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# **The significance of the physical environment in people's Sense of Place**

How local cultural activities play a role in people-place relationships

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## Abstract

Planning initiatives have started to focus on the development of positive people-place relationships to create meaningful places within this changing world. The concept sense of place was introduced in planning regulations to create insight into people's attachments to places. Local events are being incorporated within place-based policies to stimulate positive people-place relationships. However, the impact of cultural events on people's sense of place is understudied. Furthermore, only social settings are researched and developed to enhance a positive sense of place, while social interactions do not appear out of nowhere. There is a need to focus on the relation between the physical environment and sense of place. Five avenues researched within this study create more insight into people's sense of place. The chosen case study was a local cultural activity called the Slachtdag in the rural village of Zuidwolde, Drenthe, the Netherlands.

This thesis shows that local cultural activities impact people's sense of place, as the physical environment offers a way to experience a place's resources, history and culture, while communicating this to people and helping people identify with a larger place. Furthermore, the physical environment stimulates social interactions through the events' decoration, accessibility and seating areas. Social interactions at the event help with creating the feeling of belonging and familiarization by fulfilling the desire of contact and creating a social network. A longer residence period within a place directly relates to a positive sense of place, as it creates time to experience a place, develop a social network and create a feeling of responsibility towards the place. In the end, volunteering at local events does not strengthen the relationship between physical environment and sense of place. This study contributes to the study of sense of place within socio-spatial planning. Results of this study offer recommendations for future research and for rural planners using cultural activities and the physical environment in the creation of meaningful places.

*Keywords: sense of place, place identity, place attachment, place dependence, physical environment, social interaction, residence length, roles, people-place relationship, rural village*

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Sense of Place and cultural activities

Several approaches addressing rural decline have been developed by Dutch planning institutions during the last decade. People are leaving their homes and relocating to urbanized areas. According to Counted et al. (2020), individuals travel to these locations because of the opportunities offered by employment, resources, and social contacts. However, Tuan (1975) argues that the absence of emotional attachment and identification with their residency are critical in the decision to move. People are more likely to connect to places that they consider to be meaningful (Counted et al., 2020). People's well-being is influenced by these people-place relationships. As a result, planning initiatives have started to focus on the development of positive people-place relationships for the construction of meaningful places (Lewicka, 2011b).

Since the emphasis has been placed on the creation of meaningful places, the concept of "sense of place" was introduced in planning regulations (Lewicka, 2011b). It describes how residents interact with their environment and gives insight into their impressions of the locations where they live, work, and play (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). The notion has grown in popularity in recent years as planners see the benefits of using it to build appealing places and keep people attached to rural areas (Jagannath, 2018). "Residents with a strong sense of place may be motivated to stay connected to the places that are important to them", writes Noel Knapp (2020, p.377). People relate to locations in various ways, depending on their traits and prior experience with them (Cross, 2001). As a result, sense of place is a challenging notion to implement in policies. However, recognizing people's different relationships with places contributes to the creation of meaningful places.

Scholars' perspectives on development and the best strategies to create a positive sense of place have evolved. Currently, the social environment is the focus in efforts to enhance people's sense of place, with the physical environment providing a backdrop to any social experience or action. However, Stedman (2003) and Sampson and Goodrich (2009) argue that the physical environment has a significant influence on people's sense of place. It provides possibilities for people to connect with, form opinions about, and meet new people in. However, the focus of planning initiatives has been on the stimulation of social interactions, since this is believed to have the largest influence on human well-being (Lewicka, 2011a;2011b). Nonetheless, social interactions do not appear out of nowhere. Stedman (2003) and Sampson and Goodrich (2009) suggest that future sense of place research should focus on the physical environment since this might lead to new insights into the positive development of sense of place within planning activities. This thesis addresses this gap.

Next to this, the role of arts and culture within communities has changed. Community workers in economically and socially disadvantaged communities are seeking ways to link citizens to their communities. Art and cultural activities have evolved into interventions that are used to foster these people-place relationships (Kay, 2000). According to research, it fosters social capital and can aid in the strengthening of emotional relationships between inhabitants and their living environment (Van der Vaart et al., 2018). Local cultural activities have been shown to increase social capital and place attachment (Brajša-Žganec et al., 2011). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that local activities provide a setting in which individuals connect and engage with others and their surroundings. As a result, it can contribute to a local's sense of place.

People are beginning to reconsider and incorporate local cultural activities into place-based policies, moving the emphasis to the utilization of cultural resources in the development of beneficial people-place interactions. Overall, planners are interested in developing liveable places through the inclusion of sense of place and cultural approaches in planning policies. Both provide a place for a community's culture, while also providing social, economic and environmental advantages to the community (Counted et al., 2020; Lewicka, 2011b; Kay,



2000). This study will look into establishing a sense of place by examining a local cultural activity. A local cultural activity provides a physical and social setting of which individuals may develop their sense of place. Initially, this study would have researched a local cultural activity known as "Slachtdag" in November 2021 in the Dutch rural community of Zuidwolde. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 limitations were tightened in the Netherlands just one week before the event, forcing the Slachtdag event organizers to make the painful choice to cancel the event. As a result, this study focuses on the most recent Slachtdag (of 2019).

## 1.2 Academic gaps

As mentioned above, local events have become moments in which ideas of sense of place are transformed and communicated. Van der Vaart et al. (2018) and Brajša-Žganec et al. (2011) point to the positive impacts cultural events can have on people's perceptions of a place. It is argued that these events offer moments to experience a place and its community. Thus, it is assumed that cultural events can contribute to the formation of a local's sense of place. However, research conducted on how and what aspects of events influence people's sense of place within rural communities has been lacking. Within this research, five avenues were identified.

First, this study will add to the incomplete empirical research on the topic of sense of place enhancement through the physical environment as stated by Stedman (2003). Research on sense of place has concentrated on the function of social interactions in the development of a positive sense of place, the physical environment is often solely seen as the backdrop of research. However, the physical environment shapes one's sense of place (Stedman, 2003). According to Beidler and Morrison (2015), it supports a location's distinctive character by, for example, the visibility of monuments. Lewicka (2011b) argues that architectural variety and open or green areas can influence the cognitive relationship people have with places. Furthermore, Abbaszadeh et al. (2015) argue that interior design predominantly influences people's sense of place by instilling a sense of comfort and safety. There is no conclusive answer yet to the question of to what extent, and with what factors, the physical environment influences people's sense of place, and consequently, how policy-makers might take this into consideration when developing places.

Second, Sampson and Goodrich (2009) argue that the physical environment indirectly impacts sense of place by facilitating social interactions. This indirect relationship is often not seen to be significant enough to be researched. However, Christensen (2010) claims that an efficient physical setting stimulates social interactions. Social interactions are thus supported by the physical environment. By unravelling this relationship, this study adds to the body of literature on the creation of sense of place literature (Lewicka, 2011b; Stedman, 2003). It will especially add to our understanding of what are important determinants within the physical environment for people's sense of place.

Third, social interactions are consistently seen as the most influential concept to influence people's sense of place (Lewicka, 2011b). People experience social interactions differently at events (Claridge, 2020). Gehl (2010) argues that low-intense social interactions are significant by creating an opportunity to meet and connect to new people, while Van den Berg et al. (2015) argue that it mostly offers a larger sense of belonging through the social network that is created. The literature is inconsistent in what elements of social interactions encourage a positive sense of place. This research delves into the direct relationship between social interactions and sense of place and argues how an event's social settings can be taken into account in its organisation.

Furthermore, as stated in the introduction of this study, people are leaving rural areas for urbanized areas (Central Bureau for Statistics, 2016). This research aims to add to the knowledge on the differences in people's sense of place within one community. Research

shows distinctions between participants have been made within earlier sense of place studies. Often, studies concentrate on unique socio-demographic groups, such as senior citizens or immigrants (Chatman, 1991; Shohan & Strauss, 2008). However, there is a limited number of qualitative studies on sense of place in relation to people's residence time duration. As people perceive and bond differently with places, it is relevant to study how time spent within a place relates to a people-place relationship.

Lastly, people participate differently in cultural events. Stevenson (2020) argues that volunteers and visitors impact an event differently, due to the roles they have at the event. Volunteers often contribute to the physical environment which is experienced by all attending locals, because they organize the event (Stevenson, 2020). Nonetheless, studies have not yet focused on researching the differences in people's roles impacting the physical environment, thus influencing sense of place. This research will create insight into this unexplored theme.

### 1.3 Societal relevance: tactical and operational

Besides the academic relevance discussed in section 1.2, the societal relevance stems from a multitude of reasons. This study is tactically and also operationally relevant. First, the outcome of this research can be used in developing future municipal policies within rural areas. This research heeds to the call of both Liu (2014) and Reid (2008). As mentioned before, cultural events are increasingly seen as methods to bond locals to a place and each other. These studies focus on larger or urban events with the argument that they create significant identities and connectedness. However, the sense of identity and rootedness in rural communities can be just as intense (National Research Council, 2002). However, it is unclear what local events can mean for rural communities. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the knowledge of local rural cultural events and the impact it brings to rural communities.

Second, Cultureel Platform De Wolden uses cultural events to develop the municipality De Wolden, to create attractive places for people to stay at or relocate to. Their policy document suggests that cultural activities can create social connections among residents, which creates local connections inside and outside the community. This study will add to the knowledge on how cultural activities may promote sense of place and can be organized by volunteer associations to develop attractive places. The results provide insight for public institutions within rural communities, such as education, museums or volunteer associations, and evaluate how cultural events can be used within sense of place goals.

Furthermore, the study's results also evaluate how the physical environment of cultural events can be arranged effectively to fulfil a set goal by the organisation of the event. As this research studies a specific local event, an evaluation of the physical environment and social interactions at the Slachtdag can be created.

### 1.4 Research objective and research questions

The study's aim was developed in response to the above-mentioned gaps and relevant arguments. The purpose of this study is to look at how and with what elements a cultural event impacts people's sense of place in a rural community. A local cultural activity offers a physical environment to study, which directly and indirectly (through social interactions) influences people's sense of place. By using a local cultural activity to research this goal, this study also evaluates how local cultural activities can be used within rural areas to create positive people-place relationships and to develop the community for the better. To achieve the research objective, the following research question is posed:

**How does a local cultural activity impact residents' sense of place within rural Zuidwolde?**

The secondary questions are stated below:

1. How does a local cultural activity's physical environment directly influence residents' sense of place?
2. How does a local cultural activity's physical environment indirectly influence residents' sense of place?
3. How do social interactions at a local cultural activity influence residents' sense of place?
4. To what extent does people's length of residence in a rural village influence their sense of place?
5. To what extent does the role of residents attending local cultural activities influence the creation of sense of place?

### 1.5 Thesis structure

The rest of the thesis is structured as follows. The theoretical framework is offered first in chapter two, expanding on the background of sense of place. Chapter three discusses the information and theories necessary to create the hypotheses for this research, based on the physical environment, social interactions, residence length and locals' roles at events. It also presents the conceptual model. Chapter four then offers an outline of the thesis methodology. It discusses why a case study was chosen as the research approach, as well as why several methods were used to construct a mixed-method design, such as observations, questionnaires, and interviews. This chapter also looks at the Zuidwolde unit of analysis, data gathering techniques and analysis, and ethical judgments taken during the study process. The fifth chapter presents the findings of the data, while chapter six analyses and discusses the results in comparison to the set hypotheses. In the end, the last chapter discusses the study's importance to planning theory and planning practice and reflects on the overall progress.

## Chapter 2. Theoretical Background

In this chapter, the theoretical background of the concept sense of place is presented. All of the theories discussed here contribute to answering the main question. First, an introduction to the broad and fuzzy concept sense of place is presented. This helps define a clear sense of place definition for this study. Afterwards, theories on different people-place relationships are discussed. These are classified as affective, cognitive and behavioural. These relationships are expanded upon in the broad sense of place concept, to make it a well-defined concept to explore in this study. Chapter three continues on theories within the sense of place concept, and creates an insight into the hypotheses created based on this. It also shows the conceptual model created based on chapters two and three.

### 2.1 Defining Sense of Place – overlapping terminology

Sense of place has always been characterized as the discussion of individuals' relationship with their spatial surroundings (Lewicka, 2011b). Nevertheless, the term is defined in various ways, as it has been studied in many research fields, such as environmental planning, social science and cultural geography. The growing number of publications and the various perspectives on sense of place create the need to outline a clear definition of the concept. Still, researchers have been using overlapping concepts to describe sense of place through different terms. Cross (2001) researched these different terms and concluded that concepts such as *place attachment* (Shumaker & Taylor, 1983; Low & Altman, 1992), *Topophilia* (Tuan, 1974), and *community attachment* (Hummon, 1992) define the same people-place relationship as sense of place often does (Stedman, 2003). These vocabularies all distinguish an individual's connection to their living context.

First, the term place attachment is defined by Shumaker and Taylor (1983, p.221) as a "person-place bond that evolves from specifiable conditions of place and characteristics of people". The creation of a people-place relationship does not happen to everyone or to each place, and can differ over time. Furthermore, Low and Altman (1992, *cited by Najafi & Kamal, 2012*) describe place attachment as an affective link between people and their surroundings, based on place-based emotions and society. It shows that an individual and their perceptions of a place are central for a satisfying connection towards a place. Subsequently, Topophilia (Tuan, 1974) also describes the affective bond which focuses on individuals' reactions to a physical environment, but focuses on the aesthetic, tactile or emotional feeling it can be in a certain moment. Based on these definitions, it becomes clear that the connection to a place is created when an individual has a positive or negative perception of the place, with its tangible and intangible elements.

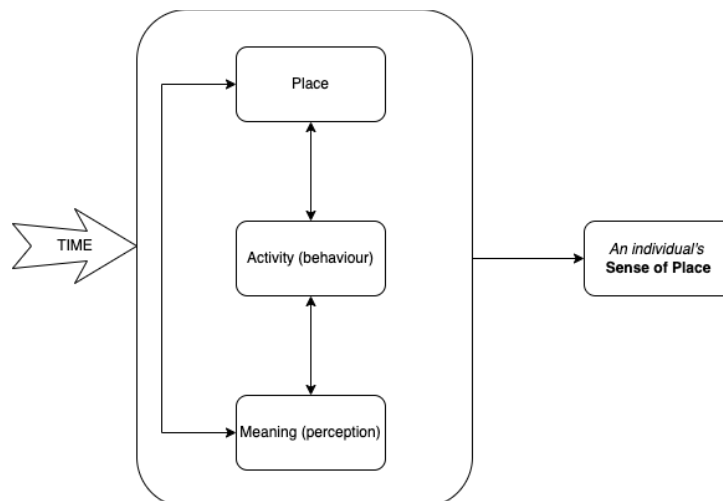
Furthermore, Hummon (1992, *cited by Hutama, 2016, p.10*) expresses community attachment as a "personal orientation towards place, in which one's understanding of place and one's feeling about place become fused in the context of environmental meaning." It emphasizes the importance of the surroundings of the place, the physical environment and community, and the impact it has on human activities.

Sense of place was characterized by Stedman (2003) as a three-element approach that combines the physical world, human activity and social structures. A connection is created by being present in a place through different kinds of experiences. Basso (1996, *cited by Adams et al., 2016*) emphasized sense of place as the relationship of people and places, representing all aspects of human existence: emotions, history, values and stories. Therefore, it can be argued that sense of place is not only created by the present physical environment, but also with the underlying stories of history and cultural values. All above-mentioned theories describe the importance of four elements within the sense of place concept, which are discussed in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1** Sense of Place elements

Sense of Place Elements	Theory	Sources
Place	Place differs from space. Space is usually the abstract term for a geographical area, whereas place refers to the value people put on a specific site. The acknowledgement of place creates an understanding that it may differ per location, scale, person and time.	Tuan (1974, <i>cited by Davies, 2014</i> ); Gieryn (2000)
Activity (behaviour)	Activity means all the actions an individual undertakes throughout their daily lives, often connected to a specific place. The activities can be planned, spontaneous or be part of an individual's daily rhythm. It can offer a moment to experience a place, or to meet people.	Stedman (2003)
Meaning (perception)	Meaning is the perception people have towards a place, for example the feeling of belonging. These perceptions can be positive or negative. Negative perceptions can decrease their sense of place, while experiencing a sad moment can help connect emotionally to place.	Jorgensen and Stedman, (2001); Foote and Azaryahu (2009)
Time	Place, activity and meaning are all influenced by time. It influences people's memory of a place, positively or negatively. Remembering certain experiences influences people's present sense of place. The experience of a place through certain moments within a place, based on activities and the meaning ascribed to it by people, remains in people's minds.	Gieryn (2000), Othman et al., (2013)

These elements and theories have created a starting point for defining sense of place for this study. The three main elements that overlap throughout these clarifications are place, meaning and individual behavior or activity, all influenced by time. Therefore, this study uses “sense of place” as the description of the connection of place, behaviour and people’s meaning ascribed to a place and experience at a certain moment of time (Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1** Sense of Place definition (own source).

