

# THE FRISIAN BRAIN DRAIN

Out-migration of (highly educated) youth in rural areas of Fryslân and the role of place attachment in stimulating return migration



Master Thesis - Final Version

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21<sup>st</sup> August 2022

## Colophon

Title: The Frisian Brain Drain

Subtitle: Out-migration of (highly educated) youth in rural areas of Fryslân and the role of place attachment in stimulating return migration

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University: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

Date: 21 August 2022

Place: Groningen

Version: Final

Supervisor: dr. Elen-Maarja Trelle-Zuidema

Word count: 18.668

## Abstract

Frisian (highly educated) youth are leaving the Frisian rural areas in pursuit of economic and educational opportunities in urban areas, leading to a changing demographic that over time becomes lower educated and older. In order to prevent this and its consequences from happening it seems in the best interest of the Frisian municipalities to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration.

Place attachment could play a role in this. However, what aspects of their rural home places do the Frisian (highly educated) youth value and what not and thus, by extension, which aspects can potentially be used to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration?

In order to figure this out, this thesis aims to explore experiences of migration and place attachment of a number of young people from the rural areas of Fryslân and compare insights gained via qualitative interviews to regional strategy and vision documents to gain insight in how to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration of young people.

Through the interviews it becomes clear that motives for migration away from the rural areas in Fryslân are indeed linked to the pursuit of economic and educational opportunities in urban areas, as there is a lack of these opportunities in the rural areas of Fryslân. However, the interviews also show that motives for return migration are linked to aspects of place that migrants value in the rural areas of Fryslân. Regional strategy and vision documents do take into account the lack of opportunities and provide plans in investing in their region, thus creating these lacking opportunities. However, the protection of aspects that migrants value have not been taken into account.

The lesson for planning theory and practice that this thesis provides is that while investments and changes are needed to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration, it is important to keep the aspects that individuals value unaltered. Through a combination of these two strategies an optimum could be achieved in combating out-migration and stimulating return migration.

**Key words:** youth; rural; Fryslân; out-migration; return migration; place attachment.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background and problem definition

The rural areas of the province of Fryslân are experiencing a demographic decline and 'brain drain', due to the out-migration of (highly educated/ambitious) youth (Bock, 2016; Tremblay, 2001). One of the reasons of the aforementioned youth out-migration is that they cannot find the desired education opportunities, on a suitable level, or suitable job opportunities in rural areas of Fryslân, so they often move to the cities in provinces in the West, such as Noord- and Zuid Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland (CBP/PBL, 2015).

While the youth might be leaving there can also be found an increase in potential highly educated people through retirees, who thus do not work anymore, moving from the Randstad towards Friesland to spend their retirement years in the countryside (Algemeen Dagblad, 2020). An article by the Leeuwarder Courant, published by Algemeen Dagblad (2020), posts that in the southwestern part of Fryslân out of a thousand retirees that are older than sixty 5,76 of these retirees are from a different region than Fryslân. In combination with the decreasing youth demographic this leads to a population that is older due. Thus, the region is changing demographically but likely also culturally, with the influx of people who have no strong connection to the Frisian language/culture. In addition, liveability is also predicted to decline over time, as services disappear due to the population decline and youth out-migration (Bock, 2016). Furthermore, retirees have little to contribute to the economic condition of a region due to the lack of workforce that they bring, thus perhaps not creating the conditions that attract companies to the region. In the following figures the problem will be illustrated, showing two municipalities, Achtkarspelen and Ooststellingwerf, and their changing demographics (see figure 1 and 2).

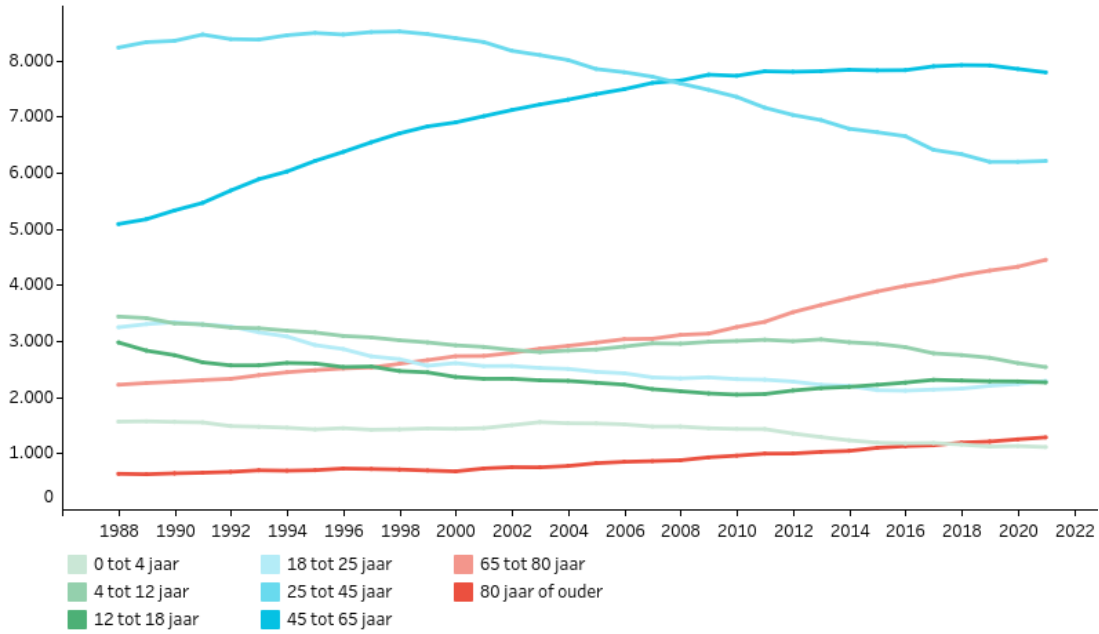


Figure 1.: The changing population composition of the municipality of Achtkarspelen (Frysk Sociaal Planbureau, 2022). As can be seen, the share of the younger age groups declines while the share of older age groups increases.

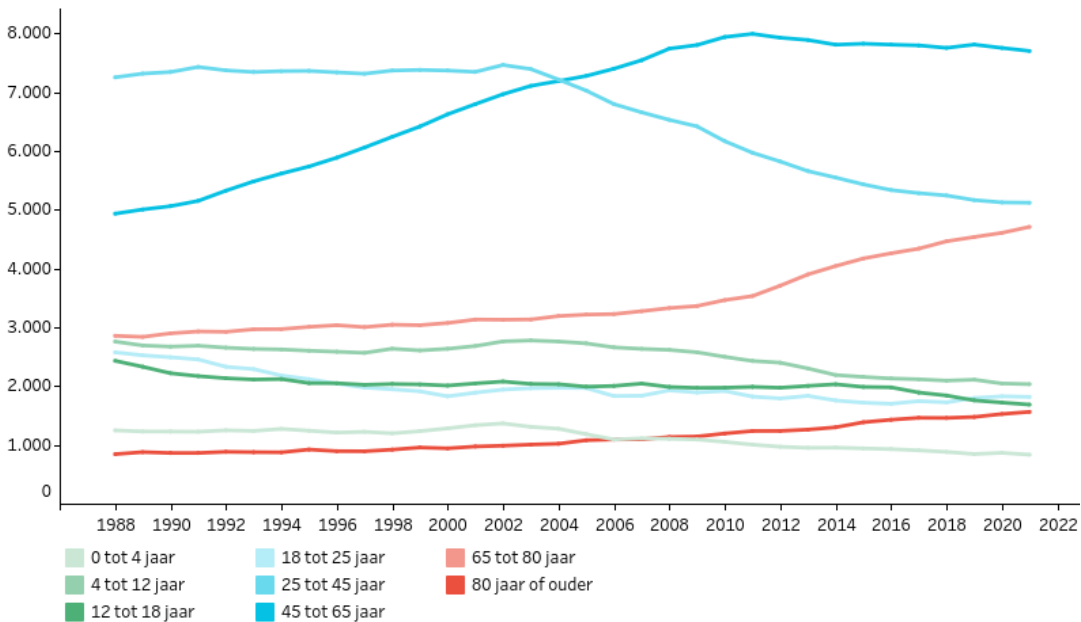


Figure 2.: The changing population composition of the municipality of Ooststellingwerf (Frysk Sociaal Planbureau, 2022). As can be seen, the share of the younger age groups declines while the share of older age groups increases.

One of the proposed solutions by Bock (2019) for this decline in the demographic of (highly educated) youth in rural areas is specific investments into liveability. Bock (2019) shows,

through a comparison with Germany, Great-Britain and Italy, which solutions that might potentially work in the Netherlands to combat population decline in rural areas. From this comparison Bock (2019) shows that more investments into liveability in the rural areas of the northern part of the Netherlands are necessary in order to minimize the socio-economic differences between the rural northern parts and urban western parts of the Netherlands. The government should take on more responsibility in these rural areas by investing in for instance job opportunities, making higher levels of education available, increasing employment opportunities in tourism and recreation, rather than directing the residents of these rural areas to tackle issues through , among other things, community programs, such as communal funds to stop disappearing services (Bock, 2019).

Another factor that might influence migration and potentially stimulate return migration, could be a phenomenon called “place attachment”. Place attachment is defined as a unique, emotional connection to specific places (and even regions/countries), subjective to the perception of a place of each person (Altman & Low, 1992). The concept is often used in relation to places that people consider their home but also sacred places. In a research by Trell et al. (2012) it is stated that a rural upbringing often creates a foundation for the youth, allowing them to stay connected, feeling grounded and potentially moving back to their rural home regions. Municipalities of rural areas in Fryslân could potentially use a deeper understanding of the mechanisms behind place attachment to their advantage, promoting the rural areas by playing into this attachment in an effort to attract back the youth/young families.

However, what measures could potentially work in the rural areas of Fryslân to combat the out-migration of youth? The aforementioned articles by Bock (2019) and Trell et al. (2012) show potential aspects that could be used to combat out-migration of youth and better understand the mechanisms for return migration, however, the question remains what the exact aspects are that the (highly educated) youth from rural areas of Fryslân value and do not value, and what the municipalities do in terms of combating out-migration and stimulating return migration. Therefore, this research sets out to study what aspects the (highly educated) youth from the rural areas of Fryslân do and do not value about the place that they reside or used to reside in, and how these aspects compare to the aspects taken into account by municipalities in their attempts to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration to their regions.

## 1.2 Relevance

### 1.2.1 Societal relevance

The societal relevance of this thesis lies in the potential to help municipalities gain insight into the aspects of rural areas in Fryslân that the (highly educated youth) values and does not value, in order to provide insights into what aspects to use to combat rural out-migration and stimulate rural return migration.. The results from this research provide insights into the reasons for (highly educated) youth to migrate away and motivation that they (may) have to migrate back to rural areas of Fryslân. Therefore, this study is relevant in a societal sense as it could provide insights that allows municipalities of rural areas of Fryslân to help combat the decline in (highly educated/ambitious) youth and stimulate the return migration of youth/young families in particular, which would also by extension enhance the liveability of these areas.



### 1.2.2 Academic relevance

An essay in a bundle by Bock (2019) suggests that, studying other countries, regions experiencing demographic decline could be strengthened through investment in the regional economy, opportunities for work and infrastructure. Trell et al. (2012) shows that migrants with an upbringing in rural places develop a certain connection to these rural places, which could lead to return migration. The effect of this foundation created by a rural upbringing can potentially be utilized by the municipalities of rural areas in Fryslân to promote these areas by playing into the place attachment that these highly educated youth (potentially) have. Bijker (2013) shows in her article that attachment to rural areas, such as the Frisian rural areas, can lead to a migration flow from urban areas back to rural areas, thus creating a potential return migration flow of (highly educated) youth. Nevertheless, as Deotti and Estruch (2016) indicate that the root causes of migration differ per context, Rönnlund (2020) shows that in a different context even those that value a place could migrate away from the rural areas.

The question that remains when looking at these different sources is: what role does place attachment play in stimulating return migration? While Trell et al. (2012) show that place attachment does play a role in return migration, Rönnlund shows that place attachment does not play a role in return migration. In order to find out what role place attachment actually plays in stimulating return migration this thesis will focus on the aspects surrounding place attachment. Through looking at the aspects that cause an attachment to a place such as the rural regions of the province of Fryslân, it is possible to see which of these aspects of attachment to place would drive (highly educated) youth back to Fryslân and which aspects of attachment to place would not play a role in their return migration. While according to Deotti and Estruch (2016) the root causes of migration might differ per context, this thesis aims to show what aspects of place attachment would be considered important enough for the (highly educated) youth to migrate back to the rural areas of Fryslân, thus answering the question: what role does place attachment and its aspects play in stimulating return migration?

### 1.3 Research aim and questions

The aim of this study is to give insight into the motives of (highly educated) youth that migrate away and how to combat this out-migration and stimulate return migration. The focus will be on the role of place attachment in stimulating return migration and what aspects of place attachment would be considered important enough for the (highly educated) youth to indeed migrate back to the rural areas of Fryslân (as indicated in the academic relevance).

*Central question:*

- *What aspects of place can be used to combat the out-migration and stimulate return migration of (highly educated) youth in rural areas of Fryslân and how can place attachment potentially play a role in this?*

*Secondary questions:*

- *What is rural out-migration by (highly educated) youth and what causes this phenomenon to occur?;*
- *What is rural return migration by (highly educated) youth and what causes this phenomenon to occur?;*

- *What is place attachment and how does it develop? How does it contribute to/is it related to return migration by (highly educated) youth to rural areas?*
- *What are the motives of out-migration away from Frisian rural areas according to the (highly educated) youth themselves?;*
- *What aspects of their rural home places are the (highly educated) youth from Frisian rural areas attached to?*
- *What aspects are already being mentioned in the Versnellingsagenda and ANNO III and how do they compare to aspects mentioned by (highly educated) youth?*

## 1.4 Structure

This thesis will follow a traditional structure:

- Chapter 1: The introduction will introduce the issue at hand and show through which research questions this issue will be studied;
- Chapter 2: The theoretical framework will show a definition and deeper understanding to the concepts used in the research questions, such as out-migration, return migration and place attachment;
- Chapter 3: The methodology will introduce the several methods of research, including a literature review, interviews and policy document review, along with a brief explanation of how they interrelate to each other and the conclusion;
- Chapter 4: The results show the information gathered through the methods introduced in the methodology and show, through discussion, how the results interrelate with both the literature and each other;
- Chapter 5: The conclusion will show the most important findings and present the final answer to the main research question.
- Chapter 6: The reflection and recommendations will show lessons for planning theory and practice, but also potential improvements in research as well as entry-points for future research.

Furthermore, the reference list will show the literature used throughout the thesis, while appendices will show elements that were not included in the main body of the thesis while still being important to the process of research.

## 2. Theoretical background: causes of/interlinkages between rural out-migration and return migration

### 2.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to provide insights into the motives of migration to and from the rural areas of Fryslân by (highly educated) youth specifically focusing on the aspects that they value (and do not value) about a place. Therefore, the concepts attached to the aforementioned research should be defined in an according fashion while highlighting the different aspects that lead to/influence these phenomena. The definitions for these concepts along with the causing/influencing aspects will be discussed through theory found in different forms of literature, such as academic books and papers, but also newspaper articles, statistics et cetera.

The following secondary questions will be answered through this chapter:

- What is rural out-migration by (highly educated) youth and what causes this phenomenon to occur?;
- What is rural return migration by (highly educated) youth and what causes this phenomenon to occur?;
- What is place attachment and how does it develop? How does it contribute to/is it related to return migration by (highly educated) youth to rural areas?

### 2.2 Rural out-migration

#### 2.2.1 Definition of rural out-migration

It is important to set a suitable definition for rural out-migration to use throughout the thesis. This provides a clear focus on what out-migration exactly entails within this thesis. In an article by Wierucka (2021) discussing migration of youth from rural areas in Ecuador to urban areas, the definition used is 'a demographic process that moves people between places', in this article done by 'people aged 15-24' (Rees, 2001; UN Youth, 2013). This definition is agreed upon by further literature, as Stockdale (2004) and Thissen et al. (2010) show in their articles. The definitions used in their articles come down to something similar, stating that rural out-migration is defined as 'inhabitants of rural communities leaving these areas for urban areas in pursuit of better socio-economic opportunities, especially highly educated youth' (Stockdale, 2004; Thissen et al., 2010).

This thesis will be focussing on the migratory flows of (highly educated) youth, thus the definition that is used by Wierucka (2021) will be on the forefront of this definition. The interest group will be migrants that are aged between the ages of 15 and 24. Furthermore, these migrants make the migration from rural areas to urban areas, as shown by Stockdale (2004) and Thissen et al. (2010). Therefore, the following definition will be set for usage throughout this thesis, however, this might differ from definitions used in other papers as they focus on a different context:

*Rural out-migration is a demographic process of moving (highly educated/ambitious) youth (people aged 15-24) from rural areas to urban areas in pursuit of better socio-economic opportunities.*

### 2.2.2 Causes/influences of/on rural out-migration

Rural out-migration seems to be caused/influenced by various factors which will be highlighted within this section of the chapter. First and foremost are the characteristics of a rural village, which might influence the decision to remain in the rural areas or migrate out of these regions. A book by Cloke et al. (1994), for instance, shows that the perception of one person of a close-knit village can differ from another person. Due to the small scale of a village, people know each other more easily, gossip goes around more easily, raising the point presented by Cloke et al. (1994): some people find the lack of privacy in a village disturbing, and therefore prefer the anonymity that a more urban area provides. Furthermore, articles by Phillips and Skinner (1994), Leyshon (2000) and Pavis et al. (2000) show that while a village might be a more close-knit community than an urban area, youth often feels more isolated than part of the aforementioned community. The previously mentioned articles show that the lack of services and more aged people in rural villages might drive the youth away from villages in pursuit of a feeling of inclusion in for instance an urban area, where more services are present and more same age youth reside. Stockdale (2002) goes on to show another influence on out-migration by (highly educated/ambitious) youth: social networks. As presented in her article, social networks, such as family and friends, can influence the decision of an individual to either remain in the rural areas or move to an urban area. However, as Stockdale (2002) also highlights in her article, important in this decision is to take into account that this relationship can change, and thus, also the decision of whether to remain in the rural area or move to an urban area. Furthermore, economic motives can also be attributed as a motive to migrate from rural areas to cities. These economic motives can be subdivided into a “carrot-and-stick” analogy, or the “pull-and-push” analogy. The “carrot”, or “pull”, can be regarded as a positive aspect of an urban area that makes people want to migrate to an urban area, such as economic opportunities. The “stick”, or “push”, can be regarded as a negative aspect of a rural area that makes people want to migrate away from the rural area, such as the lack of economic opportunities. This rings especially true for highly educated youth, as proven by Findlay et al. (2009). The article by Findlay et al. (2009) shows that attaining a higher education degree provides better economic opportunities for the youth. This is where the “carrot” comes in: Auclair and Vanoni (2002) show that, after attaining a higher educational degree a better future perspective is presented through a career that suits the aforementioned degree than through using the aforementioned degree to restore rural areas. This would mean that after leaving rural areas in pursuit of a higher educational degree the highly educated youth will not be returning as they found a better economic opportunity in the urban areas than they would find going back to rural areas. Therefore, this “carrot” of better economic opportunities makes the highly educated youth remain in these urban areas. The other side of the presented analogy is the “stick”, which comes down to driving the highly educated youth away from these villages as they lack the economic opportunities that they are looking for. This side of the analogy is described in an article written by Machold et al. (2002), who conducted a study in rural areas of Austria. This research shows out-migration of highly educated youth from rural areas to urban areas as there

is a lack of career opportunities fitting their higher education degree, but an abundance of low wage sector jobs. This would mean that it would economically be less wise to remain in rural areas, as there are no sufficient economic opportunities in rural areas.

Overall, this section shows that the characteristics of a rural area, while attractive to one individual, might prove to be a driver for migrating out of rural areas for others, such as youth. This can be attributed to lack of services, lack of similarly aged people or lack of privacy. Next, social networks that an individual might have in the rural region might also influence the decision to remain or leave rural areas, however, this need not be a definitive decision. As relationships might change over time so might the decision to migrate. Lastly, economic motives can also be attributed to influence whether to migrate or not. This is due to the presence of economic opportunities for highly educated youth in particular in urban areas where rural areas often lack this presence.

### 2.2.3 Consequences of rural out-migration

The consequences of rural out-migration can exhibit themselves in various manners. Desertion of a region can for instance be regarded as one, such as for instance in Scotland on the St. Kilda and Scarp islands, which have been empty since the 1930s and 1970s (Thompson, 1988). While this might provide an extreme example, namely the desertion of an entire region, it still shows that the demand for buildings or space declines or disappears, it leaves these buildings or regions behind, deserted. This effect can only become more apparent as the province of Groningen et al. (2016) highlights that population will only further decline another 19% until 2030. Furthermore, besides the landscape the demographic that resides in the landscape also is affected by this rural out-migration, as was also shown in an article by Tremblay (2001). Tremblay (2001) shows that as the (highly educated/ambitious) youth migrates away from these rural areas, the average age of the population goes up, resulting in an aging of the population (Bock, 2016). This aging is further exacerbated through 'child drought': as the (highly educated/ambitious) youth migrate away from the rural areas, the potential to have young children does as well (Lonsdale & Archer, 1998). This means that younger families will more likely start in urban areas, leading to a rise in children in urban areas, however, a decline in children in rural areas. Furthermore, the rural out-migration also could lead to a decrease in liveability, as services start disappearing from these rural regions (Bock, 2016). While some services are perhaps not necessary, the numbers show that average health is relatively worse in regions that experience a demographic decline (RIVM, 2015). Nevertheless, Bock (2016) shows that, while decline in demographic in rural areas is perhaps not desirable, it does create opportunity through the availability of space. As Bock (2016) shows: space to, for instance, escape the bustle of urban areas, making it attractive perhaps for those from urban areas to move to. However, this would also bring forth a potential disadvantage specific for the rural areas of Fryslân: loss of culture. People from Fryslân speak a language called Frisian, which is often not spoken in the rest of the Netherlands (Van Laanen, 2001). Inviting migrants from for instance urban areas to reside in these rural areas of Fryslân might therefore lead to loss of an important cultural aspect, as has been the case in England, as proven by (Mackinnon, 2000). In their article they show that a decrease in native youth combined with an increase of aforementioned migrants have contributed to the loss of native Gaelic speakers in England. This is comparable to what is happening in Fryslân as discussed in the introduction of this thesis,

where Frisian students are leaving Fryslân for other urban areas, thus being forced to stop speaking Frisian (CBP/PBL, 2015). However, people from these other parts of the Netherlands move to Fryslân to live there while being unable to speak Frisian, thus leading to a population that is less able to speak Frisian (Algemeen Dagblad, 2020).

Concluding, it is possible to state that rural out-migration has impacts not only on the landscape in the deserted buildings and, in extreme scenarios, rural areas, however, also in other aspects. An aging of the population for instance, could lead to an even accelerated form of desertion, worsened by 'child drought'. Disappearance of services is also a consequence, leading to a decrease in liveability. While the new space available through out-migration might create room for new development and a way to escape the bustle of the city, new migrants could lead to the loss of the Frisian language, therefore, is not desirable.

## 2.3 Return migration

### 2.3.1 Definition of return migration

The previously discussed concept of rural out-migration seems to suggest that the migration from the rural areas of highly educated youth to urban areas can be considered a one-way-ticket. However, as can be shown through for instance an article by Dustmann (1996), return migration is the polar opposite of out-migration. Dustmann (1996) describes the migration pattern after the second World War towards the northern part of Europe due to economic development that followed the war. However, the migration was on a temporary basis, leading to return migration, where migrants returned towards their place of origin after their services were no longer needed. This definition is further confirmed through another article by Dustmann and Weiss (2007), stating the definition of return migration to be the return of migrants back to the place where they migrated from, after a significant amount of time in the place where they migrated to. Kunuroglu et al. (2016), however, wanted to build upon this definition and broaden it further, stating that children and grandchildren were to be included as a second and third generation return migration. Nevertheless, while this thesis takes into account migration due to academic and economic opportunities towards urban areas, this thesis does not focus on international migration or second or third generation migration. Therefore, an article by Bijker (2013) on return migration to less popular rural areas provides a suitable definition to return migration: return migration is a concept that conveys the migration from one area that one migrated to previously (in this thesis: urban areas) back to the area that one lived prior to the aforementioned migration (in this thesis: rural areas). Ní Laoire (2007) confirms this, stating that out-migration to the urban areas also comes with a certain element of return migration, a certain counterurbanisation. The definition that will be used throughout this thesis will therefore be based on Bijker (2013) and Ní Laoire (2007), since these articles take into account the rural aspect of return migration:

*Return migration is the concept used to describe migration of highly educated youth from the urban areas they migrated to in pursuit of economic opportunities back to (similar) rural areas that they initially migrated from.*

### 2.3.2 Causes/influences on/of return migration: Place attachment

As this thesis is interested in the influence of place attachment on return migration the following section will be dedicated to the definition of place attachment itself and the influences that place attachment might have on the return migration process of (highly educated/ambitious) youth. Ainsworth and Bell (1970) show that when an individual is attached to some place or something, the desire to be in the close proximity of that place or object increases. This would mean that if a person senses a strong attachment to a place, such as the rural areas of Fryslân, they would want to return to these rural areas, perhaps even migrate back. The actual influence of place attachment on return migration will be tested throughout the thesis, however, the following sections aim to provide some basic theoretical foundation to shape future research methods.

