

Settling in Reeve: Exploring Motivations, Experiences and Expectations of a Village's First Residents

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Abstract

The emergence of new villages or cities is far from everyday news, and the story of the new village of Reeve represents an extensive housing project to combat housing shortages in the province of Overijssel in the Netherlands. Based on a rural idyllic image of living with water and a modern take on housing development, Reeve represents a case that revolves around the virtues of sustainable living and the increasing prominence of the position of attractive living and leisure in housing studies. This research focuses on the motivations, first living experiences, and future expectations or ambitions of the residents that moved to Reeve. This study explores the appeal and challenges of living in a totally new rural environment, unbound by any form of prior residential experience and fueled by a rural idyll of living with water. It finds that environmental aesthetics plays a significant role in modern housing projects. Furthermore, communication on behalf of the municipality has been crucial in Reeve in shaping expectations and desires or ambitions for the future among its first residents. In general, participants have recounted great positivity so far, but there are also critical voices raised against developments that, to some extent, limit certain aspects of development in Reeve, which are illustrated and elaborated on provided by personal interviews.

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1. Background

The issue of housing shortage in the Netherlands has gained significant prominence in recent years, and it is estimated that this scarcity will peak in 2024 to reach a number of over 400.000 homes (NL Times, 2024). Housing shortage in the Netherlands poses fundamental challenges, not just a national but also on many regional levels, aiming to resolve the imbalance of supply and demand of social housing and high rental prices (NJI, n.d.). The housing crisis has been dealing blows to not just Dutch, but overarching EU housing policies for decades amid financial crises, the unprecedented influx of immigrants, and the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War (The Guardian, 2024).

New housing projects are found in abundance in the Netherlands, in which sustainability and environmentalism have taken a central position. This study sheds a light on the specific case-study of Reeve, just outside the city of Kampen, where a new village is being built in a regional and sophisticated project to help combat regional housing shortage in the area of West-Overijssel. The eventual plan is to have Reeve comprise over 3.000 residences and several facilities and services that would make Reeve a functioning village in its own right, planned in close proximity to the opening of the mitigated river channel of the Reevediep river in 2019 to connect the river bodies of the IJssel and the Drontermeer (see figures 1 and 2).

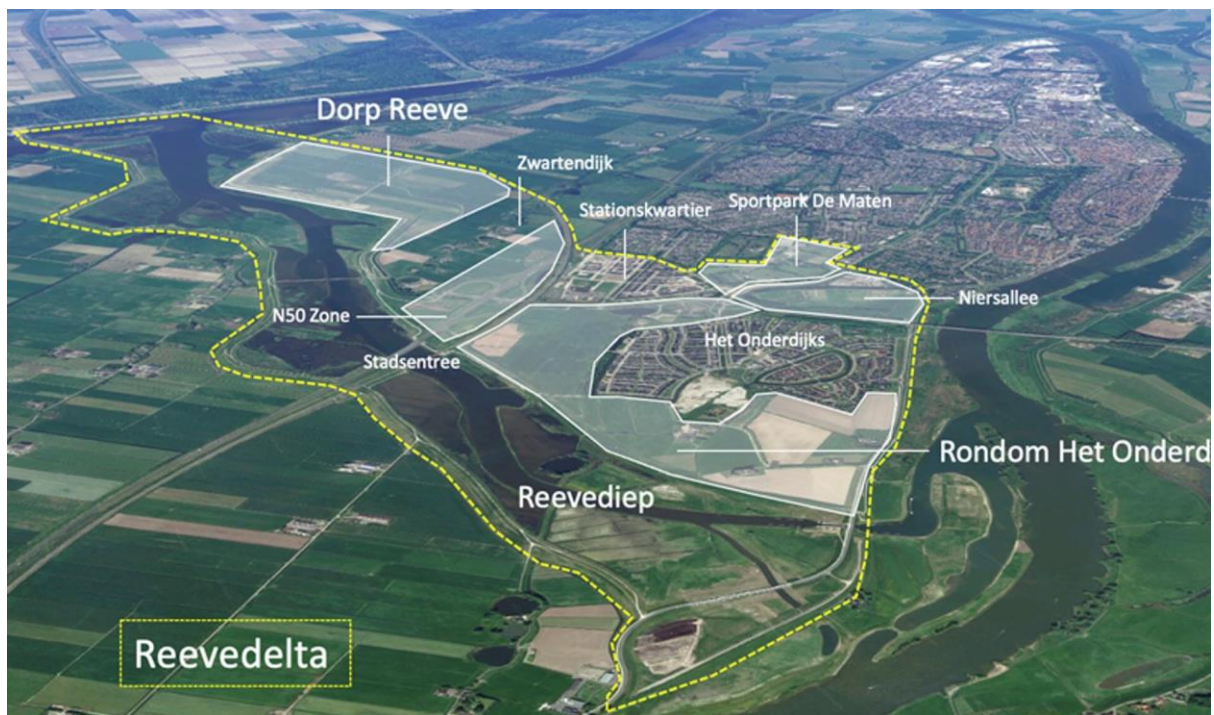


Figure 1: the spatial concept of the Reevedelta and the planned location of the new village of Reeve ('Dorp Reeve') that is to become part of the municipality of the city of Kampen. Taken from: <https://www.brugnieuws.nl/nieuws/algemeen/259516/presentatie-concept-gebiedsvisie-reevedelta> (2022).



