim to enable communities to access the levers of social and adaptive change (Robinson & Carson, 2015). Leadership and social capital are the basic steppingstones to activate the communities and in combination with well-considered scalar politics, many neighbourhoods can become resourceful in terms of for example climate change.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Letter of consent

#### **De rol van sociaal kapitaal en leiderschap in het ontstaan van burgerinitiatieven**

Beste deelnemer,

Ik wil u bedanken voor het feit dat u mee wil werken aan dit interview voor mijn onderzoek. Het interview zal ongeveer een half uur duren, misschien iets langer. Ik verwacht niet dat er risico's voor u als deelnemer zullen ontstaan tijdens het interview, maar u heeft natuurlijk het recht om te stoppen of te pauzeren wanneer u wil.

Wegens ethische procedure in academisch onderzoek is het belangrijk dat u, als deelnemer, expliciet toestemt om geïnterviewd te worden. Daarnaast is het belangrijk dat de deelnemer weet hoe de informatie van het interview wordt gebruikt. Deze brief is belangrijk omdat het mij duidelijk maakt dat u weet wat u rechten zijn en dat u de onderstaande voorwaarden accepteert. Zou u zo vriendelijk willen zijn de onderstaande informatie door te lezen en helemaal onderaan uw handtekening te geven. Doordat we elkaar niet fysiek kunnen ontmoeten, zal ik aan het begin van het interview vragen of u akkoord gaat met de voorwaarden

Ik ....., doe vrijwillig mee met dit onderzoek Ja/ Nee

Ik begrijp dat ongeacht het feit dat ik accepteer mee te werken ik op ieder moment kan stoppen of kan weigeren antwoord te geven. Ja/ Nee

Ik begrijp dat er een geluidsopname van het interview wordt gemaakt zodat het interview kan worden uitgetypt Ja/ Nee

Ik begrijp dat alle informatie alleen wordt gebruikt voor dit onderzoek en dat er vertrouwelijk mee wordt omgegaan. Ja/ Nee

Ik begrijp dat in een verslag van alle resultaten van dit onderzoek mijn identiteit geheim zal blijven. Ja/ Nee

Ik begrijp dat uitspraken tijdens het interview gebruikt worden in het verslag Ja/ Nee

#### *Handtekening van de deelnemer*

.....  
Handtekening van deelnemer datum

#### *Handtekening van onderzoeker*

.....  
Handtekening van onderzoeker datum

## Onderzoek naar de rol van sociaal kapitaal en leiderschap in het ontstaan van burgerinitiatieven

Onderzoeker: Thom Busschers [thombusschers1@gmail.com](mailto:thombusschers1@gmail.com)

Supervisor: Ina Horlings

Beste deelnemer,

Ik wil u vragen de tijd te nemen om de volgende informatie door te lezen. Als u ergens vragen hebt, aarzel dan vooral niet om ze aan mij te stellen. U kunt mij natuurlijk ook in een later stadium van het onderzoek benaderen door mij te mailen. Mijn e-mailadres staat hierboven genoemd.

U hebt aangegeven dat u wil meewerken met mijn bachelor project waarbij de rol van sociaal kapitaal en leiderschap in het ontstaan van burgerinitiatieven wordt onderzocht. Door klimaatverandering moeten veel wijken en buurten in Nederland worden aangepast door klimaat-adaptief te worden. De rol van burgerinitiatieven wordt hierin steeds belangrijker. Hoe kunnen bepaalde mensen anderen stimuleren om deel te nemen aan burgerinitiatieven en in hoeverre kan de wijkraad of de lokale overheid sociaal kapitaal in de wijk verbeteren. Sociaal kapitaal is een verzamelnaam voor de sociale cohesie, het vertrouwen en de sociale netwerken binnen een wijk.

### Uw taak

U bent gevraagd om deel te nemen aan een vertrouwelijk onderzoek, waarbij de resultaten anoniem worden verwerkt in een verslag. Het interview duurt ongeveer 30 minuten, misschien iets korter of langer. Dit interview zal worden gehouden op een tijdstip, datum en locatie (onzeker door het coronavirus, misschien via skype) dat u schikt. Het interview moet uiterlijk voor 15 mei plaatsvinden.