#### 2.3.2.1 Definition of place attachment

Place attachment could potentially play a role in choosing a place to live, therefore this concept could also play a role in the return to the place of origin of an individual, such as the rural areas of Fryslân. In the previous paragraphs that describe the concept of return migration, it has been shown that returning to rural areas is more often done by those that experienced a rural upbringing, therefore having more connection to rural areas in general (Gkartizios & Scott, 2009; Feijten et al., 2008). Therefore, a theoretical study into the concept of place attachment could prove to be an important asset in the research into its potential role in combating rural out-migration. In order to find a suitable definition that fits the topic of this thesis, an article by Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) is studied. This article answers conceptual and empirical questions related to the concept of place attachment through academic literature and physical research. As place attachment is a concept that can be perceived in a broad manner, multiple definitions are given. The first definition, which is provided through an article by Shumaker and Taylor (1983), shows that place attachment can be perceived as a positive connection that one senses with their residential environment. This definition, however, does not fulfill the definition necessary for the sake of this thesis. The definition provided by Shumaker and Taylor (1983) refers to the current residential environment in which one finds themselves. This thesis, however, is more interested in the residential environment in which one was brought up, in this case: the rural areas of Fryslân. This thesis is interested in the connection to these rural areas and to what extent they would influence the potential to return to the aforementioned rural areas. Another definition, provided through an article by Altman and Low (1992), shows the meaning of place attachment as more of an emotional connection to a specific setting or environment. This means that an individual could for instance have a connection with, in the case specific to this thesis, rural areas, or more specifically: the rural areas of Fryslân. This definition shows more of an overlap with the aforementioned reason for return migration, however, it still needs some slight altering to adjust it to the purposes of this thesis specifically. Therefore, the definition that will be used throughout this thesis is as follows:

*Place attachment is the emotional connection to a specific setting or environment, for this thesis specifically the connection one feels with the rural areas of Fryslân after being brought up in these areas.*

### 2.3.2.1 Causes/influences on/of place attachment

Due to the fact that Ainsworth and Bell (1970) show that attachment to a place leads to the desire to be in the close proximity of the aforementioned place, playing into place attachment might stimulate return migration. The article by Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) shows us through literature that there are two dimensions through which these attachments can be formed: the social dimension and the environmental dimension. Altman and Low (1992) show, for instance, that attachment to place is not necessarily led by the environmental dimension of a certain setting or environment, but rather the social dimension, referring to the different relationships formed within the community of this setting or environment. As Stockdale (2002) also highlights, social networks can influence the decision to remain in rural areas or migrate towards urban areas. Therefore, this aspect of place attachment could lead to both preventing migration and stimulating return migration. This is in line with the articles by Niedomsyl and Amcoff (2011) and Farrell et al. (2012), showing that one of the main reasons for return migration is people wanting to be close to family and friends, assuming these family and friends remain in the area as well. For rural areas in Fryslân this makes sense, as villages in these rural areas possess a certain culture that provides a sense of community that provides the social aspect to place attachment as shown by Altman and Low (1992) (Ní Laoire, 2007). Migrants often want to return back to restore this sense of community and kinship, which a city often cannot provide (Ní Laoire, 2007). The second dimension, as highlighted in Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) is the environmental dimension. The environmental dimension, or rootedness as it is called in an article by Riger and Lavrakas (1981), refers to the environmental component of an area (for instance buildings, routes, et cetera). In the case of this thesis it would mean that an individual values the smaller scale housing or greener environment that are included in a rural area in Fryslân and thus attaches emotional value to such a place. This feeling does not even have to be specific to a certain place, as has been proven by Bijker (2013): the attachment to the rural areas alone is enough for someone to return to a similar rural village setting when raised in rural areas themselves. This claim is shown in articles such as Gkartizios and Scott (2009) and Feijten et al. (2008) both also show that migrants are more inclined to return to villages in rural areas when being brought up in similar rural areas.

### 2.3.3 Consequences of return migration

The consequences of return migration can be seen through several perspectives. For instance, return migration can change the balance in the dilemma discussed in the section on rural out-migration: the social aspects versus the economic aspects. The return migration of (highly educated/ambitious) youth could for instance create a reason to remain in these rural regions for youth that wants to move due to the lack of similarly aged people (Phillips & Skinner, 1994; Leyshon, 2000; Pavis et al., 2000). Altman and Low (1992) show that attachment to place is, among other things, influenced by social networks. Individuals returning to the rural regions might also stimulate family and friends that still reside in the region and doubt on moving to remain there, stopping further out-migration through return migration, as Stockdale (2002) also shows: relation to family and friends in the region could provide a barrier against out-migration. Furthermore, Farrell et al. (2012) shows that migrants that return to rural areas return with knowledge and experience attained through education and employment, alongside multiple forms of asset gained through the aforementioned employment. This means that these migrants



return with the potential to provide a socio-economic boost to these rural areas, as the returning migrants provide an increase in residents that are both able to be employed and employ themselves, allowing for various forms of improvement of the region in terms of economy. As opposed to the so-called “brain drain” that can be triggered through the phenomenon of rural out-migration, Farrell et al. (2012) show in their study that return migration can trigger the exact opposite, a “brain gain”. However, as mentioned at the start of this paragraph, the effect of return migration depends on the context it takes place in. Oftentimes, returning migrants return after their retirement, therefore they would not have the potential to be employed or employ residents of the rural areas (Stockdale, 2004). This leads to the negation of the previously mentioned positive effect, allowing for no economic growth while contributing to the increase of an older demographic as mentioned in the paragraph on rural out-migration. Therefore, the answer to whether or not return migration is a positive phenomenon cannot be easily answered: it all depends on the context.

## 2.5 Interrelations and conceptual framework

The theoretical chapter shows that there are two migration flows in the rural context: out-migration, showing a migration flow from the rural areas to the urban areas, and return migration, showing a migration flow from the urban areas back to the rural areas. The theoretical chapter therefore shows that the migration that takes place in the rural context is not a one-way stream, but a counterurbanisation movement is also experienced in these regions. However, the influence that these migration flows have on the rural regions are still dependent on the context in which they take place, for instance the newly formed demographic in these regions.

Furthermore, this chapter also shows the factors that have the ability to influence the aforementioned migration flows, showing that both out-migration and return migration can be influenced through economic, social and environmental factors. For rural out-migration, people might experience the close-knit community of a rural village as a lack of privacy, while for the youth specifically the lack of services and people of a similar age might be a driving factor for rural out-migration. Furthermore, the social networks, or relationships to their family and friends could influence the desire to migrate from rural areas to another place, depending on the quality of the relationship. Lastly, economic factors can also be a factor that influences the decision to migrate or not for (highly educated/ambitious) youth, since urban areas are able to provide economic opportunities for youth suitable to their academic degrees and rural areas are not. For return migration, the potential impact of place attachment was studied. Place attachment is the emotional connection one experiences to a place or setting, in this case the rural areas in Fryslân. Place attachment can be explained through two dimensions: attachment to the environmental aspect of an environment and attachment to the social aspect of an environment. The social aspect can be influenced by the presence and relationships to family and friends, however, also by the sense of community and kinship that a rural area can offer. The environmental aspect shows the influence of the shape of the rural environment along with its characteristics, such as green or spacious, as a main reason for people to feel attachment.

Through interviews the following explanations from theoretical sources, such as scientific articles and books, will be tested in order to see if these theoretical explanations apply to the real life situation of rural areas in Fryslân, and thus provide insights into the question: how can

out-migration be combated while stimulating return migration? Figure 3 highlights the conceptual model that will be used to study the topic of migration of (highly educated) youth in Fryslân, showing the relationship between the migration flows and the corresponding regions, the factors influencing the migration flows and the potential influence of place attachment. Through this model the theory will be tested against the real life situation of rural areas of Fryslân.

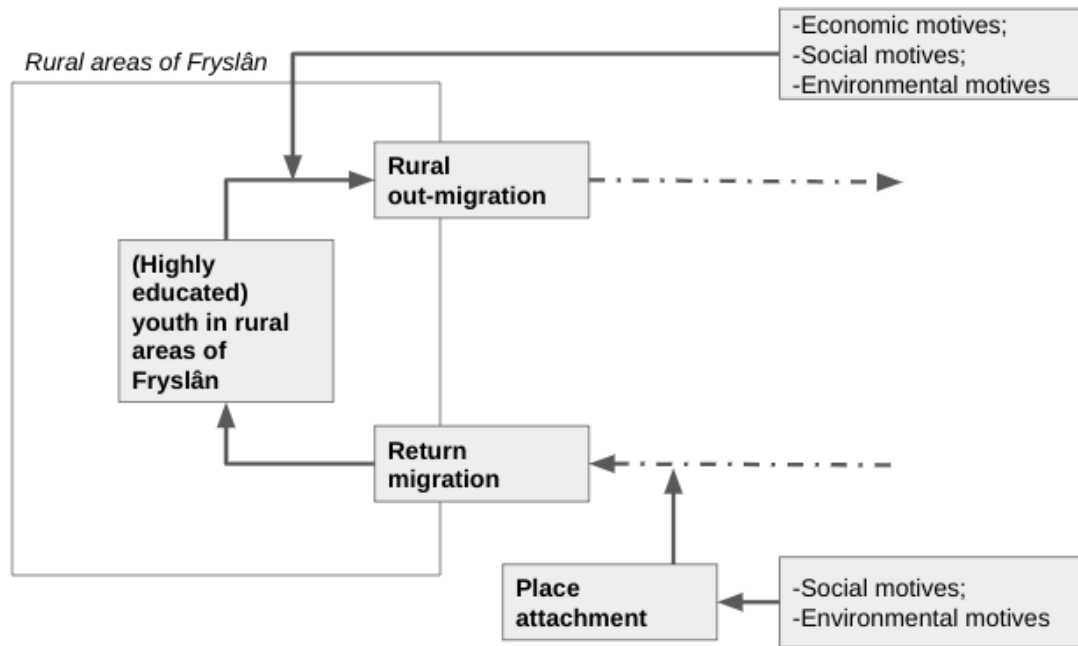


Figure 3.: The conceptual model highlighting the different flows of migration by (highly educated) youth in rural areas of Fryslân and the potential influences on the aforementioned flows by different motives (made by author).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to provide insights into the motives of migration to and from the rural areas of Fryslân by (highly educated) youth specifically focusing on the aspects that they value (and do not value) about a place. This thesis aims to compare the aspects considered in policy documents and strategy documents such as the Versnellingsagenda and ANNO III to the aspects highlighted as relevant by the (highly educated) youth.

In order to answer the research questions, the following research methods are used in this thesis:

- Literature review: In order to explore definitions to key concepts used throughout the thesis while also studying their interrelatedness, a (academic) literature review will be conducted through relevant literature;
- Interviews: In order to study what aspects to place the (highly educated) youth value and not value about the rural areas of Fryslân, interviews will be conducted among Frisian students from rural areas. Some of the respondents remained in the region and some;
- Policy and strategy document review and analysis: in order to see what aspects to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration have been taken into account in policy documents by Frisian municipalities, the Versnellingsagenda and ANNO III will be studied. Furthermore, the aspects taken into account in these policy documents will be related to the aspects mentioned in the interviews in order to give advice to the rural municipalities dealing with population decline.

In this methodology chapter, the aforementioned methods will be explained and connected to the research questions that they correspond to. A qualitative research approach was chosen as a qualitative approach allows for a better and deeper understanding of the opinions and experiences of the interviewees (or: the (highly educated) youth) (Dunn, 2000). Furthermore, for the strategy and vision document analysis a qualitative research approach was chosen again. This is because the thesis focuses on the content of the policy documents, not about the amount of times something is mentioned or the numbers included in the documents, thus providing a deeper understanding of these documents (Denscombe, 2017).

### 3.2 Literature review

A literature review will be conducted. Through the use of various academic search engines, such as Google Scholar and Web of Science, literature will be searched. This literature will correspond to key words used throughout the thesis, such as "rural out-migration", "rural return migration", "place attachment". The key word "rural" will be added onto these important concepts as the regions that this thesis focuses on are rural regions. Furthermore, journals that will be focused on will be journals specialized in sociological or spatial sciences, as these will best represent the type of information that this thesis will focus on.

The information that originates from the literature review will be used in order to answer the first, second and third research questions in the chapter theoretical background, however, it will also be used in order to provide a foundation for contextualizing answers to the (empirical) secondary questions that follow. Furthermore, the results from the interviews will be compared to the literature review in order to see the overlap between the context of the literature and the context of the rural areas in Fryslân.

### 3.3 Interviews

In order to gain insight into the aspects of rural areas in Fryslân that are valued and not valued by the (highly educated) youth, interviews with students aged between 20 and 25 will be conducted. Since this research focuses on experiences and opinions related to the rural areas of Fryslân, a qualitative research method, such as interviews, is preferred. Dunn (2000) states that one of the main reasons to go for a qualitative research method, in this case interviews, is to gain insight into the various experiences and opinions of your target group. Through the use of open questions rather than closed questions the interviewees can describe their experiences and opinions in their own words. Denscombe (2017) confirms this as the depth of experiences and opinions can only be studied through their words, not by methods which require numbers as a unit of analysis as in quantitative research.

The interviews will follow a semi-structured manner of interviewing as presented by Dunn (2000). This means that while the interview will follow a certain predetermined structure through the use of an interview guide (see appendix 1), the interviewer is free to differ from this structure in order to go more in depth into a certain experience or opinion that the interviewee indicated. As opposed to a structured interview a semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to explore answers more freely and go more into depth. As opposed to unstructured interviews the interviewer can intervene when the answer moves away too far from the topic. The effect this will have in terms of answering is that an interviewee is welcome to speak more freely on a topic thus giving the interviewee more information to work with (Denscombe, 2017).

Before the interview it is first and foremost important to set up an agreement between the interviewer and interviewee on the interview itself. As Denscombe (2017) states in his book, *"research interviews are different from conversations"* (p. 202). Interviewees need to recognize that they are part of a research interview and that their information will be used in a thesis. Before the interview, interviewers are required to discuss with an interviewee what their rights are, how their information will be used and how the interview will be conducted/structured. In order to confirm their understanding and agreement to these points, a document will be signed prior to the interview. The informed consent form used for the interviews of this thesis will be added as appendix 2.

The interview will be conducted among youth between the ages of 20 and 25, based on the ages set in the literature review by the UN Youth (2013). The interviewees will be consisting of two subgroups: the (highly educated) youth that remained in the rural areas of Fryslân and the (highly educated) youth that migrated away from the rural areas of Fryslân. A full list of interviewees will be provided below (see table 1). As the interviewees will differ in characteristics of migration, two separate lists of interview questions will be prepared, in order to prevent confusion amongst the interviewees (see appendix 1)

*Table 1.: List of interviewees with corresponding information (made by author).*

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Originated from</b>	<b>Currently living in</b>
1	23	Female	Drogeham	Groningen
2	22	Male	Surhuizum	Surhuizum
3	23	Female	Kootstertille	The Hague
4	21	Male	Twijzelerheide	Twijzelerheide
5	21	Female	Drogeham	Drogeham
6	24	Male	Surhuisterveen	Enschede
7	23	Male	Augustinusga	Augustinusga
8	21	Male	Oosterwolde	Oosterwolde
9	23	Female	Surhuisterveen	Groningen

After agreements have been made between interviewee and interviewer and questions have been developed, conducting the interviews could commence. The interviews typically ran for three quarters of an hour to a full hour. However, in light of the current COVID pandemic and the long distance that interviewees have often migrated away from the rural areas of Fryslân, some interviews can be affected in the manner in which they can be conducted. In order to provide the easiest and safest manner of interviewing for both interviewer and interviewees, interviewees were asked whether or not they would be available to conduct the interview face-to-face or online through a video calling service, such as Google Meet or Teams. This provides the option to record the interview, allowing the interviewer to transcribe the interview at a later time and providing more accurate data than through note taking. If an interview were to be conducted face-to-face, the interview will be recorded on a phone (with permission of the interviewee, see appendix 2 for an informed consent form).

After the interview, the data were transcribed and color-coded according to a coding tree (see figure 4). The codes were achieved through both deductive and inductive coding. Deductive coding was achieved through studying literature in the literature review. From literature codes that can be associated with aspects of place were found. The theory behind these codes will be tested against the answers of the interviews, thus deductive coding (Williams & Moser, 2019). Furthermore, using the data collected through the interviews further codes can be used that can be associated with aspects of place. This is inductive coding (Williams & Moser, 2019). If a pattern between answers of respondents or something out of the ordinary is found within this data, it is included in the coding tree.

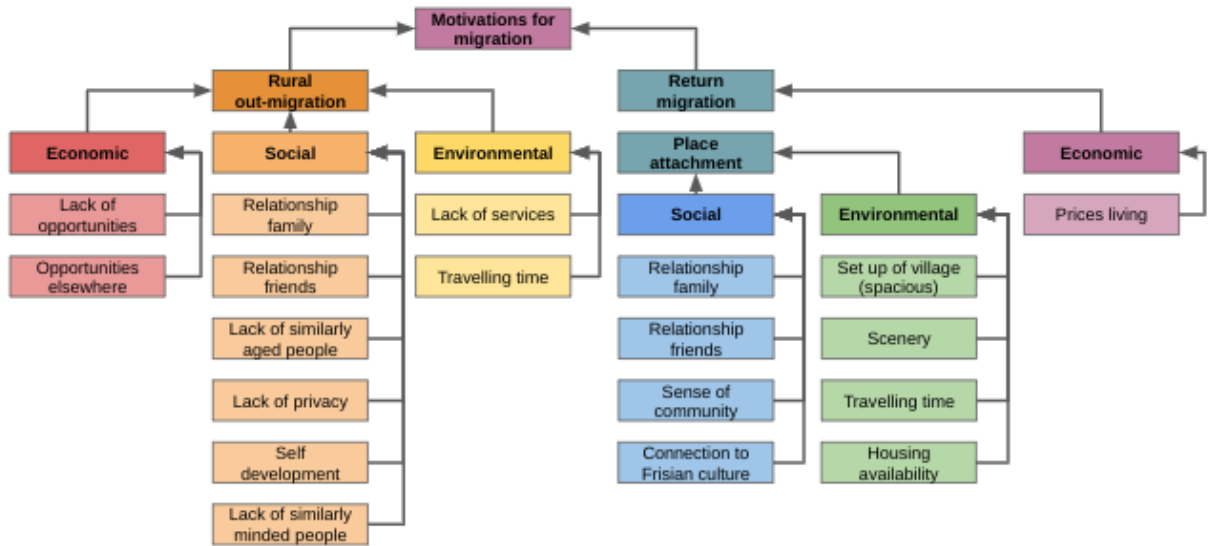


Figure 4.: Coding tree for interviews (source made by author).

The valued aspects and non-valued aspects of place that emerged from the interviews will be used to answer not only the fourth and fifth secondary research questions, but also compared to the aspects that have been taken into account in the policy documents of the Versnellingsagenda and ANNO III. Comparing the aspects mentioned by the (highly educated) youth from Frisian rural areas and policy documents from Frisian rural areas will thus shed light to potential extra measures that can be taken by the municipalities in Fryslân in order to combat youth out-migration and stimulate return migration.

### 3.4 Strategy and vision document review and analysis

Two policy documents, namely the Versnellingsagenda and ANNO III, will be studied. For this a qualitative approach was chosen again, as similarly to the interviews, it is about the content of the policy documents, not about the amount of times something is mentioned or the numbers included in the documents (Denscombe, 2017). As this thesis is interested with the words stated in these policy and strategy documents, a qualitative approach is used, similarly to used in the literature review. This research method allows the researcher to not focus on the numbers associated with these documents, but rather the content of the documents, the policies and the strategies.

The Versnellingsagenda and ANNO III were both chosen since these were policy documents both aimed to improve liveability in rural regions in Fryslân (Gemeente Noardeast-Fryslân, 2018; Gemeente Achtkarspelen, 2021). Through the improvement of liveability the regions associated with these policy documents aim to make these Frisian rural regions a more attractive place to live for youth, thus stimulating return migration of (highly educated) youth and combating out-migration by (highly educated) youth. Through this qualitative study aspects of place that are taken into account in these policy and strategy documents can be studied in order to see how they align with the aspects of place mentioned in the interviews.

These policy and strategy documents were read through and coded through the use of a coding tree (see figure 5). The coding tree was set up through deductive coding, meaning the codes that were used for initial coding came from literature before the analysis of coding of the policy and strategy documents and were thus used to test the theory presented in literature (Williams & Moser, 2019). Besides the use of deductive coding, the coding tree was modified according to inductive coding. This means that from the collected data, in this case the policy and strategy documents, codes were retrieved which could be attributed to improve aspects of place (Williams & Moser, 2019). However, as no new aspects of place were mentioned through the Through this coding strategy the contents of these documents will be analyzed.

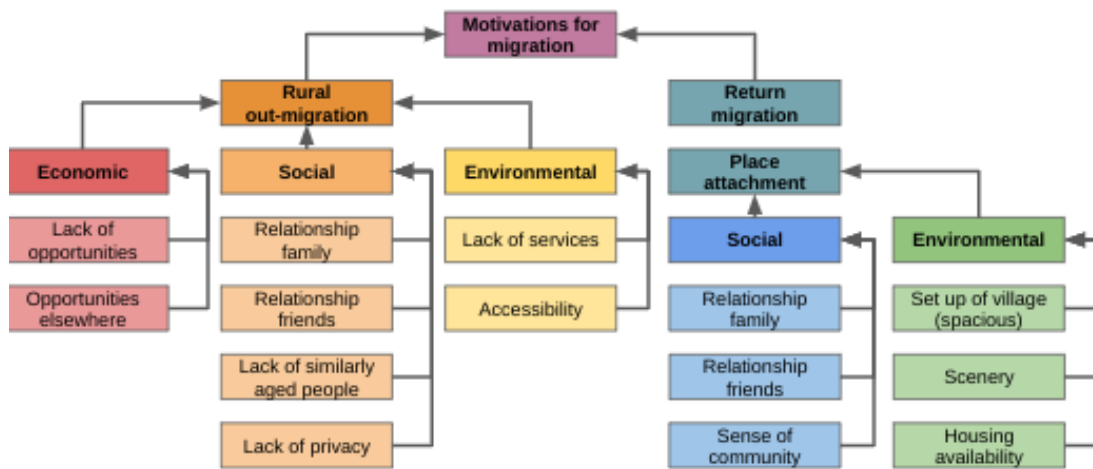


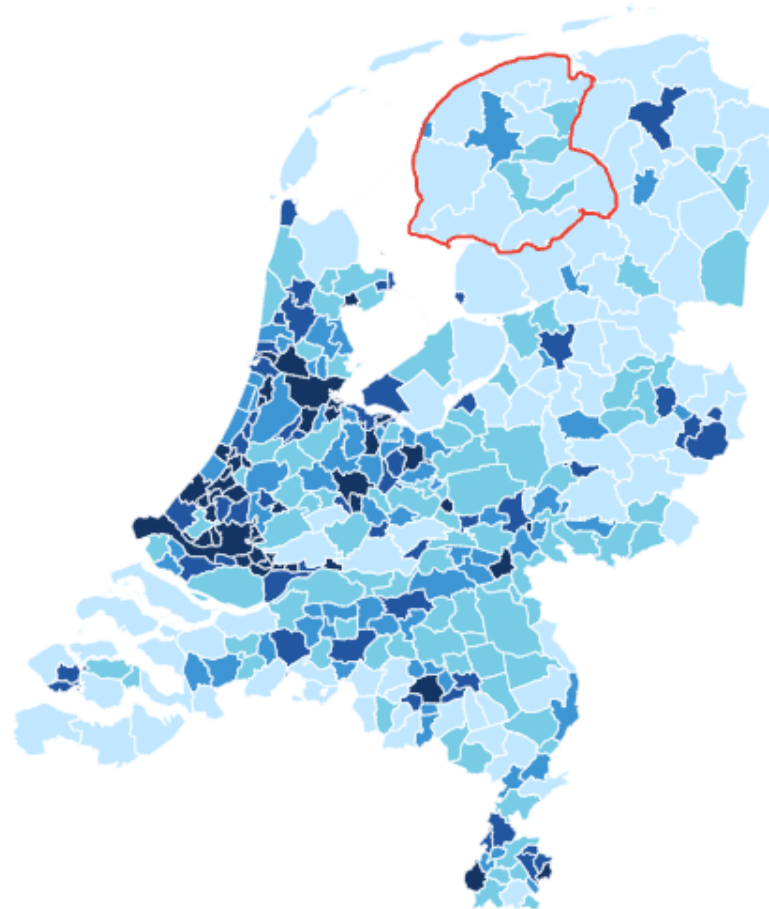
Figure 5.: Coding tree for policy and strategy document review and analysis (made by author).

This method answers the final secondary question. Furthermore, these aspects will be taken from the policy documents and compared to aspects mentioned in both the literature review and the interview results. Through doing this, it is possible to see whether or not there is some overlap between what is mentioned by the (highly educated) youth and the policies already in place. This shows whether or not the municipalities are already on their way to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration, or whether more steps are required to be taken.

### 3.5 Research context

This thesis will focus on combating out-migration and stimulating return migration in the rural areas of Fryslân. Fryslân is a province in the northern part of the Netherlands with its own language that, as of the first of January 2022, resides 654.000 inhabitants (Van Laanen, 2001; Frysk Sociaal Planbureau, 2022). While currently this number is slowly increasing, the population experienced a decline from 2011 to 2016, with a surplus of mortality in 2015 (Frysk Sociaal Planbureau, 2022). The population is spread out over the province creating a low population density. This is due to the rural aspect of the province. As can be seen in figure 6

(CBS, 2022) as opposed to the Randstad, which is an urban environment, the province of Fryslân has a low population density, as it is a rural environment.



*Figure 6.: A map showing the population density of the Netherlands with Fryslân highlighted in red (CBS, 2022). As can be seen, in comparison to the urban Randstad, which is darker in color indicating higher density, Fryslân is relatively light in color indicating a lower density.*

However, while the population is currently increasing again, the demographic composition is still changing due to migration from and to the province. As can be seen in figure 7, the population aged through 45 years old are experiencing a decline, while the population above 45 years old are experiencing an increase. This is due to a combination of the out-migration of the (highly educated) youth and the migration of retirees from the Randstad to the rural areas of Fryslân (Bock, 2016; Tremblay, 2001; Algemeen Dagblad, 2020). This leads to a decrease of workforce as the youth that are able and willing to work migrate away from the rural areas of Fryslân while retirees who are retired and thus not working are migrating to the rural areas of Fryslân.



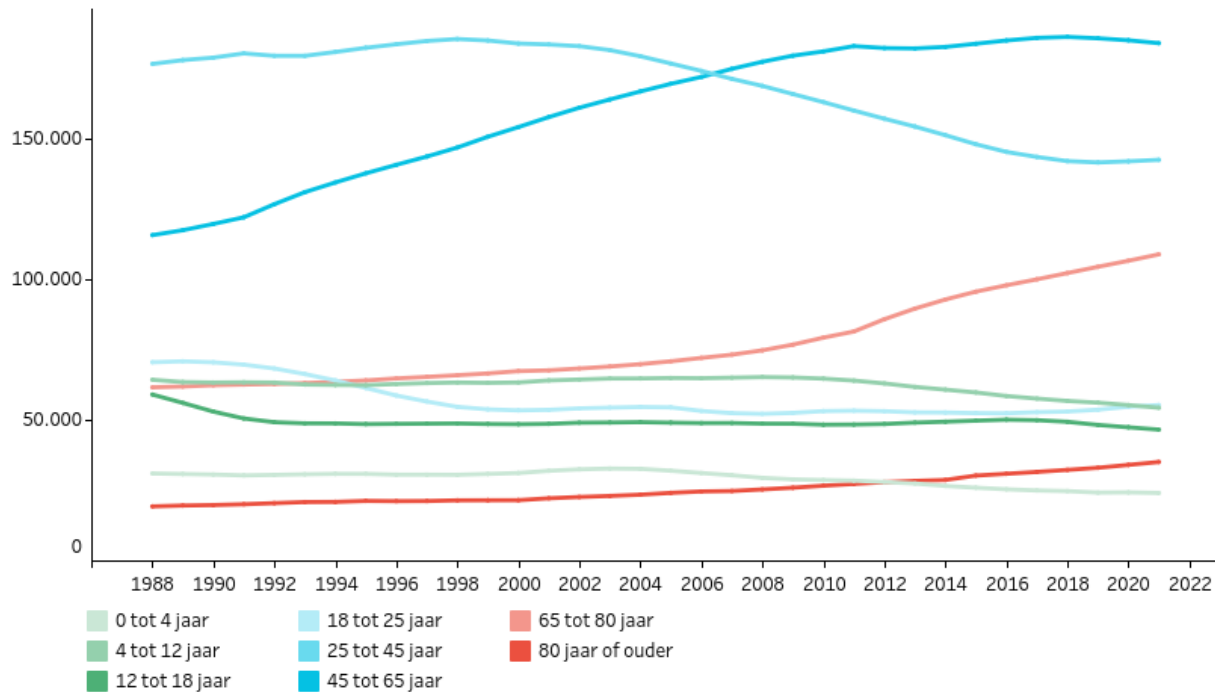


Figure 7.: The demographic composition of Fryslân between 1988 and 2022 (Frysk Sociaal Planbureau, 2022).