Figure 2: zoning map of the village of Reeve along the existing 'klimaatdijk' and Reevediep channel (vaargeul) of the Reeve bypass. Taken from: <https://www.stadsleven.nu/2017/06/21/flexibel-watermanagement-wonen-op-dijk/> (n.d)

While plans for the project have been on the table since 2018, when the Kampen council finally concluded its binding spatial destination plan ('bestemmingsplan'), the construction plans had faced a degree of controversy. Several regional nature associations like Natuurvereniging IJsseldelta had raised their concerns and objections regarding the development of one of the Netherlands' youngest villages on the designated lands, pointing at environmental and climate-related concerns, for instance stressing the near presence of a designated Natura 2000 area (see figure 2) (AD, 2018). Despite having faced substantial criticism, the council of State ('Raad van State') formally approved the proposal for Reeve's construction in December 2019, meaning that residential construction could start, while leaving the channel of Reevediep completely navigable with houses to be built along its shores.

If anything, the essence of the new village of Reeve goes further than simply the construction of new dwellings to combat housing shortages. The Reevediep channel has formed the basis for the planned construction of a completely new village in the Netherlands, with most of its dwellings being situated directly adjacent to the water channel, built on and around a klimaatdijk ('climate dyke') along the shores of the Reevediep. The river is thus not just a water barrier, but now also serves the purpose of building land for a new housing project (Metz, 2017).

Development of Reeve has been underway since 2019, with the goal to realize the first proposed plan of building 600 dwellings with an intended population of 1500, divided over the three subareas: 'De Dorpskern' (phase 1), 'Het Eiland' (phase 2), and 'De Werven' (phase 3, to be built on the Klimaatdijk); see figure 3. Residence construction had officially started in 2022, and the complete vision comprises the plan of building approximately 3600 homes in the next 10-15 years, including facilities and amenities (Stadszaken, 2024), of which around 135 are currently standing (KadastraleKaart, 2024).



Figure 3: the first three planned subareas in Reeve on which dwellings are currently in the process of being inhabited, under sale, or still under construction. Taken from: <https://www.nieuwbouw-reeve.nl/omgeving/ligging>

Alderman Albert Holtland of Kampen explained that the village will be situated in close vicinity to Kampen, but is also geographically separated from it because of the N50 highway and train line Hanzelijn, meaning that the community will not come to serve as a suburb of Kampen, but rather a village in its own right with its own zip code area, and above all one with a distinguished identity with a special character that is on par with its watery and scenic environment. Therefore, Reeve will be given the formal status of a village (RTV Oost, 2021).

1.1 Research Problem

This research aims to focus on the experiences felt by the first inhabitants that have taken up residence in Reeve in the first two years of active construction of dwellings. It attempts to explore what motivations were most prominent or decisive behind the decision to move towards the new place of Reeve, as well as gain insights into their first experiences and expectations for the future. Detailed plans for Reeve have existed for years now, but they are estimated to take up years before completion, and the same goes for planned and required facilities, services and amenities. Though Reeve is situated within close proximity of Kampen, a new village on empty land means also that there is hardly any legacy or existing sentiment associated with the place. The very factors that can enhance such sentiment may be based on a promise of rural idyll, and its first residents, who have all arrived with their own expectations and wishes, can play a vital role in pioneering a sense of community in Reeve.

1.2 Research Questions

This research aim leads to the following research question central to the thesis:

'What were the motivations of the first residents to move to Reeve and what are their experiences and expectations with regard to life in the new place?'

This research question is substantiated by the following sub-questions:

1. What were the most prominent motivations or perceived upsides of moving to Reeve?
2. What are the experiences felt by the residents of Reeve during the first phase of living there, and do they align with their expectations on forehand?
3. What expectations or wishes do the residents of Reeve have with regard to the development of Reeve in the future in terms of facilities, services and/or a sense of belonging or place attachment?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 New communities

The creation of a new neighbourhood or village, like Reeve, offers the opportunity to prioritize sustainable development from day 1, and the shift towards active citizen contributions in sociotechnical change resonates with wider research on users and consumers in fields related to sustainability (Hyysalo, 2021). Sustainable housing relates not only to environmental effects, but also to cultural and social elements that need to be incorporated despite its difficulties. Furthermore, besides its environmental duty, sustainable development also targets the well-being of the people, and any form of conceptual approach to such initiatives must be in line with cultural and social values of the society it is intended for (Rovers, 2008).