## 2.2 Sense of Place relationships

After creating a general definition of sense of place, the focus is shifted towards the different relationships people can have with places. This helps create an understanding of the different ways people’s sense of place is influenced. Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) argue that there are three relationships within the umbrella sense of place: (a) place attachment, “feelings

toward the place”; (b) place identity, “beliefs about the relationship between self and place” and (c) place dependence, “the behavioural exclusivity of the place in relation to alternatives” (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001, p.233). Many scholars used this theory ever since Jorgensen and Stedman introduced it.

On the other hand, Low and Altman (1992) describe another often-used three people-place relationships: the cognitive, emotional and behavioral relationship. The cognitive attitude refers “to the meaning of place to a person”, however, it can differ per person depending on social experiences, physical characteristics and values within the place (Hutama, 2016, p.10). The emotional relation connects to the spatial perception of the place, while behavioural refers to the functional relationship of activities and space (Low & Altman, 1992, 1992; Hutama, 2016). This introduces a way different locals can connect to specific places. The behavioural relationship could be used to explain why people lose connection towards a rural community, as their interests and needs change, for example studying at university in a different place. However, they can still be connected by relating the place identity/cognitive attitude towards the place, if they grew up there.

Table 2.1 presents the interaction people can have with their places and the concepts within the literature. The next paragraphs elaborate on these concepts and their production of sense of place (Figure 2.2). Jorgensen and Stedman (2006) claim that this is relevant to do, as all relationships influence people’s organization of attitudes, feelings and commitments towards places.

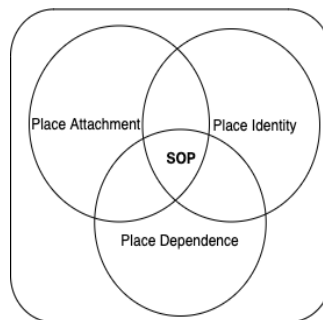


Figure 2.2 Sense of Place components (own source).

Table 2.2 Sense of Place concepts overview

	Sense of Place component <i>Jorgensen &amp; Stedman (2001)</i>	Type of relationship <i>Low &amp; Altman (1992)</i>	Details of relationship <i>Hutama (2016)</i>
<b>People-place relationships</b>	Place Attachment	Affective	The personal perceived bond of approval and connection to a place
	Place Identity	Cognitive	Perception in order to comprehend a place
	Place Dependence	Behavioural	Perception of functional place competences for a specific individual's demand

### 2.2.1 Place Attachment – Affective relationship

The affective relationship is researched as an independent concept or as part of sense of place. However, it always describes the attachment towards a spatial setting. First, Relph (1976) and Low and Altman (1992) have introduced and used place attachment as a concept independently of the concept sense of place. Relph (1976) defined place attachment as “the authentic and emotional bond with an environment that satisfies a fundamental human need” (cited by Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p.3). This puts the emphasis and need to focus on the

emotional perceptions people have of places. Low and Altman (1992) characterized place attachment as a people-place bond development based on people's feelings and thoughts, but with the connection to place awareness. People's remembrance of places can provoke feelings of love, grief or pleasure (Wolf et al., 2014). Therefore, positively perceived memories and feelings lead to a stronger bond with a place. These feelings and memories are all influenced by personal experiences.

While Relph (1976) and Low and Altman (1992) see place attachment as an independent concept, Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) discuss it as one of three elements of sense of place. They do argue that place attachment has the largest resemblance with the *umbrella* sense of place. Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) have researched the difference between these two main concepts and argue that the main distinction is placed on the longing to "maintain closeness" to the place, which makes place attachment part of sense of place (p.247). The concept sense of place can be seen as a more general reflection of the relationship between people and specific locations, while place attachment points out one of the different relationships people can have with a place: the emotional psychological one. This emotional bond often is influenced mostly by the people within the place. This thesis argues that place attachment can be seen as an element of sense of place as it discusses the symbolic relationship with place formed by emotional meanings people attach and relate to places (Low & Altman, 1992).

### *2.2.2 Place Identity – Cognitive relationship*

The concept place identity is regularly seen as a separate part of the sense of place concept. The concept is used since the 1970s. Proshansky (1978) initially introduced it as the dimensions that include the individual's identity connected to a place, including all emotions and perceptions about the place. Subsequently, Paasi (2001) came to the conclusion that there are two kinds of place identity: place identity of a place and people's place identity. The difference between the two is how place identity of a place differs per place, while people's place identity of one specific place may differ per individual. Sense of place literature talks about the latter, referencing the personal identification with a place (Peng et al., 2020). This shows why it is difficult to see sense of place only from a community perspective. Place identity focuses on the connection made with the physical environment, observed and perceived differently through time.

It is not only about the appearance of the physical elements, but also about the meanings people attach to a space. Proshansky (1978) has described place identity developed through the past, as a mix of remembrance and perceptions of a physical environment. It develops through observation and interpretation of the physical environment. Qazimi (2014) connects place identity to the way individuals evolve their identities and how they distinguish themselves from others. Place identity develops through a person's lifetime (Proshansky, 1978; Qazimi, 2014). It explains how the amount of time spent within a place can influence people's sense of place, as people who have lived longer in a place experienced more within the place than people who just started to live in a place. One way in which identity is linked to a specific place is through a sense of belonging. It is a place where a person feels at ease, such as at home, "because the way you define yourself is symbolized by certain qualities of that place" (Qazimi, 2014, p.308).

### *2.2.3 Place Dependence – Behavioural relationship*

Finally, place dependence is concerned with how people achieve a specific individual goal (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). In the literature, this term has received less attention than the other ones but is more straightforward. It differs from place attachment in that is more functional, and has fewer social connections (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Place dependence refers to the activities that take place in an area and indicates whether this is the best location to provide conditions that support an intended use (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). This can affect movement to other locations or overall satisfaction with a place. As a result,

people frequently evaluate whether alternative places are more suitable (Stokols & Shumaker, 1983). According to Stokols and Schumaker (1981, *cited by Jaspers, 2012*), this assessment is dependent on the individual's awareness of an alternative setting, whether or not the individual wants to go somewhere new, resource availability, and flexibility in moving to the other location. People who have a broader focus than their place of residence are more likely to be aware of alternatives than seniors who are more focused on their place of residence. As a result, these theories demonstrate that it is not only the conditions provided within a location to meet people's needs that are important, but also their evaluation of these conditions.

All in all, these theories on the different relationships within sense of place tell us that the two major streams of Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) and Low and Altman (1992) are complimentary on the different relationships they see within the umbrella concept sense of place. Therefore, the current research can build upon both streams of thought.



## Chapter 3. Setting hypotheses

This chapter continues on the theory discussed within chapter two. It explores gaps and patterns within the literature of sense of place and sets five hypotheses for this research.

### 3.1 The Direct Relationship of the Physical Environment and Sense of Place

As described in chapter two, sense of place has had many different definitions and research scopes within different studies. As a long-standing concept, different trends have become visible within the exhaustive literature. Research has focused on different variables helping to enhance a positive sense of place. This section describes the physical environment and its relationship to people's sense of place.

#### *3.1.1 The Physical Environment and Sense of Place*

The physical environment is assumed to impact people's sense of place, as scholars talk about how it offers physical elements which influence people's identification with a place, facilitates people's desires and encourage people's positive feelings. Theories explain different ways a place's physical environment plays a role within people's sense of place.

First, Beidler and Morrison (2015) argue that a physical environment strengthens a place's unique identity and helps people connect to places. The visibility of statues, heritage and architecture contributes to a place's history and community's culture. The physical environment and its tangible elements create opportunities to connect to. According to Beidler and Morrison (2015), people can feel like they belong in a place through personal recognition of certain physical elements that are linked to people's memories or backgrounds. This theory explains why people have different place connections, as it depends on a person's identification with certain physical elements. For example, rural areas have different landscape elements than urban areas, and certain people connect to it while others are leaving places because they identify more with the urban fabric. Sampson and Goodrich (2009) agree with Beidler and Morrison (2015), as they argue that the physical setting of a place influences how people develop and maintain a sense of place. They conclude that the place is a repository of cultural meanings, which creates an identity to which people attach themselves. Identity and belonging, according to Sampson and Goodrich (2009, p.904), "can be created, constructed, shaped, and maintained through engaging in practices and behaviours that connect individuals to specific landscapes." These theories argue that people create a perception of a place based on elements within the physical environment and its identity that is created through this. The physical environment is a starting point for people to identify with a place and its community.

Furthermore, the physical environment creates a way people connect to a place due to the way people's wishes and needs are facilitated. As Beidler and Morrison (2015) state, the environment is more than tangible objects that evoke specific narratives; it develops a character for a place through the positive relationship between landmarks and perceptions of a town's character. It also provides individuals with opportunities for their functional behaviour. According to Sampson and Goodrich (2009), certain behaviours, such as the forestry industry, connect individuals to a landscape. The physical environment helps facilitate people's daily lives, and their changing desires or lives can influence their evaluation of a physical setting. This means that people can connect differently to places, due to people's changing or missing demands within the physical environment. People can also change and develop the physical environment depending on their desires.

Moreover, Stedman (2003) contends that the main importance of the physical environment is not to create a particular identity but to improve people's feelings: such as feeling at home or feeling safe. Additionally, according to Hummon (1992), the physical context of a place creates a sense of rootedness, identification, and community sentiment towards a place and its

community. All these feelings contribute to a positive well-being of individuals. The physical environment contributes to the creation of symbolic meaning, which Hummon (1992) describes as being created through a narrative of lived experiences of the place. It discusses how a concrete reality, for example a building, communicates an intangible feeling, a value or story. However, a symbolic meaning can only be interpreted in the context in which they emerge. Therefore, this illustrates that when a place means anything to an individual or community, it has symbolic meaning. People who attach a symbolic meaning to a place, often feel more at home in a place, and thus attach easier to a place.

As said, the physical environment is assumed to play a role within people's sense of place. However, there is no definitive explanation about how the physical environment effects people's sense of place, because the theories are not consistent.

### *3.1.2 Neglecting the Physical Environment*

One of the trends found within sense of place literature was the shift in research focus of physical environment to social environment within the creation of sense of place. Around the 1980s, a shift was visible in which planners saw the social world as the main factor affecting humans' well-being (Lewicka, 2011a;2011b). Currently, empirical research focuses on place meanings and attachment as products of shared behaviours and cultural processes (Stedman, 2003). In research, the spatial context is frequently used as a backdrop for social experience and action, but it is rarely specifically studied (Stedman, 2003). However, various researchers started pleading for studies on the impact of the physical environment on sense of place. This request helped narrow the research scope of this study.

Stedman (2003, p.673) concludes that the nature of the physical environment, as well as local community culture, can influence place meanings, and that empirical research has largely ignored the role of the physical environment in place meanings and attachment. The physical landscape of a place contains tangible cultural elements of value and history. Tangible physical elements provide opportunities for people to form opinions about a place. He argues that the physical environment is not researched enough to be beneficially used within planning (2003). According to Sampson and Goodrich (2009), the physical environment directly influences people's sense of place, however, they question the literature on this topic and argue for future research.

Following the call of Stedman (2003) and Sampson and Goodrich (2009) to investigate how the physical spatial setting influences sense of place, this research is directed towards the direct impact the physical setting has on people's sense of place. The literature on this is inconclusive, raising questions about where to focus future policies and research. Furthermore, it is unknown how certain physical elements impact a person's sense of place. Some scholars have researched the relationship between the physical environment and sense of place; nonetheless, they believe that different components are important in generating a positive influence on sense of place.

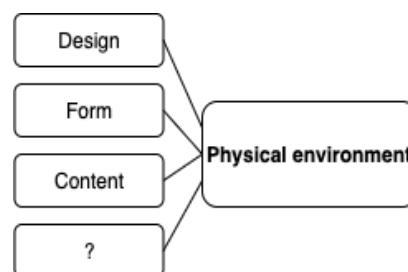
Table 3.1 shows the scholars who have researched specific physical environment elements and their outcomes of which elements are significant in the relation between the physical environment and sense of place. When reading these theories on different physical variables, it becomes clear that sense of place is a complicated phenomenon as it depends on many variables which are often difficult or even impossible to research. However, the findings are instrumental in advancing the sense of place study and in the end of creation of meaningful places. There are overlapping themes found within the physical environment literature: Design, Form and Content. These are used to organize and distinguish differences between the physical elements.

**Table 3.1** Researched Physical factors positively impacting sense of place

Scholars	Notes on physical environment elements	Physical elements argued to help people's sense of place within three themes		
		Design	Form	Content
Sampson and Goodrich (2009)	Helps people identify with the area.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open landscape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greenery</li> <li>Diversity of houses</li> </ul>
Salvesen (2002)	Helps create a feeling of pride and responsibility towards a space. Smaller areas are often perceived with a greater sense of pride than larger locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Architecture</li> <li>Physical landmarks and fabric</li> </ul>		
Lewicka (2011b)	Helps by creating a way to identify with a place, which helps create a sense of accessibility and safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Type of housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Layout</li> <li>Size of buildings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greenery</li> </ul>
Abbaszadeh et al. (2015)	Helps people's connection and perception of a place. It should reflect the location's history, narrative and identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symbols</li> <li>Texture</li> <li>Decoration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shape</li> <li>Layout</li> <li>Accessibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dimensions</li> </ul>
Motalebi (2006, cited by Abbaszadeh et al., 2015)	Creates a comfortable and safe feeling and makes people aware of their environment.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organization</li> <li>Arrangement of internal components</li> </ul>
Steele 1981, cited by Abbaszadeh et al., 2015)	Needs to create a sense of recognition and personalization, while also representing people's perceptions of the location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Texture</li> <li>Decoration</li> <li>Colour</li> <li>Visual variety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Size</li> <li>Scale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noise</li> <li>Odour</li> <li>Temperature</li> </ul>

Themes Design, Form and Content created as umbrellas based on theories mentioned within the table.

Inferred from Table 3.1 and the above-mentioned literature, it shows that there are no clear specific physical variables that are to be set to influence sense of place the most positively, which is why this study conducts deductive and inductive research to help close this gap. Previous study results are used as a foundation and added to with an inductive research design (Figure 3.1). Because cultural local activities are small-scaled, the emphasis is on physical variables that enhance sense of place at a local cultural activity and facilitate social interactions.



Note: ? refers to physical elements found through inductive research.

**Figure 3.1** The Physical Factors part of the Physical Environment (own source)

As mentioned above, the physical environment has been missing from empirical studies on people's sense of place creations. It is assumed that it influences people's sense of place, however, theories about this are inconsistent and miss information about how and what elements within the physical environment help create people's sense of place.

**Hypothesis 1: the evaluation of the physical environment has a positive, direct, relationship with sense of place (Figure 3.2)**

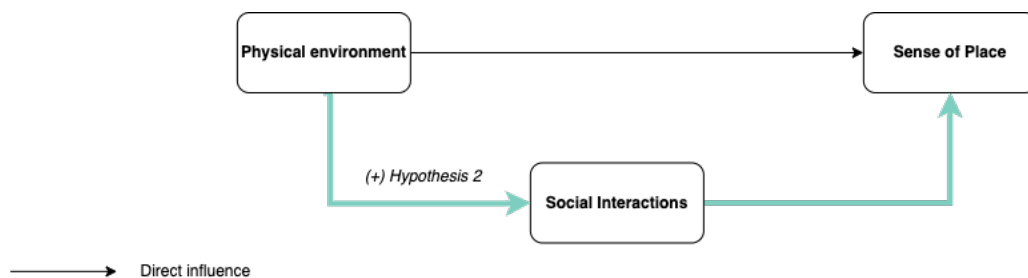


**Figure 3.2** Hypothesis 1: Direct relationship between the Physical Environment and Sense of Place (own source)

### 3.2 The Indirect Relationship between the Physical Environment and Sense of Place

As stated before, the physical environment also connects to social interactions. According to Beidler and Morrison (2015), “the physical environment is interpreted as a primary influence on the development of sense of place, but again this influence is interlaced with an additional dimension namely, social” (p.208). People’s social interactions can be downgraded by the poor physical environment of their living environment. Positive physical environments, in theory, improve “social interactions through providing opportunity for passive contact, proximity to others, and appropriate space to interact” (Fleming, Baum & Singer, 1985; *cited by Christensen, 2010, p.3*). Passive contact helps the creation of familiarization through spontaneous interactions within the physical environment (Christensen, 2010). These spontaneous casual interactions can, for example, be bumping into a neighbour or spontaneous talks about visible decoration at a local activity. Familiarization occurs more frequently among people who live in close proximity because they have more opportunities for spontaneous interactions. Physical environments do not force interactions, but they do make them more likely to occur. Social constructions are important; however, they hardly arise out of thin air. This shows that physical elements not only have a direct influence on the sense of place, but also indirectly influence people’s social interactions within a place. Inferred from this, hypothesis two is formulated about researching the physical environment’s relationships to sense of place (Figure 3.3).