This research aims to provide insight into the motives of the (highly educated) youth to migrate away and back to the rural areas of Fryslân. These insights might prove to be useful for municipalities when designing strategy or vision documents in order to create an attractive place for the (highly educated) youth to live and work.

### 3.6 Research ethics

In order to ensure an ethical research this research followed the core principles of research ethics as presented in the book by Denscombe (2017). These principles are described below along with a description on how they are taken into account for this research.

Firstly, a researcher should protect the interest of the participants (Denscombe, 2017). This means that a participant in the research, in this case the interviewees, do not suffer any negative consequences due to the research conducted. In the case of this research the researcher does this through obscuring the identities of those involved in the research. While basic characteristics of those involved are used (gender, age, place of origin, et cetera) to describe an interviewee their names are obscured. This prevents any answer given by them to be linked to them and thus potentially causing harm to the interviewee.

Secondly, participation in the research should be voluntary and is based on informed consent (Denscombe, 2017). Interviewees should be able to refuse an interview as well as stop an interview at any given point. Furthermore, an interviewee should be informed on the use of their answers and have to have given consent for the aforementioned answers to be used. This was ensured through an informed consent form that was filled in by interviewees ahead of the

interview (see appendix 2). This informed them of their rights and gave them the choice to for instance refuse an audio recording of the interview.

Thirdly, an interviewer avoids the use of deception during an interview and operates with scientific integrity (Denscombe, 2017). An interviewer is open and honest about their intentions with the interview and how the answers given by the interviewee will be used in their research. This is achieved through first and foremost the information given ahead of the interview and answering any questions the interviewee may have on this information.

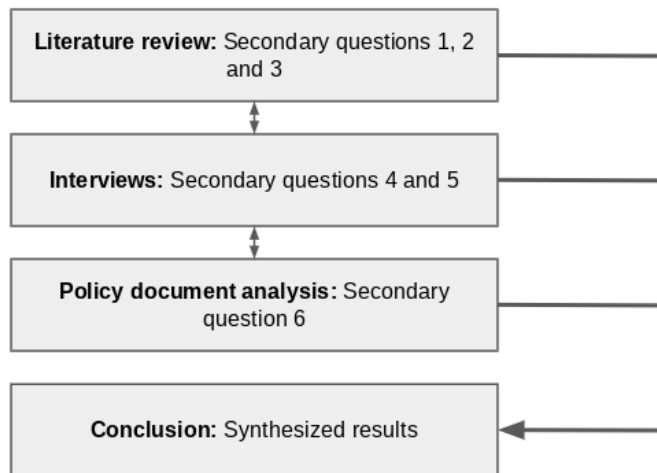
Lastly, an interview should be conducted within the laws that apply to the context in which the interview is conducted (Denscombe, 2017). The execution of this interview does not break any law as it follows the core principles of research ethics, thus providing an ethical manner of research.

### 3.7 Concluding remarks

The aforementioned three research methods will be synthesized in order to answer the main research question: What measures can be taken to combat the out-migration of highly educated youth in rural areas of Fryslân and how can place attachment potentially play a role in this? This will be achieved in the following fashion:

- The information gained through the literature review can be used to create the foundation for the interview questions as well as define the aspects that are necessary in the measures and find out how these can be used to combat out-migration. Furthermore, the aspects to cause/influence out-migration and return migration as shown in the literature review can be compared to the interviews in order to see the overlap;
- The interviews that will be conducted among (highly educated) youth allow to see what aspects of the rural areas of Fryslân value and do not value and can be compared to the literature review in order to see how other contexts compare to the rural areas of Fryslân. Furthermore, they can be compared to the results from the policy document review in order to see how the municipality is already combating out-migration and stimulating return migration and what steps can still be taken;
- The policy documents will be studied in order to see what aspects are included in order to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration. They will be compared to the results from the interviews in order to see to what extent they overlap and could thus be successful in combating out-migration and stimulating return migration of (highly educated) youth and what steps could still be taken.

These methods and how they interrelate with each other as well as the conclusion will be illustrated in figure 8.



*Figure 8.: Figure explaining the interrelationships between questions and/or the conclusion (made by author).*

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the results gathered through both interviews with young people from Fryslân and to a policy document study. The results from the interviews will discuss answers from respondents in order to answer the following secondary research questions:

- What are the motives of out-migration away from Frisian rural areas according to the (highly educated/ambitious) youth themselves?
- What aspects of their rural home places are the (highly educated) youth from Frisian rural areas attached to?

The results from the interview will discuss aspects mentioned throughout policy documents from Fryslân aimed at tackling the out-migration and stimulation of return migration by making living in these rural areas more attractive. This can be achieved by for instance improving the liveability of a region. The results from this policy documents study will be used to answer the following secondary research questions:

- What aspects are already being mentioned in the Versnellingsagenda and ANNO III and how do they compare to aspects mentioned by (highly educated) youth?

This chapter will be divided in subsections, each tackling a different research method and its secondary research question.

### 4.2 Results interviews with highly educated youth from Fryslân

#### 4.2.1 Motives to migrate away from the rural areas of Fryslân

##### 4.2.1.1 Economic motives

In terms of economic motives, a few of the interviewees indicated throughout the interview that the lack of opportunities in the rural areas of Fryslân would lead to them looking elsewhere in the pursuit of a career. Interviewees indicated that, due to the nature of their higher education, employment opportunities in the rural areas of Fryslân were either not up to their standards of education, limited or not available at all.

One of the interviewees stated that:

*"That is just the main difference, because for instance in Fryslân there are not a lot of technical companies, I think near Drachten there are still a few, but those are not on my level or they are companies where I cannot see myself working in the near future. ... I have been approached by people who said that I could do technical drawing for them, and that does not pay that badly, but if I am going to do that for the rest of my life I will not use my study at all, then I could have just as well done a small course on technical drawing." -Male, migrated*

This quote shows that, while opportunities are presented for this interviewee, the opportunities are not up to their standard of education. The interviewee indicates that they are

not interested in these opportunities that are of a lower standard of education as better opportunities in their field of interest exist.

Another interviewee showed that available opportunities for education and work were limited in their niche, therefore the question remained whether or not they could pursue their career in Fryslân:

*"Well, imagine if I were to work in Groningen, then I would still live in Fryslân. But then it should be stable, because first you have to go into training, go work, sometimes you get a temporary contract. If I get a permanent contract I know my future, and that kind of stuff. If I am able to travel I will go and live in Fryslân, if not then I find another nice place nearby. Then that will just be the case." -Female, migrated*

This interviewee indicates that whether or not they would live in Fryslân depends on whether or not the employment is present and stable. Through this quote it is indicated that not only availability of opportunities matter, however, the stability of these opportunities matters as well.

Lastly, the following quote by an interviewee indicates that job opportunities in their niche were slim to none in Fryslân:

*"I have also applied in Groningen, also Overijssel, eastern Netherlands, some job openings in Fryslân: it is really little. ... And if in my employment area there would be job openings in Fryslân or Groningen or whatever, then I would have moved back without a doubt. But that is not the case so that is why I am here." -Female, migrated*

Through this the interviewee showed that the lack of job openings in Fryslân acted as a barrier against return migration and therefore they stayed in the place where they migrated, such as Enschede or the Hague, after out-migration. In order to find a career within their interests they have to look elsewhere.

This indication that a lack of opportunities is able to influence the decision of out-migration is also highlighted in Findlay et al. (2009), indicating that with better academic education comes better economic opportunities. As for instance the first interviewee indicated, the opportunities that are present are not up to the standards of their academic education, thus not interesting to them. The last interviewee also indicated this, stating that the employment opportunities in their niche are slim to none. This is similar to the situation as described in an article by Machold et al. (2002), where the youth moves from the rural to the urban in pursuit of academic opportunities. The interviewees that stated the first and last aforementioned quotes highlight the same event occurring in the case of rural areas in Fryslân.

Besides a lack of opportunities, the availability of opportunities elsewhere has also been indicated by a few interviewees. These interviewees indicated that career plays a big role in their choice in a place of residence. The following interviewee stated that a career opportunity somewhere outside their home village would be a motivating factor to leave the Frisian rural areas:

*"... so for instance my career, if I want a good job elsewhere and that would happen to be in the city then it would take me some time to think but it would be some motivation to leave Surhuizum." -Male, remained*

Through this the interviewee shows that a promising career opportunity elsewhere could lead to out-migration towards another region.

Another interviewee stated the following:

*"Then I look here: here there are a lot of opportunities. That is why I am going to work in the Hague temporarily and I have an application in [REDACTED], that is around the corner here. So employment opportunities play a big role in why I still live here." -Female, migrated*

Stating that the amount of opportunities is higher in the urban environment, therefore leading the interviewee to prefer to live in the urban over the rural areas in that sense.

This motive has been discussed through literature by Auclair and Vanoni (2002), stating that a better future perspective is attained through finding a suitable career fitting the academic degree than returning to the rural environment and using an academic degree there. The interviewees indicated that opportunities were not present in the rural areas, thus making it unattractive to return. This is confirmed even further by the availability of fitting opportunities elsewhere, thus making out-migration more attractive.

#### 4.2.1.2 Social motives

The relationship to family has also been indicated as a motivation to migrate away from their place of upbringing by a couple of interviewees, for two different reasons. The following interviewee indicated that the quality which the relationship had at the time of the migration played a significant role in them migrating away from the rural areas of Fryslân, stating:

*"If situations at home would be good I would still live at home. I still wanted to live on my own, that was partially due to the situation at home, ..." -Female, migrated*

Through this the interviewee indicates that the negative quality of the relationship with their family at that time did play a role in the out-migration from the rural environment to the urban area.

Another perspective into the role of family being a motivation to migrate away comes from the following interviewee, indicating that while the relationship with their family is good, they need a certain distance from them. This becomes clear from the following quote:

*"I do not have to detach myself from my parents entirely but it is still the feeling like living in the village of your parents, with the people that you know." -Female, migrated*

While they still indicate that they want to keep contact with their parents, the interviewee wants to migrate elsewhere to have a certain distance from them.

This has also been highlighted in an article by Stockdale (2002), stating that the quality of a social relationship can influence the decision to migrate away from a place of upbringing.

This is in line with the first quote, stating that they moved away due to the quality of the relationship. However, it is important to keep in mind that Stockdale (2002) also mentioned that the quality can change, and with it, the decision to migrate.

In terms of out-migration, a few interviewees indicated that self-development was a reason to move away from their place of upbringing and migrate towards an urban area to be closer to their study. As the following interviewee stated after asking about a hypothetical situation in which they would be able to remain in their place of upbringing:

*"I did indicate that I would have probably still wanted to live on my own, but that would have been purely for personal development." -Male, migrated*

Indicating that if all other determinants of migrations were nullified, they still wanted to live on their own so they could develop themselves.

Another interviewee confirmed this through a shorter quote:

*"And at some point you just want to be on your own." -Female, migrated*

Indicating that at some point you want to be on your own, able to be on your own and develop the skills necessary to live on your own.

While the literature review offers no insight into this motive, it is an interesting motive nevertheless and should therefore be taken into account in the results.

#### 4.2.1.3 Environmental motives

A majority of the interviewees indicated a lack of services as something they perceived negatively to a certain extent about villages or in which they preferred the city. These interviewees indicated in some cases that the cities had more services available, while in other cases they indicated that their village severely lacked services.

The following interviewee indicated that they liked the cities more than villages, stating that the city has more services available:

*"In Surhuisterveen you have Kolkzicht and It Stee and then that is it, we also have two pizzerias. Sometimes I sit in Surhuisterveen and I am asked if I want to order some food and I get the choice between a food bar and pizzeria. Here in Groningen you have more choice, which I really like. Also in the sense of sport, I do not know if it is actually closer but yeah. I do kickboxing, here I can do it in the same city but in Surhuisterveen I have to go a few villages over. But I am not sure if the distance really matters that much. But that is what I like in the sense of services. And of course the festivals that are here in the summer, that stuff is organized where you can go out and enjoy your free time in the city, I like that." -Female, migrated*

Through this, the interviewee indicates that they prefer the city due to a bigger variety of choices in terms of various services, such as food services, sport services and entertainment services.

Another interviewee, however, indicated that while cities are often preferred due to their various choices, villages are often severely lacking in services:

*"It is kind of dead around here. ... There is little to do in the village itself. If you go to a bar for instance you will always run into the same people, a little bit older people as the younger people often go further away when going out. But also if you want to go to a store you will have to drive for around three kilometers minimum, and even then you are at a small supermarket. So if you want to go get real groceries you have to travel for five kilometers even." -Male, remained*

Through this the interviewee indicated that youth is forced to travel further to reach services, thus making life elsewhere more attractive in order to have more services.

This lack of services as a motive to migrate away from the rural areas has also been discussed through the literature review, as Phillips and Skinner (1994), Leyshon (2000) and Pavis et al. (2000) state that the lack of services is indeed something that drives the youth away from villages. As both interviewees state, having to travel further in order to reach basic services is not desirable, therefore it is something that should be taken into consideration when thinking of a solution.

Around half of the interviewees indicated traveling time as a motivation to migrate away from rural areas to urban areas. The following interviewee, for instance, stated that:

*"Well, I think an hour and a half of travel is a lot. That is even by car. With new rules and stuff it often runs up to two hours, which is way too much to do on a daily basis. And that is the primary reason. I don't really have a different reason. Imagine if I would be around ten minutes away, around half an hour by bike, I would have still lived at home probably. But that was just not the case." -Male, migrated*

Indicating that traveling time played a big role in the decision to out-migrate or not.

Another interviewee, however, also indicated that they would migrate closer to the urban area in order to decrease traveling time towards available services, such as concerts for instance. Stating that they would prefer the choice to visit the bustle of the city in 20 minutes, furthermore:

*"... because if I look at my parents and last weekend, when we visited Groningen, then I had to travel 45 minutes by car, then take the bus to the city center, walk for a bit, in total that took over an hour. That is not something I want to do every weekend." -Female, migrated*

This interviewee indicates that services should not only be available, however, also be within reach within a reasonable amount of time. Traveling an hour is not something that they would like to do every weekend, thus migrating closer to the city would be desirable.

While the literature review does not include literature on this topic, it is a valid motive to take into account when thinking of measures.



## 4.2.2 Aspects of place attachment that could lead to return migration to the rural areas of Fryslân

### 4.2.2.1 Place attachment: Social motives

A majority of respondents indicated that they felt a certain attachment to their place of upbringing due to family still living in this region, which would also influence their choice of living somewhere. The following quote comes from an interviewee who stated that:

*"But it is real personal, I have my network in Kootstertille, my friends, my family, that is the sentimental part of me returning to Fryslân every weekend. It is because of me having my social factors still there, so to speak." -Female, migrated*

Indicating that they indeed felt a certain sentimental connection to Fryslân due their family still living in their place of upbringing, thus returning to Fryslân every weekend to be close to them.

When asked about whether or not they would allow their choice of place to live to be influenced by their family, the following interviewee stated this:

*"A bit, yeah. I do take it into consideration, but if I were to find a nice house a bit further away than that is just the way it is. If I think this is it then that is it. Then I will move there. But I will take it into account. If I were to have the choice between two houses, one is a bit closer, same quality, then I would choose the one closer." -Male, remained*

Indicating that family would indeed influence their decision to choose a place to live.

This is in line with what is provided in the literature review, as Niedomsyl and Amcoff (2011) and Farrell et al. (2012) both state that family, as well as friends, create a sense of place attachment and thus a reason to move back.

Around half of the interviewees also indicated that their relationship with friends in the region influenced their choice in place to live to various degrees. The following interviewee, for instance, stated this:

*"Preferably a bit closer than further away, because it is always handy to be closer to friends if you have the choice, so you will always take it into account. Of course I will not start looking in Drenthe instead of Fryslân, but if there is nothing there I will look further away, for instance in Groningen, if there is a nice house there." -Male, remained*

Indicating that while not being a deciding factor in choosing a place to live, it is something that would influence the degree of closeness to the place of upbringing.

Another interviewee gave the following quote:

*"Other than that, there are friends in the region that I would like to continue to visit, but if that is a 45 minutes drive away then that is okay to me. I would not say that there is a friend that I*

*would like to live next door to, but of course there are still friends that I would like to still visit, so it would be nice to be able to be in the proximity of them." -Male, migrated*

Confirming the statement by the previous interviewee.

This statement is again covered in the literature review by Niedomsyl and Amcoff (2011) and Farrell et al. (2012), who state that relationships to friends are a cause of place attachment and thus could potentially play a role in the return migration of youth.

Sense of community is also an aspect that a majority of the interviewees experienced in the Frisian rural village in which they were brought up. An interviewee indicates that, while the current place in which they reside contains the greenery that they desire, they miss the contact with other people from the neighborhood:

*"What I truly miss is the sense of community, kinship with others. It does not feel like I am a part of this (Beijum). A little bit, since I live in Beijum and I love this neighborhood, but I know nothing of the people that live here. That is the biggest difference and what I miss most about a village. I have a few neighbors that I sometimes talk to, but it is not that you truly know them. That is what I really miss." -Female, migrated*

A sense of community is something that this interviewee experiences in the village in which they grew up, however, not in the urban environment of Beijum. This could potentially lead to return migration, due to the fact that this sense of community is something that this interviewee indicates to miss in the new urban environment.

Another interviewee stated the following when asked what they value about the place they grew up:

*"That you have a lot of contacts, that you are free to greet each other in the street. In the supermarket you often stop and make small talk with someone. If I, for instance, see some classmates from elementary school in the street then I greet them, ask them how they are doing. I feel like that is a lot less in a bigger city such as Groningen. I feel like you ignore each other more often there than in a small village where you grew up, where you really know each other a bit more." -Female, migrated*

Confirming the sense of community present in villages that the previous interviewee was missing.

Altman and Low (1992) and Ní Laoire (2007) confirm this, stating that villages provide this sense of community that residents value, however, urban environments do not. Therefore, the sense of community is something that is often missed by migrants and creates place attachment.

As Fryslân is the only province in the Netherlands with a distinct language, Frisian, the connection to Frisian culture was also taken into consideration when conducting interviews. Out of the nine interviewees, six interviewees indicated that they were able to conduct the interview in Frisian and thus spoke the Frisian language. Out of these respondents, five respondents

indicated that their connection to the Frisian culture was certainly a driving factor for returning to Fryslân. During the interview the interviewer noticed a poster hanging in the room, from which the following conversation originated:

*"Like the poster that hangs behind you, "kist t famke wol út Fryslân helje mar Fryslân net út t famke" (you can take the girl out of Fryslân but not Fryslân out of the girl)?"*

*"Of course, I think that is really typical. I cannot see myself living in a village in Groningen, I am too Frisian for that. I would survive that and I would like it, but I am still too Frisian for that."*  
*-Female, migrated*

While Fryslân is easily reachable from Groningen, the interviewee indicated that the connection to the Frisian culture was too great to accept residence in another province.

Furthermore, throughout the interviews small indications of a connection to the Frisian culture were mentioned, such as the following quote:

*"I feel at home here, I can speak my own language, ..."* -Male, remained

Indicating that the ability to speak their own language is something that makes someone feel at place and have a connection to that place.

While the literature in the literature review is lacking on this type of motive, it is important due to it being specific to the Frisian rural areas and how place attachment is formed to these regions.

#### 4.2.2.2 Place attachment: Environmental motives

One of the issues that interviewees were experiencing overall (in both urban and rural environments) is the shortage of housing available. This was not stated as a motivation to migrate away from the rural area as the problem is experienced in general throughout the Netherlands, however, it is something that prevents interviewees from leaving their current place of residence and moving back to their place of upbringing. A majority of interviewees indicated to experience problems in terms of housing availability. One of these interviewees stated that:

*"We are dealing with a housing shortage and people that currently live at home with their parents or live in another village because they cannot find a place here is worrying to me. There have to be more houses so people that do want to live here are able to live here. People that also originate from here and choose for Surhuizum, not people that just come from elsewhere and are looking for a living place in the northern part of the Netherlands."* -Male, remained

Combining the housing availability and connection to Frisian culture, this interviewee states that there is not enough housing available to live in Fryslân.

Another interviewee, when asked about any additional comments for the interview, stated three simple words:

*"Build more houses."* -Male, remained

Confirming the statement made by the previous interviewee.

The literature review offers no support for this claim, however, as this is a topical issue and one of the bigger barriers against return migration this should be taken into consideration when creating new measures.

Every interviewee indicated that scenery is something that they find pleasant when thinking of Frisian rural villages. Three different perspectives have been mentioned throughout the interview. One interviewee, for instance, indicated that they perceive the nature in Fryslân as pleasant, cycling through the meadows in order to reach the nearby forests:

*“Yes. I do think that some beautiful nature in the surroundings is important to me. And for instance in Enschede you have a lot of forests nearby, beautiful with good mountain bike trails where you can mountain bike. And for instance in Fryslân you have mostly meadows surrounding our village, but if you go a bit further, if you search well you have a few nice forests or for instance a mountain bike trail, you just have to cycle a bit further which is not that bad. Because I would rather cycle a bit through the meadows than that I would have to cycle through the city where you have to stop for every traffic light.” -Male, migrated*

This interviewee thus indicates that nature is an important part of attachment to place for them, indicating that they prefer cycling through the meadows in Fryslân to reach this nature over the urban environment of Enschede.

Two other interviewees show that, besides nature surrounding the village, the architecture of the village itself also has the potential to reach a certain level of attachment to the Frisian rural villages, however, this is being threatened:

*“And above that, a bar or cafe, if you see it, is often a more beautiful building. It has a certain place in its street scene. If you make a modern apartment complex, that also kind of destroys the image of that street scene. I think that is also important.”*

*“In Drogeham it is the same story. Near the old gas station there is also an apartment complex, but it totally clashes with the street scene of typical housing. It is way more modern and luxurious in that regard. It does not make sense. It is surrounded by housing from 1950 and stuff.” -Male, remained*

Talking about an old bar and an old hotel being turned into an apartment complex, these interviewees indicate that the street image is important to them, thus playing a role in the attachment to place for them.

Also, the calmness of the Frisian rural village in contrast to the bustle of the urban environment of a city is something that makes the following interviewee, among other interviewees, appreciate the Frisian rural village over the city:

*“Usually my motivation is that in the city you can barely find calmness, or it is hard to do so, but if you live in a village you can choose between calmness and business. If you want to go to a busy place you go to the city and if you want some peace and quiet you stay at home.” -Male, remained*

This interviewee indicates that a village provides calmness all around, however, allows you to leave this calmness to find a more busy place. However, the city does not offer this opportunity, since as soon as you step outside you are in its bustle, having to look for calmness.

Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) confirm this statement, stating that the environmental component of the rural areas also has the ability to raise attachment to place. This can be found in the previous examples, such as greenery, street image or just general calmness.

The set up of a village, meaning more space surrounding the house, is something that a majority of interviewees also indicate to value, describing their future dream home as being a detached house. One interviewee indicates that the space in a village is important to them:

*“Definitely the space, and the fact that you are easily outside the village, if you want to go for a walk you do not have to go through the village or through the center but you can easily get out. It is also the village where you grew up, so also the people that you know and run into. A bit of a sense of community.” -Female, migrated*

Indicating that the spacious design of a village is not only important, but also the possibility to go through a walk outside the village which is easily accessible.

Another interviewee confirms this, stating:

*“Space as well. People are so cramped up together, you really have to take each other into account. In the house as well, I have to take my roommates into account already, but also our neighbors upstairs are often making noise, we cannot party too well into the night, not that we do so, but we cannot do that because we have neighbors all around us. Then we get the police here for a noise complaint. ... Yes, like my parents would not have those types of problems, but here I never play music.” -Female, migrated*

Indicating that in the urban environment the interviewee feels like they have to be careful due to neighbors, while in the rural environment there is some room around the house allowing a bit more freedom.

Again, Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) confirm this statement, as the set up of the village is another environmental component that is valued among the interviewees.

#### 4.2.3 Motives for migrate back to the rural areas of Fryslân (besides place attachment)

##### 4.2.3.1 Economic motives

If housing would be available, around half of the interviewees would prefer the rural areas of Fryslân over urban areas due to the cheaper prices of living. One of these interviewees, who is already looking for a house in the rural areas of Fryslân, stated the following:

*“... and what I also think is an advantage is the price of a house in Fryslân in comparison to Groningen, if you were to pay 300000 euros for a house here you get a much bigger house than*

*when comparing to Groningen, you get much more value for your money. You get a garden, and that kind of stuff, while in Groningen you probably get a terraced house, or even an apartment, and I personally prefer having a real house, a detached house." -Male, remained*

Showing that for the same amount of money this interviewee could find a better house in a village in Fryslân than he could find a house in the city of Groningen.

Another interviewee, however, has a different perspective on the matter, showing that while houses are cheaper in the rural areas in Fryslân, buying a house is more expensive than compared to paying rent every month:

*"Another example, a friend of mine showed me that he could get an apartment the size of a small single-storey house for around 600 euros per month. They think that it is much more attractive to live in the city than in a village because they can get it for cheap while in a village you easily lose around 250000 euro, which is a big investment." -Male, remained*

However, the friend they were referring to was still studying, thus taking on the load of buying a house in combination with the decreased amount of income could play a part in this.

The literature review provides no supporting literature, however, taking this motive into account could be useful when designing measures.

## 4.3 Results from strategy and vision document review and analysis of the 'Versnellingsagenda' and 'ANNO III'

### 4.3.1 Economic strategies and visions to combat out-migration

In order to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration the strategy document the Versnellingsagenda (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018) and the vision document ANNO III (Achtkarspelen, 2021), both collaborations between the municipalities Achtkarspelen, Dantumadiel, Noardeast-Fryslân and Tytsjerkadiel, came up with several tools to tackle economic issues, namely the lack of opportunities in the rural areas of the northeastern part of Fryslân. These tools can be split up in two different manners in tackling economic issues:

1. Creating opportunities for employees to develop further and find a suitable career;
2. Creating opportunities for employers to settle in a suitable environment with enough resources.

This text will highlight these economic development tools, show the issues that they tackle and connect them to the previous interviews and literature.

#### 4.3.1.1 Creating opportunities for employees to develop

In order to work in a flexible job market, the Versnellingsagenda aims to set up a platform that eases the search for a job and the ability to switch careers (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). This tool, called "mobility center", aims to ease the job searching process and thus remove the struggle of finding a suitable opportunity for (among others) the (highly educated) youth. This tool is aimed to combat the decrease in labor force, as the labor force in the northeastern part of Fryslân has decreased 7% in the last 10 years while the national

average has remained stagnant (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018)). Furthermore, Machold et al. (2002) shows that one of the reasons for out-migration of (highly educated) youth is the lack of opportunities. Creating an easier manner to find a suitable career might stop a fraction of the migrating demographic. Interviewees have also indicated that the struggle to find a job was a reason to migrate away from the rural areas of Fryslân.