Christenson et al. (1994) have defined community development as ‘a group of people in a locality initiating a social action process, or planned intervention, to change their economic, social, cultural and/or environmental situation’, and environmentalism takes a more central stance in modern perceptions of community development. This narrative has started to infiltrate and colonize the areas of urban design since the 1990s, though a more efficient spread was palpable in the second decade of the 21st century, and these developments have presented us with the aesthetics of an enhanced ‘eco-lifestyle’ and a greater focus on amenities in the field of urban planning (Vázquez, 2022).

2.2 Motives for moving

Residential mobility, the ‘relatively local-scale relocation of individuals and households from one usual residence to another’ (Coulter & Thomas, 2020), is commonly associated with factors within one’s life stage, relating to the access to amenities, attributes of the household, and housing characteristics (Willibald et al., 2018). Rossi’s ‘Why Families Move’, his theory on residential mobility as he produced in 1955, relates various stages in the life cycle in terms of age and changes in the household composition, to accompanying housing needs or social aspirations, denoting those changes in the life cycle precipitate movement (Short, 1978). Rossi’s findings have largely managed to retain its influence in the field of residential mobility research, but the mix of reasons why people move has become very heterogeneous, and a variety of data analyses have shown that making sense of examining expressed reasons for moving is challenging (Coulter & Scott, 2014).

Van Dam et al. (2002) have provided more insight into practices of urban-rural migration and divided the motivations for migration towards more rural areas into the categories of work and education, household and residential motives. Especially in more recent years, non-economic considerations have taken up an increasingly prominent role as a driver of migration, for people have gained access to greater means to act with a focus on their preferences. In relation to this development, Van Dam et al. also paid attention to the concept of a ‘Dutch rural idyll’ enhanced by visual characteristics of the countryside, functional or spatial functions like agriculture or nature, norms and values or feelings associated with the countryside, and its locational aspects. Furthermore, they have found that rural housing preferences are mainly shaped by whether children are part of the life stage, age, social aspects, income, residential history, and the frequency of visiting the countryside.

2.3 Residential experiences & satisfaction

According to Chen et al. (2023), residential satisfaction comprises a subjective evaluation of the residential environment, referring to the environmental elements that surround a living space, like the living space, physical or natural conditions, infrastructure support and the social environment. Skalicky & Cerpes (2019) argued that the degree of residential satisfaction reflects 'people's pursuit of a liveable living quality'. Both above-mentioned studies have hereby built upon the concept of liveability as it was introduced by the WHO in 1976, identifying four dimensions of the residential environment that have since then been widely adopted worldwide. The concepts of safety, health, convenience and amenity serve as crucial elements to determine residential satisfaction (Higasa, 1977).

The extending flexibility to make residential decisions on the basis of non-economic considerations as mentioned by Van Dam et al. have left us with a greater multiplicity of reasons to determine whether young adults stay and/or feel attracted to rural areas, which sets the stage for a distinction between material and symbolic factors. Rural areas are commonly assessed by their environmental qualities, and the possibilities of leisure and symbolic factors like a sense of belonging to landscapes contributes greatly to the residential appreciation of rural areas for young adults, whereas socio-economic factors take a more marginalized position in the residential choices and appreciation of young adults in rural areas (Hofstede et al., 2022).

(Physical) contact with rural landscapes promotes serenity and intellectual inspiration, and the first engagement with a natural environment is decisive in determining one's appraisal of the landscape and the experienced engagement with it in the long run (Mooney, 2019). Furthermore, the level of adaptation to an environment depends on perceived sense of place attachment by the user, and the physical relationship between the actor and their environment can be positive and develop if the environment is built based on the satisfaction of its users (Rosalina, 2021).

2.4 Place attachment

A 'space that qualifies people's emotional resonance with their natural environments; individual and collective activities in a place; and emotional meanings in a spatial setting' is a widely accepted definition of the concept of "place", and an experience of place attachment 'generally suggests some kind of connection and emotional bonding between individuals and places that assure attachment security and emotional support' (Counted, 2016).

The concept of place attachment encompasses a dynamic interdependence that is influenced by a sense of rootedness in and identity with a certain place, a degree of social involvement, and environmental aesthetics (Seamon, 2020). Najafi & Syarif (2012) distinguish between physical attributes, (personal) meanings and activities or experiences as the central constructs of a place, but stress that physical attributes do not directly create the sense of place. Physical characteristics, like architectural beauty, accessibility, environmental pleasance and adequate facilities, as well as geographical qualities, play an important role in fostering both place attachment and residential satisfaction (Abu Bakar et al., 2017).