**Hypothesis 2: the evaluation of the physical environment has a positive, indirect, relationship with sense of place, through social interactions (Figure 3.3).**



**Figure 3.3** Hypothesis 2: Indirect relationship between the Physical Environment and Sense of Place, through social interactions (own source)

### 3.3 Social Interactions and Sense of Place

It is assumed that social interactions directly influence sense of place (Lewicka, 2011b). Often, social interactions are used as a variable to research the social environment relating to people’s sense of place. The social environment includes everything from social contacts, cultural background, to beliefs and values within certain communities (Casper, 2001). Studies

on people's sense of place have focused on the variable social ties and social capital (Lewicka, 2011b). Social ties are relationships between individuals, whereas social capital is a network of people, built on shared values and trust (Lewicka, 2011b; Putnam, 2000). The overlapping topic of both is the importance of social interactions to the formation of human relationships (Reis et al., 2000). These social interactions are all communicative behaviours people have when talking to another person or group.

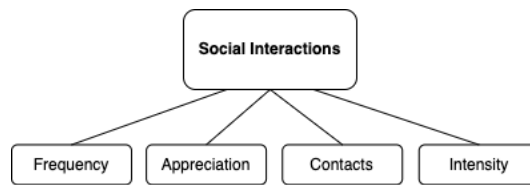
Social interactions are frequently associated with the beneficial impact they may have on people's well-being, such as promoting a sense of belonging within a group or location (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009). Additionally, Fowler and Christakis (2008) conclude that people who are at the centre of their local social networks appear happier because they engage in more social interactions. Moreover, they argue that short social contacts with strangers impact our subjective well-being and connectivity. Social interactions do not only influence a person's happiness, but also their feeling of belonging to a specific place. Consequently, social interactions impact people-place relationships. Based on this and the preceding theories, it is relevant for this study to research social interactions as the only variable of the social environment, influenced by the physical environment and influencing people's sense of place.

### 3.3.1 Social Interactions elements

It is important to highlight that social interactions and sense of place have been studied as casual relationships of each other. Cross (2001) claims that these social interactions, along with the physical surroundings, create the environment, thereby producing a sense of place. Individuals, she claims, are more likely to interact with people in their neighbourhoods if they have a strong positive sense of place. Lewicka (2011b) discovered the same effect, claiming that social relationships formed via contact with neighbours indicate a pleasant sense of place. Therefore, it is possible to assume that increasing one's sense of place through social interactions is a reinforcing process. However, this study focused on the causal relationship between social interactions and sense of place, because social processes frequently guide behaviour and attitude, which is the beginning of sense of place creation. Table 3.2 explains the different scholar's theories on the elements influencing people's social interactions, visualized in Figure 3.4.

**Table 3.2** Elements creating social interactions variable

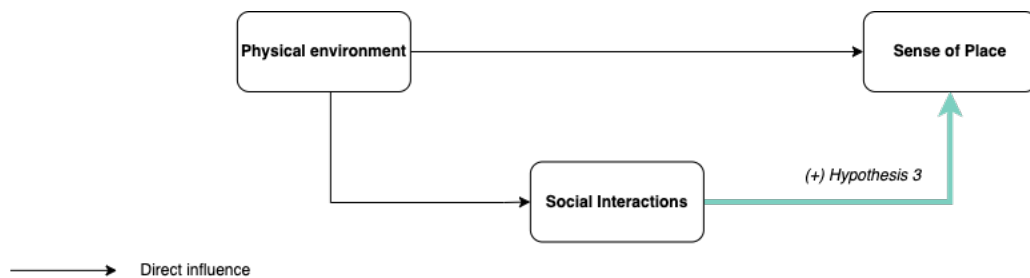
Social Interactions Elements	Theory	Sources
Personal characteristics	Different socio-demographic characteristics of people impact people's social interactions. This can help create bonding with or bridging of various social groups. People who are older seek more interaction with their peers in the community. Families and elderly often have more time spent within a place, offering more and easier interactions with other locals. A longer time spent in a place offers more social opportunities.	Putnam (2000); Lewicka (2011b); Van den Berg et al. (2015).
Magnitude	A larger network creates an easier connection towards a place and its community.	Van den Berg et al. (2015)
Frequency	Interactions depend on the people and the amount of people in their network. Frequent interactions develop a relationship between people. There is no specification of number of times social contacts must occur, in the end, it depends on a person's wishes.	Fowler and Christakis (2008); Lewicka (2011b)
Quality of contacts	Low-intensity connections (e.g., passive contacts) are just as beneficial as high-intensity contacts (close friends). It is a starting point for contact at other levels.	Gehl (2010)



**Figure 3.4** Social Interactions elements (own source)

These theories show that perceptions on social interactions can depend on personal socio-demographic characteristics. People can perceive social interactions differently depending on their stages of life. Furthermore, it can depend on the magnitude of social networks, as well as the frequency of interactions within a place or with certain people. Moreover, short interactions offer a great basis for high-intensity contacts. According to Lewicka (2011b), a lack of social contact can lead to feelings of unsafety associated with a specific location. However, there is a chance that there will be no social interaction between people or that there will be social conflict present at the local cultural activity, which could impact attendants' sense of place. Based on the literature in this section, it can be assumed that people who are well-integrated within the place through social interactions, have a higher positive level of sense of place than people who are disconnected from the social environment through fewer or no social interactions.

**Hypothesis 3: the level of social interactions has a positive, direct, relationship with sense of place (Figure 3.5).**



**Figure 3.5** Hypothesis 3: Direct relationship Between the Social Interactions and Sense of Place (own source)

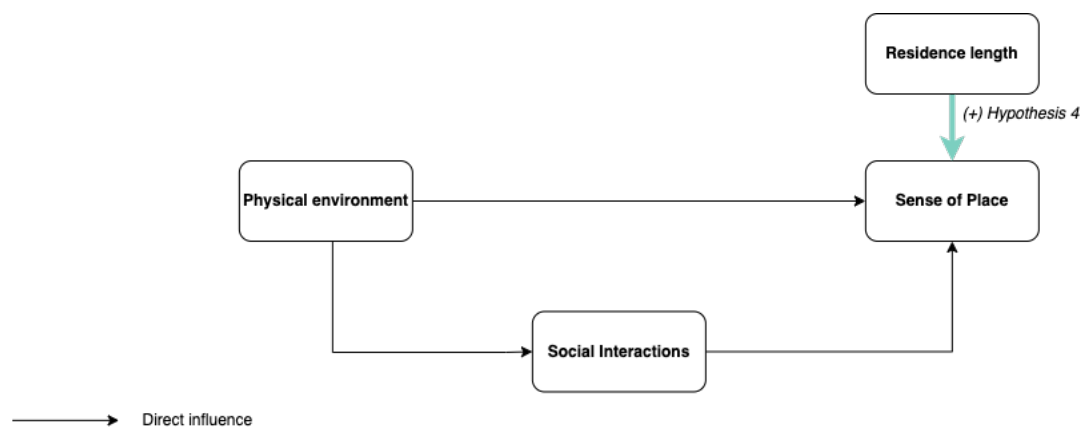
### 3.4 The Direct Relationship of Residence length and Sense of Place

Socio-demographic variables have been argued to be important predictors of positive people-place relationships. Predictors that are considered influential include length of residence, age, having children and gender. According to Lewicka (2011b), residence length is the socio-demographic variable to research as it is the most consistent positive predictor of attachment. Studies on residence length have concentrated on various groups: newcomers, tourists and people who have lived in an area for a longer period of time. According to Stedman (2003), people who are new to an area have had less time to connect to the place because they have had fewer spontaneous moments to experience. However, Lalli (1992) contends that, while the longer one lives in a place, the more attached one becomes to it, the highest levels of attachment occur during the first years of residence. Similarly, Harlan et al., (2005) discovered that, while length of residence consistently predicted attachment, the highest increase occurred in the first years of residence, before flattening out. These are the moments seen to be influential as people experience more within the first years of residency in a place. On the other hand, Lewicka (2011b) contends that even though the highest attachment happens within the first years of residency, longer residence length does result in a higher sense of

place as its attachment grows over residence years. Furthermore, she argues that people often evaluate places more positively if they have lived there for a longer time period.

Despite the fact that it is regarded as a major factor influencing people's relationships with a place, the majority of studies have not looked for qualitative data on locals' perceptions of their own residence length spent in a place (Lewicka, 2011b). In this topic, studies have remained focused on quantitative data and statistical tests (Domingues et al., 2021). According to Raymond et al. (2017), experiences within the length of residence continue to have a significant influence on the perception of a place. A negative experience based on the community or physical setting can have a greater impact on the creation of a sense of place than time spent within a place. It has an impact on people's sense of belonging. To investigate the significance of a longer residence time and experiences within a place, qualitative data on the relationship between residence length and sense of place are required.

**Hypothesis 4: a longer residence length time within a place has a positive, direct, relationship with sense of place (Figure 3.6).**



**Figure 3.6** Hypothesis 4: Direct relationship Residence Length and Sense of Place (own source)

### 3.5. Moderating variable Local Roles on Physical Environment and Sense of Place

Aside from the growing body of literature of sense of place, there is an increasing emphasis on the role of culture and activities in the development of places and people's sense of place. Recently, attention has been drawn to the role of arts and culture in improving social cohesion and strengthening emotional bonds between people and their surroundings (Van der Vaart et al., 2018). It mediates bringing people together at one location. Cultural activities are now, more than ever, a means of connecting individuals to places as they offer a physical place to meet and present a place's identity (Stockdale, 2006). People's connections to places were influenced by physical and social restrictions due to COVID-19: physical distancing, cancellations of events or closing of amenities. A local cultural activity is an environment that facilitates the creation of identity by communicating ideals or values. Thus, it has the potential to play a role in the formation of a local's sense of place. Organizers of an event shape the experience of attending locals. There are various arguments for using cultural local events to foster positive attachment to a location.

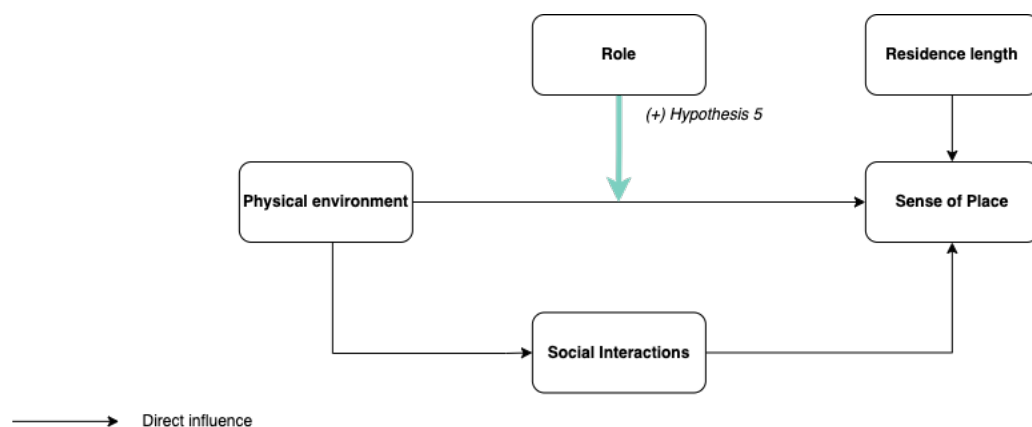
First of all, a local event may promote the values of the community, positively impacting the connection to the area. Derrett (2003) calls this "pride community boosterism". The organization of a local event can distinguish and facilitate the community's values, as well as showcasing certain local products or talents. Frisby and Getz (1989) explain that these local activities can help preserve and maintain local history or culture. The organization shapes a context in which the cognitive interaction with a location may be maintained or changed. Local

events can present traditions of a place for educational purposes. Furthermore, according to Derrett (2003), local festivals might help in the creation or maintenance of communal or regional identity. Cultural local activities shape place perceptions and community engagement, such as support for a local event, which predicts the strength of a person's affinity with the location (Derrett, 2003; Frisby & Getz, 1989). Volunteers or organizers of events can have pride in organizing a certain event for other locals, which can enhance a positive sense of place creation.

Second, cultural activities provide a place for people to meet and interact. Event organizations frequently leverage a location's culture to link inhabitants to their surroundings or to attract new tourists to the region (Liu, 2014). According to Claridge (2020), local activities should seek to contribute to the cohesiveness and connection of insiders to a place. It shapes a social meeting place for people to experience the location and each other.

Based on the literature discussed above, it can be argued that a local activity offers a physical and social environment that can impact people's sense of place. Furthermore, as mentioned by Derrett (2003), event organizers are the main drivers behind events; they shape the physical environment. Stevenson (2020) argues that locals who organize events influence the relationship between the physical environment and people's experiences of the event. It is assumed that people who participate in the organization before and during the event influence the impact the physical environment has on an attendee's sense of place.

**Hypothesis 5: the role of volunteers strengthens the positive relationship between the physical environment and sense of place (Figure 3.7).**



**Figure 3.7** Hypothesis 5: Moderating relationship Variable Role (own source)

### 3.6 Conceptual Model

The conceptual model (Figure 3.8) presents the previously presented theories of the concepts sense of place, physical environment, social interactions, residence length and local's roles. A local cultural activity facilitates a physical environment and social interactions. The arrows between the different concepts represent a causal relation. The model shows the physical environment, through physical factors, having a relationship with people's sense of place, directly and indirectly through influencing the social interactions. The choice is made to research social interactions which have a direct relationship to sense of place. Furthermore, residence length has a direct relationship with sense of place, while roles of locals at events moderate the relationship between the physical environment and people's sense of place. The feedback loop in this model shows how people's sense of place influences the physical environment, for example by sacrificing land for certain facilities, or social interactions, for example by investing in social contacts within a place. However, these feedback loops are not the main focus of the research.



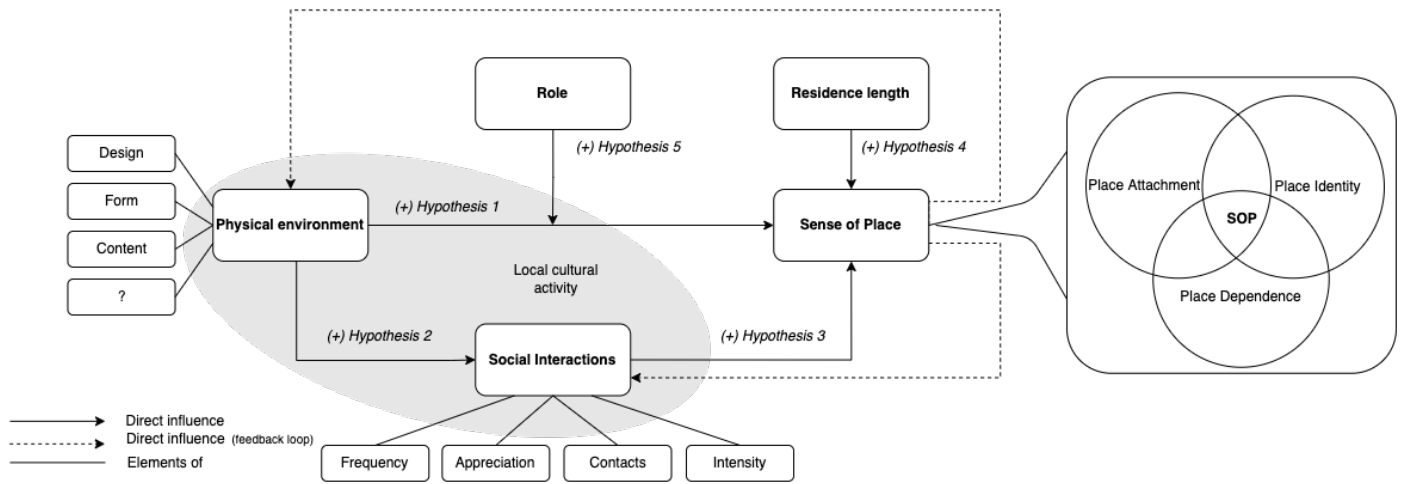


Figure 3.8 Conceptual Model with hypothesis (own source).

## Chapter 4. Methodology

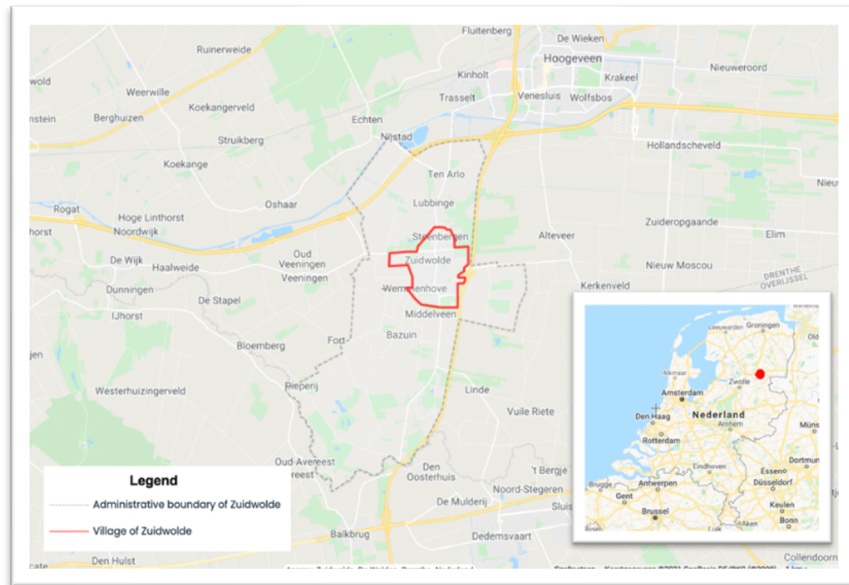
The following chapter discusses the methodology of this study by describing the case study, the data collection methods and analyses approaches, ethical considerations and COVID-19 impact in detail.