"Agile craftsmanship" is the term used to describe the cooperation between educational facilities and employers to educate personnel together, leading to higher educated employees (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). Rather than helping individuals find a career after their studies, this tool aims to help these individuals to find a career during their study. Similar to the previous tool, the goal is to combat the decrease in labor force experienced in the northeastern part of Fryslân (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). While not directly connected to the article by Machold et al. (2002), opportunities that combine study and career might combat out-migration due to the lack of economic opportunities. Moreover, interviewed students did not indicate the necessity of opportunities that combine study and career. However, these students were already attending a university study. Therefore, had the opportunity been presented to them before, they might have responded positively.

Continuous stimulation of further development for students, parents and teachers will be achieved through so-called "ambition routes" (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). These routes will be implemented in order to ensure further development of education and lifelong learning and improve the connection between education and the labor market in a sustainable manner. By improving the connection between education and the labor market students might flow into the labor market more effectively, thus combating the decrease in labor force (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). As Machold et al. (2002) state, the (highly educated) youth migrates away due to the lack of opportunities. If one of these opportunities is lifelong learning the tool would fit the literature frame. While not mentioned by the interviewees, further development of education and lifelong learning might suit their interests as well.

Lastly, the vision document ANNO III sees the education sector as a development opportunity in order to make Fryslân more liveable (Gemeente Achtkarspelen, 2021). While the document does not specify what type of developments have been envisioned, the document states that there are multiple opportunities to improve this sector. As the document does not provide a clear frame of reference on what is planned, it is not clear to what extent this measure connects to literature or connects to the answers of the interviewees.

#### 4.3.1.2 Creating opportunities for employers to settle

In the Versnellingsagenda the plan to set up a campus where companies and knowledge institutions can come together in order to innovate the construction industry and its materials (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). By combining the expertise of the construction industry and the knowledge of knowledge institutions new processes and materials might be developed through this collaboration. Through this strategy it might become more attractive for companies to settle in Fryslân, as they are presented with the opportunity to collaborate with knowledge institutes and thus innovate their processes and products. This leads to a cheaper production

process and more profit. This tool is aimed at creating more employment opportunities. As employment opportunities have decreased with 2,5% in the northeastern part of Fryslân while the national average has increased with 7,5% it seems in the best interest of the region to combat this decrease (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). Furthermore, attracting companies potentially increases the amount of economic opportunities for the (highly educated) youth, which might be able to stop the out-migration due to the lack of opportunities (Machold et al., 2002). Furthermore, this is in line with what interviewees indicated: creating a collaboration between companies and knowledge institutions might create a more attractive environment for companies, thus attracting more companies suitable for (highly educated) youth. Unfortunately this measure is limited to the building sector.

Furthermore, the lower the barrier for companies to settle in the northeastern part of Fryslân even more, the Versnellingsagenda introduces shared facilities centers (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). As a company needs certain facilities in order to fully establish a branch in the northeastern region of Fryslân, the Versnellingsagenda aims to provide the ability to share these facilities, thus lowering the costs of establishing a branch as facilities are present for companies to use. Similar to the previously mentioned tool, through the shared facilities centers the municipalities involved in the Versnellingsagenda aim to combat the decrease in employment opportunities by lowering the barriers that companies experience against settling in Fryslân (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). This also brings forth potential new opportunities for highly educated people, something that Machold et al. (2002) presents a necessity for opportunities, since highly educated people are leaving for urban areas due to a lack of suitable opportunities in the rural areas. This is in line with what interviewees wanted, where opportunities were lacking for highly educated people, where this provides a chance for new companies to move there. Unfortunately this measure is only limited to the metal sector, therefore more steps need to be taken.

The sharing of knowledge is also stimulated through the Versnellingsagenda (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). Through so-called 'knowledge meetings' gained knowledge is shared between companies in order to stimulate entrepreneurship. This has the opportunity to lead to more businesses through the stimulation of entrepreneurship, however, similar to setting up a campus it also creates an attractive environment for companies to set up a branch in the northeastern region of Fryslân. Creating an attractive environment for companies helps combat the decrease in employment opportunities as attracting companies creates new employment opportunities. These employment opportunities might combat the out-migration by (highly educated) youth as described by Machold et al. (2002) as the lack of opportunities is decreasing. Furthermore, this would also be in line with what interviewees stated, as this would bring more companies to the region. However, these measures are limited to the building, metal and agrifood sector, thus in other sectors more steps are required.

As the northeastern part of Fryslân is a global frontrunner in the agrifood sector the Versnellingsagenda aim to have an economically smart and ecologically responsible agricultural sector that is able to present itself as a knowledge lab for the rest of the Netherlands (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). As has been stated in the Versnellingsagenda, the northeastern part



of Fryslân is a global frontrunner in the sector agrifood (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). In order to fully profit from this global position, presenting itself as a knowledge lab for the rest of the Netherlands would bring more opportunities for this sector to the region and thus create more potential opportunities for the (highly educated) youth. Therefore it could potentially combat out-migration as presented by Machold et al. (2002) by (highly educated) youth who are involved in the agrifood sector due to a lack of opportunities. Bringing more companies would also benefit the interviewees, however, this opportunity is limited to the agrifood sector.

Lastly, the vision document ANNO III (Gemeente Achtkarspelen, 2021) presents the intent to tackle the economy even further. Topics that were not discussed in the Versnellingsagenda but will contribute to the liveability and vitality of the region in terms of economy will be taken into account in ANNO III. As the previous tools as discussed in the Versnellingsagenda focussed primarily on the building, metal and agrifood sector this intent might create further opportunities in sectors that have not yet been discussed in these strategy and vision documents. Therefore it might fit the concerts as presented by Machold et al. (2002) and the interviewees more.

#### 4.3.2 Environmental strategies and visions to combat out-migration

The Versnellingsagenda (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018) and ANNO III (Gemeente Achtkarspelen, 2021) also focus on improving the environment of the rural region of northeast Fryslân. Through several tools that stimulate the improvement of services a higher liveability and thus a region that is attractive to live is to be achieved. This can be achieved through two different methods, as seen in the strategy and vision document:

- The improvement of services in general;
- The promotion of the region, thus creating a market for improved services.

This text will highlight these environmental development tools, show the issues that they tackle and connect them to the previous interviews and literature.

##### 4.3.2.1 Improvement of services in general

ANNO III aims to improve the communal services and general real estate of the northeastern part of Fryslân (Gemeente Achtkarspelen, 2021). As Bock (2016) states, the out-migration of (highly educated) youth might lead to a decrease in liveability due to the disappearance of services. This tool is aimed at making the northeastern part of Fryslân a more attractive place to live, as is the goal of ANNO III (Gemeente Achtkarspelen, 2021). There still has to be a survey of what should and could be done, however, this proves to be an opportunity to improve an aspect that the youth indicated to find lacking: the availability of services. This current lack of services is supported by the articles by Phillips and Skinner (1994), Leyshon (2000) and Pavis et al. (2000), who state that a lack of services could lead to the migration of youth to the urban areas in pursuit of services. Furthermore, this is in line with what the interviewees stated, as they indicated having to travel further to reach basic services. Creating more services nearby would cut down traveling time, thus combating the reason to migrate away.

Moreover, ANNO III aims to improve accessibility (Gemeente Achtkarspelen, 2021). The question remains how this will be tackled or how the pandemic and working from home play a role in this. While the studied literature did not indicate anything on accessibility, interviewees indicated having to travel further for services than in an urban setting. Therefore, this would perhaps prove to be an improvement in this aspect and thus in line with what the interviewees indicated to be interested in.

#### 4.3.2.2 Promotion of the northeastern part of Fryslân

Destinational and regional marketing of the northeastern part of Fryslân is one of the tools taken into account for the Versnellingsagenda (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). This strategy shows that marketing of the region to tourists from outside the region provides more income, thus allowing the region to combat the decreasing development over the last ten years (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018). While this also allows for more economic opportunities for the (highly educated) youth (Machold et al., 2002), the promotion of the northeastern part of Fryslân comes with the necessity for better services to support to flow of tourists to the region. Both the necessity and the income generated by the tourists allow for more and better services, which have been stated to be useful in combating out-migration by Phillips and Skinner (1994), Leyshon (2000) and Pavis et al. (2000). Furthermore, an increase of economic opportunities and services would be in line with what has been indicated by interviewees.

Next, ANNO III similarly aims to promote the environment of the rural regions of northeastern Fryslân (Gemeente Achtkarspelen, 2021). This approach is similar to the approach used by the Versnellingsagenda (Gemeente Noardeast Fryslân, 2018), however, the approach of the vision is not yet clear from the vision document. Similar to the strategy document, this vision has the opportunity to create economic opportunities and new services (Machold et al., 2002; Phillips and Skinner (1994); Leyshon (2000); Pavis et al. (2000)). This would similarly be in line with what interviewees have indicated.

#### 4.3.3 Place attachment: Social strategies and visions to stimulate return migration

ANNO III indicates that the municipalities that associate with the vision document understand the importance of a community in creating a more liveable region (Gemeente Achtkarspelen, 2021). However, as the vision document shows no further explanation on how this will be used or achieved, it is not possible to state what its effects will be. However, literature has mentioned the effects of a sense of community. This sense of community has also been described in articles by both Altman and Low (1992) and Ní Laoire (2007), showing that rural villages offer a sense of community that urban areas are unable to. Using these communities to improve liveability could act as an extra stimulant. However, as the steps that will be taken are unknown, its effects and connection to what interviewees have stated are also unknown.

#### 4.3.4 Place attachment: Environmental strategies and visions to stimulate return migration

ANNO III stated the necessity of tackling issues concerning the availability of housing (Gemeente Achtkarspelen, 2021). The vision document states that this will potentially be achieved through the use of flexible (circular) housing. This would help liveability as is the goal of the vision document ANNO III, as some interviewees indicated that one of the issues they experienced when finding housing in Fryslân is the availability of it, often being outbid by someone from outside of the village. More housing would provide the opportunity for these (highly educated) youth to move back to the rural areas, thus stimulating return migration.

#### 4.4 Concluding remarks

As can be seen in the strategy and document analysis, the Versnellingsagenda and ANNO III tackle economic and environmental motives for out-migration while stimulating social and environmental motives (for place attachment) for return migration. These tools were mostly in line with what interviewees stated to be interested in for combating out-migration and stimulating return migration. However, still some motives for out-migration and return migration were left out of policy documents. In terms of economic motives, opportunities elsewhere can not be stopped by a strategy or vision document as the government of Fryslân can only influence its own region. Furthermore, as both literature and interviewees have indicated, relationships to family and friends can also influence the desire to migrate away, nevertheless, a document can not influence this as this is a private motive rather than something related to the public domain. The same goes for social influences that stimulate return migration: the relationship with family and friends can not be influenced by governmental influence, similarly to how the set up of a village or its scenery cannot be influenced by government through policy documents as it is a matter of opinion. Therefore, the strategy and vision documents have taken into account the aspects of place that they were able to tackle as indicated by both literature and interviewees.

## 5. Conclusion

Concluding, this thesis aims to answer the question as presented in the introduction:

*What aspects of place can be used to combat the out-migration and stimulate return migration of (highly educated) youth in rural areas of Fryslân and how can place attachment potentially play a role in this?*

This question was answered using three different research methods, each representing a step through which a final answer could be reached.

Through literature review it was possible to see what caused rural out-migration in order to see what aspects should be tackled in order to potentially combat rural out-migration. Literature showed that motives of out-migration could be subdivided into three different categories: economic, social and environmental motives. Economic motives can be characterized by a "carrot and stick" analogy, where (highly educated) youth is pushed away from the rural areas due to a lack of opportunities while being attracted to urban areas such as the Randstad due to opportunities there. Social motives can be considered to be for instance a negative relationship that an individual has with family and friends, but also a lack of similarly aged people or a lack of privacy that can be considered to be characteristics of a rural village. Environmental motives are considered as motives that originate from the environment of a rural Frisian village, in this case the lack of services that characterize a rural environment.

Furthermore, literature also showed the cause of return migration, which was mainly caused by an attachment to place, in this case an attachment to the rural areas of Fryslân. This place attachment was caused by two different types of motives: an attachment to the social aspect of a rural Frisian village and an attachment to the environmental aspect of a rural Frisian village. The attachment to the social aspect of a rural Frisian village is caused by for instance a positive relationship that an individual experiences to family and friends that remained in the rural Frisian village, however this can also be caused by the sense of a community which characterizes a village. Attachment to the environmental aspect of a village can be caused by the set up of a village (as it is set up with more space than an urban environment) and the scenery of a village.

Interviews were conducted next in order to find out what the (highly educated) youth themselves considered their biggest motives of out-migration and return migration to be. In terms of motives for out-migration, interviewees indicated that the rural areas of Fryslân indeed lack the economic opportunities that they are looking for, as has been stated by Findlay et al. (2009) and Machold et al. (2002). Furthermore, interviewees indicated that, besides a lack of opportunities in Fryslân, opportunities elsewhere were also a motive for out-migration. This confirms literature on the topic, as Auclair and Vanoni (2002) stated that (highly educated) youth would rather find a suitable career to their academic degree elsewhere than take a lower career in their place of origin. In terms of social motives of out-migration, interviewees indicated that a bad relationship to their family did indeed count for a motive of out-migration, confirming what was stated by Stockdale (2002). Interviewees indicated that, even with a good relationship to

family, at some point they required a certain distance between them and family. Moreover, interviewees indicated that they migrated away from their places of upbringing in order to develop themselves. This was not stated by literature. In terms of environmental motives, interviewees indicated that a lack of services, as was also stated by Phillips and Skinner (1994), Leyshon (2000) and Pavis et al. (2000), was a motive to migrate away from the rural areas of Fryslân. Unlike literature, traveling time was also considered a motive to migrate away from rural areas of Fryslân and live closer to urban areas.

In terms of (potential) motives for return migration, place attachment played an important role according to interviewees. In terms of social motives, as Niedomsyl and Amcoff (2011) and Farrell et al. (2012) already stated in their articles, interviewees confirmed that the presence of family and friends played a role in wanting to migrate back to the rural areas of Fryslân. Furthermore, interviewees indicated to miss the sense of a community that a rural village has to offer but often lacks in urban environments. This was also stated in literature by Altman and Low (1992) and Ní Laoire (2007). Similarly, interviewees indicated to miss the Frisian culture that could be found in rural Frisian villages. Studied literature did not mention this. Besides the social aspects of place attachment, interviewees also indicated to value the environmental aspects of place attachment. One of the issues, however, they experienced in this regard was a lack of housing. As this is a topical issue, no articles stated something similar. However, literature did state that the scenery of a village was a reason to migrate back to the rural areas of Fryslân, as Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) and interviewees show. The spacious set up of a village was also stated by interviewees and Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) as a reason for return migration. Lastly, besides place attachment, interviewees indicated that an economic motive, the costs of living in Fryslân, made them want to return to Fryslân.

Strategy and vision document analysis showed that economic strategies were used to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration, such as creating opportunities for the (highly educated) youth to find suitable opportunities for for instance development or careers. Machold et al. (2002) confirmed this as something that could help combat out-migration by (highly educated) youth. Furthermore, creating opportunities for companies to settle in Fryslân was taken into consideration by strategy and vision documents. This could create more opportunities as more businesses settle, thus aligning with what was stated by Machold et al. (2002).

In terms of environmental aspects, the strategy and vision documents showed that services would be improved, as was also mentioned by interviewees and Phillips and Skinner (1994), Leyshon (2000) and Pavis et al. (2000). Promotion of the regions was also taken into account in strategy and vision documents and could also be used to spark more income and thus create more demand for services.

In terms of place attachment, the vision document ANNO III wanted to use a sense of community in creating a more liveable region. This would align with what interviewees wanted and what Altman and Low (1992) and Ní Laoire (2007) stated to be valued in rural areas.

Furthermore, in terms of place attachment environmental visions described fixing the housing issue. This is in line with what interviewees stated.

In conclusion, this thesis shows that in order to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration investments as presented by Bock (2019) are needed in the rural areas of Fryslân as well as protection for aspects that people value as presented by Altman and Low (1992). Economic aspects require investments in order to for instance opportunities for (highly educated) youth in the rural areas of Fryslân. Environmental aspects require investments in order to for instance provide necessary services for (highly educated) youth in the rural areas of Fryslân. However, place attachment as described by Altman and Low (1992) also plays a significant role in combating out-migration and return migration. This does not only call for change, but also ensures that aspects valued by the (highly educated) youth that thus create attachment to the rural areas of Fryslân remain unaltered. Interviewees indicated that for instance the sense of community that the rural areas provide or the Frisian culture that is part of the province of Fryslân is an aspect that they value, therefore should remain unaltered in order to attract the (highly educated) youth.

## 6. Reflection and recommendations

For planning theory and practice this thesis recommends that place attachment is taken into account in a more serious manner when trying to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration in an area with declining population. As current planning theory and practice often show that investments are required or are being made in a region with declining population (as Bock (2019) and the strategy and vision document show), it is important to keep in mind that certain aspects that people value have to remain unaltered. These valued aspects have also been proven to be efficient in creating motives to remain in a Frisian rural area or return to a Frisian rural area as has been shown throughout this thesis. By using a combination of changing aspects that are lacking while keeping aspects that are valued an optimum of combating out-migration and stimulating return migration might be achieved. However, this should be tested in practice.

While this thesis did provide some insights into the aspects that motivate out-migration and return migration by (highly educated) youth from and to rural areas of Fryslân, it is important to acknowledge the shortcomings of the thesis as well. This section will provide readers with the shortcomings of this thesis as well as some corresponding entry-points that can stimulate future research.

Firstly, this thesis aimed to explain rural out-migration and return migration for the province of Fryslân, however, its interviewees came from two municipalities within this province: the municipality of Achtkarspelen and Ooststellingwerf. In focussing on these two municipalities the rest of Fryslân is left out of the research and is thus not sufficiently represented in the results. The same goes for the studied policies, which are only focussed on one region in Fryslân: Noardeast-Fryslân. Therefore, a better representation of Fryslân could have been achieved through the inclusion of a wider spread of interviewees. This can be done through future and more professional research, by for instance asking for information of students through the Rijksuniversiteit of Groningen, sending an invitation for an interview and have the different regions of Fryslân be more accurately represented through a wider spread of interviewees.

Secondly, as this thesis aimed to gain insights into why the rural (highly educated) youth migrates and what policies were doing to combat out-migration and stimulate return migration, it would be interesting to see what the experts who design these policies would have to say on the matter. This thesis did approach a couple of experts in order to conduct an interview with them, however, these experts either did not respond or responded too late to be interviewed, transcribed, coded and translated into results on time. Therefore, a suggestion for future research would be to include expert interviews, since it would be an interesting perspective to compare to the perspective of (highly educated) youth in a similar fashion to how this thesis compares policy documents and the aspects included to the aspects that were mentioned by interviewees.

Lastly, the strategy and vision document review and analysis mentions one policy document (VersnellingsAgenda) that is being executed as of writing this thesis and one policy document (ANNO III) whose precise steps are still in production. As these policies are still being executed or even still taking shape, it would be interesting to see how their implementation would shape the new migratory flows of (highly educated) youth. Therefore, one of the

recommendations for future research would be to study the impact of the executed policies on these migratory flows. This would show whether or not these policies alone are able to change the current state of demographic decline in Fryslân, or if further steps are required.



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## 8. Appendix

### 1. Interview questions

Participant group	Main themes	Support questions
Highly educated youth (remained)	1. Could you introduce yourself a bit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where do you currently live?</li> <li>- Are you currently following a study?</li> <li>- What are you studying?</li> <li>- In which city are you following this study?</li> </ul>
	2. What do you think about the place in which you currently reside?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you give a description of the place where you currently live?</li> <li>- What do you value about the place where you currently live?</li> <li>- What do you not value about the place where you currently live?</li> <li>- What made you make the choice to continue living in Fryslân?</li> </ul>
	3. What do you think about the place in which your study currently takes place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why did you choose to study in the city in which you are currently following a study/you followed a study?</li> <li>- Did someone/something influence your choice in pursuing a study in this city?</li> <li>- Why did you choose to not move to the city in which you are currently following study/you followed a study?</li> <li>- Did someone/something influence your choice in not moving to this city?</li> </ul>
	4. What are factors that you deem to be important in choosing an appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you give a description of where you would like to live after</li> </ul>

	place to live?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- finishing your study/in the future?</li> <li>- What recommendations would you give a policymaker on improving your current place of residence?</li> </ul>
	5. As of now, how do you see your future in terms of residency and employment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you see yourself remaining in your current place of residence or moving elsewhere?</li> <li>- Would someone/something influence this decision?</li> <li>- Do you see yourself working near your current place of residence or working elsewhere?</li> <li>- Would someone/something influence this decision?</li> </ul>
	6. Any closing remarks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- After this interview, would you like to add anything on this topic that has not yet been discussed throughout the interview?</li> </ul>
Highly educated youth (out-migrated)	1. Could you introduce yourself a bit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where do you currently live?</li> <li>- Are you currently following a study?</li> <li>- What are you studying?</li> <li>- In which city are you following this study?</li> </ul>
	2. What do you think about the place in which you currently reside?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you give a description of the place where you currently live?</li> <li>- What do you value about the place where you currently live?</li> <li>- What do you not value about the place where you currently live?</li> </ul>
	2.5 In case your place of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why did you choose to</li> </ul>

<p>residency differs from place of study, what do you think about the place in which your study currently takes place?</p>	<p>study in the city in which you are currently following a study/ followed a study?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did someone/something influence your choice in pursuing a study in this city?</li> <li>- Why did you choose to move to the city in which you are currently following study/ followed a study?</li> <li>- Did someone/something influence your choice in moving to this city?</li> </ul>
<p>3. Do you still experience (to some extent) a feeling of attachment to the rural areas of Fryslân in which you were brought up?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you give a description of the place where you grew up/ lived before the study?</li> <li>- What do you value about the place where you grew up/ lived before the study?</li> <li>- What do you not value about the place where you grew up/ lived before the study?</li> <li>- Could you imagine yourself returning to the place you grew up/ lived before the study?</li> </ul>
<p>4. What are factors that you deem to be important in choosing an appropriate place to live?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you give a description of where you would like to live after finishing your study/ in the future?</li> <li>- What recommendations would you give a policymaker on improving your current place of residence?</li> </ul>
<p>5. As of now, how do you see your future in terms return migrating?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would you remain at your current place of residence or migrate back to the rural areas of Fryslân?</li> </ul>

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- Why would you choose this?

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6. As of now, how do you see your future in terms of residency and employment?

- Do you see yourself remaining in your current place of residence or moving elsewhere?  
- Would someone/something influence this decision?  
- Do you see yourself working near your current place of residence or working elsewhere?  
- Would someone/something influence this decision?

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7. Any closing remarks?

- After this interview, would you like to add anything on this topic that has not yet been discussed throughout the interview?

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## 2. Informed consent forms



university of  
 groningen

### Agreement to participate - Research Ethics Committee (REC)

in research project: Research into factors for combating of out-migration and stimulation of return migration of (highly educated/ambitious) youth in rural areas of Fryslân and the potential role of place attachment (title still in development).

*The purpose of this research is to gain insight into the motivations of (highly educated/ambitious) youth of Fryslân that migrate away from its rural areas. Through doing this the research aims to gain information about what would be necessary in order to combat this out-migration while stimulating return migration of youth/young families. Furthermore, the potential role of place attachment in this will be studied (how does it come into play).*

- I have read and I understand the information sheet of the research project.
- I understand that taking part in this research is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from it up to three weeks after the interview, as well as to decline to answer a question I do not wish to answer.
- I understand that my participation in this research is confidential. Without my prior consent, no material, which could identify me, will be used in any reports generated from this study.
- I understand that the interview data may be used in academic articles, book chapters, published and unpublished work and presentations.
- I understand that all information I provide will be kept confidentially either in a locked facility or as a password protected encrypted file on a password protected computer.

Please highlight with **bold marking** YES or NO to each of the following:

I consent to my interview being audio-recorded

YES  NO

I wish to remain anonymous for this research

YES  NO

#### IF YES

My first name can be used for this research

YES  NO


#### OR

A pseudonym of my own choosing can be used in this research

YES  NO


If you wish to choose own pseudonym, please mark it here:

**"I agree to participate in this individual interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet."**

Signature of participant: 

Date: 03-04-2022

**"I agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet and I ensure no harm will be done to any participant during this research."**

Signature of researcher: 

Date: 03-04-2022



**Agreement to participate - Research Ethics Committee (REC)**

in research project: Research into factors for combating of out-migration and stimulation of return migration of (highly educated/ambitious) youth in rural areas of Fryslân and the potential role of place attachment (title still in development).

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- I understand that taking part in this research is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from it up to three weeks after the interview, as well as to decline to answer a question I do not wish to answer.
- I understand that my participation in this research is confidential. Without my prior consent, no material, which could identify me, will be used in any reports generated from this study.
- I understand that the interview data may be used in academic articles, book chapters, published and unpublished work and presentations.
- I understand that all information I provide will be kept confidentially either in a locked facility or as a password protected encrypted file on a password protected computer.

Please highlight with **bold marking** YES or NO to each of the following:

I consent to my interview being audio-recorded

YES  NO

I wish to remain anonymous for this research

YES  NO

**IF YES**

My first name can be used for this research

YES  NO

**OR**

A pseudonym of my own choosing can be used in this research

YES  NO

If you wish to choose own pseudonym, please mark it here:

**"I agree to participate in this individual interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet."**

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 08-05-2022

**"I agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet and I ensure no harm will be done to any participant during this research."**

Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 08-05-2022



**Agreement to participate - Research Ethics Committee (REC)**

in research project: Research into factors for combating of out-migration and stimulation of return migration of (highly educated/ambitious) youth in rural areas of Fryslân and the potential role of place attachment (title still in development).

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- I have read and I understand the information sheet of the research project.
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**YES** / NO

I wish to remain anonymous for this research

YES / **NO**

**If YES**

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YES / NO

**OR**

A pseudonym of my own choosing can be used in this research

YES / NO

If you wish to choose own pseudonym, please mark it here:

**"I agree to participate in this individual interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet."**

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 22-4-22

**"I agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet and I ensure no harm will be done to any participant during this research."**

Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 22-4-22



**Agreement to participate - Research Ethics Committee (REC)**

in research project: Research into factors for combating of out-migration and stimulation of return migration of (highly educated/ambitious) youth in rural areas of Fryslân and the potential role of place attachment (title still in development).

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Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 0-5-2022

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FOX

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Date: 23-4-2022

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If you wish to choose own pseudonym, please mark it here:

**"I agree to participate in this individual interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet."**

Signature of participant: W. Vriens Date: 21-4-2022

**"I agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet and I ensure no harm will be done to any participant during this research."**

Signature of researcher: [Signature] Date: 24-4-2022



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**OR**

A pseudonym of my own choosing can be used in this research YES / NO

If you wish to choose own pseudonym, please mark it here:

**"I agree to participate in this individual interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet."**

Signature of participant: [Signature] Date: 8-5-2022

**"I agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet and I ensure no harm will be done to any participant during this research."**

Signature of researcher: [Signature] Date: 8-5-22





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**OR**

A pseudonym of my own choosing can be used in this research YES / NO

If you wish to choose own pseudonym, please mark it here: Jeanine

**“I agree to participate in this individual interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet.”**

Signature of participant:  Date: 08-06-2022

**“I agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet and I ensure no harm will be done to any participant during this research.”**

Signature of researcher:  Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Transcriptions interview

#### Transcription 1: Female, migrated

Firstly, I ask you to give a brief description of yourself, for example where you live at the moment, whether or not you follow a study, what study you follow.