Reeve's ideal of living on a recreational waterfront may be the single most important factor in initiating a sense of place attachment and attachment to the environment, and Hussein (2006) argued that a river expresses a unique image as the main focal point of location and identification to its users, while being accessible in a pleasant and secure besides providing tourist opportunities, or social activities.

2.5 Shaping future expectations

Relating these principles and qualities to this study, the Reeve case presents a rather interesting situation. While new residents may have experienced a sense of belonging or felt some sort of emotional connection to the region, or the neighbouring city of Kampen, it could be challenging to foster a sense of identity with a place that is devoid of any recent habitation, and possibly aesthetically not extremely pleasing at least as long as large-scale construction is ongoing and the village incomplete or unfinished in terms of necessary facilities or services, leaving an important role for Reeve's proximity to the city of Kampen going into the future.

Facilitating mutual understanding between the municipality and the buyers of residential dwellings, especially in the case of Reeve, is of significant importance to establish and maintain a sense of trust and shape future expectations. Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation has served as an instrumental concept to distinguish and define eight levels of (non)participation, ranging from total nonparticipation to degrees of tokenism, to levels of citizen power. The presence several online and physical means provided by the municipality of Kampen towards people interested in or potential buyers of Reeve, such as newsletters, websites or physical meetings, allow the project to be considered as a level of information or consultation, which place the project somewhat in the middle of the ladder, representing a degree of tokenism. The extent to which information is conveyed from the municipality towards the people of Reeve significantly impacts their expectations and experiences about the area. The participation of the people is measured by the attendance of meetings, or the information received from brochures, whereas powerholders hold a duty of involving those people in the process (Arnstein, 2019).

2.6 Conceptual framework

Linking the research questions to the theoretical framework, the most important concepts and theories in this research are visually represented in the conceptual framework with regard to motivations to move, residential experiences and factors contributing to residential satisfaction, as well as future expectations for residents in a new rural community.

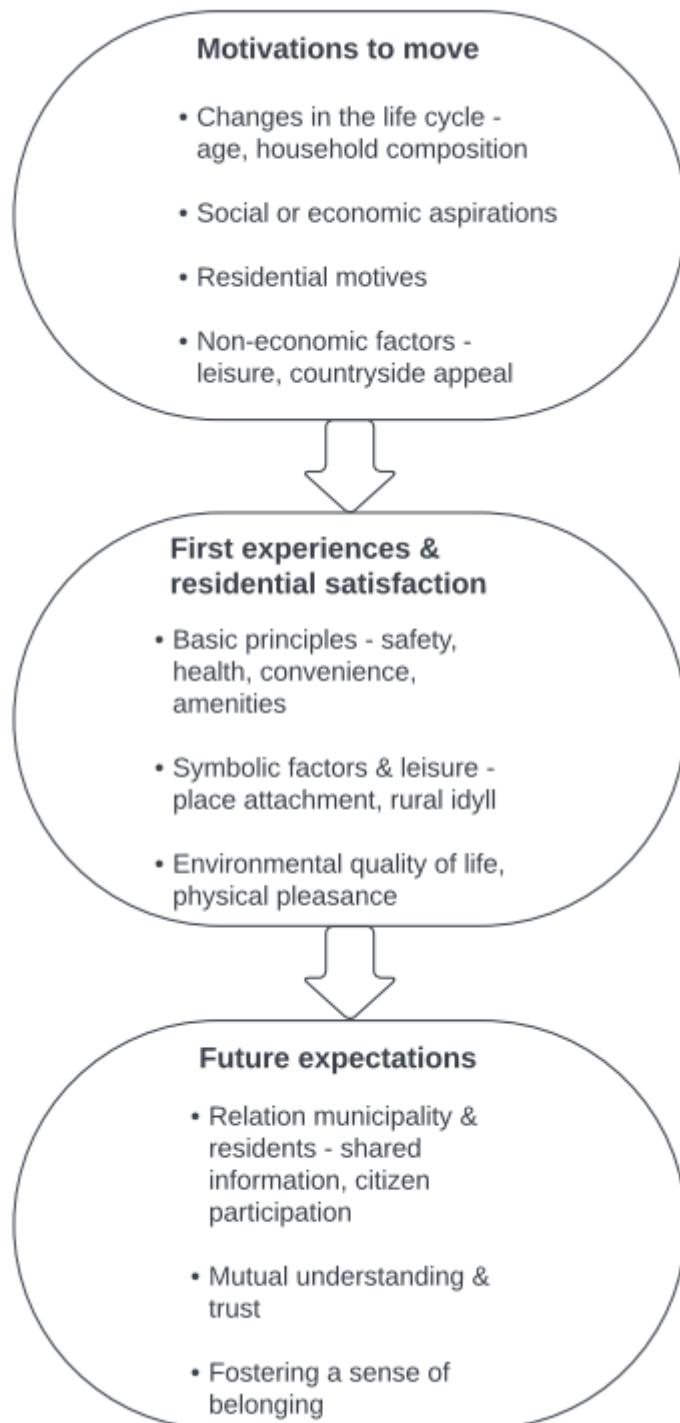


Figure 4: The conceptual model. Constructed by the author (2024).