### 4.1 Case study as a research strategy

This study aims to investigate the impact of local cultural activities on people's sense of place. In order to provide an in-depth investigation in the concept sense of place, a case study as research strategy has been deemed suitable for this thesis. According to Yin (1994), case studies are the preferred strategy when asking "how" questions, as they pose little control over the events researched and focus "on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p.1). It is a research strategy that creates information on past events, and it does not require control over the physical environment or social interactions. This research uses a single-case study with mixed-method data collection, as this provides a holistic view and creates the opportunity to research multiple variables within one unit of analysis (Yin, 1994). It offers the possibility to analyse the effect of a local cultural activity on people's sense of place, by studying the physical environment and social interactions separately and in connection to each other, the residence length and various roles of locals. The single case, introduced later on, is as Yin (1994) defines, a representative case of rural villages in the Netherlands, assuming that lessons learned from the case are to be informative about the experiences of the average person or community. It is a representative case as it resembles a lot of rural villages within the Netherlands that see people moving to other larger places (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

#### *4.1.1 Unit of analysis: Zuidwolde*

Since this study focuses on the creation of sense of place within rural communities, a rural village to be researched needed to be chosen. The village of Zuidwolde in Drenthe, the Netherlands, was chosen as the municipality wants to use cultural activities to create attachment between locals and Zuidwolde and the village experiences migration of locals to larger urban areas (Cultureel Platform De Wolden, 2019). The unit of analysis is determined by the spatial boundary, theoretical scope, and timeframe (Yin, 1994). The spatial boundary is the border of the village of Zuidwolde in Drenthe, the Netherlands. The case is the inhabitants of the village and their sense of place, with the inhabitants as units of analysis (Figure 4.1). The village counts 6775 residents, and includes different historical settlements. The village is the largest of the core of the municipality De Wolden in Drenthe. The theoretical scope of the literature are the main concepts: a sense of place, place attachment, place identity, place dependence, physical environment, social interactions, residence lengths and roles at cultural events. The attitudes of inhabitants can change over time, but the data collection period is from October 2021 to January 2022 (detailed information in 4.2). The results are centred on this period, based on locals' current sense of place and their perceptions and memories of an event from 2019.



**Figure 4.1** Unit of Analysis: Zuidwolde (own source with use of program Scribble)

#### 4.1.2 Local cultural activity “Slachtdag” as the research case

The local cultural activity “Slachtdag” was chosen to be researched based on three arguments. First, Liu (2014) stressed the significance to research local cultural activities. She argues that cultural activities need to be connected to the place where it is organised. The Slachtdag is facilitated by the museum De Wemme in Zuidwolde, which is known to be a museum of and for the region. Furthermore, the Slachtdag is a place-based activity and returns yearly, except for the years 2020 and 2021 because of COVID-19 restrictions. The local event creates a place for local entrepreneurs to market local products, to see the exhibition of the local museum and to meet other locals.

Second, according to Reid (2008), there is a necessity to research smaller-scale events, to see the influence it has across the community. The choice for a singular case study creates the opportunity for a focus on how this specific activity creates in-depth knowledge on people’s sense of place within rural communities.

Finally, the Slachtdag 2019 was chosen as the research case because it provided the possibility to use already-prepared data collection methods with small alterations. To clarify, initially the local cultural activity “Slachtdag” on 13 November 2021 was chosen to be researched. However, as new COVID-19 restrictions were implemented in the Netherlands, the event was sadly cancelled a week before. Thus, the choice was made to focus on the Slachtdag event in 2019. It offered a way to use prepared data collection methods for the 2021 event and, furthermore, it was unclear if other local cultural activities could continue during this research timeframe. Additionally, the Slachtdag 2019 offered the possibility to research how a past event influences people’s current sense of place. Othman et al., (2013, p.556) argue that the “the remembrance of an event or events is a valuable identifier of space”. Thus, this study in the end reflects on the importance of the past for people’s present sense of place.

#### 4.2 Mixed method data collection and analysis

In this study three data collection methods were used to answer the sub-questions (overview can be found in Appendix A). According to Yin (1994), multiple methods of data collection are necessary for case studies, as a mix of methods increases the internal validity of the research. This led to a choice to use three data collection approaches: observation, questionnaires and

semi-structured interviews. It leads to confirmation and reliability of results, while it additionally helps to reduce the impact of potential biases within the data (Clifford et al., 2010; Yin, 1994). This research uses both qualitative and quantitative methods within the research process, as it works with both the experience and opinions of people, and the differences between residence lengths and roles of locals. Before the data collection of the research case could happen, an interview was held with the organization of De Wemme to understand the event's objectives and organization. This interview was held on October 21, 2021 and the interview guide can be found in Appendix B.

#### *4.2.1 Observation*

After the starting interview, the first phase of the data collection took place: the observation, which was done between November 1 and November 10, 2021. The aim of the observation was to create insight into the presence of the physical environment factors at the event. Therefore, the review used a checklist based on the physical environments defined and described in chapter three (Appendix C). Researching the physical environment when the event took place was not possible, thus, photographic materials provided the opportunity to observe elements of the environment of the Slachtdag 2019. The photographs were made available by the organisation of De Wemme. The use of these kinds of visual research methods within studies can unveil information about past events and further support multidisciplinary investigation (Law et al., 2017). However, Drew and Guillemin (2014, p.56) argue that producers of images can have the opportunity to "artfully choose and/or manipulate what they include". The images provided by De Wemme were created by a volunteer who made the images for himself with no intention of using them for advertising or this study. People were made unrecognizable if the pictures were used within this report. One of the limitations of this method is that visual materials "may be interpreted differently by researchers" (Glaw et al., 2017, p.7). However, this was counterbalanced by using a photo elicitation method within the interviews as a checking tool.

#### *4.2.2 Observation analysis*

For this technique, pre-existing physical environment elements discussed by academic literature of the theoretical framework were used. The analysis of the pictures was done deductively, but also allowed for inductive codes (Figure 4.2). Harper (2002) argues that the analysis of pictures adds validity and reliability to word-based research. The data analysis focused on interpretation of what was noticed, translating the data into themes that were regularly found. First, it was coded manually, and later as a digital version through Atlas.ti. These steps started with open coding which often created first and second level coding, which afterward was followed by axial coding (Gioia et al., 2013). Subsequently, the information is organized into the related themes within the physical environment elements-based set through the theoretical framework: *design, form and content*. This information was then further used as background information for the creation of the questionnaire, interviews and as evidence to results of these data collection methods.



**Figure 4.2** Example observation coding analysis: design

### 4.2.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was phase two of the data collection process and had the aim to retrieve information of the perception about the themes sense of place, the physical environment and social interactions. The goal of the questionnaire was to acquire information about the personal characteristics, behaviours and perceptions of the inhabitants of Zuidwolde. As Clifford et al. (2010) claim, a questionnaire is the best way to measure differences between various individuals, such as residence length and roles. Additionally, it asked qualitative questions data about the way people perceive their sense of place to Zuidwolde. Pictures were added to increase the participation rate of the questionnaire and to stimulate memories of the event. This method is called “photo elicitation”, in which photographs or visual mediums are used to discover deep emotions, memories and ideas of participants (Glaw et al., 2017). Clifford et al. (2010) argue that the last step of making a questionnaire is to pre-test it. This happened with family and friends and after this, some questions were changed or scrapped. The finalized questionnaire can be found in Appendix D. After the pre-test, the questionnaire was distributed from November 17 until December 12, through different mediums in Zuidwolde. These different mediums offered all residents in Zuidwolde an opportunity to fill in the questionnaire. It was distributed to volunteers of De Wemme, through a monthly newsletter, a personalized e-mail and physically at evaluation meetings of the former exhibition. Respondents were asked if they wanted to supply the questionnaire to visitors they knew went to the event, in the hope that it created a snowball effect. Furthermore, visitors were reached through social media, an advertisement and local news segment in a local paper, and through flyers at different meeting points within the village (Appendix E). Respondents were also given the option to fill in a physical questionnaire. Table 4.1 shows the descriptive information of the respondents of the questionnaire: their age, gender, role at the event and how long they have lived in Zuidwolde.

**Table 4.1** Descriptive information questionnaire

		Volunteers *26	Visitors *39	Total *65
Gender	Men		9	16
	Women		17	23
Average age			74.7	66.3
Average residence length in years			40.5	37.9
Average mark of Slachtdag 2019			8.4	8.0
				8.2

#### 4.2.4 Questionnaire analysis

The main focus of the questionnaire analysis was the creation of the multiple regression model within SPSS. Petchko (2018) argues that a multiple regression analysis offers researchers the opportunity to assess the strength of the relationship between the outcome (the dependent variable) and several predictors as well as the importance of these different predictors. As the questionnaire used statements based on a Likert-scale (1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree), it was possible to do the analysis. It was not possible to research the two groups of volunteers and visitors against each other because of the small number of respondents. The quantitative analysis of the questionnaire visualizes results in different tables and diagrams throughout the results. Furthermore, the qualitative side of the questionnaire is coded through the Gioia method, through open and axial coding.

#### 4.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

The questionnaire resulted in quantitative data, while the interviews (as phase three) provided a more normative and qualitative view on questions (Saunders et al., 2009). The interview guide and informed consent form can be found in Appendix F. An overview of the personal data of the interviewees can be found in Table 4.2. As sense of place is a normative and broad concept, the focus of the interviews was on people's sense of place, how they perceive their connection with Zuidwolde, and how they feel that this is influenced. Afterwards a few questions are asked specifically about the physical environment and social interactions at the Slachtdag 2019. The method photo elicitation was used to stimulate the memories of the event. It helped to generate verbal discussion and contributed to encouraged reflection of the event (Glaw et al., 2017). A potential limitation of this method is that "visual material may be interpreted differently by researchers compared to participants" and between participants (Glaw et al., 2017, p.7). However, by using the same pictures at all interviews, the photo elicitation became a checking tool of answers. Flexibility was needed as sense of place is such a broadly defined concept, thus the interviews were semi-structured. The use of semi-structured interviews offers a way to ask all questions, in addition to asking more probing questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

**Table 4.2** Overview semi-structured interviews

Pseudonym*	Role	Age	Gender	Residence length	Date
Mr. de Vries	Volunteer	73 years	Male	73 years	January 10, 2022
Ms. Blokzijl	Visitor	68 years	Female	68 years	January 10, 2022
Mr. van der Veen	Visitor	71 years	Male	55 years	January 11, 2022
Ms. Jansen	Visitor	70 years	Female	27 years	January 11, 2022
Ms. de Boer	Volunteer	79 years	Female	59 years	January 12, 2022
Ms. Koster	Volunteer	88 years	Female	88 years	January 12, 2022

\*Pseudonym based on "most common surnames in Drenthe, the Netherlands: <https://www.places.nl/kennisbank/de-vries-uit-drenthe-dit-zijn-de-meest-voorkomende-achternamen/#:~:text=0%20%20min.,De%20Vries%20het%20vaakst%20voor>.

#### 4.2.4 Semi-structured interviews analysis

The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that it involved an interview guide which consisted of a few questions covering specific topics: their sense of place in connection to Zuidwolde, and the role of the physical environment and social interactions in the creation of their sense of place. Because of this structure, the analysis was done through open coding in connection to axial coding and selective coding. The recorded interviews were transcribed and printed out for analysis. Printed interviews were colour-coded manually through a few steps. Open coding gives the opportunity to break up the data into discrete parts and to create codes to label them (Gioia et al., 2013). It gave the opportunity to see new theoretical possibilities and to compare and contrast similar events in the data through the codes created. Afterwards, axial coding helped to create connections between codes by organizing them in categories (Gioia et al., 2013). These codes often defined the concepts, in combination with selective coding to create an understandable abstraction between concepts. By coding qualitative data,

a variety of patterns was deducted. Table 4.3 shows an example of the interviews' coded structure.

**Table 4.3** Example interview coding

Interview	Representative quote	Code
Interviewee V1	"Yes definitely, born and raised, and as I mentioned you have a bond with the people who live here, a story, history. And family."	Born and raised
		Attach to people & story
		<i>Place Attachment</i>
Interviewee G1	"I mean, I just feel at home in Zuidwolde."	Feel at home
		<i>Place Identity</i>
Interviewee V3	"[moved] With all the neighboring girls. Surely that was because Zuidwolde was becoming a main village, there was more to do."	Resource availability
		<i>Place Dependence</i>

### 4.3 Ethical considerations

Throughout the study, different steps were taken to provide transparency and confidentiality of the data collected within the research. First of all, transparency within the research process provides accountability, replicability and makes sure that prevention and correction of disputable data is not needed (Clifford et al., 2010). The research was made transparent through different elements. Transparency was increased by adding introductions to the interviews about the goal of the research. Additionally, the researcher made sure that the interviews were done on a voluntary basis. Participants of the interviews signed an informed consent by hand or verbally. The transparency was also visible at the questionnaire through the introduction "brief" at the beginning of the questionnaire. The last question of the questionnaire asked if people wanted to be provided with the results of the questionnaire after the thesis was finished.

Second, another important ethical issue is the confidentiality and anonymity of participants (Clifford et al., 2010). To assure this, respondents' answers within the questionnaire and interviews were anonymized and only used with pseudonyms within the results chapter. Additionally, the photographs used within the research were anonymized. It is necessary to carefully and non-judgmentally listen to and read answers collected within the study, as Clifford et al., (2010) argue that people sometimes feel vulnerable sharing their perceptions on certain subjects, scared to be judged. This is why it was made clear in the introduction of the questionnaire and interview that all answers were valued and that the interview was a safe place for all kinds of answers. Furthermore, all results, transcriptions, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and other data were stored in a password-secured laptop. All personal information, interview recordings and transcripts will be deleted after the research is finished.

Regarding the positionality, I can be considered an insider in the research field, as I was born in Zuidwolde and have family in Zuidwolde with whom I have social contact on a weekly level. However, I have moved to Groningen and do not have many other social relations within Zuidwolde. An insider position can be a disadvantage, however, I was aware of this position and the consequences on the process of creating generalized data. Thus, I have worked extra on an objective thesis. Nevertheless, as an insider, I do understand certain arguments more when given within the open questions in the questionnaire and interviews due to my background, which can help the conversation. Furthermore, it was possible to research more sensitive local topics such as negative experiences within Zuidwolde's community as people knew my personal connection to Zuidwolde. They were more open to include experiences without needing to explain them as much as to an outsider.

#### 4.4 COVID-19 attention

The COVID-19 pandemic had, and still has, a significant impact on people, communities and research around the world. In the Netherlands, governmental restrictions have had an impact on people's well-being, social contacts, and on their perceptions and experiences with their physical surroundings. Claridge (2020) argues that the pandemic likely changes society, emphasizing that it does not only change people individually, but also communities overall. The pandemic creates new physical and social distances between people. However, it also inspires people to help others in their community. The health pandemic has had a significant impact on the study in three ways.

First, the change of research case from Slachtdag 2021 to Slachtdag 2019 influences the expected outcomes in the results. People had to answer based on their memory and remembrance of the event, and as mentioned in the theoretical framework, time also influences people's perception of their sense of place. Thus, reflection is needed on this changing element and this can be found in section 7.3.

Furthermore, the change of the event studied impacted the way the data collection happened. It was harder to find people who visited the event. The distribution of the questionnaire changed, from one moment to one month with circulating the questionnaire amongst the whole village. This is why volunteers who helped at the event in 2019 were also asked to fill in the questionnaire. However, this also influences the outcomes, which is reflected upon in chapter seven.

Additionally, participants might have answered the questionnaire more positively than they would have if the event would not have been cancelled in 2021, because people could be missing events more than before. As a result of these points, it is important to repeat the study once the pandemic has ended or has faded into the background of society.



## Chapter 5. Results

The following chapter describes and visualizes the findings of the conducted empirical research, based on the observation, questionnaire and interviews. Afterwards, chapter six analyses and discusses these results and the findings on the basis of the hypotheses set in chapter three.

### 5.1 Case description

This section introduces the Slachtdag, while afterwards Zuidwolde's locals' sense of place is described.