I currently live in Groningen, in the neighborhood of Beijum. I am currently following a study, a master study called Science Education and Communication.

And where do you follow this study? I mean, what institution provides this study?

The Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.

And did you choose this institution because of its availability? If you look at other cities for instance, is this study specific for this city and institution or was this the best option for you in another way?

Well, it was also available in Utrecht I believe and perhaps somewhere else in the world, but I did not want to go there. In that regard, this was the only place in the northern part of the Netherlands where I could follow this study. I am not going to Utrecht, or Amsterdam, or Rotterdam, or those types of places.

Understandable. The following questions will be on your current place of residence, so as you said Groningen, in the neighborhood of Beijum. Could you, in your own words, provide a brief description of what this place is according to you?

Beijum is a green neighborhood in Groningen. It is a neighborhood of Groningen, however, it could actually be regarded as a village on its own. It is really green, it is really calm. It is on the outskirts of the city. It is more calm than the city, people sometimes say something to one another in the streets. It is not typically like the city center. It is green.

So you would argue that the neighborhood of Beijum would be characterized more to be a village than to be characterized like a city?

Yes, I think it is more like a village. It does house a lot of people due to it mainly consisting of (relative) high rise buildings, so it is a bit more anonymous than a city, or not really high rise but more houses on top of houses. But it does feel more like a village than a city. It is really a village on its own.

I think you are more aiming at the bustle in the streets, that Beijum in that regard feels more like a village than a city?

Yes, the bustle in the streets, but also the greenery throughout the neighborhood and how spacious it is set up.

You indicate that it is green, it is calm, that type of stuff. What do you value about this neighborhood, what is important to you in this neighborhood?

The greenery in this neighborhood is what I like most.

And why this particular feature?

First of all, as it is important in regards to nature, but secondly, to live in such an environment provides more peace. When I'm in nature. If I look outside there are, of course, still a lot of houses, but there is also a lot of green and that provides me with more peace than the city center. Plus, if I walk for a few steps I am already out of the city. Then I am already in the nature reserve (Kardinge), while if you live in the city this takes some effort, around half an hour.

Would this also connect, to some extent, to the area where you came from (rural areas of Fryslân)?

I think that does play a part in this, as it does remind me of that time, and there it also does not take that much effort to get outside the village, where it is also really green. So it does remind me a lot of where I came from, and that does me good as well.

Maybe also since you are used to so much greenery, that you leave for the city and finally find such a place again, giving you the realization that you did miss it to some extent?

Well, I did live in the city for a while, and at first that was also okay. But then I wanted to live together, and we started searching. First of all, in the city it was difficult to find anything, and second of all, it was really expensive. It is also often taken really quickly. So then I looked further and accidentally found Beijum. It was purely coincidental, but when I found it I did think: this is perfect.

So you just described what you did like about this place of residence, now the opposite follows: what do you dislike about this living environment?

What I truly miss is the sense of community, kinship with others. It does not feel like I am a part of this (Beijum). A little bit, since I live in Beijum and I love this neighborhood, but I know nothing of the people that live here. That is the biggest difference and what I miss most about a village. I have a few neighbors that I sometimes talk to, but it is not that you truly know them. That is what I really miss.

Would you say that you could achieve that sense of community or kinship anywhere or would you say that that would be something typical for a village?

That is typical for a village, that I know for sure. Still that takes some effort, for instance by joining a church or some type of association. But I think you can only achieve this in a village, because in a city it is too anonymous, there are too many people, also from different places.

So you are saying that this sense of community or kinship is achieved through joining a church or an association, do you think a village provides a lot more opportunities in this regard?

I do not know, I really do not know. I think the opportunities are actually more present in a city, however I do think that it is more anonymous in a city. I think a village has less options, but a bigger chance of becoming a part of something since you work together with other villagers for something for the village.

I think it might also have something to do with the size, since a village is so small that residents find a connection with each other in an easier way.

I think so too.

Moving on, the following questions are on the city that you currently live in. It seems to me that in some form or another your study could also be followed elsewhere, so why did you specifically choose the city of Groningen to follow your study?

Because it is located in the northern part of the Netherlands. I did think about Wageningen, since it is also green and also has a campus. I did not even think about Amsterdam or Utrecht. Randstad is not even an option to me since I don't like it. Enschede also looked like an option since it had a nice campus, but that was more aimed towards the technical side of Biology. It was between Groningen and Wageningen, but since no one was going to Wageningen and it was easier to visit my family and friends I chose to go to Groningen. Also, I think I like people from the northern part of the Netherlands better.

So would you say that you feel some type of connection between you and other people from the northern parts of the Netherlands, such as Fryslân? In a cultural sense?

I think so, especially with Frisians. However, I still think that I have a lot more in common with people from the northern part of the Netherlands than the rest of the Netherlands, since we all live in similar conditions (in the open between meadows). The people are also a lot more sober, less dramatic. Normal. Honest.

So you wanted to stay close to family and friends. Would you then say that someone or something influenced your decision to move to Groningen instead of staying at home?

If situations at home would be good I would still live at home. I still wanted to live on my own, that was partially due to the situation at home, but also part of my personality to be on my own. But if things were good at home I would have remained there, thinking about how much money it would have saved me. It is really expensive. However, it does save a lot of traveling time.

If it was good at home and you did remain at home, would some part of you still want to move to Groningen?

Yes, but mostly since it would be closer to my study. Not only the traveling time, but also all the stuff around it. Cycling to the station because I have no drivers license, then taking a train and taking a bus to campus.

But in terms of culture would you choose Fryslân over Groningen?

To shop here is fun, but I would not move here because of the culture. I would much rather remain in Fryslân.

Could you give me a brief description of the place where you grew up?

Drogeham is a village of around 2000 inhabitants, 1800 perhaps? It has four churches, when I lived there a large proportion of the population was Christian and also old, this also mixed really well I think. It is not big, it is set up spaciouly. Even a big proportion of the youth attended the church services, not that they believed themselves. It does have an elementary school, which is still open, and a supermarket, which is also still open, a gas station, a food bar, a baker, all still open. Only the pizzeria closed down. And a clothing store, which was there for a long time but has now closed down. So there are still services around.

It is mostly a rural village I believe?

Yes, around the village there is a lot of agricultural land. People within the village are not really farmers, but more typically villagers.

So you gave a brief description, which leads me to the following question: what do you truly value about the village of Drogeham?

That you know people. Community, being part of something. That you know who lives in your neighborhood. That you know something about those people, and that they know you.

Is that specific for Drogeham or more a village thing?

I know people in Drogeham, so it would seem great to me to live there again. But it would seem great to me to have that feeling regardless, whatever village. I do think it would be harder to achieve that feeling elsewhere. Then you have to join an association and stuff. I think it is harder in a village where you did not grow up. You get to know people through your parents.

So it is more about the social factors, such as family, friends that you already have? So you can build onto that foundation that you already set?

Yes, because regardless of the rest, a house is a house. Where I live now it is also good, Beijum is beautiful, it is a great house, I do not need much else. The only thing that you really miss is a sense of community.

But what do you not value about Drogeham?

That there are a lot of Christian people, but that is a difficult answer. The church itself is great, feeling like a part of something, I attended it myself. It is great for the community. But it is really a different mindset, Christianity. I do however think it is not as bad nowadays as it was back then.

So the peer pressure of joining a church would now be less?

Yes. And they are not extreme, you can be gay if you want to, so they are not extreme or anything. So I do not know if it is truly a negative point. It is just that when I make friends there, a lot of them will be Christian, while I am not. In Drogeham, an important aspect is the church. If you are not a part of it, I think it is harder to find good friends. Unless you join a sports association for instance. It is really football or the church. Else perhaps another association. I feel like that is a pitfall of Drogeham, a decreased choice of communities. I have thought about joining the church purely to be part of a group of people and to work together on something, while I do not even believe in a god.

So you also told me that your family still lives there, your friends still live there. Could you imagine yourself returning to the village of Drogeham?

Yes, that has always been the plan. Or at least it was the plan to move back to a village nearby, but Drogeham would be ideal. I have thought about the other side of Fryslân, but I do not know anyone there. So I would remain in or nearby the municipality. I want my children to grow up Frisian.

And what would be the biggest reason for you to move back?

Community and kinship.

So really the feeling of being part of something?

Yes, in Groningen we just sit here being alone in a neighborhood in a city, just by yourself. And that can be nice, but I need other people.

I would agree, in a village it is normal to be more social.

Yes, just walking around the village, speaking to random people on the street.

Onto a more fun question. In a future scenario, if you think about "this would be my ideal living situation", what do you expect from this scenario?

Ideal scenario would be a detached house in a village, or outside, barely outside. So you are still part of the community but can have animals such as ponies. I also want to be part of the community of the village, talk to people, know who those people are, and perhaps part of something such as an association. For instance sport, or start a dancing group, just work on something. Not thinking "this is such an obligation", but working together on something, being busy together.

Would you have any tips or tricks for policymakers for making Drogeham the perfect scenario according to you?

Yes, making houses cheaper for Frisians and more expensive for Hollanders. That may sound really xenophobic, it may be awful to think that way and I am not happy to feel that way, but I just feel that way. I feel like those Hollanders mess everything up. I know you can not simply do

that as it is discrimination, but they have to come up with something so those houses are not bought up by those rich Hollanders, but rather for the Frisians that originate from this region.

Why do you exactly want that?

Because I feel like Frisian villagers are the only thing keeping that sense of community in place. They still greet each other in the street, and make small talk. Not being too busy to be social, not just work-work-work. I think people from the Randstad and those cities ruin the morale of Frisian villages, they have a different mindset. They do not speak the Frisian language, which I think plays a significant role in that sense of community. It is an important aspect of our culture. I see it now, that it changes. It is not the same as it used to be. If you want a nice house in nature, look for something outside the village, move to something like Almere where you can get the same break from Amsterdam. There you also live among nature. Why Fryslân? I get that houses are cheaper, but Frisians do not even get the chance to move back to their own region.

So take measures to ensure a place for Frisians in Fryslân?

Yes, and make sure that that sense of community does not change. Everything is becoming more individualistic, in the city that is already the case, the internet also does not help, but now it also is taking place in the villages. Maybe make houses in nearby villages near the Randstad cheaper, so they do not all move to Fryslân. Or make sure they are part of the community and are willing to adapt to the Frisian culture, for instance learn the language.

So it is not a problem that they live there, but you want to ensure that the culture remains?

Yes, living here so that they can become part of the community. So that they do not isolate themselves.

So a double-sided solution perhaps? Give priority to Frisians moving back to the region, but ensure that people moving here from Holland contribute to this sense of community and keep the Frisian culture alive?

Yes, this sounds xenophobic, but I want to keep this culture alive.

The following question I already asked, but I still have to ask: would you rather remain here in Groningen or move back to a rural village in Fryslân?

Definitely moving back, but I have to say, I always wanted to move back straight away, but now that I live here I have also become attached to the city. But that is because Groningen is just super sociable. It is not an extremely big city. There is a sense of community among the students, you know the fun places, you become used to it. For now it is good, but I prefer to move back at some point.

It is more alive than a village perhaps even.

Yes, I think it will take some getting used to when back in a village. That you can not just grab some food just because.

So you will miss the abundance of services and the sociable side of the city?

Yes, but on the other hand, I do not really go anywhere, I just remain at home and that is just fine. So that would be similar to Fryslân, just on the weekends that you have the ease of looking for something to do. But you can also do that in Fryslân, just grab the car and go to Drachten for instance. Or to Groningen. Or to Leeuwarden. Or join an association and then you also have something to do.

So mostly moving back because of family, friends, community?

Well, not just family and friends, but also being part of this community indeed. Being part of the whole.

Is there also something or someone that influences this decision to move back?

Well, first of all I cannot move back now due to a housing shortage, so that is really stopping me. But mostly the sense of community and having family and friends close.

Would you work nearby where you live? Or work nearby Groningen?

Close to where I live, not in the village itself since there are no secondary or high schools there, but go by bike to a village nearby that has one. Just to speak Frisian to my students.

That was the basis of the interview. Do you happen to have any comments, questions, things that you feel like have not been discussed extensively enough or have not been highlighted at all?

No, all clear!

Thank you for your time.

## Transcription 2: Male, remained

The first question is simply to introduce yourself, so where do you live at this moment for instance?

I live in Surhuizum, my name is **CENSORED** and I am 22 years old.

And are you following a study at the moment?

I just finished studying.

Which study would that be?

International Business and Management Studies, but in short International Business.

And where did you follow this study?

Three and a half years of the study I followed in Leeuwarden, and half a year in Zaragoza in Spain.

That was a small introduction, the following question regards where you live, in this case the village of Surhuizum. Could you give a brief description of Surhuizum?

Surhuizum is a small-scaled village, with around 1200 people as residents. Services are not really present, only a foodbar and a I believe since not long ago a barbershop, but that is it. It has an elementary school and it is situated exactly in between Groningen and Leeuwarden, that is also the reason I believe people want to live here. But other than that, it is just a village where not that much happens.

You are talking a bit about services among other things, but what are things that you value about Surhuizum?

To me it is calmness. Because, for instance, if I go to the city there are a lot of triggers. Then you return to Surhuizum and it just feels calm. You can be yourself at home. To me, positive things, there is also a sports association which I am involved with, my friends live here. I can calmly do my own things, I can run, I can sport to the extent that I want. So those are the things I value about Surhuizum.

So in conclusion, it is firstly the setting in which the village is situated, the calmness, so the lack of services might also be a plus then. It is more about the setting, among the farmland, not too busy, not too crowded.

Usually my motivation is that in the city you can barely find calmness, or it is hard to do so, but if you live in a village you can choose between calmness and business. If you want to go to a busy place you go to the city and if you want some peace and quiet you stay at home.

Secondly, the sports association. Would you say you appreciate the feeling of community, being part of something?

Yeah, I can also find that in the city, but here it feels a lot more normal so to speak. It feels like I am part of something here.

Yeah, you mean you have your roots here so to speak.

Yes.

And you also have family and friends here, so would the social factors also weigh in on the fact that you value Surhuizum?

Yes, that is correct.

Would you consider that to be one of the bigger reasons to value Surhuizum?

To remain here now I would say so, to remain here in the future I would also say so, but there might also be aspects that outweigh these social factors in where I would like to live, so for instance my career, if I want a good job elsewhere and that would happen to be in the city then it would take me some time to think but it would be some motivation to leave Surhuizum.

And the nature setting as you said, perhaps clean air, that would also weigh in favor of valuing Surhuizum?

Well, clean air, we are situated between farms so that does not help, but it does feel more natural so to speak.

To for instance work out or take a walk into the farmlands, if you like that it does feel good to have the opportunity to do so.

Yes.

You were also talking about the lack of services in Surhuizum, coming back to that: what do you not value about living in the village of Surhuizum?

Some people, for instance the older generation that is not really involved with the village. Grumpy people, that might also be a bit in the culture of Fryslân but that is sometimes also present here. I can not really think of things that I consider to be very negative, perhaps sometimes it is too boring, for instance that you do not see people going out in the summer, only having a Spulwike so to speak where people really go out, and that other than that it is really quiet, that might be a downside. Some more services in that aspect might be welcome, for instance a terrace or something like that, a bar, a restaurant, make the village a bit more lively.

So you do like that there is a certain calmness in the village, that you do not actively have to search to find that rest, but sometimes you would like it to be a bit more busy and lively?

Yes, it does not necessarily have to be in my street so to speak, it can be a few streets over, but just have a small place where people can just come together, where it is lively.

And you also mentioned the older generation that are not really involved in the village?

Yeah, not everyone from the older generation, you also have people who are really involved, but there are also a lot of people that, if you make too much noise for instance, they get mad or they have it in for you. Those kinds of people can best move to the city where they can also be just a number and have no social interactions. But in a village that can really damage the living environment.

So you mean to say that a village should be sociable, you should get together, you should be friendly?

Yes, and that should not be exaggerated or something, but you have to at least try to be sociable and talk to people and be a bit more involved.



In a previous interview the interviewee indicated that a lot of people that moved from other parts of the Netherlands to the region of Fryslân also contributed to this less sociable behavior. Do you also experience this in the region in Surhuizum or is it more the older generation?

We do have a few of those people, not a lot. I think it is not that bad in my village. But from my experience, those people are social but different, so it should not influence the culture in such a village. If those people try to be more involved in the village it would not be a problem to me. But usually, people that come from a city, are usually used to having their own place, an own apartment, and they only go to shops and bars with friends and family, and if they come here that is all gone, so they might live by themselves but I do not have any experience with this.

Then I just have one last question on this theme, which is focused on you. What made you make the decision to remain in the village of Surhuizum?

Currently I have no job, so I have no obligations to go for. I feel at home here, I can speak my own language, I have my friends here, my side job is here, I can do my other side job from home. With the current housing shortage you would move to the city, because I am planning to live on my own but I would rather have a house here since I have all my friends and my life here. So I would need a specific reason to move to the city. And currently I do not have one.

So for you the connections in the village outweigh the convenience of for instance increased services in the city?

Yes, if I would move to the city then that would be either because of a relationship or a career or if all my friends spontaneously move to the city which I do not see happening soon.

The following questions are on your study, firstly: why did you choose the city in which you chose to follow your study, in this case Leeuwarden?

Firstly this was because of the school. I visited the Hanze Hogeschool and it was just one concrete block and it had no atmosphere. Then I visited NHL Stenden and I thought: oh, this is beautiful and it has an international aspect. So that is why I visited NHL Stenden. And Leeuwarden was more small-scale. The choice was between Groningen and Leeuwarden en Groningen was a real student city, easy to go out, and Leeuwarden had a certain atmosphere, not too big, not too overwhelming. It was the perfect step from middle and high school.

So more of a village then?

Yes. Last week I was in Leeuwarden. I was sitting at a terrace and I was thinking to myself: this is not extremely busy, it is just calm and you can do your own thing.

Another question, you also mentioned studying in Zaragoza. What eventually led you to follow a study here?

That came from my interest in Spain, I wanted to learn Spanish. For my study I did have to study somewhere else for half a year, so that also was a motivation. But I wanted to go to a Spanish city, so you have Barcelona, more than a million inhabitants, Madrid, more than a million inhabitants, those are cities in which you drown. Zaragoza was also a big city, 800000 inhabitants so in terms of residents around Amsterdam or something like that, but it had something a bit more personal and a certain pride that you cannot find in Barcelona and Madrid and that was interesting to discover. A teacher also recommended going there.

What did you like about this pride, did you want to discover the culture or something?

Yes, I wanted to choose a city with which I could have a connection. And I wanted to discover Zaragoza, it was really a green city in terms of Spanish cities. Many Spanish cities are more about cars and this city was more a walkable city, great public transport, five minutes away there

was a park. So the contrast I also had in the Netherlands: you could go for the busy side but also the calm side.

So that ability to have some calmness in where you are is something that echoes through in other choices?

Yes, also in the case of Leeuwarden. It is basically a really big village. And with Zaragoza this was less the case, because it really was a city, but it did feel good.

Coming back to Leeuwarden, the building was more beautiful, there was an international side to it, it is a great city. Was there someone or something that influenced your choice in this city besides that? Were their friends that moved there that were important to you, little traveling time?

No, I do not think so. I think I am the only one of my friends that went from high school to this education.

For me it is also interesting, because you did study in both Leeuwarden and Zaragoza, why did you not move to Leeuwarden? Why did you want to remain in Surhuizum and not go there?

Firstly, I was not ready to move there and have the responsibility of living on my own. Secondly, I could remain with my parents, I was only 17 years old so I was relatively young, most people move out around 22. Then COVID happened, so then you also stayed at home. And when I thought about moving out I got to go to Spain, so then I had to leave because traveling time would be too great. Then it also felt good, to move out, to discover myself. So eventually I did not have a need and I could also sleep at places of people I knew in Leeuwarden. If I wanted to go out I always had a place there.

I also heard you mention friends, has this eventually also influenced your choice of remaining in Surhuizum?

Yes, but mostly the sport association since you have to be there often throughout the week, so traveling would not be ideal. And the traveling time was around an hour, an hour and a half, so that was also ideal to go to school from home.

But could you not join a sports association in Leeuwarden for instance?

I could have, but I think that if I would have done that I think my priorities would have been elsewhere, so going to parties for instance. So I might not have had time to go there then.

Also maybe a certain obligation because you have been a part of that association for a long time.

Yes, indeed. I did build a certain sense of community there so you can not just leave that behind.

So coming up next, I am interested in the place that you would like to live in the future. So could you give me a brief description of your ideal living place?

I want to have easy access to my work, around half an hour of traveling time. Safety for me and my children. If I have children I want to have safe space to play and not worry about safety. I would put work and family ahead of friends. Now that I do not have either I will not set priorities in this. And I think I would also not prioritize sport or something, so I think in the future my priorities will shift to family and work.

I hear you talking about traveling time and safety and family, so this sounds to me that you consider yourself to be more of a village person than someone that moves to a city and makes the best there. Or does this not matter to you?

In the first instance I would choose a village.

And why would you say that?

Firstly the things that I mentioned previously in the interview. Having work and life separate. It also depends where my family is from and that kind of stuff. So for instance if I get a girlfriend that would rather live in Groningen than Leeuwarden then we can discuss that, see what the options are. But firstly I would choose a village for the calmness. Also having the social aspect, looking for a connection with people.

So having that sense of community, being involved with the village.

Yes, and that you do not live fully by yourself, having an outlet.

You currently also live in a village, so I am wondering what tips and tricks would you give to policymakers to make Surhuizum the place that you want to remain?

First and foremost housing. We are dealing with a housing shortage and people that currently live at home with their parents or live in another village because they cannot find a place here is worrying to me. There have to be more houses built so people that do want to live here are able to live here. People that also originate from here and choose for Surhuizum, not people that just come from elsewhere and are looking for a living place in the northern part of the Netherlands. Maybe some more services to come together centrally, not to go to Leeuwarden, Drachten, Groningen, just around the corner in Surhuizum. This does not have to be big, it can just be a small place, maybe somewhere outside the village. And perhaps put some more effort in the current services, for instance the park, playgrounds and that kind of stuff. Get the kids outside instead of inside with their iPads.

So if a house were to become available you would go for it?

Yes, that does depend on other things, for instance is the house old, does it need a lot of work, that kind of stuff. But if it is a fun project that I could turn into something where I could live over a longer period of time then I would certainly go for it.

I also heard that, in combination with the fact that a lot of houses are bought up by people from Holland, coming here to live there, so that the culture is adjusted so that you lose the feeling of the village. Is this something that you also experience or are the houses more in the hands of the people that originate from Surhuizum?

Usually people from the region, so from the area around a maximum of six kilometers around Surhuizum. But I did hear a story a short while ago of a house that was on sale, and then soon people from Amsterdam came who wanted to have the house themselves. So it is worrisome that someone from Amsterdam who has never heard of Surhuizum just looks at Funda and finds a house here without knowing anything about the village or the culture.

...

Another example, a friend of mine showed me that he could get an apartment the size of a small single-storey house for around 600 euros per month. They think that is much more attractive to live in the city than in a village because they can get it for cheap while in a village you easily lose around 250000 euro, which is a big investment.

So what I hear is that you have friends that really want to move back to a village but are not able to, so they are forced to move to a city since it is cheaper?

Yes, he does come from a bigger village, he did want to stay here, but he was thinking: here I have to invest in a house, but in Leeuwarden I can get an apartment for 600 euros.

Moving on, in terms of your future, what do you want?

Not just a house, but also a community, ways to connect to people around me.

Is there also something that influences your choice of place to live?

Yes, the prices of living, loss of identity of the village, the presence of friends and family, that would drive me towards a city. Also if the demographic shrinking of younger people increases I would also like to leave, I do not want to be the only young person between old people.

Do you really notice it?

Yes, for instance the sport association in which I am involved, when I was young it was really growing, now you really see that the younger generation is decreasing. The schoolyard also used to be full of children after school, playing soccer and stuff, and that makes me wonder: or they are inside playing with their iPads, or there are less children in the village. Also during school, the schoolyard used to be full, but now you just see three separate groups and that is it.

That was the basis of the interview. Do you have any remarks, things we did not discuss, things we did not go into enough?

Firstly, not really. No real contributions.

Thank you for your time!

### Transcription 3: Female, migrated

The first theme that I want to discuss is mainly on yourself, it mainly focuses on who you are, where you live at the moment, what your study is. So tell us about yourself.

I was brought up in Fryslân until I was 19 years old. Then I moved to the Hague, since then I have lived here. I am now 23 years old. I did my bachelor here, International Studies, and my master, Crisis and Security Management. I am now almost working.

And so you live in the Hague and are almost working, is that also in the Hague?

Yes, that is also in the Hague.

That was a brief introduction. Other than that I have a few questions on where you live now, where you used to live, what you studied and how you got there. Thinking back to where you used to live, could you give me a brief description of the place you grew up?

I was brought up in the village of Kootstertille, I believe it has 2000 to around 2500 inhabitants. It has a small grocery store and in a few years two pizzerias. And some food bars. A detached house, small pond in front of the house.

...

At the start the pizzerias were certainly important, because I remember thinking: what, we can eat something different than fries? And Thuisbezorgd is also not a thing in the region of Kootstertille. Then I moved to the Hague and all of the sudden you can choose to order from a hundred different places. And in Kootstertille there was all of the sudden a pizzeria, besides the fact that it already had a foodbar. That was remarkable.

I hear from you that there is a lack of decent services, but are there also things that you value about Kootstertille?

Yes, the fact that it is spacious. As I said I was raised in a detached house. That is not normal in the Hague, that is almost impossible. I currently live in a small room in a small apartment for a starting family so to speak. I think that is one of the biggest things that I am thankful for when I grew up is that I just grew up somewhere spacious, with a lot of nature, I could play in the pond with a friend of mine and I don't even know what else, catching tadpoles. I was thinking about it last week, if I have children I do not want to live here, because they cannot play here in the streets because they will get hit by cars.

So mostly the setting in which you grew up, more spacious, a bit more, not the bustle so to speak.

Yes, exactly, because here there are so many people. In Fryslân it is a bit of the 'knows us' feeling, which I also do not like because there is a lot of gossip, I do not feel good about that. But it is real personal, I have my network in Kootstertille, my friends, my family, that is the sentimental part of me returning to Fryslân every weekend. It is because of me having my social factors still there, so to speak.

So that is something that really weighs into why you value Kootstertille, the social connections that you have built and that you perhaps have less in the Hague.

Yes, and it is different, I know those people more. I grew up with them, and here I have friends but they all go away so something along those lines.

So positive things about Kootstertille are more the setting that you are in, the connections, but are there also things that you do not value about Kootstertille? You were talking about the 'knows us' feeling, the feeling of everyone knows everything about each other. Are there more things that you dislike to some extent about Kootstertille?

There are not a lot of highly educated people, and I come from an environment where I mostly hang out with highly educated people, that is where I feel at home. As soon as I go to the Poiesz (Frisian supermarket), it is different how people think about life, it is hard to explain.

I think I know what you mean, a bit like 'klootjesvolk'.

I mean PVV-voters, perhaps really generalizing, but for instance: there is a street behind where my parents live, there you can find a lot of PVV-posters in the windows. Or where the police visit often because they are having a fight. Or domestic violence or whatever. And I do not really associate with that. I am just different. It is mainly that highly educated people are not to be found there.