In het interview zal worden gevraagd naar uw rol binnen het burgerinitiatief. In hoeverre bent u betrokken en waarom bent u betrokken. Hierbij is uw persoonlijke mening van belang. Daarnaast zal worden gekeken naar de rol van deze initiatieven in de toekomst. Tijdens het interview krijgt u de mogelijkheid om uw mening te delen door te vertellen vanuit uw standpunt. Ook uw kijk op de sociale cohesie en de netwerken in de buurt zullen worden behandeld tijdens het interview.

### De data

Om de data van het onderzoek zo sterk mogelijk te krijgen zal van het interview een geluidsopname worden gemaakt. Hierdoor kan ik als onderzoeker beter inzicht krijgen in de overeenkomsten tussen verschillende interview. Daarnaast zullen, met uw toestemming, een aantal opmerkingen van u kunnen worden gebruikt in het verslag. Er zullen geen persoonlijke gegevens van u vernoemd worden, waardoor de uitspraken niet aan u gerelateerd kunnen worden. De opnames van het interview zullen worden opgeslagen in een vertrouwelijke omgeving die alleen toegankelijk is voor mij en mijn supervisor. Verder krijgt niemand u identiteit te weten. Nadat het onderzoek is afgerond zal de data worden vernietigd.

Bedankt voor het lezen van deze informatiebrief en ik hoop u snel te spreken. En nogmaals, wanneer u vragen hebt, beantwoord ik die met alle plezier

Thom Busschers

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### Appendix 3: Interview questions and coding themes

1. Hoe zou u de wijk waarin u leeft omschrijven?
  - Voelen mensen zich veilig
  - In hoeverre hebben mensen contact met elkaar
  - Wat zijn volgens u de sterke punten van de wijk
  - Wat kan er verbeterd worden in de wijk
2. Wat voor soort burgerinitiatieven zijn er in de buurt?
  - Wat voor soort mensen zijn vooral betrokken bij deze initiatieven. Leeftijd/geslacht, nationaliteit etc.
  - Welke mensen juist niet → Kun je dat duidelijk zien
  - hoeveel mensen zijn betrokken bij deze initiatieven.
  - Wat vindt u van de hoeveelheid burgerinitiatieven in de wijk?
3. Hoe zijn de initiatieven ontstaan?
4. Waarom bent u dit burgerinitiatief begonnen?
5. Waarom denkt u dat er zo veel/zo weinig mensen betrokken zijn?
6. Wat voegt het project toe aan de buurt?
  - participatie
  - sociale cohesie
  - vertrouwen
  - veiligheid
7. Waarom is de sociale cohesie binnen ..... zo hoog/ laag is terwijl het aantal sociaal culturele voorzieningen onder/boven het Groningens gemiddelde ligt
8. Volgens de basismonitor Groningen scoort ..... slecht/sterk op de sociale cohesie, in hoeverre moet dit gestimuleerd worden door de wijkraad en in hoeverre is dit afhankelijk van de inwoners zelf.
  - Welke rol speelt de gemeente hierin
9. Wat is de rol van de wijkraad in deze burgerinitiatieven?
10. Hoe stimuleren jullie als wijkraad of leiders deze initiatieven?
  - Geld
  - middelen (wat voor middelen → kennis/ communicatie etc.)
  - Wat moeten de burgers zelf bijdragen
11. Wie neemt de verantwoordelijkheid voor de initiatieven op zich? Zijn dat leiders binnen het project?
  - Wat voor effecten kan dit hebben
12. Wat voor problemen ondervindt u die buiten uw macht liggen?
  - Wat kan de gemeente hierin betekenen?
  - en de wijkraad?

13. Hoe stimuleren jullie als wijkraad, mensen om deel te nemen aan deze activiteiten of een nieuw?

- Hebben jullie nauw contact met de leiders van projecten?
- Hebben jullie nauw contact met de andere mensen in de wijk
- Welke voordelen geeft het mensen wanneer ze deelnemen?

14. Hoe ziet u de toekomst van deze initiatieven?

- Klimaatverandering?

15. Wat is de rol van de wijkraad in de toekomst, aangezien burgerinitiatieven steeds belangrijker worden.

16. In hoeverre hebt u contact met de lokale overheid en de gemeente?

- Kunnen jullie als wijkraad, de gemeente vragen om initiatieven te steunen doormiddel van geld of andere middelen?

#### Coding themes

1. Recognition
2. 'Folk' Knowledge
3. Resources
4. Skills
5. Leadership
6. Social Capital
7. Top-down/bottom-up interaction