#### 5.1.1 Local cultural activity evaluation

The respondents of the questionnaire have given the Slachtdag 2019 an average mark of an 8.2 (scaled 1-10, 10 highest). Volunteers have scored the event a little bit higher than the visitors (8.4/8.0). Both groups remember and experienced the event overall positively. The organization of the Slachtdag argues that it is organized to facilitate a way to experience Zuidwolde's talent, people and culture. It is not argued to necessarily advertise the region to outsiders. It seeks to contribute to the cohesiveness and connection of insiders of Zuidwolde. Respondents attended the event mostly due to their interest in the event, and the argument that the event embodies and belongs to and in Zuidwolde. Furthermore, knowing participants of the event and the reason that there is much to see are also argued to be influential (Table 5.1). The arguments that the event is located centrally and to meet new people score the lowest.

**Table 5.1** Q5. Reasons attendance Slachtdag

Reasons attendance Slachtdag	Volunteers	Visitors	Both
Knew participant(s)	52.6%	43.6%	46.6%
Interested in event	57.9%	61.5%	60.3%
Socialize with acquaintances	34.6%	20.5%	29.3%
Meet new people	23.1%	5.1%	13.8%
Event located centrally	7.7%	5.1%	6.9%
Much to see	34.6%	46.2%	46.6%
Event embodies Zuidwolde	38.5%	48.7%	50.0%

An introduction into the setting of the Slachtdag is given with Figures 5.1-5.4.



**Figure 5.1** Architecture and local products.



**Figure 5.2** Pictures of Zuidwolde



**Figure 5.3** Access by levelled floors and layout **Figure 5.4** Crowded space around stalls

The physical environment of the Slachtdag was observed by studying photographic materials. Table 5.2 visualizes an overview of the present physical environment elements, which can help create identification, place perception and safety as discussed by Sampson and Goodrich (2009), Lewicka (2011b) and Abbaszadeh et al. (2015). The physical environment of the Slachtdag connects in various ways to the local place: decoration, symbols and architecture are place-based and visualize the history and culture of Zuidwolde. Zuidwolde's resources and history are on display (Figure 5.2). Old devices used within Zuidwolde as a place and in people's homes are presented. The place offers a safe environment through the accessibility created, size and organization of the location. Accessing the Slachtdag is efficient and well-defines, as pathways are clear, broad and levelled, while there is a large parking opportunity (Figure 5.3). New physical elements that stood out were architecture, costumes worn by volunteers, safety signs, lighting and windows.

**Table 5.2** Present Physical elements at Slachtdag

Theme	Physical Element	Relevant points
Design	Decoration	Decoration: general decoration of De Wemme, left over from exhibition, or by local entrepreneurs and their stalls. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stalls with local products and resources</li> <li>▪ Pictures</li> <li>▪ Crochets present</li> <li>▪ Videos played</li> <li>▪ Not-in-use vehicles exhibited</li> </ul> Visibility of information on the decoration
	Visual Variety	Visual variety through the different mediums of decoration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Videos</li> <li>▪ Pictures</li> <li>▪ Stalls</li> <li>▪ Clothes – worn in past in Zuidwolde</li> <li>▪ Music</li> </ul>
	Symbols	Symbols could be found within the decoration visible at the event. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local entrepreneurs</li> <li>▪ “Slachten”</li> <li>▪ Name tags</li> </ul>
	Colours	Colours are divergent, with a few main ones largely visible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Green</li> <li>▪ Grey</li> <li>▪ White</li> <li>▪ Yellow</li> </ul>
	Architecture	Clear view of the building and its construction. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wooden beams</li> </ul>
	Form	Access

Content	Open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Space around entrepreneur stalls</li> <li>Spacious set-up</li> </ul>
	Shape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shape of event makes the event one-way route.</li> </ul>
	Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different rooms as parts create the whole event.</li> <li>Crowded spaces</li> </ul>
	Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spotlights shed light on certain areas of the event: stands or people</li> </ul>
	Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Windows to the outside – Zuidwolde</li> </ul>
	Organization & Arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear organization through different areas and facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local entrepreneurs' area</li> <li>Seating and food area</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Demarcation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demarcation not by set or clear boundaries, but by the way it is situated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seating areas</li> <li>Food corners</li> <li>Pathways</li> <li>Stalls</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Observations depend on the photographic material available – based on objective analysis.

Respondents of the questionnaire perceive the physical environment and its role positively (Figure 5.5). First, the physical environment statement 8B scored the highest with a mean of 5.95 (scaled 1-7, 7 highest), explaining that the physical environment is evaluated as accessible and safe which offers a comfortable feeling within Zuidwolde. It also offers a topic to talk about (mean 5.67). Furthermore, the Slachtdag's physical environment is a place to experience Zuidwolde as a village, its location, resources and community as it communicates Zuidwolde's history (mean 5.64). These reasons are also found within the interviews (Table 5.3). The interviewees explain that the physical environment connects to traditions and past habits, experienced within Zuidwolde or people's personal lives. It offers a place to reconnect with Zuidwolde's culture and educates people about Zuidwolde's history and present talent. The ambiance shaped through the physical environment offers a positive experience of the event.

### Q8. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IMPACTS

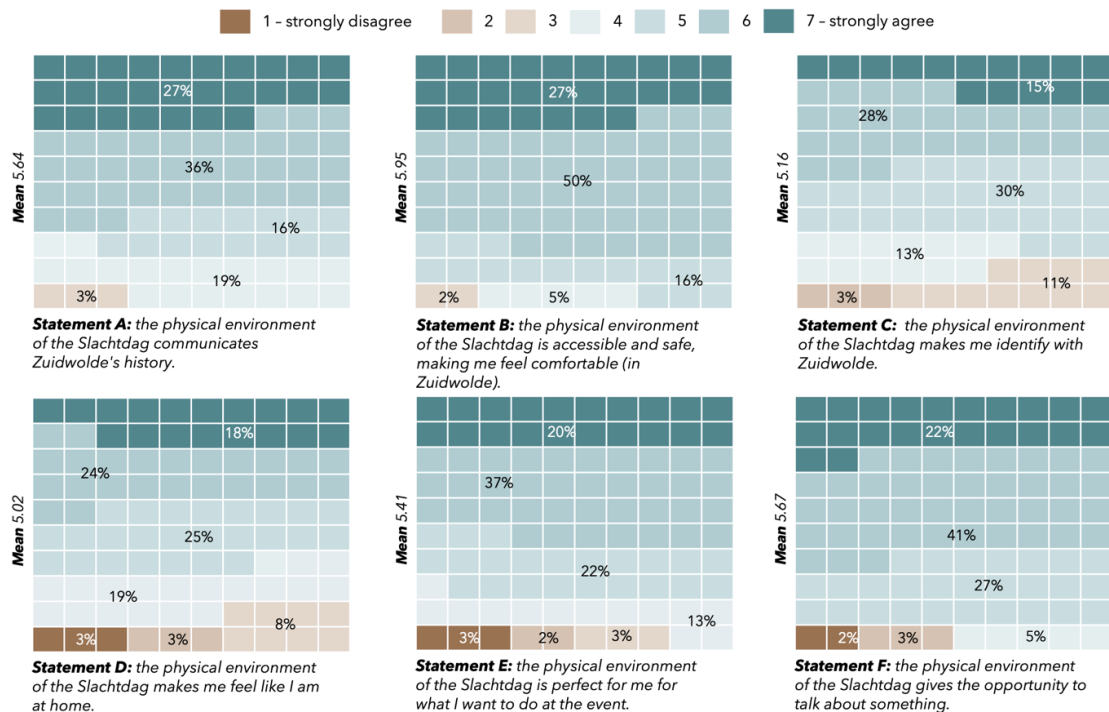


Figure 5.5 Q8. Statements Outcomes

**Table 5.3** Interview Results Physical Environment

Interviewees	Physical Environment	
	General perception	Significant physical elements
Mr. de Vries <i>Volunteer,</i> 73 years, 73 years residence length	The physical environment displays Zuidwolde's past and present culture. Local resources and talent are visible through the presentation of local entrepreneur stalls. The exhibition is not the main focus of the physical environment, those are the local entrepreneurs and smaller decorative elements on walls. It has a "Slachtdag" ambiance.	Mentioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Size</li> <li>▪ Decoration</li> <li>▪ Party tents</li> <li>▪ Stalls</li> <li>▪ Local products</li> </ul> <p><i>"Look it would be the nicest thing if everything could be facilitated in De Wemme. That would be the perfect setting. So, that you do not need the outdoor area. But that is just not possible because it's too small for that."</i></p>
Ms. Blokzijl <i>Visitor,</i> 68 years, 68 years residence length	The presentation of the museum's exhibition and Zuidwolde's history were a good addition to the overall experience of the event. You experience elements from your past: such as the slaughtering of a pig which happened at people's homes in the past.	Mentioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stalls</li> <li>▪ Food court</li> <li>▪ Exhibition</li> <li>▪ Seating areas</li> <li>▪ Local products</li> </ul> <p><i>"We also used to have a farm at home, so we slaughtered at home. And I loved that"</i></p>
Mr. van der Veen <i>Visitor,</i> 71 years, 55 years residence length	The visibility of old habits and traditions helps educate younger family of traditions at home and within the community. It communicates Zuidwolde's history. The location of De Wemme offers an accessible and comfortable atmosphere.	Mentioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accessibility</li> <li>▪ Stalls</li> <li>▪ Decoration</li> <li>▪ Pictures &amp; videos</li> <li>▪ Party tent</li> <li>▪ Size</li> <li>▪ Parking</li> <li>▪ Local products</li> </ul> <p><i>"But then you also have pictures of the antiques room, and I always like that, looking at old pictures."</i></p> <p><i>"No impediment, no obstacles. Everyone can go in there, walk there: freely and happily"</i></p>
Ms. Jansen <i>Visitor,</i> 70 years, 27 years residence length	It offers a place to remember memories of people's past, to which they reconnect and identify with. The local products presented within the physical environment contributes to a connection and stimulation to use local production. It empowers her own values.	Mentioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decoration</li> <li>▪ Visual variety</li> <li>▪ Stalls</li> <li>▪ Local products</li> <li>▪ Size</li> <li>▪ Clothes</li> <li>▪ Accessibility</li> </ul> <p><i>"I really like old customs and actually the Slachtdag was a bit of the nostalgia."</i></p>
Ms. de Boer <i>Volunteer,</i> 79 years, 59 years residence length	It is a unique experience, and locally-based. The whole ambiance contributes to a specific feeling, connected to old traditions. It offers a feeling of being at home: because she was born and raised in Zuidwolde.	Mentioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decoration</li> <li>▪ Stalls</li> <li>▪ Size</li> <li>▪ Clothes</li> <li>▪ Architecture</li> </ul> <p><i>[The farm house architecture] "grew up on a farm, and was not used to anything else"</i></p>
Ms. Koster <i>Volunteer,</i> 88 years, 88 years residence length	It communicates Zuidwolde's culture and presents the development of the place through decoration and local entrepreneurs. It educates people on the history of local traditions or old habits. The Slachtdag provides an opportunity to get updates on the village.	Mentioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decoration</li> <li>▪ Stalls</li> <li>▪ Clothes</li> </ul>

The different elements of Slachtdag's physical environment are argued by the respondents of the questionnaire to be significant within the relationship towards sense of place, are perceived differently (Figure 5.6). Accessibility of the Slachtdag was scored to be the most significant variable within this relationship, with a mean of 5.83 (scale 1-7, 7 highest). The elements content and organization have both scored a mean of 5.73 (scale 1-7, 7 highest). Decoration is seen as least important, however, still scores a mean of 5.41. New elements that were

mentioned within the free section were: stalls of local entrepreneurs, architecture of the building, music, and pictures and videos. Within the interviews, the same findings were found, complementing each other. Alternative physical elements mentioned were clothes, party tent, local products, exhibition and visual variety.

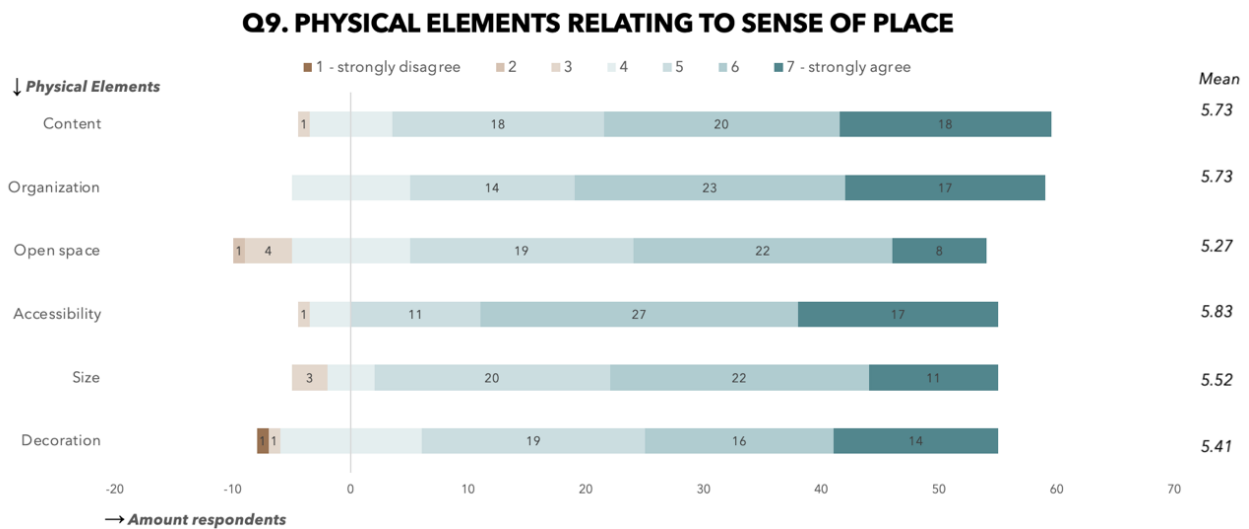


Figure 5.6 Q9. Statements Outcomes

Respondents of the questionnaire have also evaluated the social interactions at the Slachtdag (Figure 5.7). The social interactions at the Slachtdag are evaluated positively and experienced as pleasant (mean 6.44). Locals argue that they have superficial talks, mostly to people they already know (statement D, B and C). It does offer a moment to have more contacts than on a normal day in Zuidwolde (mean 5.03), but they do not attend the event mostly for their need of social interactions (mean 4.03).

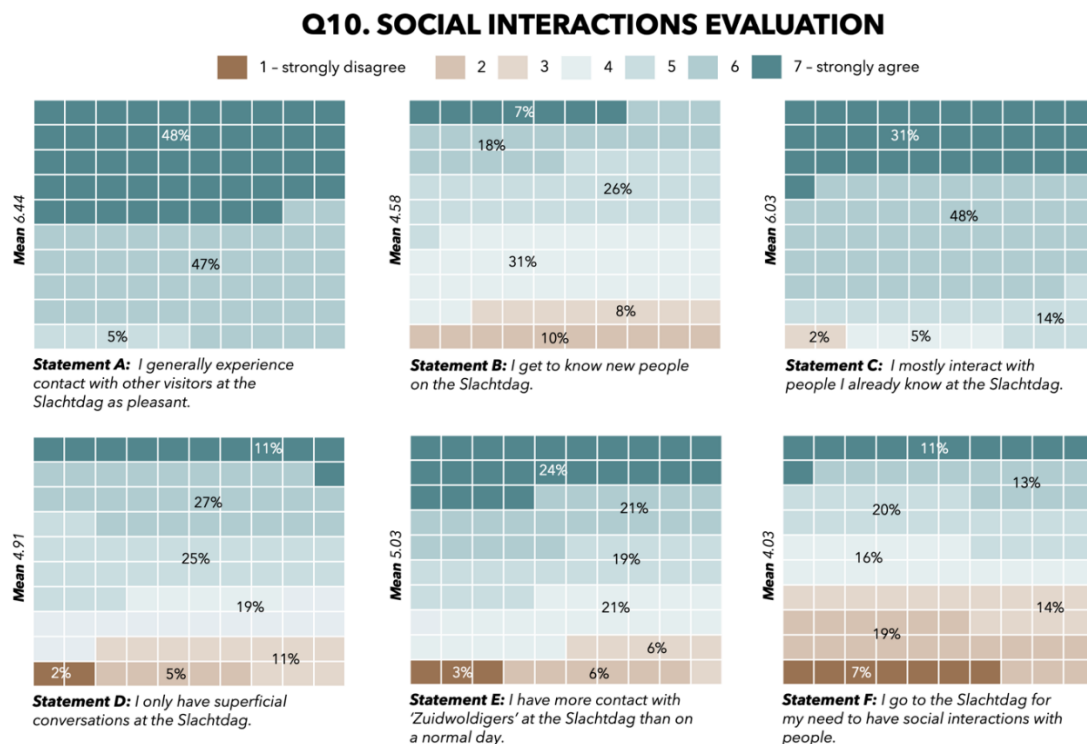


Figure 5.7 Q10. Statements Outcomes

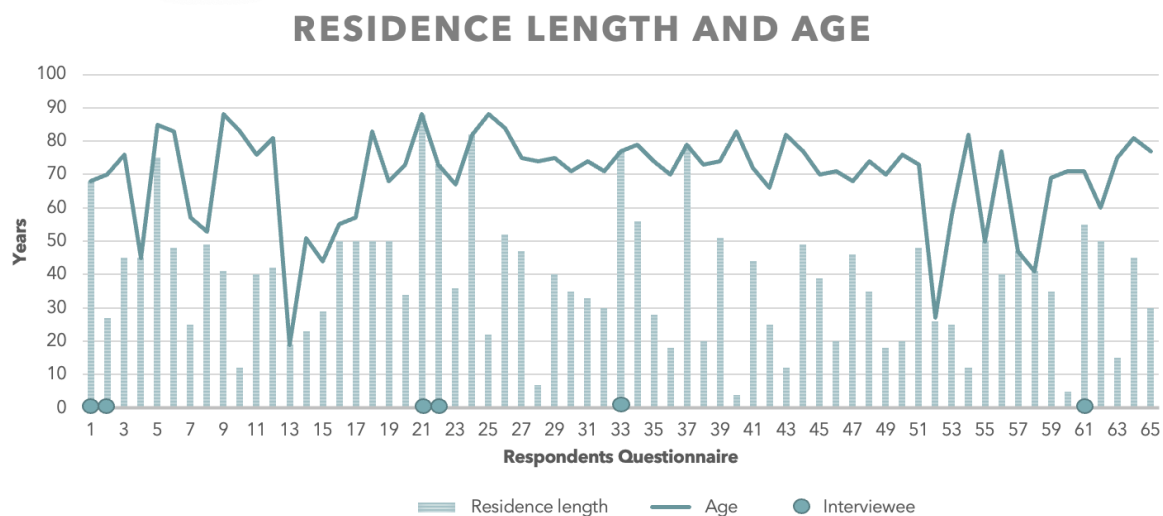
The interviewees describe the social interactions as the most important factor of attending the Slachtdag (Table 5.4). It offers opportunities to meet acquaintances, new people, and reconnect to old-acquaintances. The superficial social interactions happen as the Slachtdag is a topic to talk about, or start conversations about. Conversations happen as people are willing to discuss the Slachtdag as well as Zuidwolde in general.