So I messed up the order of the questions a bit, excuse me while I try to fix it a bit to make sense of the interview. So you moved from Kootstertille to the Hague, could you give a brief description of where you live in the Hague?

It is not in the city center, it is around 15 minutes cycling from the city center. It is still relatively busy. There is a shopping street next here, with a Plus (Dutch supermarket), Albert Heijn (Dutch supermarket), Ethos (Dutch pharmacy), that kind of stuff. It is a mansion three stories high. We have one floor that I share with two others. One living room, three bedrooms. Just like the usual student house. The landlord is pretty nice. My previous landlord was pretty bad, he was a slumlord.

Alright. You were previously making a joke about Kootstertille, how it was amazing that you now have two pizzerias. Is this also something that you value about the Hague? Do you have certain feelings about stuff that you can find in the Hague but not in Kootstertille?

Yes, because on one hand it is really busy here, but on the other hand there is a lot to do here, a lot of restaurants where you can go, musea, the beach is nearby, not that I visit that that often. The employment opportunities are a lot more over here. I have applied often here over the last few years. I have also applied in Groningen, also Overijssel, eastern Netherlands, and some job openings in Fryslân: it is really little. Then I look here: here there are a lot of opportunities. That is why I am going to work in the Hague temporarily and I have an application in **CENSORED**, that is around the corner here. So employment opportunities play a big role in why I still live here.

So you are saying that the employment opportunities in Fryslân are little, but does it really weigh in choosing a place to live?

It is actually THE reason why I still live here. Because when I finished my bachelor's degree, and COVID just started, almost all my friends left the Hague. Because they were all international students. So my network in the Hague was really small all of the sudden. Then I started working at a place called Spellenhuis, then I found some social connections there. My master was also online, so I also could not make any new friends there. So my social network here is small. Currently it has improved but that has made me think about not necessarily having to live there. And if in my employment area there would be job openings in Fryslân or Groningen or whatever, then I would have moved back without a doubt. But that is not the case so that is why I am here. So what I hear from you is that the services are more plentiful, you always have something to do, and the employment opportunities count as points towards staying in the Hague. But social networks are lacking a bit there.

Yes, but that is due to current events, so COVID, online teaching. I would not say that it is a characteristic of the city of the Hague or something like that.

So time-specific. And are there also things that you do not value about the Hague?

The fact that I have a small room in a small apartment somewhere. That is kind of a shame. I do want to live at my home without roommates but I can simply not afford it. An apartment here is really expensive and really hard to find. Finding housing is hard. I do not think it is better in Fryslân, but I do think it is a lot cheaper over there. So that. Space as well. People are so cramped up together, you really have to take each other into account. In the house as well, I have to take my roommates into account already, but also our neighbors upstairs are often making noise, we cannot party too well into the night, not that we do so, but we cannot do that because we have neighbors all around us. Then we get the police here for a noise complaint.

So, as you also said about Kootstertille, you would maybe prefer some room around the house, for when you turn up the music so you do not annoy the neighbors or something, kind of a buffer.

Yes, like my parents would not have those types of problems, but here I never play music.

Then I move on, you chose the Hague to follow a study, for as you said the international security study and stuff. Why did you specifically choose this city, the Hague?

I first studied in Groningen, Sociology, I did not like that at all. I was done with studying, so I took a gap year in Japan, and in Japan I discovered that I liked it, and I really liked the language and I wanted to know more about that, about Japan and stuff. But I did not want to do Japan Studies, that is in Leiden and that is just learning about Japan, learning Japanese. I did not want to do just that. So I found International Studies. It looks a bit like International Relations, but International Relations is focused on Europe. International Studies allows you to specialize in Africa, Latin-America and Eastern Asia. And in that I could learn Japanese. And because of that I moved to the Hague, because that was the only place I could follow that study. So that is how I got to the Hague for my bachelor's degree for three years. And then I found my master and by coincidence it was also in the Hague at the same campus.

So it was because the study you wanted to follow was only found in the Hague, not Groningen or anywhere else?

Yes, that is correct.

So you mention that it is the only place to follow that study, but are there other influences on why you exactly chose for the Hague to study?

Not really, I did choose to live in the Hague rather than Leiden, you can also live in Leiden and study in the Hague. But I did not like that because Leiden is a city for students and I do not really associate with that. The Hague is a bit of a mix of everything, studying, working, diplomats and really diverse. That I really liked.

Is that also something that might have formed a barrier in Groningen, because Groningen is also a city full of students?

Yeah, I do not associate with that. But that is also because I was really young back then, I was just 18, insecure, and I did not like the study then, and the people were also not my type of people. Partying and drinking have never really attracted me. I did not mind leaving there.

So you mentioned that if you have children later on in life you want to return to Fryslân, the green around you, less busy, children can play outside, and a bit of space around the house. Can you really imagine that to yourself, returning to Kootstertille, or would you rather have a different village?

I will not return to Kootstertille, my parents live there, I grew up there but I do not have an emotional connection with it, thinking I want to return because I grew up there or something like that. I am not sure if it can happen at all, it is far in the future, I don't even know if I want children, but imagine that I have children and I want to move and it is possible with my job, then I would look for a nice place in Fryslân, not too far from my parents if they still live there, and then I would look into what would be a nice village located near a place with some shops, so for instance Surhuisterveen, Drachten. So you have the calmness and the nature around you, but you can still easily go to the shops.

And if you left kids out of the equation, would you say that you yourself still have some connection to Fryslân to return there, or would you rather remain in the city if there would be no kids?

I think the second. I think maybe if I retire I would buy a house if I have the money then, maybe then I will feel the urge to return to rural areas, but no, that really depends on what job I have then and if I can do it in that region. Because if the job will not work out in Fryslân, even with kids I would not return to Fryslân. Maybe if my partner makes enough money.

So the economic opportunities really have to be present to be able to move somewhere?

Yes, because it really is the only thing that I can do.

I continue with what you feel is important in a place where you would like to live, but could you give a brief description of a place where you would like to live after your study, or in the future?

A place outside of the Randstad, which is still acceptable in terms of travel time, is also a bit in a rural area, more spacious, but still close enough to the city to still go to a concert for instance.

So still close to services, the bustle of the city instead of a traditional village?

Well, if the village is close to the city I would be fine with living in the village. I want to go there for my calmness, so spacious, more nature, no noise and that kind of stuff. But if I want to go to the city, it is still easy to reach.

So you still want to have the choice to visit the bustle of the city rather than living in the middle of nowhere?

Yes, because if I look at my parents and last weekend, when we visited Groningen, then I had to travel 45 minutes by car, then take the bus to the city center, walk for a bit, in total it took over an hour. That is not something I want to do every weekend.

So you really want to be close to the border of a city in that case?

Yes, so around 20 minutes to get to the city center, something like that.

You want to have something a bit more green, a bit more calmness but still the possibility to get to the city center in the shortest amount of time. I can, of course, not make policymakers move an entire village closer to the city, but do you have any tips that you want to share with policymakers to make for instance Kootstertille more to your liking?

Invest more in job opportunities. In my case that would mean investing more in security, the police is really understaffed, especially in Fryslân, but meanwhile there are no job openings in Fryslân, so that is not right. I think that might have to do something with the budget. But that also ensures that no additional people join the police. I think that is also the case for other sectors, I am kind of in a niche, so security and counterterrorism, so in Fryslân that is probably not a really big thing. But I think for a lot of people the employment opportunities are really a thing stopping us from living in Fryslân.

So what you are really saying is that they should invest in employment opportunities for highly educated people, creating opportunities perhaps even for those niches?

Yes, but even employment opportunities at all. I even looked at job openings at the municipality and there is just very little to find. So for me it really depends on work, because I would like to live there, but there is no work at the moment.

I am wondering, with the police being understaffed in Fryslân, would you say that that is a big issue, or would you say that it is understandable in a small countryside region like Fryslân?

I can not really speak for Fryslân. Fryslân is a bit of a rural region, which means that there are little base teams, which are the places which have a police station, from which cops drive with their car. They get a notification, an emergency notification for instance, which could potentially be a half an hour drive, and that seems bad to me. Waiting half an hour for the police to arrive, that should not be possible. But still it happens sometimes, and maybe half an hour is an exaggeration since I do not precisely know what the case is in Fryslân, but I can speak for a similar region. The time it takes to arrive is just really long. This is bad since cops can not contain someone while it should still happen, for instance if someone hits his or her husband or wife, so domestic violence, and a child is involve or something like that, and that person becomes aggressive, and you are alone as a cop you cannot do anything, you cannot detain someone, unless you are a tree of a guy. Usually you get on with two or three people, it is just dangerous when someone is there by himself. But in rural areas the problem is just that the time to arrive is way longer, if I call the police in the Hague I have the police at my doorstep within one minute, but in Fryslân this is not the case.

Maybe because there live a lower amount of people there is a lower amount of personnel necessary, however, because of the vastness of the region this amount of personnel is too low since it takes a long time to arrive at the scene.

Yes, but there are also a lot of problems that are not being tackled. There is undermining, crime that is taking place in the underground world but penetrates the regular world. There are criminals that are doing money laundering through a barbershop for instance. A barber never works while he makes a lot of money, that does not make sense, that could be a front for certain



affairs. Police do not have a sight on this since they have such an extensive area. Since they have to respond to those emergency notifications they have no time to look into undermining.

Currently, this question is on how you exactly so your future at the moment, in terms of where you are going to live and your career, would you rather live where you currently reside or Fryslân? I hear you talking about your career for instance, so then the Hague would seem as the most logical option.

Yes, because otherwise I have to live at my parents house without a job. There are a lot of jobs, but usually as a secretary for instance, jobs for people from community colleges. And that is fine, those openings also have to be filled up, but that is not what I studied for, I would be really unhappy if I were to type all week, staring at a screen. So realistically, the Hague, because here I do have employment opportunities that I cannot find in Fryslân. Also I do not want to live at my parents house which is a plus.

So that might pose a slight issue, if you were to return home there should first and foremost be housing available, but also secondly you could not work at the level at which you were educated.

Yes, yes, exactly.

Would you remain at the Hague in the future or would you then look for another city, another village?

That also depends, if I can find a job in Utrecht for instance, then I would move to Utrecht. Not Rotterdam, since Rotterdam is not my favorite city. It is not like I am really attached to the Hague or something like that.

And would something or someone influence the place at which you are going to live?

If it would be realistic, yes. If my boyfriend were to really want to go to Limburg, where he would have a really cool job which he really wanted to do and move to Limburg, if I were to find a job as well, I would move with him. The only problem is that I can only really work in the Randstad, so no. I think you could better ask my boyfriend, since he would find a job more easily than me.

So you would say that your career is most important, that something or someone would be more influenced by you than you by it?

How else? Because a career is the biggest thing that you will do in your life. I could realistically move alongside my boyfriend to for instance Limburg, but what would I be doing then? Should I live off of his money? Should I take a secretary job? That is not really an option, because why would I have studied then, why do I have a student debt then?

I agree, that is not something that you easily give up, it is part of your identity. Also with the student debt, you would have nothing in return.

Yes, and it is also something that makes me happy, I think it is fun. That is why I want to work at the police, I become really enthusiastic about that. I feel at home when I walk there, and I want to make a difference in the lives of people, help people, and I know that I would be happy there. It would be an option if I were to work at the police for five years, then I could say that I want to move to Fryslân and would like to transfer, there is always an opportunity for that. But if my boyfriend were to want to move then I could look into a transfer.

That was the basis of the interview. Do you have any remarks, questions, things that have not been highlighted enough or that you want to contribute to the interview?

That there are a lot of aspects to take into consideration, employment opportunities, relationships. Employment is the biggest barrier, I want to move back but I cannot. But if there

were opportunities, housing would be a problem. So there are a lot of obstacles following each other up. That makes it easier to remain here, especially in the niche that I work in. I will take that into account. Thank you for your time!

#### Transcription 4: Male, remained; female, remained

The first question is quite simple, you can introduce yourself. So, who are you?

Well, my name is [REDACTED], I am 21 years old. I am a third year nursing student in Groningen. I am currently doing my minor.

My name is [REDACTED], I am a second year student at the NHL Stenden, in Leeuwarden, I am studying to become an English teacher. I live in Twijzelerheide.

I live in Drogeham.

So taking a look at where you both currently live, could you both give a brief description of the place where you live?

Drogeham, it is a really small village, really Christian, there are four churches, therefore it feels really Christian to me. It feels like a hole in Fryslân. If I say I live in Drogeham there are not a lot of people that know where it is located, but within Drogeham everyone does know one another, so if something comes out about someone the whole village immediately knows it. Very small village, we have a supermarket, and that is it.

I live on the outside of Twijzelerheide, so I don't really know what happens within the village itself, but it is a really quiet little village. Not that many services, it seems like one big car dealership.

So you live a bit more on the rural side of Twijzelerheide?

Yes, free, in the meadows around the village.

You both indicated some negative sides, that it is Christian, it is a hole in Fryslân, not that many services. To stay a bit more positive, what are things that you do value about both Drogeham and Twijzelerheide?

That you have a lot of contacts, that you are free to greet each other in the street. In the supermarket you often stop and make small talk with someone. If I, for instance, see some classmates from elementary school in the street then I greet them, ask them how they are doing. I feel like that is a lot less in a bigger city such as Groningen. I feel like you ignore each other more often there than in a small village where you grew up, where you really know each other a bit more.

So really the sense of community, but also the social contacts that you still have there.

Yes, I think so. And people often invite you for things. There was a woman a few years back who was really creative, making plates beautiful with paint and stuff, and I told a friend that I thought that was fun. And I was invited, it also seemed fun to her. So you are also often invited to things, such as for a cup of coffee, or in the streets, everyone greets each other.

The beautiful thing about Twijzelerheide, and I think it is representative of the entire municipality of Achtkarspelen, is the maintenance. When you drive through a village, the bushes are trimmed nicely, the ground around the trees are kept tidy, the roads are in good shape and if that is not the case it is fixed within a month. Near us the channel was cleaned around five years ago, they placed fishing piers. They have an eye for the needs of the people. And within the village itself they organize stuff, so we have for instance the Heidenfest, we have Neighbors Day, joint breakfasts, that I like.

I have to say that that is also the case in Drogeham. There is an organization that hosts hikes, making Easter branches, they organize stuff for youth, so that is also nice.

So that shows the social side of a village, doing things together with one another. You also mentioned previously that there are not really a lot of services, that it was mostly a car dealership, but you also indicate that the services that are there are being maintained nicely, for instance parks and stuff.

Yes, they for instance play benches around the village, we have pingos nearby that are being maintained, nature is being taken into consideration.

We just discussed the positive things about a village. I will now give you the opportunity to share what you do not value about Drogeham and Twijzelerheide. So what do you not value?

There is a lot of gossip in Drogeham. A lot of stories that I think are not hundred percent true. There are also people that are a bit insurrectional. There are also some stories from the church for instance, that there are a lot of strong opinions given for instance and that clashes with other strong opinions, because of that some groups fall apart. That is happening a lot in Drogeham, just like I said before: if something comes out about you, the next day, the next week everybody knows that about you. And there are also a lot of new people in the village that you do not really know. The people that you do know from growing up are nice and greet you but there are also a lot of new people who are not even trying to get to know the older generation of Drogeham for instance.

Others have said that a lot of city people are coming to the villages.

Yes, a lot are coming to Fryslân. And on one hand I like that, it is fun to see that they want to come to a village, it attracts them, but on the other hand I think it is unfair that people that want to come back have a hard time finding a house in the villages.

What I think is a shame in Twijzelerheide, and I also saw it in Buitenpost, I do not agree with certain zoning plans. We have for instance a building that used to be a bank, that has been bought by someone who currently lives there, but the zoning plan says that it is a car dealership. So on the main street of the village he has a lot of cars around his property. I think that looks a bit sloppy, and across the street from that there used to be a bar, and opposite from that another, so two bars. Those are both being torn down and instead of that they are going to build apartments. I understand that a bar might not be doing that well anymore nowadays, but I think an apartment also does not really belong in that place. And what kind of people are going to live in that apartment? That raises some questions for me. Because someone said he wanted to place apartments there, but was there not someone who wanted to continue the bar there? That might also keep some youth in the village perhaps.

As you also indicated, there are already little services in the area, so maybe preserve the ones that are currently still there.

Yes, because now, if you want to go to a bar, you have to go a few villages over. But most go to the cities of Leeuwarden or Groningen. So for a lot of barkeepers it is not that profitable anymore because people are not going from bar to bar but just to the city and back home.

But do you, perhaps a little bit, also think the apartments are a good idea, for people that want to return to the region for instance?

Yes, absolutely, but one of those apartment complexes is already reserved for refugees for instance. I give it to those people to live there, but you do create a certain division in the village.

While the previous zoning plan was to prevent a diversion by having a bar. So I think the target group for those apartments is also important.

Besides that I also do not think Twijzelerheide is the right place to place refugees. People from there are often thinking more of themselves and are a bit against foreigners. Perhaps that is different so they would rather not have it there.

Someone in a previous interview also said that perhaps even Hollanders, people from the Netherlands, might threaten the Frisian culture a bit. So services decline, apartments are increasing...

And above that, a bar or cafe, if you see it, is often a more beautiful building. It has a certain place in its street scene. If you make a modern apartment complex, that also kind of destroys the image of that street scene. I think that is also important.

In Drogeham it is the same story. Near the old gas station there is also an apartment complex, but it totally clashes with the street scene of typical housing. It is way more modern and luxurious in that regard. It does not make sense. It is surrounded by housing from 1950 and stuff.

You made the choice to not move to Groningen or Leeuwarden, but what has driven you to make the choice to remain at home for now? That you are not thinking about moving out during your study?

The price of rent. I think that is the biggest factor.

I think the market is upside down, because currently you are not able to live in the city for a reasonable price.

We want to move out, but we found something last December that was 750 euros to 800 euros per month, excluding gas and electricity, so that could go up to around 1000 euros. And the rest has to be added as well. That is also located relatively far outside the city center, so I also do not think that that is entirely fair. If I look at Funda now, the lowest I can find is 750 euros to 800 euros. In Fryslân it is relatively lower, 500 euros to 600 euros, but that is often in a village, such as Wolvega or Dokkum. They are mostly flat apartments.

The worst part is, as a young person, the first person that someone wants to know is how much you are paying for it. And the worst part is that they are paying too much for what they get in return.

So you are both studying in a different city, you are both doing the same level of education. Why did you both choose the city where you are studying?

I wanted to study to be a nurse and the most favorable option to me was either Leeuwarden or Groningen. And I heard from people that the education in Leeuwarden is worse in quality than Groningen. Also my sister lived in Groningen, so I came here from time to time and Groningen is also more attractive to me. Groningen is more fun than Leeuwarden. And I came here more often.

I have exactly the same but then the other way around. When I was orienting for a study in English I also looked in Groningen but the education was not clear. Leeuwarden was way more accessible and other than that Leeuwarden was closer for me and my brother also went to NHL Stenden and he also followed the same study.

So quality weighs heavy in this equation for both of you, but what I also hear is that traveling time also weighs into this. But you were not interested in going to a different province.

No.

No, but I have to say that Leeuwarden is closer for me as well.

Is there something or someone that influenced that decision for you as well?

Yes, my sister liked it when I came here.

My friends were studying in Leeuwarden, so they also wanted me to come to Leeuwarden. My brother was studying at the same school, so it was already like I had a lot of inside men already. I also asked you why you did not move, which was mostly financial. Was there also something or someone that influenced this decision even further? For instance social contacts in your own village?

No, I have no connection in the village that keeps me there. The only thing that has kept me tied to my village are my parents who have insight into my wallet. They told me if they were in my shoes they would not have lived on their own.

So bound by budget and also advised by your parents?

Yes, but no connection within the village that is stopping me.

What I do think keeps me here is your little brother and little sister. We are there now regularly, then we would be there a lot less, and they are still relatively young so I think it is a bit sad to already leave them.

For me it is a bit different because they are my brother and sister so I will not leave them.

So that was mostly about your current situation, now a question where you can dream a little bit.

Could you give me a description of your ideal place where you would like to live?

Well, we discussed it already, we would really like to live in Limburg. In terms of housing, if we go through Feanwâlden, we see old farmhouses with the shutters on the windows. We think that is beautiful but that is nowhere to find in Limburg, that is not the type of house you would find there. So I am in doubt what I would rather have, in a beautiful farmhouse, or in Limburg, but if we were rich we would like to build such a beautiful farmhouse in Limburg, that would be the dream.

The ideal house would be an old farm in the middle of the hills in Limburg.

What exactly attracts your attention to Limburg?

The hills, the surroundings. We already went there for three years on holiday, and I do not know, the people there are nice. In Amsterdam the people are so grumpy, in Groningen as well, but in Limburg they are not grumpy at all.

The feeling in Limburg is that you are not in the Netherlands at all anymore, but you still have the benefits of being in the Netherlands. I have been going there since I was six years old, and the people there are just a bit more loose, easy to deal with, if you have to wait in line or are stuck in traffic, that is just the way it goes, then we just talk to each other for a while. On top of that I just really like to eat good food, which can also be done there. It is also a bit closer to the rest of Europe, so you can go to France, to Luxembourg, or Germany. That is all really close together. And I really like the landscape there.

So if I hear it correctly you could say Fryslân plus, way more fun, way more beautiful.

Yes, but on the other hand I would also like to stay in Fryslân, I think that is also a really good option. Not in Leeuwarden or something like that, but in the middle of the meadows for instance. If you drive through Fryslân, you can find farmhouses everywhere. Something like that.

In the middle of nowhere?

Yes, if I were to stay in Fryslân it has to be outside in a detached house.

And what kind of advice would you give policymakers to make the place where you are living more to your liking?

I think for us to stay in Fryslân the housing prices should really be tackled. It should be accessible. All the people coming from Amsterdam to here, that is also fun, but it is not really fair because we also want to keep on living here, or if people want to return from the city to the Frisian villages that is also possible.

You are feeling a certain threat.

Yes, that it will be taken from us. I feel like, 15 years ago when I was still really young, everyone was still speaking Frisian around us. Nowadays, when you go to the register for instance, nine out of ten times they will ask you what you are saying when you start speaking Frisian. That you have to speak Dutch.

I also have some tips, because I also agree that the rental prices have to go down, but in order to do so the supply has to go up and in order to do that new zoning plans have to be in order. Do that, there are enough meadows that are not being used where you can build housing. But make sure the housing fits the scene of the village, do not make factory-ready housing to just spread. And do not forget to respect the original architecture of the village, because I feel like that is the thing that gives a village its soul and that is in connection with the identity of a village. And if people from Amsterdam or Rotterdam come here and buy houses, make sure that they are living there, and not that they are renting them out for prices that are way too high.

So keep the culture of Fryslân and its villages, and build more housing.

What is also a great initiative is for instance Tiny Homes. A lot of municipalities are not really looking into that now, I know that Achtkarspelen is looking into it in Buitenpost, but do that even more. Then you give people with a smaller budget the opportunity to make their own little place. Yes, I feel like there is a lot of enthusiasm for ideas such as that. If I talk to people about housing the topic of Tiny Homes always comes up. I think with a concept you can make them enthusiastic.

Do you think the image of a village can be communicated through these Tiny Homes?

Yes, a lot of Tiny Homes have a kind of hippie vibe, they want to make it as rural as possible. So then it will fit within the more extensive meaning of a village, for instance Achtkarspelen.

So you would like to live here, but you want to be sure of having a place here, that the culture will be protected, you are able to speak Frisian here. And you are feeling that the cultural aspect is disappearing a bit. Are you also experiencing this in the village itself? You, for instance, mention that new people are not greeting you in the street anymore.

Yes, they are not really looking for that connection anymore like people that have lived here for around 30 years for instance.

For a couple of years there has been a bed and breakfast in Twijzelerheide, and I know for a fact that those people are not from the region. A lot of their clients are also not from this region, and if I drive past them you can see that it is a different type of person, they are a little bit more city. Like they are a bit more than the people around them, like it is not good enough but because it is spacious they would like to live here.

A village per definition is more social, so you do not want someone who is not social at all.

Yes, if you enter a bar in a village for instance, you know everyone there. Everybody talks to you. But in the city when you order something from McDonalds you often have to look at the screen, and that is exactly the route that we should not take. Someone from the city would not

enter a bar since it is way too much contact and they would not be used to it, and I would like to keep that contact that way.

You also have those week long parties in most Frisian villages, in my home village of Surhuizum you have the Soul Like for instance, in Drogeham I know of the Gondelvaart and you mentioned the Heidenfest. Do you happen to know whether or not those people also go to those parties?

They are coming to Gondelvaart. And building the cars up, sticking flowers on them is also where those people help.

So maybe they also need a little push like a party to get started being social?

Yes, perhaps.

Well, that is not what we have in our village. If the Heidefeest starts and you walk onto the area of the party then it is mostly the core people there, the youth over at the shooting range, airsoft guns come out, beer comes out. We are a rough village in that aspect. We also had, till two years ago, the oldtimer festival in our village, which was a really big organization. So then people from far away visited as well, but the target group was mostly like minded people like those from Twijzelerheide. Often they are also a bit 'rûchhauwer', so yeah.

But coming back to Limburg, you can see yourself leaving Fryslân behind?

One one hand yes, on the other hand no. Because on the one hand I grew up here, I think it is also fun here in Fryslân, the nature here is also beautiful, nature reserves everywhere, the Kleine Wielen, Beetstersweach, that is also really beautiful.

Yes, I also have my doubts. My brother studies environmental conservation, and I always watch with him at the nature reserves we have here, and the wooded banks, and the pingos, and the sand banks, and it is really beautiful in our region. And what [REDACTED] also says, we did grow up here, and it is still beautiful. There are also a lot of beautiful places near us where you can live. The chance is certainly there that I will indeed stay here.

So both the aesthetic and the upbringing here?

Yes, and I still am Frisian. If I go to Limburg you lose that bit of yourself and your surroundings. You have to adjust a bit, that is still a bit of culture as well.

Can you see yourself working in this region, or a little out of this region? Are there opportunities here?

I can, I will work in homecare in Drachten for a bit, which is really nearby. And if I have my degree in a few years as well, in MCL in Leeuwarden, or Drachten, or UMCG in Groningen. So I definitely have chances here and I am not afraid of having no opportunities.

I will become a teacher so there are always opportunities there, it will always be necessary, also in a region such as Fryslân.

Bringing us to the last questions, are there any topics that we did not discuss, are there any remarks or questions that you still have?

Build more houses.

Yes, more houses, but not too full. Also keep nature. For instance through Tiny Homes or for instance a community with Tiny Homes with a vegetable garden.

Or build closer together. Or terraced houses, which can also be made in the style of the village. Keep the full image while building.

Thank you for your time!

## Transcription 5: Male, migrated

The first question is relatively simple I assume, it is about giving an introduction about yourself.

Hello, I am a student at the university of Twente, I am currently working on the graduation project of my master. I study Mechanical Engineering and originally I am from Surhuisterveen. This is my sixth year of studying here. In short.

Do you currently also live in Twente?

I currently live in a student house in Enschede, in the city.

So close to Twente.

Yes.

You indicated, you are currently still studying, the final work. You are doing so in Twente. You said Mechanical Engineering, but what exactly was the master that you were studying?