2.7 Expectations

Bearing in mind that it will likely take years before many facilities and services can be properly operationalized, it forces frequent visits to other places nearby to ensure the fulfilment of facilities, services, or other needs. Considering that Reeve still finds itself in an early stage of development, it may be hard to describe an early sense of place attachment, but their initial perceptions or predictions may have played a role in their decision-making to make the move. If the residents have moved only a small distance, for example having previously lived in or around the city of Kampen for a longer period of time in their lives, their already existing sense of local or regional identity may play a part in their knowledge about the project and its potential, and perhaps even engagement with it.

It is expected that the aesthetic promise of Reeve, despite the lack of a concrete place and residential history, will be instrumental in the development of a sense of place attachment in Reeve as its construction expands. The rural idyll of Reeve as it is surrounded by greenery and a large water body is expected to serve as an appealing amenity for Reeve's residents, within proximity not only to nature but also the city of Kampen situated nearby to provide necessary services and facilities. It is furthermore expected most of the residential qualities and non-economic factors of leisure and greenery will be positively received and mentioned in the first experiences of the interviewees. Hereby, the planning ideal of modern and sustainable housing may serve as an additional benefit in the process.

With regard to the first (residential) experiences of Reeve's residents, the lack of several elements and facilities like stores, a public transport stop or community buildings and the abundance of construction and the accompanying noise and pollution might lead to incidents or unpleasant occasions for the residents, especially if the residents have not been made aware of certain issues by the municipality in advance, or if ongoing construction is subject to delay. However, it is expected that these issues will not cause more than minor inconveniences among the respondents. In terms of future expectations for Reeve, it is expected that the residents are well aware of the fact that the Reeve project is one that will take years before it can take up the status of a functioning village, and that a sense of place attachment will be enhanced over the years as long as promises from the municipality towards the residents are kept, especially in terms of infrastructure (bike lanes, bridges) and necessary facilities (community spaces, stores).

3. Methodology

3.1 Structure

The research will be carried out through several interviews (n=10) conducted with residents of Reeve. Through a qualitative method of data collection, more insights into the stories and experiences of the subjects can be gained in length. The research thus relies on the willingness and input given by residents who haven't lived in their new place of residence for a very long time. No experts or people higher up in the Reeve project have been approached for this research, to put stronger emphasis on the voices of the residents. The interview guide is fully structured, for the same list of questions are asked regardless of the exact interviewee, because they all share the common denominator of "resident of Reeve", and no interviewee of a higher or authoritative function has been approached.

The constructed interview guide consists of four parts, before which the residents have been acquainted with the background of the researcher, the purpose of the research and the line of questions they could expect. Furthermore, a structured interview guide ensures that the interviewees cover the same topics to create a basis for reliable and coherent analysis. Hereby, the participants have been asked to introduce their living situations in and prior to moving to Reeve, their driving motives of moving, their first experiences in the new place and their expectations for the (near) future. The interviews are, by consent, conducted in Dutch, for that is the mother tongue and primary nationality of the interviewees. A selection of the quotes by the interviewees are put in the results section in Dutch, in order to capture their words as well as possible. Footnotes at the bottom of the page provide English translations to the responses of the interviewees that are used to answer the research questions.

3.2 Positionality of the researcher

Familiarity of the researcher with some of residents of Reeve on a personal level has greatly contributed to the process and ease of getting in contact with several residents of Reeve, who have demonstrated their willingness to serve as interviewees for this research after the message with the question for interviewees has been shared online. In this way, the population that formed a part of the intended focus group was aware of the researcher's intentions and line of questions in the interview. Representativeness among the interviewees at the time of conducting the interviews seemed justified amid the relatively similar stages of the life cycle that the participants seemed to be in, but as construction in Reeve remains ongoing and new people move in, this can be challenged at any time if people with different backgrounds, life stages or residential situations move to Reeve, possibly with different stories. Of relevance is also the background of the researcher, as an inhabitant of Kampen himself, and the fact that the researcher has been familiar with some of Reeve's residents prior to the research, which have significantly eased the process of engaging with the focus group.