**Table 5.4** Interview Results Social Interactions

Interviewees	Social Interactions	
	General perception	Facilitation through physical elements
Mr. de Vries <i>Volunteer,</i> 73 years, 73 years <i>residence length</i>	The social interactions are spontaneous, low-intense and positively perceived. It offers away to develop local acquaintances. A lot of new people attend the Slachtdag, which offers a possibility to meet new and old acquaintances.	The Slachtdag's physical environment is a great conversation sparker as topic for talks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seating areas</li> <li>▪ Building of physical environment</li> </ul>
Ms. Blokzijl <i>Visitor,</i> 68 years, 68 years <i>residence length</i>	Social interactions at the Slachtdag often turn out discussing Zuidwolde's physical and social setting. The Slachtdag offers a moment to meet other locals and reconnect with the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decoration</li> <li>▪ Exhibition</li> <li>▪ Seating areas (spaced)</li> <li>▪ Food</li> <li>▪ Demarcation</li> </ul> <p><i>"Well, if you sit at one of those tables, with a cup of soup. Then there are more people you know; you talk to them or they talk to us. ... Not when I am looking at the exhibition. I look at what is on the exhibition and I do not go and talk to anyone."</i></p>
Mr. van der Veen <i>Visitor,</i> 71 years, 55 years <i>residence length</i>	Spontaneous interactions offer opportunities to form social contacts. The accessible Slachtdag is a topic which everyone attending can talk about: the history or memories connected to an object.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decoration</li> <li>▪ Accessibility</li> <li>▪ Seating areas</li> <li>▪ Scale</li> <li>▪ Food</li> </ul>
Ms. Jansen <i>Visitor,</i> 70 years, 27 years <i>residence length</i>	The ambiance of the Slachtdag facilitates positive social interactions. However, she does not connect to Zuidwolde's community and thus experiences not a lot of social contacts at the Slachtdag. Conversations do happen for educational purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decoration</li> <li>▪ Stalls</li> <li>▪ Scale</li> <li>▪ Seating areas (spaced)</li> </ul> <p><i>"It is not such a large space and then when it is full, that is what I remember the most. Like at the butcher's, we could not follow the presentation/conversation that well, he was cutting things and he told us about it but we could not understand a word of it."</i></p>
Ms. de Boer <i>Volunteer,</i> 79 years, 59 years <i>residence length</i>	Social interactions at the event create recognition and familiarization of locals after the event. The Slachtdag has an atmosphere that makes social interactions possible. They are effective ways to develop high-intense contacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Size</li> <li>▪ Stalls</li> <li>▪ Local products</li> <li>▪ Food</li> <li>▪ Seating areas (spaced)</li> <li>▪ Clothes</li> </ul> <p><i>"You keep a lot of acquaintances from it, because you also get "oh she also works at De Wemme" and you see people on the road while cycling that you suddenly recognize."</i></p>
Ms. Koster <i>Volunteer,</i> 88 years, 88 years <i>residence length</i>	The Slachtdag stimulates a lot of positive spontaneous low-intense contacts. Not only the event, but the whole village is discussed. It offers a way to look out for each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decoration</li> <li>▪ Accessibility</li> </ul>

### 5.1.2 Local's Sense of Place

This section describes the results on people's sense of place in Zuidwolde. The sample size's age and residence length corresponds with Zuidwolde's population. On average the respondents are 67.9 years old and have lived an average of 38.9 years in Zuidwolde (Figure 5.8).



**Figure 5.8** Respondents' Residence length and Age (own source).

The interviewees explain that a longer residence length positively influences their sense of place (Table 5.5). A longer residence period offers more opportunities to experience different areas through work, family or events and memories are imbedded within different areas of the village. There has been more time to develop social connections and people start to evaluate a place positively depending on the fulfilment of demands and desires.

**Table 5.5** Interview Results Residence Length

Interviewees	Residence Length - General perception	Example Quote
Mr. de Vries Volunteer, 73 years, 73 years residence length	Zuidwolde is embedded with memories of various moments spend within the village. This offers various opportunities to talk and experience lost memories. It causes him to connect with and remember his own past. Furthermore, the social connections are deepened and prolonged after a longer time period.	<i>"So that was nice, everyone here was new. ... and you build the place together. And that does do something for the community."</i>
Ms. Blokzijl Visitor, 68 years, 68 years residence length	Her birth and growing up in Zuidwolde creates many locations where she learned and developed herself. Social contacts have grown over the years.	<i>"Yes, yes. I'm not used to anything else. I never lived anywhere else, ... I've always lived here in Zuidwolde. Sometimes there was something to do ... and that's nice. Those are moments when you see and meet people again. I find that very important."</i>
Mr. van der Veen Visitor, 71 years, 55 years residence length	The appreciation of the place has grown over the years that he has lived in Zuidwolde. He did not evaluate all facilities and opportunities in Zuidwolde as a young adult in the same way that he does now. The area has become increasingly suited to his needs and desires.	<i>"It does get stronger. I think it does. Through the years. ... And the older you get, the more you do things, especially in the village."</i>
Ms. Jansen Visitor, 70 years, 27 years residence length	She has lived in Zuidwolde for nearly 30 years but she does not feel connected to the people there. It depends on the type of people for her, and it adds nuances to the other positive interviews she has had about this topic.	[does residence relate to your sense of place?] <i>"No, I don't think so. ... Not that I feel unhappy, fortunately not. ... but in 10 years I am hopefully moved".</i>
Ms. De Boer Volunteer, 79 years, 59 years residence length	Embeddedness has grown through positive and negative key life moments experienced within Zuidwolde. Daily encounters and high-intense contacts created over the years create a positive experience within the village.	<i>"More that you look back, I am now 79 and yes you have experienced everything here. Beautiful and sad things."</i>
Mds. Koster Volunteer, 88 years, 88 years residence length	All big life events have happened in Zuidwolde. A social network has developed over the years, and memories are embedded throughout the place.	<i>"That's here in the village too, you know all the faces but I mean I was born here then I know all the faces here but then you don't know names with them."</i>

Zuidwolde is described as a rural village that offers many facilities regarding shops, associations, religion and sport, and has a lot of nature to be enjoyed. These factors have played major roles in the efforts to enhance a positive sense of place. Zuidwolde’s mentality is described as the Dutch saying “doe maar normaal, dan doe je al gek genoeg” (*translated: just act normal and you’ll be crazy enough*). Respondents argue that people should not pretend to be better than other community members, and that it is common to ask people “van wie bin jie er iene” (*translated: which family are you from*). People explain that kindness is one of the values of the area; people always greet each other. Furthermore, locals value people’s loyalty to each other and to the physical environment. They are proud of the resources that the place offers, such as the diverse stock of stores and associations. The cultural heritage present within the village, visible through the newly working windmill, local district museum De Wemme and buildings as national monuments, are valued and preserved by the locals.

Respondents of the questionnaire argue to have a positive perception of their sense of place to Zuidwolde with a mean of 5.3 (Q7, scale 1-7). They emotionally attach to the village, identify with, and depend on resources of the area. This study is in line with the theory of Low and Altman (1992) and Jorgensen and Stedman (2001), whom concluded that there are three ways to connect to a place. All were visible within this study. Table 5.6 visualizes the different relationships found within the umbrella sense of place to Zuidwolde while Table 5.7 shows examples of quotes from respondents discussing these different relationships.

**Table 5.6** Sense of Place Outcomes

Sense of Place Statements – Question 7		N	Mean
Place Attachment	7-A Zuidwolde is the place I prefer to be.	64	6,02
	7-B I feel happiest when I am in Zuidwolde.	63	5,67
	7-C I miss Zuidwolde when I am away for a long time.	63	5,11
Place Identity	7-D I feel at home in Zuidwolde.	63	6,40
	7-E Zuidwolde reflects the kind of person I am.	62	4,98
	7-F I feel that Zuidwolde is a part of me.	63	5,06
Place Dependence	7-G Zuidwolde is the best place for the things I like to do.	64	5,41
	7-H The things I do in Zuidwolde, I could not do elsewhere.	62	3,84
	7-I As far as I am concerned, there are no better places to live.	64	5,02

Statements based on: Nanzer (2004) and Jorgensen & Stedman (2001).

**Table 5.7** Sense of Place Quotes

Sense of Place Relationships	Questionnaire Respondent	Quote (translated)
Place Attachment	Female, 77 years old, 49 years residence length.	"The village atmosphere: people greet each other, even if you don't know them ... Naoberschap ( <i>translated: helping each other</i> )"
	Female, 51 years old, 23 years residence length.	"Through the people I know, participating in activities together ( <i>church</i> )"
Place Identity	Female, 55 years old, 55 years residence length.	"Because I was born and raised here. I feel at home here."
	Female, 77 years old, 49 years residence length.	"The rural village atmosphere, people greet each other even if you don't know them."
Place Dependence	Female, 68 years old, 50 years residence length.	"Zuidwolde has everything that we need."
	Male, 66 years old, 25 years residence length.	"Through work and volunteer work".

Based on Q13. What makes you feel connected to Zuidwolde?



First, locals argue to have an emotional attachment to Zuidwolde. Zuidwolde is argued to be a place people prefer to live at, provoking feelings of happiness, and is missed when left for a longer time period (Table 5.6). The emotional people-place relationship with Zuidwolde is mostly based on the community and residence of certain people. Respondents point to the importance of family members, children and acquaintances within their living environment. Residents say that Zuidwolde has an open environment in which people greet each other and which facilitates events and associations at which people can have talks and discussions. People look out for each other and have the same mentalities within Zuidwolde. On the other hand, Zuidwolde's community is also seen to be a close group. People have to change their own habits to fit in with the crowd. Respondents explain that people have solidarity to each other, but are selective to the people whom are well-connected within the village.

Second, people's place identity with Zuidwolde is based on their personal identification with the place and the feelings they attach to the place. People feel at home in Zuidwolde, see the place as part of their personal identities and additionally reflects their personal identities (Table 5.6). People identify with Zuidwolde due to the fact it fits their own personality, mentality and people. Many respondents identify with the place as they have been born and raised in the place.

Finally, the behavioural relationship was found in the relationship people visualized and defined to Zuidwolde through the facilities they discussed. Locals experience a place dependence relationship based on the perception that Zuidwolde offers to be the best place for their needs and personal behavior (Table 5.6). The respondents of the questionnaire and interviewees see Zuidwolde as the place that offers the facilities regarding shops, sports, religion and associations.

## 5.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was created to study how different variables relate to people's sense of place. A multiple regression analysis studies the relationship between the multiple independent variables: "physical environment", "social interactions", "residence length" and "role" and the dependent variable "sense of place". The statements of the questionnaire were translated to a few variables through a reliability analysis (see Appendix G for connection statements and variables). Questions 2 (age), 3 (residence length), 4 (role) 7 (sense of place), 8 (physical environment) and 10 (social interactions) were used in the creation of the models. Table 5.8 shows the reliability of the new main variables made for further analysis. A benchmark of .7 was used in Cronbach's alpha, to explain the close connection of the test items as groups (Glen, 2022). The "social interactions" variable had a questionable outcome within the reliability analysis with all test items included. The choice was made to include statements 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 to end up with a Cronbach's alpha of .603. This is still questionable, but accepted as a correlation analysis showed that these five test items are linked to each other.

**Table 5.8** Cronbach's Alpha for new variables

Variable	Number of Items	Reliability Cronbach's alpha	Comment**
Sense of Place	9	.903	Excellent
Place Attachment	3	.823	Good
Place Identity	3	.794	Acceptable
Place Dependence	3	.789	Acceptable
Physical Environment	6	.866	Good
Social Interactions	5	.603	Questionable <i>but accepted</i> *

\* Social Interactions alternative – N:6 (all statements) = .570

Social Interactions alternative – N:3 (statements 2, 5 & 6) = .637

Social Interactions alternative – N:3 (statements 1, 3 & 5) = .426

\*\* Source: Stephanie Glen (2022). "Cronbach's Alpha: Simple Definition, Use and Interpretation" from <https://www.statisticshowto.com/probability-and-statistics/statistics-definitions/cronbachs-alpha-spss/>

Further descriptive statistics can be found in Table 5.9. The Pearson correlations show the links between the different made variables of Table 5.8. The variables “place attachment”, “place identity”, and “place dependence” have a strong relationship with the variable “sense of place” and with each other. This corresponds with the theory on the concept sense of place, which contends that the three types of relationship overlap with each other and with the main umbrella sense of place (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Hutama, 2016). These different variables are never utilized together in a model, but rather studied independently, which is why this research could be continued with “sense of place” as the dependent variable. The assumptions to employ the multiple regression analysis are discussed in Appendix G.

**Table 5.9** Mean, standard deviation & correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	SOP	Place Attachment	Place Identity	Place Dependence	Correlations Physical environment	Social interactions	Residence length	Age	Score
SOP	5.287	1.062	1								
Place Attachment	5.604	1.159	<b>.873**</b>	1							
Place Identity	5.495	1.187	<b>.886**</b>	<b>.709**</b>	1						
Place Dependence	4.779	1.297	<b>.870**</b>	<b>.616**</b>	<b>.636**</b>	1					
Physical environment	5.463	.989	<b>.544**</b>	<b>.365**</b>	<b>.513**</b>	<b>.540**</b>	1				
Social interactions	5.224	.825	<b>.306*</b>	.243	<b>.274*</b>	<b>.283*</b>	<b>.456**</b>	1			
Residence length	38.95	19.098	<b>.498**</b>	<b>.528**</b>	<b>.443**</b>	<b>.369**</b>	<b>.262*</b>	<b>.269*</b>	1		
Age	69.71	13.930	-.15	-.047	-.065	.073	.098	.201	.148	1	
Score	8.214	.670	.254	.194	.239	.257	<b>.408**</b>	.170	<b>.335*</b>	<b>.414**</b>	1

Rounded to three decimals.

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

The final regression analysis can be found in Table 5.10. The baseline model (Model 1) only includes control variables, and shows that variables “age” and “gender” are not predictors for a high level of sense of place.

**Table 5.10** Regression analysis/sense of place as dependent variable

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<u>Control</u>			
Age	.056 (.277)	-.006 (0.008)	-.130 (.232)
Gender	-.001 (0.10)	-.142 (.230)	-0.006(0.008)
<u>Independent</u>			
Physical environment		<b>.431***</b> (.131)	<b>.372**</b> (.173)
Social interactions		.048 (.159)	.038 (.162)
Residence length		<b>.022***</b> (.006)	<b>.022***</b> (.006)
Role		-.162 (.236)	-.810 (1.246)
<u>Interaction</u>			
Physical environment * Role			0.119 (.225)
<u>Model Parameters</u>			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.001	.439	.439
Change in R <sup>2</sup>	.001	.438	.003
N	63	63	63

\* Unstandardized coefficient is significant at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Unstandardized coefficient is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Unstandardized coefficient is significant at the 0.01 level.