My master is officially called High Tech Systems and Materials. It is the master that is most Mechanical Engineering related, so yeah.

That was on the short introduction, we are moving on to where you currently reside. You currently live in Enschede, in a student house. Could you give a brief description and where you live?

Well, how I have described Enschede over time is that it is a village but then a bit bigger. It has a big city center, there are a lot more entertainment options. A student city in that regard. In design it has wide streets, relatively green and the vibes are not typically city-like because there are not a lot of highrise buildings, or that everything is completely built up. So that is briefly how I usually describe Enschede. I currently live a bit north of the city center, I live in a detached house there with five other people. An old mansion, with a shared kitchen, shared living room, but a living room nonetheless, a shared eating area and bathroom of course. So fitting for a student. That is a brief summary.

I hear you say that it is kind of like a village plus. Do you notice a lot of differences with where you used to live or is it pretty similar?

Besides a terrible Twents accent, everything is slightly bigger, you have a bit more opportunities, a bit more different things, but in itself, the village that I used to live in was also one of the bigger villages in the region where we had a small shopping street, with almost every shops that you would need, so in that regard, I feel like it is a bit busier, I feel like there are, especially in the mechanical engineering industry, a lot more companies situated here. And it is just busier, but other than that in a more general vibe I think it is not that different. I think it is pretty similar to a village.

But you did say more employment opportunities for you.

Yes, that is indeed the case. That is just the main difference, because for instance in Fryslân there are not a lot of technical companies, I think near Drachten there are still a few, but those are not on my level or they are companies where I cannot see myself working in the near future. So yeah.

Yeah, you want to use the knowledge that you gained over the course of your education, right?

Yes, exactly. I do want to do something in that regard. I have been approached by people who said that I could do technical drawing for them, and that does not pay that badly, but if I am going to do that for the rest of my life I will not use my study at all, then I could have just as well done a small course on technical drawing.



Clear. I hear you talking about employment opportunities that you have in Enschede, which leads us beautifully to the next question: what do you exactly value about Enschede? What do you think is good, or positive?

That is a hard question. The good thing about me is that I don't really care about where I live or do. I am primarily focusing on what I want to do in terms of work and in terms of what my girlfriend wants to do, if she for instance has to work in a specific area, because in terms of mechanical engineering there is still a lot to do everywhere. I am also not in some way emotionally attached to Enschede, I have some friends here of course, but they might also go somewhere else so that is not something that I want to focus on so to speak. And other than that I have lived in Bologna for half a year, which was also fine, also really fun. Over there I really liked having places to drink a cup of coffee somewhere, but that is not really part of Dutch culture. But that would be something that I value in a place to live, just having a place to sit in the evening, in between where it is not too busy, and Enschede also does not really have that. Surhuisterveen, for instance, does have that a bit, which is funny to me.

Funny that it is the other way around, that Surhuisterveen has something that Enschede does not.

Well, I think it is just coincidence, I feel like Enschede has something like that as well but I see that from a different perspective.

Yeah, exactly. So you indicate that you would like some more opportunities in terms of having a cup of coffee in between or something like that...

Yeah, but I feel like that is also not really part of Dutch culture. That is not something that I expect here, it would just be nice to drink some coffee or tea in the evening, just be among people, that seems fun to me.

Alright. Moving on, you indicated that those opportunities are not there, but are there also other things that could be improved in Enschede, or stuff that you miss?

In Enschede... As I said, I am easily content about places, it doesn't really matter to me. As long as I, in terms of city I do not see something that could be improved. But what I primarily want is just friends in the place where I live. I think Enschede now has that. I think it will be a problem when they go to a different city, I think I have to look for opportunities to be among people then and practice hobbies, go work out and stuff, that is important to me. But I do not think that there are cities that do not have those opportunities. I think all cities if they are to some extent large enough there will be places where I can practice my hobbies and be among people. So I would not be quick to say that I miss something in Enschede.

Okay, so what is most important to you in a place is the opportunity to make connections with other people and to be yourself. Where you can do stuff that seems fun to you while you also do it with other people.

Yes, exactly, or not per se with other people, but just that there are activities that seem fun to me. Sport activities, museums, but I would not say that a village does not have those things, because for instance a village has a surrounding area and you can be everywhere quickly and each village has something, and otherwise you do not have to go far to find something. If you want to go cycling for instance, or mountain biking, you can just do that in a village, which is really fun. There are probably associations there which you can join.

So it is not really place-specific, but still important that there are opportunities.

Yes. I do think that some beautiful nature in the surroundings is important to me. And for instance in Enschede you have a lot of forests nearby, beautiful with good mountain bike trails where you can mountain bike. And for instance in Fryslân you have mostly meadows surrounding our village, but if you go a bit further, if you search well you have a few nice forests or for instance a mountain bike trail, you just have to cycle a bit further which is not that bad. Because I would rather cycle a bit through the meadows than that I would have to cycle through the city where you have to stop for every traffic light.

Yes, exactly. That would be the benefit of a village, that you have to...

Yeah, you have to travel a bit further, but you are there faster. When I sit in my car in the morning for instance to go to the university, it takes me 25 minutes to get to the university. That means that I am then in the parking lot. Cycling often takes me under a quarter of an hour to get there. So yeah, I also do not think that is a big problem, because I like cycling and you get exercise in the meantime which is also nice, but that is interesting to see because I have also for some time worked in a nearby city, Hengelo, and by bike it is fine to go there, around 30 to 40 minutes, but if it is raining, or cold and you want to take the car it takes a lot longer to get there, or equally as long as it takes by bike. While I feel like that could have been much quicker. I think if you have a village and you were to travel the same distance it would take around a third of that time since there are no traffic lights. Or the bustle. That is not really a thing that bothers me because I would like to take my bike everywhere, but it is something important to keep in the back of your mind, the accessibility in regard to the car is better in a village but on the other hand you would not need that in a city since everything is in cycling distance. Which is nice.

Everything is reachable so to speak, the supermarket is around the corner usually.

Yeah, exactly.

That was mostly about where you live at this moment. The following questions are more about why exactly you chose to move to Enschede. So why did you choose the city where you are currently studying? What attracted you to Enschede or Twente that made you think: this is where I want to study?

The presence of a university. No, but in Groningen there were no technical studies, so I did not want to go there. If I were to go study there I would have perhaps even continued to live at home, go to the university by car or by train. I can only hope that I would have taken the steps to go live on my own, but I would not know for certain if I would have taken that step. I am satisfied with taking that decision. But out of the three technical universities in the Netherlands I thought Enschede was the nicest in terms of atmosphere, and it was relatively close in comparison with the other two to Fryslân. It takes around two hours by public transport, if someone were to pick me up. It takes around an hour and a half, two hours to go by car, depending on when you leave, which is also ideal. Other than that, the primary reason that I chose this place was not because I really wanted to go here or something like that but the quality of education here is just high. And that feels right to me.

So, the quality of education, also the technical side to the study. But also the traveling time, that you did not choose the one that was the furthest away.

Exactly, but if the universities were switched in place it could have been just as well that I would have chosen for Enschede, but then further so to speak. So it is a nice extra.

So the quality weighs heavy for you? You would rather have quality education than just be at the closest location.

Yes, exactly. I do not mind traveling.

Is there also someone or something that influenced your decision in choosing this university?

Not really, I mainly looked at myself.

Alright. I understand, as Enschede is so far away from Fryslân that you could not travel between the two everyday, but why did you eventually choose to move to Enschede, to live here, in this house?

Well, I think an hour and a half of travel is a lot. That is even by car. With new rules and stuff it often runs up to two hours, which is way too much to do on a daily basis. And that is the primary reason. I don't really have a different reason. Imagine if I would be around ten minutes away, around half an hour by bike, I would have still lived at home probably. But that was just not the case.

So it is mainly the traveling time?

Yes, exactly. I did indicate that I would have probably still wanted to live on my own, but that would have been purely for personal development.

You indicated that you are from Surhuisterveen, you moved to Enschede. Could you give a brief description of the village of Surhuisterveen?

Surhuisterveen is one of the biggest villages in the region. We have a sort of shopping street, it is just one street. There are around 7000 to 8000 people living there, do not quote me on that, I am not sure. So it is a pretty big village. It is also a village where people from neighboring villages come to shop, if they need more than they can find locally. Other than that, it is not really special, it is just a village.

You did indicate you would have lived at home if given the opportunity.

I would not say that I would have preferred that, I think I would have lived longer at home. But now that I have lived on my own for a while I think it is pretty nice, primarily because I am on my own here.

Yes, so it is primarily living at home because, for lack of a better word, ease, it is cheaper, but at the same time you would also move out to develop yourself, building your skillset.

Yes, exactly.

What do you exactly value when thinking about the village of Surhuisterveen?

Exactly the same as what I said for Enschede, so activities, sport activities, so I can do something besides education and work on the weekend. It does not necessarily have to be at a sports association, it could also be just with friends. If you have a friend group that likes cycling, going cycling on the weekend is just important. And in a village I would like to have a supermarket nearby. That does not necessarily mean that it has to be walking distance, but if it is around five minutes away by bike or a few minutes by car, rather than by bike, it would be good enough for me because that is really all you need.

So really the opportunity to work out and have services nearby, not a 45 minutes travel away to get a sandwich.

What I also like about a village is that it is cheaper in charges, and that could outweigh living in a city. If I had to travel further to do groceries while living cheaper I would have also not mind a village. However, there have to be employment opportunities nearby.

That brings me to my next question. I hear you say: in Fryslân there are a lot less employment opportunities in the niche that you studied for. What do you see as disadvantages of a village, besides missed employment opportunities?

Not that much, really.

The main thing is the lack of employment opportunities?

Yes, that. I do not think there is really something that can be done about that. You could say that, since I believe both Leeuwarden and Groningen have technical studies, create an initiative where you can start companies cheaper in certain areas, pay less and attract people through that initiative. Problem is that for the high-end stuff you really need universities nearby, the reason that most of these companies are located in Enschede or Hengelo is that, also the industry that used to be located here, but also because there are universities are here and people would perhaps stay and work there since they already know the area. I think a lot of people want to return to Fryslân so it could be an idea, but if it works, that still needs a bit of research.

Yes, exactly. You also say that you hear people say that they want to return to Fryslân, could you imagine yourself returning to Fryslân, as you also indicated that it does not matter to you where you live?

No, that does not matter to me. I live where it makes me happy, I do not have a big package of requirements or something like that, because if you live somewhere it is all coming back together and it is gonna be just fine. I know people who want to return to Fryslân since their family lives there, their friends live there and I just think that I can return for a weekend if I want to visit them with family or friends.

So you are saying that, similarly as you are doing now, you can just go back for the weekend to Fryslân, catch up with family and friends and that would be enough as well?

Exactly.

What I understand is that you can make any place your own, you will do your best to belong to a place or city.

Yes.

You indicate that you would be happy regardless of the place, so the next question will probably be easy, hopefully also fun: could you give a description of the village or city or whatever where you would like to live after your study. So what are things that are important to you, what are things that you really want to see?

I think I mentioned most things in the previous questions. I just want activities, either sport or spare time, and just employment opportunities. Favorably having my work around half an hour away from where I live by bike. Other than that, in terms of being concrete does not really matter to me.

So mostly both services and work nearby and that would be enough?

Yes, there is also a supermarket nearby so I do not have to travel an hour to get some food.

Alright. Do you also have a preference for how exactly you would like to live? A detached house, apartment?

I do not have a big preference because in this housing climate having a preference will make it harder. If I had a choice I would live a bit outside of the city, just the outer rim where you have a bit more space. Where you have a detached house, a bit of a garden, I would really like a garden. A garage or something like that would be nice but in the current economy I would not say that would be realistic in a city, perhaps in a village.

Would you rather stay where you live now or would you prefer going back to Surhuisterveen?

In this case Enschede because of work, also because I already have some friends here and I know that I will go to Surhuisterveen anyway. I would much rather see myself return to Enschede since I have little reason to, because going back to my parents I would do it regardless so I can visit friends in Fryslân then. If I live in Surhuisterveen I would text people in Enschede and I would much less say that I would visit them then. If there would be employment opportunities in Surhuisterveen I would not know, I would really not know. Then it depends on costs, and that would probably be Surhuisterveen.

So what I hear is mostly those employment opportunities. If you think back to Surhuisterveen, the situation there, do you have any tips to policymakers in making Surhuisterveen more attractive?

Yes, for instance the initiative I mentioned previously, but that will take a lot of money and I do not know how practical that would be. If there would be some high-end companies that could be placed there, that would be ideal if I would return to Fryslân, but even if that would be the case I would still be unsure about returning to Fryslân.

Thinking for instance about Eemshaven, where Google has a datacenter, if companies like that would move closer to Fryslân, that would make it more attractive?

Yes, I think if some companies are already located there, I think that would attract more companies. Perhaps even giving the university of Groningen the opportunity to offer more kinds of technical studies. They have the room on campus to place more buildings aimed at technical studies. But it should be practical.

For you it would not really matter where you live, if it would be Enschede, or a village, or another city. Is there something or someone who still influences that decision?

Yes, my girlfriend. I would not say it would be fun to each live on the other side of the country eventually. Other than that it would be nice to live close to both my parents and my friends, a bit nearby. An hour drive for instance, an hour and a half would also not be a problem. I was thinking of living somewhere in the triangle between Utrecht, Zwolle and Enschede. Utrecht near the Randstad, Zwolle is close to Fryslân with still employment opportunities in technical stuff, and Enschede is just Enschedé.

Would that be the same for finding a place to work?

That depends on context. If I were to find a place where I really like my work, I would not simply just give that up.

That was the end of the interview, do you still have any remarks, any things we did not touch upon, any questions?

I thought this one of the better interviews that I have done as it ran through smoothly. It was not just from question to question but it had a clear structure.

Thank you very much!

## Transcription 6: Male, remained

I will start off with a really simple question, could you introduce yourself a little bit?

I followed a study at the university in Biomedical Sciences, I am currently working in IT since I also had an interest in programming and coding of all kinds of stuff. That was it in broad strokes.

Where did you follow your study?

In Groningen, the Rijksuniversiteit.

Are you also working in Groningen then?

Yes.

And do you also live there?

No, I am currently living at my parents house in Fryslân.

Good to know. That perfectly continues onto my next question, on where you currently reside.

You indicate that you still live at your parents house in Fryslân, could you give a brief description of the village where you currently live?

Yes, I live in Augustinusga, which is a small village, I think around 5000 to 6000 inhabitants here if that number is not even lower. We do not have a supermarket here, nothing. We have to travel a bit further if we want to go shopping. It is really a small village, where people have little besides a barber or a foodbar.

So really a typical village.

Yes, we live in a detached house in a newly constructed neighborhood.

Alright. You already indicated that there is only a supermarket and nothing more, so a bit of the downside of living in a village. You also indicated that you live in a detached house, which might be a nice thing about a village. What exactly do you value about living in a village like Augustinusga?

It is really calm here, which is nice. You will never be bothered with noise pollution or traffic or something like that. If you want to go for a walk, like I said, it is really calm here so you can easily walk around with no one bothering you. A bit more in nature, I like nature. We have a meadow next to our house so you can walk through there. Also a kind of park, kind of a half forest half park. So also a bit more nature here.

So for you it is mostly the setting in which it is situated? The more open area but also to some extent how the people are there?

Yes, it is actually nice and calm here, in comparison to a city.

In a city you think it is too much, you want to be able to have a place of peace?

Yes, I actually used to live in a big village and even there it was busier. I think I like the rest that I experience here compared to the rest I experienced there much nicer.

Because that previous place of residence would be more in between city and village?

Yes, that is right. No small talk or stuff like that. There were apartment complexes, flats and that kind of stuff.

Could you perhaps give a small description of that environment?

Yes, so we lived in a terraced house. To be honest that village was, I do not know how many people lived there, but it was a place where a lot of different types of people lived, from poor to a bit richer. There were the flats where the poor people lived, but also the newly constructed neighborhood where the richer people lived.

But is it really a contrast? Now you are living in a rural area, in between the meadows, while then it was near cities, so really a place to live? Kind of like Drachten?

Yes, you could compare it to that.

So you value the calmness of the village, also the setting in which it is situated. Are there also things that make you dislike living in Augustinusga?

Yes, of course. It is kind of dead around here. I often call it a hole in Fryslân. There is little to do in the village itself. If you go to a bar for instance you will always run into the same people, a little bit older people as the younger people often go further away when going out. But also if you want to go to a store you will have to drive for around three kilometers minimum, and even

then you are at a small supermarket. So if you want to go get real groceries you have to travel for five kilometers even. Those are things that are a bit difficult.

So it is mainly the lack of services that I hear you talk about?

Yes, yes.

You have also grown up in that region. How did you experience this? For instance, you mention there is a bar for older people, but if you wanted to go out, where did you go?

In general I did not really go out that much, but when I went out I just went to a friend of mine to hang out there but I also went to Groningen or for instance to a village party, the party tent. Also a bar in Surhuisterveen, Kerkzicht. So that kind of stuff is where we went.

So I hear the calmness, the setting, the services, so it is a lot of factors weighing in. What eventually made you make the decision to live at home in Fryslân during your study and now your work?

I would prefer living in Fryslân, not in the city of Groningen for instance, for multiple reasons, for instance the calmness, people do not bother you for random reasons and what I also think is an advantage is the price of a house in Fryslân in comparison to Groningen, if you were to pay 300000 euros for a house here you get a much bigger house than when comparing to Groningen, you get much more value for your money. You get a garden, and that kind of stuff, while in Groningen you probably get a terraced house, or even an apartment, and I personally prefer having a real house, a detached house.

Did you already look into what is available near you?

Yes, I have been looking around lately, and near me you can already find nice houses for less than 200000 euros, that is just much nicer. You get a much nicer starter home.

You do not feel like there is a shortage of housing?

Well, not really a shortage. There is still choice, on paper those houses still look really nice. But I do not know how those houses are in real life, drafty, noisy, bad neighbors. But in general those houses seem fine.

That was where you currently live. I would like to go back a bit to your study and also to your work, because you also found a job in the same city as where you studied. What has brought you to the choice to study in Groningen eventually?

It was something that was close for me, much closer to me than for instance Enschede, Utrecht or Amsterdam, I don't even want to think about that. So it was actually closer. And I knew that this was a good university, this is one of the better more general universities, and that was the biggest reason. They also had the study that I wanted to follow, those are actually my three reasons.

So the availability of a study within your interest, the quality of education and the proximity to where you live?

Yes, exactly.

And imagine if they offered the same study in for instance Enschede and that would have been the best choice in terms of quality, would you have wanted to live there or is the proximity still something that outweighs those two reasons?

The point is, to live there would have been a possibility, however, I wanted to keep my student debt as low as possible. So I know that if you have to rent a place to live there then you will soon be stuck with high costs. You can for instance share the house, as some friends of mine have done. That was certainly an option. Then the costs are certainly less. But in general you

will suffer longer from those debts and I always had a good relationship with my parents, so yeah. It is a bit hard to say if I would have gone to Enschede then... Yes, perhaps so. But then I would have traveled more I think. It is not like I necessarily wanted a house over there. Maybe if I get sick of traveling after a while, but for me that is hard to say. Imagine if they did not have the choice of study that I liked over here, perhaps I would have chosen something different, who knows. I had multiple interests, so I did not necessarily have to go follow this study but this study was one of the more interesting ones to me.

Also interesting to hear that you take student debt into consideration when choosing a place to live. That you wanted to keep it as low as possible. It sounds to me like the proximity, quality and at the same time keeping those student debts as low as possible are important factors. Is there also, besides that, someone or something that influenced your choice in this study, this city? For instance friends that also went there.

No, I already knew that I wanted to do something in the direction of biology, because that was the most interesting to me, how does your body work. But I did like to see that multiple people followed that same direction. It did not help in making that choice, I never really had that, I always chose for myself. I did like seeing them making the same choice but it did not influence me or my choice.

I wanted to ask why you chose not to move to the city, but you already indicated that that was mostly to keep your student debt as low as possible. Are there also other factors that influenced this decision?

Yes, it is easier at home. You have your parents to rely on to some extent. It is not the case that all responsibilities of the household are for you, you still have some spare time for yourself.

So you also have time to spend on your study for instance?

Yes, that is right.

Did someone or something also influence your decision even further? For instance a close circle of friends?

Yes, my mom. She told me that I could keep living here, that it would be fine. You will not have debts and this and that. She wanted me to keep living there.

So very sneakily trying to persuade you?

Yes. But if I wanted to live on my own then I would have done that, of course. However I just also feel fine here, living at home.

Is she still a big influence on this decision?

Yes. Last week I went to work. I was gone for a week, I got home: oh, I missed you so, that kind of stuff.

Good that she wanted to keep you close to her. That was a bit on the study, now we are going to discuss a bit of a dreamy question: if you were to live on your own in the future, how would you describe the image of your future place of residence?

I would prefer to live in a detached house, with a nice garden, nothing special, nothing big, just a nice garden in which you can sit, where you can sunbathe or whatever. So that basically. Not a big house to be honest, just somewhere where you can live comfortably. Also a bit around nature. If you live around nature you have some places to go to, often smaller villages are a bit more in nature so preferably somewhere in Fryslân but also for instance in Drenthe, that seems also nice to me, being a bit more in the forest area, because I like forests. Bit in nature, not a big house, preferably a detached house, so you do not have to take in the neighbors that much.



People often tell me that I am a bit loud. So basically that. So that I do not have to take the people around me into account that much. In comparison with a terraced house for instance.

So what I hear from you is that you would prefer a village. Is the atmosphere of a village also important, so that social aspect, the sense of community?

I like being able to get along well with my neighbors, but I do not want to be best friends with the entire village, that I really have to be on my best behavior all the time in the village. I absolutely do not want that, that does not really matter that much to me. I just want to get along well with my neighbors. I do not necessarily want to have a good connection with the whole village. Some friends in the village would seem nice to me, have a drink or something.

So a good connection with your neighbors and a fun circle of friends so you can amuse yourself with some people?

Yes.

You also indicated that it would not matter whether it would be Fryslân or Drenthe, you just want something spacious and a bit more natural. You did come to Fryslân at a later age, you were not born here. Do you feel some connection to the Frisian culture, to the Frisian region?

I always like saying that Frisian is not a language, just to mess around with people. I think Fryslân is much more fun and social than where I previously lived. If you were to look at people and greet people where I previously lived it would almost be a form of submission. If you were to greet each other here it would be normal, it is much more social, more fun, more personal which is possible here because it is on a smaller scale here, you recognize people from your village of course. The atmosphere here is much better, it is less competing against each other than where I previously lived. People there think about their standing in the village too much. There is of course gossip in a village such as where I live here, but they are less judgemental.

So you gave a brief description of your ideal place of residence, a detached house, in a spacious area with a bit of nature, good connection with your neighbors and a close circle of friends. Currently you live in Augustinusga, you also indicated that there is a lack of services there. Would you have tips or tricks for policymakers to make Augustinusga more like your ideal village?

No, not really. Often the things that I miss in a village are found a bit further. Yes, this does take more effort, but you have the possibility to visit those services. In a city you might have the possibility to find calmness somewhere but you will always live in a busy environment. I think it is more important to live in calmness and have the possibility of going to a busier environment than to live in a busy environment and having to look for calmness somewhere.

The next question is about the future, what people expect from a career after graduation. You already graduated from university and found a job. Do you see yourself as of now remaining in Augustinusga or would you like to move to a different village or different environment?

To remain in Augustinusga: no. I have seen enough of this village. It is a bit of a boring village. I do not necessarily need a really active village or something like that, but a supermarket would be nice. It is also not really a nice place to live, where I would live.

So you would look for something where you have some more services nearby?

Yeah, but not too much more, just a little better.

So somewhere in Surhuisterveen or something?

Perhaps, I would even think that it is too big, Surhuisterveen. I was thinking more of Drogeham, Zuidhorn or something like that.

You wanted to keep your supermarket nearby, you also indicated that your mom wanted to have you as close to her as possible. Does she have some influence in this decision or do you think it is sweet but still your own decision?

A bit, yeah. I do take it into consideration, but if I were to find a nice house a bit further away than that is just the way it is. If I think this is it then that is it. Then I will move there. But I will take it into account. If I were to have the choice between two houses, one is a bit closer, same quality, then I would choose the one closer.

Are there also other people that influence your decision in this, such as friends?

Not really, no. I am someone who easily makes new friends, so not really. People who live here in the village do not really make me want to stay here. And I can always visit them if I want to. But it is not that I will not move away because of them.

So you would say that you could travel by car or by train to reach them, that would be good enough?

Yes. Preferably a bit closer than further away, because it is always handy to be closer to friends if you have the choice, so you will always take it into account. Of course I will not start looking in Drenthe instead of Fryslân, but if there is nothing there I will look further away, for instance in Groningen, if there is a nice house there.

So a bit the mentality: closer if possible, further away if necessary?

Yes, exactly that.

But away from Augustinusga then?

Yes, yes, that is right.

And the distance to work, you indicated that you work in Groningen, is that something that you struggle with?

I travel for around, a bit longer than 45 minutes, so that is quite a trip. But I do have the advantage of working at home if I want to, and I think I work from the office around twice a week. So in general if you look at it from that perspective it is not that bad.

So in the close future that will not be a driving factor to move closer to Groningen, closer to your job?

Of course, a decrease in traveling time is nice, but if I look into the bustle of a place closer to work and the price of a house, if I look at that, I think those factors outweigh traveling time to work.

Is there also something or someone that would influence your decision of going to a different place of work?

That is hard to say, it is not necessarily a friend or family member in that case, those would not have any influence on that. It would be more the atmosphere of my place of work, I think that it would depend on that. The most logical, why would you or why would you not move from this place of work to another place of work. There are not necessarily other factors that will have an influence on that. Not really, to be honest.

And what do you mean with the atmosphere of your place of work? Does this include better pay for instance?

Yes, but pay is not the thing that drives me most, I do not have to become rich or something. As long as I am comfortable, that is what I mean. To be comfortable is much more important than making a lot of money. You could have a stupid job, with a stupid atmosphere of workspace, but

still make a lot of money. So for me it would be being happy with work, that seems much more important than the amount of money that I make or the status that I acquire with that.

That was basically the foundation of the interview. I now give you the possibility to pose questions and remarks, if you feel like a topic has not come up or has not been discussed in enough detail, you now have the opportunity to tell me and discuss that with me.

Yes, that I personally, would never rent a house. If I had the option to for instance live in a city for a reasonable amount of money or I could rent a house in a village, I would go for the house in the city. That might be a bit contradictory to what I previously said, but I just think that renting is terrible. I think it is terrible, it is ridiculous that people are able to make a profit on a necessity of life, since housing is one of the necessities of life. I feel like you should always own a house. Renting should be possible, but it should not be profitable. That has led to the situation in which we are now. It is weird that it is legal that you can rent a house for 2000 euros per month but are not able to get a mortgage for 800 euros per month.

Thank you for your time, you raised a good point!

### Transcription 7: Male, remained

You are one of the people that remained in a Frisian village while studying in Groningen, could you briefly introduce yourself?

My name is **SENSORED**, I am 21 years old and I have been living in Fryslân since I was five or six years old, in Oosterwolde. I still live there, and I have been traveling for four years between here and Groningen to the university. I first studied the bachelor, Spatial Planning and Design, and now I am following the master, Environmental and Infrastructure Planning. What else do you want to know?