3.3 Ethical considerations

While making use of the input of the respondents, several ethical considerations arise. The participants have been promised full anonymity to prevent them from receiving backlash for their comments, or so that their input cannot come back to them in any harmful way. The participants have been made aware of the possibility to leave questions unanswered if desired, and that the input will be used for this research only. Furthermore, some of the participants have expressed an interest to be made aware of the outcome of this research, which will be shared with them afterwards.

If anything, there are risks associated with placing the provided response of a fairly low number of interviews (ten) at the core of such research, especially because Reeve's population is expected to steadily increase over the next months and years, leaving new residents outside of the research. However, the selected interviewees have all been able to experience the process of moving at a personal level and can share these in a hopefully unbiased manner. The input of the participants is discussed and elaborated on in the upcoming 'Results' section, where the main findings of the interviews are presented based on the main conclusions derived from the data collection, as well as connected to the theory.

4. Results

4.1 Overview of interviewees

All 10 interviewees are working adults, with the majority being part of a household with children, or as one interviewee has indicated, carrying a child wish upon moving. One interviewee has moved from Amsterdam to Reeve, but the nine other participants are familiar with the region and have only moved a relatively small distance to Reeve. Every interviewee is in possession of an owner-occupied dwelling, which meant a change for two of the interviewees, who had previously rented apartments in Zwolle and Amsterdam respectively. All interviews were adults, all in the working phase, and roughly between 30-60 years old. In the first line of questions, some practical information was gathered about the interviewees, summarized in the table below:

Figure 5: the background of the interviewees

Interviewee	Month + Year of Arrival in Reeve	Prior Residential Situation	Household Composition
1	August 2023	Semi-detached house in a residential neighbourhood in Kampen	2 adults, 3 children, 3 cats
2	October 2022	Terraced house in a residential neighbourhood in Kampen	2 adults, 3 children, a dog
3	July 2023	Semi-detached house in a residential neighbourhood in Kampen	2 adults, 1 child
4	June 2024	Rented apartment in Zwolle	2 adults
5	July 2023	Corner house near the city center of Kampen	2 adults, 2 children
6	August 2023	Detached house in the outskirts of Kampen	2 adults, 2 children, 2 dogs
7	July 2023	Terraced house in a residential neighbourhood in Kampen	2 adults
8	February 2023	Semi-detached house in a residential neighbourhood in Kampen	2 adults
9	September 2023	Rented apartment in Amsterdam	2 adults, 1 child
10	June 2023	Terraced house in a residential neighbourhood in Kampen	2 adults, 2 children

4.2 Motivations and downsides of moving to Reeve

As elaborated on in the theory and the expectations sections, the perceived idyll of living on the riverfront was an expected and recurring theme, mentioned in the interviews as a significant upside by all respondents. Several quotes by interviewees illustrate this premise:

[Interviewee 7] “We hadden de keuze om of ons huis in de Maten te verduurzamen met verbouwingen, of dus in Reeve in een nieuw duurzaam huis te komen wonen. Wij kozen voor het laatste omdat de ruimte en het wonen aan het water ons erg aansprak.”¹

[Interviewee 9] “De huurprijzen in Amsterdam waren te hoog voor ons, en we wilden deze graag inruilen voor eentje met ruime nieuwbouw, tuin, duurzaam en de droom van het wonen van het water om te zeilen.”²

This line of response can hardly be deemed surprising, for the appeal to Reeve is fundamentally driven by the relationship between the actor, i.e. the new resident, and the physical environment. The physical environment of Reeve is, by most respondents, characterized as a place that embodies serenity, peace, and also notably a safe environment for children to grow up in. Seven out of the 10 interviewees moved to Reeve with children, and one other couple had taken a desire to become parents in the near future into consideration upon moving.

[Interviewee 4] “Het wonen aan het water met een eigen stijger. Het is in de buurt van familie en vrienden, maar ook afgelegen in de natuur. Wij wilden ook groter wonen dan in het appartement. Als we later kinderen hebben, willen we die veilig laten opgroeien in het groen.”³

[Interviewee 5] “Om dicht bij familie te wonen met meer ruimte in en rondom de woning voor de kinderen, en ze kunnen laten opgroeien met natuur om hun heen, en de rust en het water natuurlijk.”⁴

¹ ‘We had the choice to either make our house in de Maten more sustainable through renovations or come to Reeve to move into a more sustainable dwelling. We chose the latter, because the space and living next to the water really appealed to us.’

² ‘The prices of rent in Amsterdam were too high for us, and we wanted to trade this in for a place with spacious and sustainable construction, a garden, and the dream of living next to the water to be able to sail.’

³ ‘Living next to the water with a dock of our own. We are close to family and friends, but also remote in nature. We wanted to live in a bigger space than in the apartment. If we have children later, we want to raise them safely in the green around.’