In Model 2, the core independent variables of “physical environment”, “social interactions”, “residence length” and “role” are added to the baseline model, to study their influence on sense of place. There is a correlation between the independent variable “physical environment” and the dependent variable “sense of place” ( $p=.002$ ). Additionally, there is a relationship between the variable “residence length” and “sense of place” ( $p=.000$ ). On the other hand, when the variables “social interactions” and “role” were added, it seemed to be insignificant ( $p=.776/p=.495$ ). In Model 3, the interaction term between the physical environment and role was added. This model shows that the moderating variable of “role” on the “physical environment” does not influence the “sense of place” as the dependent variable ( $p=.598$ ). It even shows that the “physical environment” becomes less significant to sense of place when adding this mediating variable within the model (from  $p=.002$  to  $p=.035$ ).

As mentioned earlier, the “sense of place” variable includes the three relationships people can have with a place. The regression model in Table 5.10 shows a lot of information based on the physical environment, however, as sense of place is a combination of different variables, it is relevant to research how variables correlate to the separate relationships within the umbrella sense of place. Thus, an extra multiple regression analysis was made in Table 5.11.

**Table 5.11** Regression analysis/sense of place relationships as dependent variables

Variables	Split on relationship		
	Model 2A Place Attachment	Model 2B Place Identity	Model 2C Place Dependence
<u>Control</u>			
Age	-.009 (.009)	-.012 (.009)	.002 (.828)
Gender	.169 (.272)	-.430 (.268)	-.137 (.650)
<u>Independent</u>			
Physical environment	.231 (.155)	<b>.500***</b> (.153)	<b>.560***</b> (.171)
Social interactions	.020 (.189)	.092 (.186)	.020 (.208)
Residence length	<b>.030***</b> (.007)	<b>.022***</b> (0.007)	<b>.017**</b> (.007)
Role	-.327 (.279)	-.010 (.276)	-.132 (.309)
<u>Model Parameters</u>			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.298	.342	.260
Change in R <sup>2</sup>	.345	.396	.323
N	63	63	63
Durbin-Watson	1.996	1.673	1.992

\* Unstandardized coefficient is significant at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Unstandardized coefficient is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Unstandardized coefficient is significant at the 0.01 level.

Within Table 5.11, Model 2 from Table 5.10 has been used as a baseline model within the regression analysis on “place attachment”, “place identity”, and “place dependence” as dependent variables. Model 2A shows that the correlation between the variables “physical environment” and “place attachment” is not significant in the creation of a positive attachment to Zuidwolde ( $p=.141$ ). Furthermore, Model 2B and 2C show that the physical environment is significant towards the variables “place identity” ( $p=.002$ ) and “place dependence” ( $p=0.002$ ). The physical environment has a positive correlation with these dependent variables. For all sense of place relationships separately, the variable “residence length” is also significant (Table 5.8). It is, however, less significant for the relationship “place dependence” ( $p=.027$ ) than for the relationships “place attachment” ( $p=.000$ ) and “place identity” ( $p=0.002$ ). Again, social interactions does not seem to be significant for all three relationships ( $p=.917/.622/.924$ ).

## Chapter 6. Analysis and discussion

In this study, different relationships on sense of place, and the interaction that occurs between the physical environment and social interactions are examined. This chapter analyses the results and discusses theory within this study to test the hypotheses set within chapter three.

### 6.1 Hypothesis 1: Physical Environment Direct on Sense of Place

The first hypothesis set for this research was the direct relationship between the physical environment and sense of place. This relationship is supported with the findings of this study.

First, the multiple regression model in Table 5.10 shows a direct relationship between the physical environment and sense of place, agreeing to hypothesis one. There is a correlation between the independent variable “physical environment” and the dependent variable “sense of place” ( $p=.002$ ). This agrees with earlier mentioned theories on the possible relationship between the two variables (Stedman, 2003; Sampson & Goodrich, 2009). Within the umbrella sense of place, the variable “physical environment” directly relates to the variables “place attachment”, “place identity” and “place dependence” (Table 5.11). Place attachment is less influenced by the physical environment than place identity and place dependence. Low and Altman (1992) argue that place attachment is mostly influenced by people and the community, while place identity and place dependence are more often associated to be influenced by the physical environment due to the identification with physical elements and behavioural connection to visible facilities (Peng et al., 2020; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Thus, these study’s results are in line with these theories.

However, people are often not aware of the existing relationship between the physical environment and sense of place. Within the interviews, people denied perceiving a direct relationship between the Slachtdag’s physical environment and their sense of place. Nevertheless, the physical environment is unconsciously mentioned when recalling the Slachtdag and its importance for their sense of place. This accepts the hypothesis. People can be unaware of this relationship due to the fact that they have never been asked about this specific relationship. Mr. van der Veen and Ms. Koster explain that they have never thought about this question before. However, the interviewees argue that the physical environment of the event (1) helps experience Zuidwolde, (2) communicates Zuidwolde’s history and values and (3) helps them identify with the larger area. This all complements with the findings of the questionnaire and is in line with hypothesis one (Figure 5.5). The ways the Slachtdag’s physical environment impacts people’s sense of place are explained below.

First, the direct relationship between the physical environment and sense of place exists as it offers an opportunity to experience Zuidwolde as a place, its resources and community. The Slachtdag’s physical environment creates a comfortable way to preserve and maintain unique features of the place, which complements Beidler and Morrison’s theory (2015) (Figure 5.5). People are able to draw symbolically upon the set parameters at the Slachtdag and their perceptions about Zuidwolde are influenced through different experiences within the place as discussed by Gieryn (2000). The accessible location of the Slachtdag allows for equal opportunities to everyone, corresponding to Salvesen (2002). This opportunity to experience Zuidwolde’s resources and community supports the relationship towards sense of place. People’s perceptions about Zuidwolde are influenced, and additionally, people become aware about talents and resources within Zuidwolde.

Second, the relationship is in place due to the fact that the physical environment depicts local traditions and stimulates people’s memories of other experiences in Zuidwolde through videos, images and devices (Figure 5.5 and Table 5.3). Beidler and Morrison (2015) discussed how the physical environment can connect to a place’s cultural connection. The environment’s design and content captivated the old traditions that interviewees had forgotten, and made them remember their childhoods and homes, creating a sense of belonging. Salvesen (2002)

explains that the authenticity present within a place helps debate or express a place's meaning. Furthermore, butchering a pig is something that is not done or seen in any other place or event, and it also provides an excellent opportunity for them to teach their younger family members the way they grew up. The physical environment thus created a symbolic meaning, as discussed by Hummon (1992); a meaning important for locals to teach others about. People's experience of traditions and culture of Zuidwolde and stimulated memories helped create the feelings of familiarity and sense of belonging within a place.

Thirdly, the majority of the interviewees explained that the physical environment was influential in their identification with Zuidwolde, and empowers them in their own knowledge about the place. The Slachtdag had an atmosphere in which they felt they could experience and learn about Zuidwolde's history and values (Figure 5.5). The physical environment constructed a tangible and intangible setting presenting Zuidwolde's culture with which people could identify. The Slachtdag's physical environment facilitated and displayed Zuidwolde's past, and current resources and talents. It creates a behavioural connection to the resources and talent available within Zuidwolde (Stedman, 2003). People felt empowered in their own values by using local products. This result connects to the theory of Frisby and Getz (1989), who argued that cultural local activities can strengthen people's affinity with the location by offering engagement towards local products, as well as the stimulation of personification.

Physical environment elements (design, form and content) which were remembered had two functions. First, elements that helped visualize the history, resources and values of Zuidwolde helped people's connection to the village (Figure 5.6 and Table 5.3). Often this was argued to be aspects of tangible design elements, which is in line with Salvesen (2002). On the other hand, accessibility and size were mentioned to be significant (Figure 5.6 and Table 5.3). This contributed to a safe and comfortable feeling of openness of visiting the cultural event. This was supported by Lewicka (2011b) and Salvesen (2002). The results show that the physical environment is a broad concept, in which different elements help create the overall physical environment which directly impacts people's sense of place.

## 6.2 Hypothesis 2: Physical Environment Indirect on Sense of Place

This section delves into the indirect relationship between the physical environment and sense of place, through social interactions. This is supported by the findings of this study, resulting in an acceptance of hypothesis two.

According to Beidler and Morrison (2015), the physical environment has a causal relationship with the social setting within a place. People argue that the Slachtdag's physical environment stimulates unplanned and low-intense conversations with other attendees (Figure 5.7). Ms. Jansen and Ms. de Boer explain that the comfortable physical environment offers more feeling of ease to seek out social contacts (Table 5.3). This corresponds with Christensen (2010). The physical environment of the Slachtdag relates to sense of place by stimulating social interactions through (1) decoration, (2) accessibility and (3) seating areas. These physical elements help support hypothesis two.

First, decorative features within the physical environment were claimed to be significant within the creation of interactions. It started conversations. Ms. Jansen explains that people attending the Slachtdag sometimes lack a matching topic to talk about, with decoration filling this gap. She believes that these stands are an excellent opportunity to begin a discussion about the talent and labour of local businesses. It initiates a discussion about Zuidwolde's traditions and ideals. This creates a feeling of familiarization and is in line with Christensen (2010). However, it is all dependent on the willingness to contact others.

The second physical element contributing to social interactions is the accessibility of the Slachtdag. The Slachtdag's access was positively evaluated, it was thought to foster dialogues

between people who did not know each other (Figure 5.5). Interviewees explain that the Slachtdag's location offers a great walk through for all locals, which is in line with Christensen (2010). The physical environment does not hold any barriers, becoming an effective gathering place for locals. Open space offers opportunities to listen and discuss with local entrepreneurs at their stands (Figure 5.4). The accessibility of the event create a feeling of ease to start conversations, improving people's sense of place positively.

Thirdly, Gehl (2010) explains that seating opportunities offer occasions for people to meet and connect with unknown locals. This is also found within the interviews' findings. The majority of social contacts during the Slachtdag occurred in spaces designated for sitting, eating, and meeting other attendees. According to the interviews, interviewees believe that the various seating spaces throughout the event allowed positive impromptu interactions (Table 5.3). Surprisingly, the majority of responses to this subject of seating places are about the Slachtdag's food alternatives, the local items that may be enjoyed in the region. However, some say that having a clear demarcation of a meeting space with numerous seating options which corresponds to Motalebi (2006) (Table 5.3).

In the end, spontaneous low-intensity social interactions at the event lead to a larger network of contacts within Zuidwolde, which is in line with Gehl's theory (2010). This creates a sense of belonging for attendees of the event within the larger place (Table 5.3). Social interactions on the basis of the physical environment relates to people's sense of place, through learning and identifying with physical elements and traditions together with community members, it creates cohesiveness of culture within communities and stimulates pride about the physical environment through conversations sparked about talents and resources of local entrepreneurs.

### 6.3 Hypothesis 3: Social Interactions Direct on Sense of Place

This study assumes that there is a direct relationship between social interactions at a local cultural activity and sense of place. This is partly complimented within the results of the research. First, the quantitative data contradicts this hypothesis, while the qualitative data actually stresses the importance of social interactions at events for people's sense of place.

The multiple regression analysis showed that there is no correlation between the variable "social interaction" and "sense of place". It appeared to be insignificant ( $p=.766$ ). This contradicts hypothesis three and earlier mentioned theories (Lewicka, 2011b; Sampson & Goodrich, 2009). Lewicka (2011b) argues that this can happen if people have negative experiences or no contacts at all as this decreases the social relationship towards sense of place. Nevertheless, the questionnaire shows that respondents evaluate the overall interactions at the Slachtdag as positive (Figure 5.7). The insignificant relationship found in the multiple regression model could have happened due to the lower Cronbach's Alpha of the variable "social interactions" (Table 5.8). However, adaptations to the creation of the variable social interactions did not improve the correlation of the statements. Even though the social interactions at the event are experienced as positively, they do not have a direct relationship with people's sense of place when looking at the quantitative data.

The qualitative data does accept hypothesis three. The interviewees did discuss the importance of the social interaction at the Slachtdag for their sense of place due to two reasons: (1) it fulfills their desire for contacts and (2) shapes a social network within Zuidwolde. Both create a sense of belonging and feeling of familiarization within a community.

First, it is argued that the direct relationship between social interactions at the Slachtdag and sense of place exists as it fulfills their desire for contacts. People argue that they cannot live without social interactions, and events such as the Slachtdag offer spontaneous moments for contacts. Respondents express a willingness to attend Zuidwolde's Slachtdag in order to

connect and reconnect with other residents (Figure 5.7 and Table 5.1). Ms. Koster explains that these impromptu social contacts at events offer a way to look out for each other. Van den Berg et al., (2015) discuss that mostly older people seek out interactions with their peers in the community. It creates a feeling of belonging and is found within the results. The fulfillment of people's desire for contacts through the Slachtdag helps create people's subjective well-being and happiness, as in line with Fowler and Christakis (2008). People argue that the Slachtdag helps fulfill their desire to connect with other locals. As discussed by Mr. Van der Veen, events such as the Slachtdag create an accessible social setting for locals. It provides a safe environment for people to meet new people. Meeting new people helps create a feeling of security and belonging within the community.

Second, the direct relationship between social interactions and sense of place also occurs as it creates a social network for people within Zuidwolde. People argued to attend the Slachtdag because of knowing participants (Figure 5.1). Interviewees argue that the connections with people they are already acquainted with, help foster inclusion in their own social groups within Zuidwolde. People mostly bond with people from their own social group at the Slachtdag, as people feel often more at ease with people they know or talked to before. This is supported by evidence from Putnam (2000) and Lewicka (2011b). However, interviewees also argue that Slachtdag creates new relationships with unknown locals and old acquaintances (Table 5.4). Interviewees argue that the Slachtdag offers an opportunity to reconnect with people from their past. They said that it does not make them best friends, but it does generate a recognition of the residents of Zuidwolde. It helped interviewees to feel at ease and provided them with a positive remembrance of their time in the village. This corresponds to the theory of Fowler and Christakis (2008) and Lewicka (2011b) who argue that interacting and connecting with strangers and acquaintances impacts people's well-being and connectivity. Interviewees argue that it creates a feeling of belonging and familiarization within a community.

Overall, the recognition of locals and the development of a social network helps people feel at ease within the village. The social contacts are not extensive or in-depth, but they do aid in the identification of persons as Zuidwolde residents (Figure 5.7). This is in line with Gehl (2010). It fosters a sense of familiarity within the community. However, there are certain complexities in the development of a social network; it is not easy for everyone, and working with a group such as the volunteers helps. According to Mr. van der Veen, people who attend events in groups or are members of volunteer groups make contacts easier than people who have fewer connections to begin with. Furthermore, social interactions impact people's sense of place depending on the socio-demographics of people, in line with Putnam (2000) and Lewicka (2010). The desire to connect and create a social network depends on personal characteristics. Older interviewees claim that they want more opportunities to engage with other residents, while lacking identification with other members decreases the creation of a social network. A lack of positive social contacts can increase a feeling of loneliness within a place, while social contacts for them stimulate a feeling of belonging and security within the community.

#### 6.4 Hypothesis 4: Residence Length Direct on Sense of Place

This section dives into the hypothesis that there is a direct positive relationship between a longer residence length and sense of place. This study accepts this hypothesis and an explanation of the results is given below.

The variable "residence length" is significant in the multiple regression analysis to the dependent variable "sense of place" (Table 5.10) ( $p=.000$ ). A longer residence length appears to have a positive influence on people's sense of place, which is consistent with hypothesis four. Furthermore, for all sense of place relationships separately, the variable "residence length" is also significant (Table 5.11). This also agrees with hypothesis four. It is less

significant for the relationship "place dependence" ( $p=.027$ ) than for the relationships "place attachment" ( $p=.000$ ) and "place identity" ( $p=0.002$ ). The direct relationship was further studied through interviews, to research people's perceptions on this relationship.

A longer residence length is argued to impact sense of place, due to the longer time spend within a place (Lewicka, 2011b; Jaspers, 2012). Interviewees argue that a longer residency offers more opportunities to experience and connect memories to areas and other community members (Table 5.5). A lot of people who grow up in a place, link personal development moments to certain places. People recall past experiences by re-visiting certain areas within Zuidwolde. This all makes them connect and identify with themselves, and feel as if they belong with and familiarize to a place. Often, people's connection to a place is stimulated if the village is connected to someone's past. Ms. de Boer adds that negative moments in people's lives are also significant in the creation of an emotional relationship to a place. For example, a death of a loved one makes people connect to a place, as moments are experienced with these people within certain places. Stedman (2003) argues that newcomers do not have a long enough time to experience a place. However, this study explains that it depends more on the key moments in a person's life and the strong memory connection people have of certain moments within a place. Jaspers (2012) argues that these moments are called significant events, occurring infrequently. Infrequent events have the ability to, through the feeling of spontaneity, connect people to places creating a symbolic meaning to the place. Longer residence time periods offer more opportunities for these infrequent events within one place.