You checked all the boxes that I wanted to ask you! So you are currently at the end of your studying period, have you found a job for afterwards yet?

Coincidentally I just received the labor contract a few days ago, for the municipality of Heerenveen. I can work there from the first of September as a policy maker spatial development, so that is a good prospect.

Congratulations! I will go more in depth about your job in a few questions. You currently live in Oosterwolde, could you give a brief description of that village?

Oosterwolde is a village in the municipality of Ooststellingwerf, around 10000 inhabitants and has a care function for the wide area. Between Drachten and Assen is Oosterwolde the only real big place with a number of services. I have always been able to go to elementary school, middle school, and practice my hobbies. Swimming I could always do, singing I could always do, theater I could always do, making music, trombone lessons that I took there. So a wide array of services which also made it a place where you could do anything. At the same time the calmness and the nature and just like that you are in the outer area.

So, a city has everything to offer what could be offered, and a village is a place to live with little services except a baker or something. So would you say that this is kind of in between? As it has enough services.

Yes, it is of course dependent on what you expect in terms of services, but for everyday needs you are able to do everything here. Choice from all types of stores you may need actually, supermarkets, only for the real special things such as a cinema, a theater, that is something that

you go out for, so it is not a shame that once in a while you have to go to Drachten, or Assen, or Heerenveen. Then it is just a bit further.

So I hear you talk about being able to do your hobbies, the basic services are present. What are things that you value when thinking about Oosterwolde, that you think I can only find in this village and nowhere else? Or maybe you can but it is something that Oosterwolde is able to deliver?

To me it is the balance between the services that you need from a day to day basis, so that I do not have to travel by car or by bike, everything is within reach, and then on the other hand not the bustle of the city. That I think is nice and something that this village is able to offer. In other places that might also be the case, but there are not a lot that are able to provide that balance. Because there are people from nearby villages that perhaps had to cycle for 45 minutes to get to school. I had the luxury to get to school within five minutes. They are in a different position, on a really small scale but perhaps the calmness is more present there. You could wonder if that would still be added value then, still a lack of services.

Then you perhaps have to travel further to reach those services.

Yes, it becomes a bigger part of the day, you really have to plan for shopping then.

You also mentioned that Oosterwolde is located in nature, is that also something that you value about your place of residence? For instance when doing sport activities?

Yes, if I have the time, in the summer vacation for instance, I go for a trip on my racing bike. Then it is fun to look for a more natural surrounding. The hard thing is when going for the national parks, such as Fochteloërveen or Drents Friese Wold, those are usually so touristy that I try not to cycle there. I try to avoid that. The standard nature between agricultural land, those are places where you can practice your sport then.

To summarize: services are possible, calmness is present and the space to do whatever you want. Now we are going in the opposite direction: if you look at certain aspects that make you doubt, that you think can be better or are less pleasant in a village, what comes to mind then for you?

For myself, if I wanted to keep living here that would be impossible, since there are no houses beneath 250000 euros. That is a problem that is applicable everywhere in the Netherlands, unless your house is built on a sea dyke. That is a problem here, they build newer houses that are mostly huge, they are not looking for opportunities for starters, one-person, two-person families, that kind of stuff.

So what you are saying mostly is that the housing crisis that is present currently is also present in a village such as Oosterwolde?

Absolutely. You can see that in cities and villages as well.

Exactly. And you also indicated little starter housing, little one-person to two-person housing that are present. What I heard from other interviewees is that there was little housing, and the housing that was available was too high in costs. Do you also for instance see that these houses are being built by outsiders, or would you say that it remains among the village inhabitants?

Oosterwolde is a bit too big to know who left a house somewhere and who is going to live there now, so that makes it a bit more anonymous. I can not give an example right around now if they are outsiders.

So that might be due to the fact that it is a bit in between a village and a city, you know your neighbors but other than that.

Yes, 10000 inhabitants are hard to get to know all at once.

You remained at home during the study. What initially drove you to the decision, perhaps consciously, to remain at home instead of moving to the city?

That is a combination of factors. The advantages of living here that I mentioned earlier, outweigh the life in the city with more within reach but then the bustle that comes with living in a city. Other than that the costs of living in the city. I had my side job here, and now I can continue my job at the supermarket. The cost of such a room is also high. I always tried to get out of studying with the least amount of debt. The ease and the comfort of living at home, if you come home that there are people waiting for you, that there is food on the table, talk about the day with each other, a combination of things. Being able to do your hobbies with the people you know. A bit of everything.

So the connection with your family and friends a bit, since you built your entire existence in your region so to speak, and also those economic factors of keeping your student debt as low as possible. If you would say which would outweigh which, what would you say then?

Firstly, I could not see myself living in Groningen. If I drive through the city now, I still feel like a tourist. For a day it is fun, but longer than that, that is something that I was not interested in. In combination with Oosterwolde, which I still liked and with which I was still not finished, or am still not finished. That makes it alright for me.

It feels different, not as home?

Yes, staying here just felt better to me.

You eventually chose Groningen to study, why Groningen and not Enschede, Zwolle?

The direction of study that I eventually chose, Spatial Planning, is only available in this format in Groningen. The only university with a faculty for Spatial Sciences, for instance. The only place where you can work on spatial planning is specialized. That was one. At my middle school the studies offered by Rijksuniversiteit Groningen were mostly promoted. That is how I found a flier with the bachelor that I eventually chose. And also somewhere in the back of my mind the thought that if you choose for Groningen you can always do it from home, other locations, if you have to travel for more than two hours for a single trip, that is just not doable.

So mostly the promotion from your school, something I experienced as well, but also as you indicated, this was the only university to offer this program, and also the distance.

Yes, I have also tried looking elsewhere, before I tried visiting an open day at Twente, for Civil Engineering. That is just a different balance between the technical and the social side, that leans more towards the technical, also interesting. I could have done that as well I think, but this felt like a better balance between the aforementioned sides.

No, exactly. I also visited Twente for an open day for Psychology, and that was also a balance between psychology and technology, leaning more towards the technical side.

That kind of works like a deterrent.

It is a lot more intimidating all of the sudden. You indicate that the distance between your house and the university weighs in a lot, and I do not know if anyone you know is also following the study, but has someone or something influenced your decision before the aforementioned factors you stated, choosing this city or this study?

I have heard of no one, and there was no one who followed this study that I knew before following this study. It was purely a coincidence that I found the flier at one of those study choice courses in middle school. I was interested in the study and a nice picture on it made me think about checking out what it was all about. That is when the ball started to roll, that was I believe in the ninth grade. Ever since then I have tried to stay clear of that tunnel vision, but I eventually kept coming back to that choice of study. And about the living at home situation, that is really a choice I made by myself. If I chose something different I would have also been supported, also by my parents. No doubt about that.

So you say that you tried to keep that tunnel vision open, but that interest in this study, in this discipline has driven you to make this decision?

Yes, that always returned, also when I looked at other options, this one came out on top everytime.

Then you made a good decision.

Yes, still no regrets!

You indicated that the city itself feels like you are a tourist visiting a different country. Are there, besides this, also reasons that you really did not want to go to the city? So not why you chose to stay at home but reasons that made you not want to live in a city specifically?

That is a combination of the noise, the pollution that you experience everywhere there. Your life is really influenced by everything surrounding you. Here you have a detached house, from the back I have a view of the municipal forest that is behind our house, no one bothers you. You can do what you want. There is a road close to here, but there is only a car driving there once in a while, so that is also no problem. It is nice that you are not bothered in your comings and goings, by the noise, by whatever people are doing around you. Here you also might not know everyone but it is easier to greet someone in the streets. You know them by face, especially from the supermarket, I have become somewhat of a local celebrity. And those are all kinds of things that would seem to be different in the city.

Yeah, would you say that that would be a certain feeling of community, a sense of kinship perhaps?

Yes, that would be a bit of a lite version, because you do not know the people personally, but you still greet them. You just do that, that is just normal. That gives a certain feeling without really getting to know each other.

So you would consider that to be typical to a village, greeting each other?

Yes.

So that was mostly about the city in which you currently study. So for this question I would like for you to imagine a world without student debt, without barriers. If you were to look at the place where you want to live in the future, if you have any idea about where you would like to live in the future, could you give a brief description of this place? What you would deem important?

Starting in the context of work, the ideal situation would be to have work within cycling distance, that would be really nice. So for instance on the racing bike half an hour to an hour, so within a range of 20 or 30 kilometers. Mainly a lot of green surrounding you, a garden because gardening also is a hobby of mine. Calming, just doing mindless tasks, that is always fun. I would not want to live in the middle of nowhere, still people around you that you can get to know. Still those services are nearby, I like cycling and I would love to use my car as little as possible. Looking for a way to combine those elements.

So, to summarize, I would say that you would move to or stay in a village in that regard?

Yes, that is where I feel most comfortable.

And is it important to you where that village would be located? Should it be in Fryslân, or would Groningen and Drenthe also be alright in that regard?

I do not feel a certain connection to Fryslân. They also call the area where I live now the “other” Fryslân, so it is a bit different. Language is also not really a thing here, you sometimes have some Frisians here but those are also exceptions. It is a bit of a mixture of everything so I don't really feel a connection.

So you would like a village, close to work, whether that would be in Fryslân or somewhere else, Drenthe or Groningen, would that not matter?

Yes. I grew up in the northern part of the Netherlands, which is of course beautiful, but if it were to be somewhere else in the Netherlands, I would also be open to that.

If you were to look at the described ideal situation and your hometown of Oosterwolde, they match in most aspects. Would you also have tips for policymakers that might help Oosterwolde to become your ideal living place? Something you would really like to tackle in nearby regions?

That would really be affordable housing, that is really a shortcoming here.

...

Coming back to the comment you made at the start of the interview, a new job, in Heerenveen. Would you see yourself remaining in Oosterwolde, or moving closer to Heerenveen?

That is in the short-term the intention is perfectly feasible, I can get to Heerenveen more easily than to Groningen. I have my own car now, which makes it easier. For myself I have the idea that I would rather go buy a house than rent one. If you start renting you can not easily start the savings that you need in order to save up for a house. Then you have to see if you can get a permanent contract, you start off with a one-year contract for instance, so you can look for a mortgage based on your salary. Those are all the practical things that you need, but until then, where I live is a good starting base.

So what you indicate is that on the short-term you would like to continue living in Oosterwolde, after that you would like to buy a house. And would you like to continue working in Heerenveen then, or is that to gain some experience?

That is the intention, to build something up there. I cannot look in the future to see if it indeed turns out to be something, but it is my intention to remain there for the coming years. From them as well.

Imagine, you get to a point where you have a good bank balance, good salary so you can get a mortgage, would you remain in Oosterwolde or move closer to your job, or another region?

Well, you start of course with drawing a circle around Heerenveen and seeing what is available in the nearby vicinity. I think it is hard, friends in Oosterwolde, they are currently still here, but what are the chances that they will remain here in ten years? That seems like a small chance to me. It is inevitable that everyone goes their own way, and you run into each other in the future. I do not have a connection to the village itself really. It is really dependent on what is available.

Those were the basic questions of the interview, now for you the opportunity to raise some questions, give some comments, highlight something.

I think it is interesting to see how the size of a village influences the way of interaction with people surrounding you, perhaps even your traveling behavior since people from smaller villages have to travel further to reach services.

Thank you for your time!

## Transcription 8: Female, migrated

So we start off with the most exciting question of course: could you give a brief description of yourself? Where you currently live, where you currently study, that kind of stuff.

So I live in Groningen, I study in Groningen at the university, Medicine. I am from Fryslân, Surhuisterveen.

You are saying Medicine, are you still in your bachelor or in your master?

Master, the end of my master.

Does it also have a specific name?

I think it's just Master Medicine. There are no real specific courses, really.

So you indicate that you live in Groningen, you also study in Groningen. You also indicated that you are from Fryslân, could you give a brief description of the place that you originated from?

The place where I am from is a village with around 5000 inhabitants, I believe. I always think that it is a relatively big village, if I look at the surroundings in the sense that we have a decent center with multiple shops, multiple bakers, multiple supermarkets. I used to live with my parents at the industrial site of the village.

That is a bit outside the village, or a bit on the outer rim?

A bit on the outer rim, yes. The other side of the road is really the village again.

You indicated, services are nearby, there are enough supermarkets and stuff. What do you really value, thinking back to your village where you originated, this is what I really liked there?

Definitely the space, and the fact that you are easily outside the village, if you want to go for a walk you do not have to go through the village or through the center but you can easily get out. It is also the village where you grew up, so also the people that you know and run into. A bit of a sense of community.

So you state three points, first off the space. Why do you exactly value this? Is there a specific reason for that?

It is what I am used to, it is where I grew up. In that sense I am used to having space around the house, so sitting in a room like this is really different then.

So you mean for instance having a small garden?

Yes, a bit of a garden, also the meadows around the village, I also like that.

Do you also feel a bit of a constraint now that you live here, that there is something where you miss that space?

I am lucky that I have a garden, although it is a small one. In comparison with what I have in Surhuisterveen it is a stamp but this is fantastic, I am really happy with this. In that sense I do not feel any constraint, but if I sit in that garden I also feel like someone is watching me. If I sit in this corner I know that no one can see me but from the place that I originate from I am used to a certain sense of privacy. I do not have that here so that sometimes is a bit of a struggle, but I have a garden so that is nice. And where I feel a certain constraint is that when I want to go for a walk I first have to travel ten minutes to leave the city and after that I finally get the sense of rest.

So maybe also that everyone is so close together here, that everyone can see each other due to the proximity?

Yes.



You also stated that you have some facilities nearby in Surhuisterveen.

Yes, I think that is way better here in Groningen.

Would you then prefer Surhuisterveen in that sense or Groningen?

Then I choose Groningen, absolutely.

Are there also things that you have here that make you prefer here to Surhuisterveen?

That you can easily go out to grab some food out here, and that you have a certain choice in what you want to eat. In Surhuisterveen you have Kolkzicht and It Stee and then that is it, we also have two pizzerias. Sometimes I sit in Surhuisterveen and I am asked if I want to order some food and I get the choice between a food bar and pizzeria. Here in Groningen you have more choices, which I really like. Also in the sense of sport, I do not know if it is actually closer but yeah. I do kickboxing, here I can do it in the same city but in Surhuisterveen I have to go a few villages over. But I am not sure if the distance really matters that much. But that is what I like in the sense of services. And of course the festivals that are here in the summer, that stuff is organized where you can go out and enjoy your free time in the city, I like that.

That it is alive so to speak.

Yeah, I feel like the city is more alive in that sense.

So then to come back to the positives of a village. You indicate the sense of kinship that you have in a village, the people that you know, friends and family I presume. Do you have a lot of attachment to that? If you think back to Surhuisterveen, did you know everyone, or was it a smaller group in that regard?

It is not the 'knows us' feeling, but you know a lot of people a little bit. And the church plays a role in that, there you also have a larger group that you know more easily. And I like that, that you run into each other on the street and you know where someone lives, who someone is married to. That kind of stuff. I do not have to know a lot about people but just a bit of the surface.

And the church, I would say that would be typical for a village, I do not know how you experience that here?

I do not go to church here, I know that it is here and through YouTube I follow services here as well. But I do think that you can have that same experience here as well. I only chose to do it at home since that is the church that I am mostly at. And on the weekends I am in Surhuisterveen a lot so yeah.

So at home you have the foundation of family, friends, church, that you build up over the years?

Yes, but I have to say that I also have friends here in Groningen now. And also a lot of friends that I have at home that also live here now. So that mixes as well.

...

So those are some positives that you experience in a village. Do you also have things that make you think of Surhuisterveen as something that you did not experience entirely pleasant?

Perhaps a bit that you know everything and everyone, in a smaller village that would be even more. From time to time you have the feeling that if you are up to something that everyone immediately knows, and sometimes that is a bit unpleasant. That is not immediately something bad, but sometimes you also think that that is not necessary per se. Sometimes it is nice to be a bit anonymous. The services are something I enjoy here in Groningen, but is that something that really bothers me in a village: no. I could also live without those and I just enjoy those now that I can. And if I want to, I just leave the village for some time. What I do like here, when you

want to go visit friends, for a drink for instance, you take the bike more often. When I want to visit friends in nearby villages in Fryslân I often go by car because the distance is often a bit too large, and here you just grab the bike. But things that I truly experience as unpleasant in a village, I do not know about that.

So a bit the 'knows us' feeling still, everyone knows everyone but also that everyone knows stuff about other people.

Yeah.

But do you also maybe think it is pleasant in some sense that people know stuff about each other?

Of course! I think in that sense the positive outweighs the negative.

Why did you eventually choose for the city that you are currently living and following a study?

In terms of study because it was near to where I lived then, and everyone went there, I could remain at home in Surhuisterveen. I also looked no further than Groningen.

Also a bit the quality of education perhaps? A lot of people indicated that the distance mattered, but also because it was the best in the Netherlands.

No, no, I purely looked at distance. I never thought about studying somewhere else, also because I preferred to remain at home. Financially it was also the most beneficial in the beginning. So really looking into the distance, organization wise it was the easiest.

You also indicated that you wanted to live at home during the study, did someone or something also influence your decision of studying in Groningen a bit?

Also a bit because everyone else was doing it, I think. Most of them went to Groningen, so you go along with that a bit and also that we received the most information about the university of Groningen in school. I think that had some influence, I think it confirmed it for me. But I do not think that I had made drastically different choices if the provided information would be different.

So you were fixed on studying Medicine, and the fact that others followed and it was close to your home was more an additional benefit?

I actually was studying Medicine with someone from my high school class, but that was not a best friend of mine or something. It was nice, but it was not like we were really good friends, so in that regard I did not choose to study Medicine in Groningen because of him.

So it was your own choice but it was nice to know that it was close to home?

Yes.

So you also live in Groningen, and you indicated that before that you wanted to live at home since Groningen was so close to where you lived. What eventually led you to thinking: I am going to move to Groningen?

Multiple things, on the one hand I had evening lectures twice a week. This meant that I would be home by ten or 11 in the evening and had to go by bus at eight the next morning. Twice a week. At some point I was fed up with that. I am the oldest which means that when I started that when there was a holiday the house would be full with kids. And at some point you just want to be on your own. Friends live here and I was always the one that had to travel home by bus or sleep over at someone's place and at some point you do not want that anymore. So it was actually multiple things: evening lectures, wanting to live by yourself and the calmness.

You indicated that you also felt ready to live on your own. Is that to some extent that you perhaps felt that now you had the time to explore this on your own, that it would be harder to discover living on your own besides having a job?

I think it was more that I was the one living at home and I did not want to be that person anymore. I also wanted to participate in the “grownup world”. With student life and that kind of stuff.

Are you talking about people you know from Surhuisterveen or from Groningen?

No, no, mostly from Groningen. Most of the people that I knew from Surhuisterveen were also living in or near Surhuisterveen still.

The next question will explore the attachment that you might feel with the place that you grew up. I think I made a slight mistake. I mixed up the questions. Instead of the place you grew up, could you perhaps give a brief description of where you live now, Groningen?

Groningen is the biggest city of the northern part of the Netherlands, relatively speaking in comparison to other Dutch cities still small. I think Groningen is pretty cute, it is still pretty much like a village. Still a big city with every service, the university. I do not live in the city center, but still close to the center. I think if I am traveling fast, depending on the traffic lights, it takes around ten minutes to reach the Grote Markt. And I live in a neighborhood that is a mixture between students and young families. I think it is one of the better neighborhoods of Groningen. So not really a student neighborhood but a little more calm.

Yes, yes.

I also asked what you liked about Surhuisterveen, you indicated that you liked the services better in Groningen, the accessibility is better, you can reach the city center just like that. Are there also other things that you really like about Groningen?

It is just a student city, and that is so much fun. The atmosphere that surrounds Groningen. That you can go out at night with your friends, that I cycle through the city at eight o'clock in the evening and there are still people in the street. There is just a certain atmosphere in the city that I really think is pleasant. And I really like going to the market.

Does the village not have a market, then? I think I remember there being a market as well.

Yes, they do have one, but I just like walking the circle, just taking in the atmosphere. I just really like that. In Surhuisterveen we have around four or five stalls. You could call it a market, but yeah.

You say that there are a lot of people in the street, but you also come from a bigger village yourself. Can it be compared to some extent? Or would you say it is really different?

That is hard to say. I think it is not really comparable, I think Groningen is a lot bigger and a lot more. Surhuisterveen would then be a really, really, really small version of that.

Groningen lite, so to speak.

Yes. Very, very, very lite.

So now we discussed positives about both Groningen and Surhuisterveen. Now look the other way around, taking a look at what you really do not like about Groningen. What would that be?

The fact that you have a small garden. The fact that sometimes you walk through the city and you do not run into anyone that you know. I still like running into people in the street. Especially the crowdedness. Sometimes. Usually I can really enjoy that, but it is just that if you are looking for some calmness that you cannot find it.

So in Surhuisterveen you can look for the crowdedness but you have the calmness, and here it is just crowded.

Yeah, and I currently live on the outskirts of the city so if I want I can just grab my bike and I am gone from the city, but it is a bit harder than Surhuisterveen. And that would eventually be a reason for me to leave the city.

Back to the other questions. Could you imagine yourself returning? You just indicated you would.

Yes, but not Surhuisterveen. That has to do more with the fact that my parents also live there and I do not know if I would like to live in the same village as my parents. But certainly back to Fryslân and certainly back to a village.

And, perhaps a bit dumb of a dumb question, but why a Frisian village but not Surhuisterveen? Besides your parents living there, you still have your network there.

Yes, I am not saying that I cannot live in Surhuisterveen, but I feel like you can never fully detach yourself or something like that. I do not have to detach myself from my parents entirely but it is still the feeling like living in the village of your parents, with the people that you know. I also like to build things up by myself, I think that is the biggest reason. So not the village per se, I would certainly live in a similar village, but standing on my own feet then.

Developing yourself without your parents visiting on a daily basis?

Yes, yes.

Yes, I understand completely. But Surhuisterveen is quite a big village, and your parents live on one side of the village. Could you not live on the other side of the village then?

No, no. Then it is still that there is talk, and then my mom will hear from the neighbor from the friend of what I have done or I do not know, I would not like that. I do not want my parents to know every little thing that I do. I have a really good connection with my parents but I also have to detach myself from time to time.

But you still want to go back to a Frisian village. Why a Frisian village?

Because I am Frisian. Yes, I think that is still a bit of personality, a bit of being able to speak Frisian, connect with the people, I think that is mostly it. A bit of personality that you just have there.

Like the poster that hangs behind you, “kist t famke wol út Fryslân helje mar Fryslân net út t famke” (you can take the girl out of Fryslân but not Fryslân out of the girl)?

Of course, I think that is really typical. I cannot see myself living in a village in Groningen, I am too Frisian for that. I would survive that and I would like it, but I am still too Frisian for that.

So you want to speak Frisian and still hold the culture, to the extent there is a Frisian culture, in place?

I would like that, yes.

Detaching from Surhuisterveen and Groningen, purely focusing on you wanting to live in a Frisian village, could you give a description of such a place where you would like to live?

It depends a bit on my work of course, because what I want to do and where I work could indicate how far I have to live from the hospital. That certainly is something I take into account. Other than that, a village that is still similar to Surhuisterveen in the sense that it has an elementary school, that there are one or two bakers, at least one supermarket and preferably two. A gym, that kind of stuff.

So close to work and enough services should be present.

Yes. And work, ideally I would like to live around a 45 minutes distance from work but the case could be that I have to live closer due to requirements.

That they have to call you in or something?

Yes.

And, let me see. You indicate work, do you think that would be a problem in Fryslân? You work in healthcare, there are enough hospitals there I would say?

Yes. Will it be a problem? It is not guaranteed that I will be able to work in Fryslân. I cannot really estimate that, because I first have to go into training, first I have to work as a basic doctor, then into training. Training really depends on where I can find it. And then also still finding a job.

The training is specialization after the master?

Yes, I am not finished yet, I hope to be done by my 30th birthday. But that is working while learning, so still a salary.

Do you also have tips for policymakers to make a village to your liking? It might be a bit technical, but do you have some tips in regards to your dream scenario, looking at for instance Surhuisterveen, what could be done better?

Accessibility to larger places, because for instance Surhuisterveen to Groningen or Surhuisterveen to Leeuwarden is at least an hour by bus, while by car it is around half an hour. Ideally there would be a train station in Surhuisterveen.

So you want an improvement in regards to public transportation when addressing accessibility? How do you perceive it now?

Buses are now going to and from Surhuisterveen every hour, with a fast shift and a slow shift. I prefer the faster one, so we have two buses per hour, but for the faster option there is only one every hour. In Drachten there are multiple buses but I do not know that for sure. And to Buitenpost they only travel during rush hour, so that is worthless. It can be done better, it still works, but it can be done better.

So you would prefer a more stable service, rather than just in rush hour, if you want to go home for the weekend for instance, that possibility should be there?

Yes, I now just call my parents and they will pick me up from the train station, but if you ask me what could be done better, then that can be done better.

Moving on to your future career. You indicated that you wanted to move to a Frisian village. Would you say that this would be possible in regards to work?

Yes.

Are there also other things that make you think: do I really want to move to a Frisian village?

No, I think what I mentioned is mostly why I want to move to Fryslân and nowhere else, then those are the most important things. It sounds like I am really pro-Frisian, but that is not entirely the case. It is just nice to have the option to speak Frisian when you want to.

I also interviewed others who indicate that it is part of their identity.

Yes, exactly. And if you for instance compare it to the southern parts of the Netherlands or for instance the Randstad, I would not fit in over there.

Perhaps like you mentioned earlier, you want to walk in the street and greet people, I think if you move over there that it is a different culture.

Yes, the people are also different over there.

And you are for instance destined to work in a hospital, if you for instance find a job in Groningen, would you take it then or is Fryslân more important to you?

Well, imagine if I were to work in Groningen, then I would still live in Fryslân. But then it should be stable, because first you have to go into training, go work, sometimes you get a temporary

contract. If I get a permanent contract I know my future, and that kind of stuff. If I am able to travel I will go and live in Fryslân, if not then I will find another nice place nearby. Then that will just be the case.

So if possible, move, if not, just live closer?

Yes.

Alright. Is there other than that something or someone that would influence this decision? For instance friends that you still value too much to leave?

It would definitely depend on a potential boyfriend, what he wants. If I want to move to Fryslân and he does not want to do that it will of course become complicated. Other than that, there are friends in the region that I would like to continue to visit, but if that is a 45 minutes drive away then that is okay to me. I would not say that there is a friend that I would like to live next door to, but of course there are still friends that I would like to be able to still visit, so it would be nice to be able to be in the proximity of them.

So the boyfriend would influence this decision, but a friend, a little distance would be fine.

Yes.

And do you also have a small idea where you would like to work in the future?

Well, I have too much going on, so that makes that quite a hard question in the sense of what exactly I would want. If I had to decide it would be in Leeuwarden.

Is there also a reason for this pick?

That is purely because it is a level two hospital, so the problem is a bit more intense there. And I like that, that it remains a challenge. And also because most people speak Frisian there, and I would like to be able to add something extra through that.

That was the base of the interview. If you still want to highlight something, if you have a comment, a question perhaps, now is your chance.

No, nothing that comes to mind right now.

Then I end the recording. Thank you for your time.