⁴ ‘To live closer to family with more space in and around the house for the children, and to allow them to grow up with nature around them, as well as the serenity and water of course.’

In contrast to the clear set of perceived upsides, which was relatively similar in the cases of the interviewees, some have mentioned their prior residential situation to explain their challenges or drawbacks that would come along with moving to Reeve. Moving to Reeve meant giving up on the facilities, services and routine its residents were used to. Some aspects of uncertainty were brought up, like the rising construction costs during the process of moving or the remoteness of Reeve, but the interviewees seemed rather convinced of their decision. In terms of motives, the promise of nature and serenity against the rush of city life, and the idea that Reeve was an ideal place to raise children in peace, ultimately prevailed for all interviewees.

[Interviewee 7] “De stijgende bouwkosten en het feit dat er nog geen sprake was van de aanwezigheid van zaken als een buurtsuper, openbaar vervoer of openbare plekken waren wel kleine afknappers, maar wogen af tegen haar voordelen en de ruimte.”⁵

[Interviewee 1] “Tijdens het aangaan van de koop en het bouwproces stegen de kosten best snel, maar verder was dit geen aanzet tot onzekerheid over het plan.”⁶

4.3 Knowledge about the project & contact with the municipality

Considering the theory of Arnstein’s ladder, the residents of Reeve have been insulted or consulted about the project during several stages of development and construction. Fundamental in raising awareness for the project was the ‘Reevediep festival’, hosted in 2019 by the municipality to allow exploration of the area and gain knowledge about future (housing) plans. From there, closer contact between the municipality and residents was initiated.

[Interviewee 1] “In 2019 is het Reevefestival georganiseerd door de gemeente, om burgers op de hoogte te brengen. Dit hielp om interesse op te wekken, en verder werden we door de gemeente op de hoogte gehouden.”⁷

[Interviewee 2] “Via het Reevefestival, en verder vooral online publicaties door de gemeente.”⁸

Haziness with regard to transparency on behalf of the municipality seemed not at issue, for it was hardly raised as a matter of concern or discontent. For some interviewees, the prospect of moving to Reeve came into the picture at a later date, for whom social media also proved an important way of winning information. Online information seemed to be available in a variety of ways.

[Interviewee 8] “Na berichtgeving online en in de krant hebben we ons ingeschreven op de nieuwsbrief. Toen het balletje meer ging rollen hebben we berichtgeving vanuit de gemeente opgedaan, hiervoor waren ook fysieke vergaderingen.”⁹

⁵ ‘The rising construction costs and the fact that there was no such thing as a local supermarket, public transport or public spaces yet were minor turn-offs, but they did not weigh against the positives.’

⁶ ‘During the purchase of the house and process of construction the costs rose fairly rapidly, but this was no reason for uncertainty.’

⁷ ‘In 2019, the Reeve festival was organized by the municipality, to inform citizens. This helped to generate interest, and from there we were kept up to date by the municipality.’

⁸ ‘Through the Reeve festival, and besides primarily through online publications by the municipality.’

⁹ ‘After online notification and in the newspaper, we registered for the newsletter. When the ball started rolling, we have gained more information from the municipality, for which there were also meetings.’

Based on both response from the interviewees and the information available online, most important sources of online information about the Reeve project was available via:

- A digital ‘gebiedscafé’ designed to talk and exchange ideas about developments in the Reevedelta, with participants invited to join and share their thoughts as a collaborative initiative from the municipality of Kampen (Kampen Live, 2022).
- A series of newsletters provided by the municipality, which seemed the most popular medium through which the residents have been made aware of updates or developments.
- The design of the ‘gebiedsvisie’ of Reeve, comprising the general vision, an extensive spatial framework of the project and its starting points, elaboration on the subareas of Reeve, and development structure (Gemeente Kampen, 2023).

4.4 First Experiences of Reeve

None of the ten interviewees expressed any significant form of discontent or unhappiness with their move to Reeve, all happy to see the positive experiences that match their initial motivations become reality. When asked to give their in Reeve so far a rating from 1-10, the average between the ten interviewees was 8,6/10, with the lowest rating being given a 7 (1x) and the highest a 10 (1x).

[Interviewee 1] “Wonen in de mooie omgeving van het Reeve diep, met water aansluitend aan de kavel. Dit klopte met de omschrijving, dat waarderen we het meest.”¹⁰

Breen (1996) mentioned three crucial criteria regarding the operationalization of riverfront design: accessibility, attractions and integration of the river as part of the town. The current stage of construction makes it hard to judge on the presence of diverse activities and plans to integrate the Reevediep as a whole, but in terms of public accessibility to the town, Reeve seems, for now, to fall short in terms of accessibility to the nearby train station and a proper bike path to connect the city of Kampen to the village. The most notable input of discontent or negative experiences related to themes of accessibility, infrastructure and construction traffic, and the absence or lack of proper infrastructure was mentioned a few times when the interviewees shared their experiences of living in Reeve so far.