Furthermore, it is found that a longer residency time creates more opportunities to interact and connect with community members, creating a social network. Interviewees explain that this creates a sense of security and comfort due to the fact people know and look out for each other. The secure feeling creates a feeling of belonging and attachment within a community. It makes them feel like they know many people within the community, creating a feeling of belonging (Table 5.5). People argue that certain recurring visits to places within Zuidwolde offer various moments of contact, which is in line with Gehl's theory (2010). Recurring events, as discussed by Jaspers (2012), help a continuity of meeting and connecting with people.

Lastly, the interviews support the hypothesis through the finding of people's increasing feeling of "place support" for a place over the years of residency. A longer residence length creates the feeling of having power and responsibility in building the place (Table 5.5). Stedman (2003) states that community development develops a feeling of pride and responsibility towards a place. According to the findings of this study, people who have lived in their current location for a longer period of time do experience these feelings. Interviewees argue that staying in a place for an extended period of time helps to build and develop the community with other residents. This makes them feel at ease and connected to the location. Additionally, it makes them feel in control. This finding was supported by Stokols and Shumaker (1981, *cited by Jaspers, 2012*).

On the other hand, the interviews also introduce some nuance for this hypothesis. As Lewicka (2011b) argues, negative or no social contacts impact people's sense of place. This was supported by one interview: Ms. Jansen discussed negative experiences with the community of Zuidwolde, explaining that negative social interactions in the past have a larger impact than a longer residence period. This agrees with Raymond et al.'s theory (2017). She argues that her attachment to Zuidwolde will not be more positive by a longer residence period, but if she had a positive experience with social interactions and connections within the community. Furthermore, people connect to each other if they already had a similar mentality before entering a community or when born in a place as argued by Lewicka (2011b). This is discussed by Ms. Jansen who claims she does not feel connected to the people here because she believes she has a different mentality and background than other locals. Ms. Jansen's sense



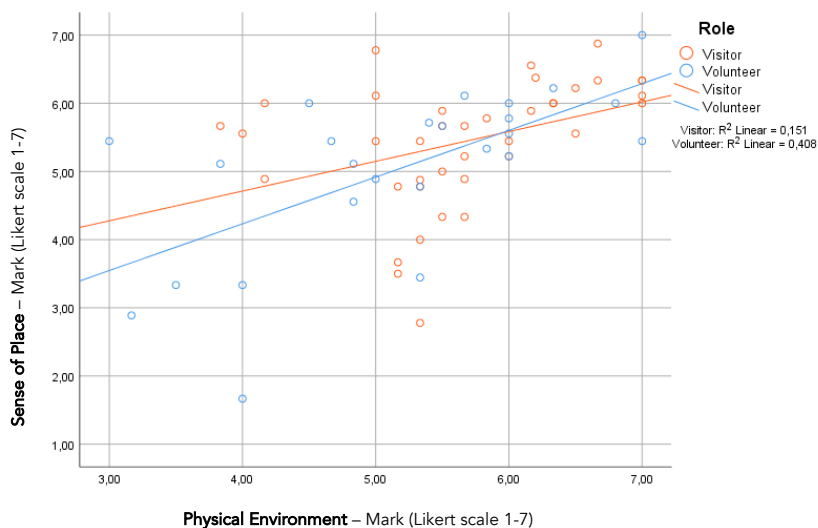
of place is negatively perceived because of negative social experiences and lack of identification towards the mentality of the community.

### 6.5 Hypothesis 5: Moderating Variable Role

In contrast to earlier mentioned research on cultural activities and sense of place, this research includes a study on how different participation roles of locals at events impact the relationship between the physical environment and sense of place. Overall, the results of the study contradict the hypothesis based on the moderating part roles play within the relationship of physical environment on sense of place.

The multiple regression analysis in Table 5.10 shows the insignificant relationship of the physical environment and role when added to Model 3 ( $p=.495$ ). This contradicts hypothesis five. It could be argued that volunteers and visitors experience a different sense of place due to the specific participation at an event (Claridge, 2020). To conclude on this, the variable “role” was also added to Model 2 as independent variable. This researched the causal relationship between the role volunteer and their sense of place. This relationship is also insignificant ( $p=.495$ ). Volunteers do not experience a higher sense of place than visitors, even if they organize the event.

To dive further into the relationship between the variable role “volunteer” on “physical environment-sense of place” the Pearson Correlation is analysed. This shows a positive correlation ( $=.616$ ). The relationship between the variable role “visitors” on “physical environment-sense of place” is also analysed as positive ( $=.389$ ). This is why the moderation does not show in the multiple regression analysis in Model 3. However, the variable role as volunteer has a higher correlation (Figure 6.1). This indicates a possible impact. A limitation within the number of respondents makes it difficult to research the impact of a moderating variable. Thus, there is reason to research this further through a qualitative data method: interviews. Interviews offered a way to delve into how volunteers perceive their contribution to the physical environment, and if they felt it influenced people’s sense of place.



**Figure 6.1** Moderating variable roles on physical environment and sense of place (through SPSS)

The interviews revealed that volunteers feel as if they facilitate local’s experiences of the event and influence people’s perceptions of the event and Zuidwolde through this. The volunteers explain their assisting roles in the recruitment of local entrepreneurs and decoration for the event. This can help maintain the place’s identity as discussed by Derrett (2003). The presentation of specific local products and talent visualizes a place’s identity. Interviewees Ms. Koster and Mr. de Vries, both volunteers, argue that they are responsible for the positive

experience of visitors at the Slachtdag. They shape the physical environment to create a safe experience of all people attending the Slachtdag. A safe environment offers an opportunity to safely experience and attach to a place's identity. Volunteers contribute to the protection of the local history by wearing the place's old clothing and helping present traditions of the local area, such as the making of "kniepertjes". This shows that volunteers play a role in the preservation of local culture which Frisby and Getz (1989) argue local events do. This complements the theories of Derrett (2003) and Stevenson (2020).

Furthermore, volunteers explain the large feeling of pride that they have when participating at the event, which helps transfer the physical environment to people. This is in line with theories of Derrett (2003) and Stevenson (2020). The volunteers argue that the pride that they feel helps promote and present the physical environment to visitors. Volunteers are excited to explain physical elements of the Slachtdag to visitors, as well as helping local entrepreneurs to feel content with their stands at the Slachtdag.

Thus, this hypothesis is not supported with the quantitative results of this study. However, the qualitative data does find interesting arguments which can complement the hypothesis. Further research, with a larger sample size, could delve more into this moderating relationship. Volunteers do help facilitate an experience of the physical environment, driven through pride towards the event. Nonetheless, visitors also impact the relationship between the physical environment and sense of place. It could be argued that local events offer various participation options, such as assisting and attending presentations of local entrepreneurs as well as making or tasting something at stands.

## Chapter 7. Conclusion, implications and recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusion, implications, and limitations and recommendations of the study's process and outcomes.

### 7.1 Conclusion

In this study, the central question was: ***how does a local cultural activity impact residents' sense of place within rural Zuidwolde?*** It was formulated in response to the need to develop meaningful places, for which planners have started to use sense of place and local cultural activities within planning policies.

The case study of Zuidwolde shows that a local cultural activity offers an opportunity to promote and present a place's talent, resources and culture. The local cultural identity is strengthened by promoting local products, and awareness of the place's heritage and resources is increased. Additionally, it fosters social inclusion and community empowerment. The physical environment and social interactions at an event contribute and relate to people's sense of place.

First, the physical environment of a local cultural activity relates directly to people's sense of place. It presents a place's culture to which people connect symbolic meanings. A local event creates the opportunity to experience a larger area's culture, by facilitating a safe and comfortable location which all locals can attend. The physical setting relates to people's sense of place as it offers a setting where people can form opinions about the area's talents, resources and culture. Feelings of pride and pleasure towards the place can be stimulated. Furthermore, traditions are re-experienced. Thus, people have the opportunity to emotionally attach to a place based on their experience at a local cultural activity. Moreover, attendance at a local activity provides an opportunity for locals to identify with the larger place. Identity and belonging can be constructed or maintained through events that connect individuals to particular physical elements. Furthermore, attendance aids in the formation of a behavioural connection to the resources of the place. People become more aware of local products. All of this is influenced by visible tangible design elements related to Zuidwolde's culture and history. Furthermore, the location's accessibility and small size provide a safe opportunity to experience Zuidwolde during the Slachtdag. The physical environment of a local cultural activity can preserve and maintain unique features of a local place, in developing a sense of place.

Indirectly, the physical environment relates to people's sense of place by facilitating the social interactions at the Slachtdag. The physical setting encourages locals to stick around and converse with other attendees. Decoration, accessibility and seating areas can stimulate unplanned conversations. It all depends on people's desire to interact. If they are not in the mood for social contacts at the event, the physical environment has no role: it cannot force interactions. These interactions based on the physical environment create a cohesiveness of a community. It creates the feeling of recognition of people's backgrounds and contributes to identification with other locals. Tangible objects are capable of recalling experiences between people. Recalled experiences help shape current place meanings and relate to people's place attachment and identity.

The local cultural activity's social interactions play a less important role than the physical environment within people's sense of place. Nevertheless, social interactions at local events help create the feeling of belonging and familiarization towards other community members. It increases a place's social inclusion and engagement within a community. However, negative experiences at events decrease this relationship.

Furthermore, local cultural activities offer the creation of attachment to a place due to shared history and collective memories shaped by attendance. People with longer residence length

within a place perceive their sense of place more positively than people with a shorter residence length. They have had more opportunities to attend these kinds of events, which helps with the creation of memories within a place, increases the chance of meeting and connecting with locals and creates an opportunity to develop a similar mentality. However, a lack of identification and negative experience over time within a place creates a negative impact on the causal relationship between residence length and sense of place. It all depends on people's experiences during their long residency. People's sense of place is determined by their evaluations of the location through their lives.

In contrast to the research mentioned earlier, this research includes a study on how different roles of locals at events influence the relationship between the physical environment and sense of place. Volunteering does not strengthen the relationship between the physical environment and sense of place more than visiting do. However, volunteers do facilitate the physical environment and help local entrepreneurs present their products through the pride they have for the event. Volunteering does increase a feeling of responsibility towards the preservation of a place's identity.

The above-mentioned conclusions guided an answer to the research question. Local cultural events offer a place in which people can connect to a village and its community. People's sense of place is impacted by attending local cultural activities, as people have opportunities to experience a place's culture and form opinions about it. Furthermore, it creates ways to meet other community members. A cultural activity relates to all relationships within sense of place. It helps people emotionally connect to a place, offers understanding and identifications with a place's identity and connects to a place's resources as people become more aware of the local resources and talents. A small event relates to people's sense of place over a larger area, due to its connection and representation of the place's history and values: by showcasing decoration, traditions and facilitating a social setting for locals to meet each other. A positive experience of the event offers a positive perception of the place it is organized in. People with negative experiences at an event can negatively transfer this feeling to a larger area.

## 7.2 Implications

The implications from this study regard planning theory, tactical and operational policies. First, the focus of planning academics has shifted toward the social domain for empirical research and improvements in people-place relationships (Lewicka 2011b). Currently, academics frequently overlook the physical environment in the formation of social interactions and people-place relationships. This study demonstrates that cultural events provide physical environments that greatly contribute to people's attachment to a place. The findings and conclusions of this study indicate that planners must reconsider the physical environment for research and interventions in order to create meaningful places. This study describes the mechanisms that can be used to stimulate social interactions through physical elements.

Another trend visible in planning approaches is the incorporation of cultural local events into the development of people-place relationships (Stockdale, 2006). This study adds to this by demonstrating the significant role it plays in creating a physical environment that directly influences people's sense of place, as well as a social interaction that helps them positively impact their place connection. According to Liu (2014), the creation of meaningful places within rural areas may rely on external motivations and funding for the development of place branding that is linked to the culture of the place. The findings of this study show that cultural local events should be organized by local residents. Those individuals are familiar with the area and are the best at presenting the local values and belongings (Derrett, 2003). This study is thus also interesting for place branding initiatives of rural areas since they often use cultural events to promote places (Liu, 2014).

Second, the findings are also important on a tactical level for rural municipalities, and the municipality of De Wolden specifically. This study shows that effective organization of the physical environment communicates a place's history and values to its residents. Rural communities can benefit from two implications based on this study. However, it should be noted that the study did not focus on the policy implications of the municipalities, so they should be viewed as potential future recommendations. First, local members should be involved in event organization and planning policies. There is a need to accommodate participation from relevant local members when creating meaningful places through cultural events. Local members' involvement in the creation of a sense of place has been shown to have a positive impact on social contacts, resources, pride, and perceptions of a place. Community members should be involved in all decision-making choices in order to enable cultural events. Boland (2010) explains that communication and participation with residents is important as this can lead to inclusion of the community within the events. He argues that events can disconnect the locals and their perceptions of the area when used for local branding, which can lead to a feeling of exclusion towards a place and its identity. Second, there is a need to preserve local and cultural values in rural (re-)development within planning opportunities (Boland, 2010). It employs strategies to maintain liveability in globalizing environments.

Lastly, there are some operational implications for the specific case of the Slachtdag. First of all, attendees all positively evaluated the event, arguing that it is always a joy to attend. People argue that the location is large enough for the activity, and that the various yearly-changing local entrepreneurs add a positive novelty to a yearly event. The decoration exhibited on the day fits the local area and educates people about Zuidwolde's history and their own. Stimulation of a high accessibility and seating area rate for all locals is highly advantageous for the community. One of the elements that people argued to be a reason for why people might not attend the Slachtdag, is the name of the event and the visible presentation of slaughtering of a pig. However, on the other hand, people do argue that this at the same time is a reason for people to attend. A change in name could improve attendance rate, or the presentation of slaughtering a pig could happen in a certain time slot or in a certain demarcated area of the event.

### 7.3 Limitations and recommendations

This thesis showed resilience and flexibility on various moments within the research timeframe. The cancellation of the Slachtdag 2021 was accommodated with changes within the data collection and analysis. Another positive point has been the use of the conceptual model and hypotheses as a guideline for the entire study. Furthermore, broad concepts were conceptualised to be used in empirical research. The thesis did face some limiting conditions which give possible recommendations, while outcomes of the data collection also offer opportunities for future research.

First, due to COVID-19, certain planned data collection elements were not possible. This influenced the number of respondents. A larger data set in the future may provide more representative results. It could lead to comparing the group's volunteers and visitors in terms of the variables researched here, as well as an in-depth report on the interaction of the physical environment, people's roles, and their sense of place. In the future, data collection at an event would be preferable. Furthermore, a door-to-door survey delivery strategy would be beneficial. However, because of the coronavirus, this was not possible. This could be an option for increasing the sample size and making the sample more representative in the future.

Second, the interviewees saw the interviews as social occasions. It was challenging to keep the interviewees' responses on track with the questions. This was expected, and there was enough flexibility in the questions. However, more specific questions will yield more useful answers. In addition, the theoretical concepts used in this study are extremely broad. In order

to develop specific recommendations for planning initiatives, future empirical research could focus more on specific elements within the used broad concepts.

Third, this research is limited to a specific time period in which a health pandemic was often present in people's daily lives. The cancellation of Slachtdag 2021 had an impact on the data collected. People may remember the event in 2019 more positively in 2021 than they would have if they had evaluated the event in 2019, because they are currently missing out on events due to COVID-19 restrictions. Because the study is based on a 2019 case, memories of this event may have been influenced by other experiences in De Wemme or Zuidwolde. Negative experiences in a specific area or at a specific time in history can have an impact on how people feel about another time in history (Othman et al., 2013). I would argue that using photo elicitation as a data collection method increased reliability and memory stimulation in relation to the specific event in 2019. I propose that this study should be repeated after the pandemic is over, possibly also to compare people's sense of place before and after attending an event, in order to incorporate the time aspect more into the creation of sense of place.

Furthermore, all of the respondents had lived Zuidwolde for an extended period of time. As a result, research into the differences in sense of place between newcomers and those who had lived there for more than four years was impossible. The first four years, according to Harlan et al. (2005), are critical in developing a sense of place. In the future, it would be interesting to compare results across different groups of residence length. Nevertheless, this study is representative of the Zuidwolde population: the average age and length of residence in Zuidwolde are both high (see chapter four). However, a future study researching a comparison between newcomers and long-time residents improves insight into the reasons for migration within rural areas. Another focus of the research, in order to provide a more representative answer to the research question, would be on attending and non-attending Slachtdag locals. This would allow for a comparison of different people's sense of place to Zuidwolde, as well as the impact of the Slachtdag on this. However, due to the research's time frame, this was not done. This would be a recommendation for future research.

In the end, this study shows how the Slachtdag contributes to the creation of meaningful places for people to connect with in the municipality of De Wolden, but studying multiple cases on this topic within one area would help create an overview of specific recommendations for municipal planning policies. A wide range of cases would allow for a thorough examination of theories as well as particular spatial and social phenomena. However, due to the time constraints of the study, this was not possible. This is another factor that could be considered in future research. Other possible Zuidwolde local events include Kar-ga-door and the Stiggeltjesdag.

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## Appendices

*The appendices are available at request. Please send an email to [fije\\_wennink@hotmail.com](mailto:fije_wennink@hotmail.com) if you want to read anything.*