[Interviewee 8] “De plannen voor infrastructuur zijn niet op orde, zoals de aanleg van een fietspad. Ook het traject rondom beloofde bruggen verloopt uiterst moeizaam en zijn er eigenlijk nog niet.”¹¹

[Interviewee 6] “We balen ervan dat veel sluizen en bruggen er nog niet zijn. Het water bij Reeve is nog niet verbonden met de rest van het Reevediep en de bypass, waardoor we nog niet ver kunnen varen.”¹²

¹⁰ ‘Living in the beautiful surroundings of the Reevediep, with water adjacent to our lot. This matched the description, which is what we appreciate the most.’

¹¹ ‘The plans for infrastructure are not in order yet, like the construction of a bike path. Also the procedure around promised bridges elapses with difficulty, and are hardly there yet.’

¹² ‘It is a shame that many of the sluices and bridges are not there yet. The water at Reeve is not really connected with the rest of the Reevediep channel and the bypass, and therefore we can not sail yet.’

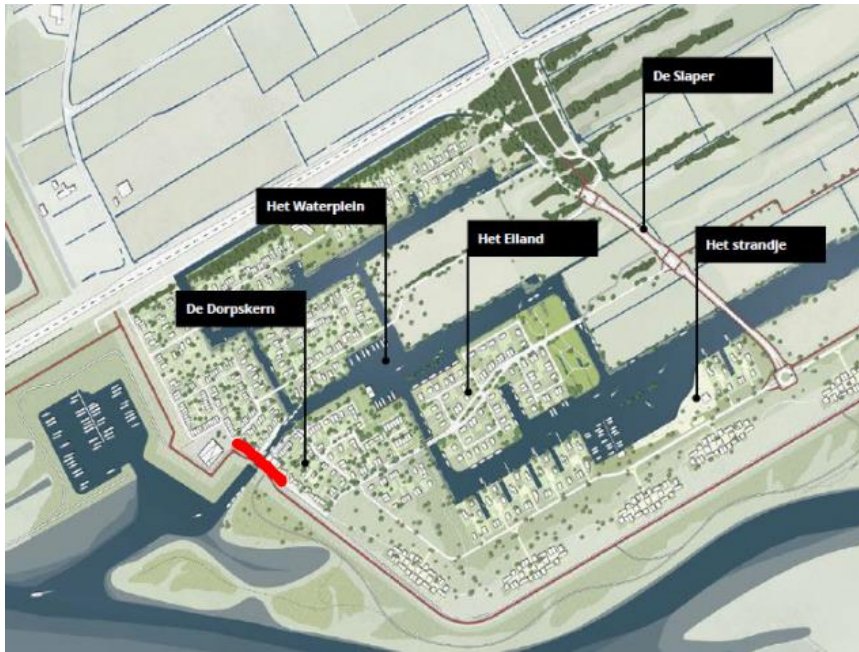


Figure 6: The absence of a retractable bridge, that is to be constructed on the place of the red line, prevents open access to the fairway of the Reevediep by boat. Via DELVA LA & Urbanism (n.d)

Whereas contact with the municipality and their way of informing the residents during the process of residential construction and moving was generally perceived positively, the interviewees took a more critical stance when it came to the way the municipality handled certain aspects. Not necessarily with regard to the contents of the plans and provided information, but rather how slowly updates were provided, or how long it took before decisions were made by the municipality and provided.

[Interviewee 3] “Met name de vertragingen en het gebrek aan urgentie bij de gemeente voordat bepaalde plannen worden gecommuniceerd of uitgevoerd, zoals de verkoop en bouw van andere woningen, of de plannen veranderen.”¹³

[Interviewee 5] “Soms lijkt het dat het plaatje rooskleuriger en mooier is geschetst dan hoe het er nu uitziet met alles wat er nog gaat komen. Zoals het uitbreiden van de wegen en het groen rondom Reeve, en het verloop van de bouw is soms vertraagd.”¹⁴

[Interviewee 10] “De gemeente Kampen vaak in de communicatie eens steken laten vallen, of toezeggingen gedaan die in de praktijk niet haalbaar bleken te zijn, zoals een direct fietspad met de stad of de komst van diverse bruggen rondom.”¹⁵

¹³ ‘In particular the delay and the lack of urgency of the municipality before certain plans were communicated or executed, like the sale and construction of other dwellings, or the plans change.’

¹⁴ ‘Sometimes it seems that things are painted as more beautiful than they look now, with everything that is yet to come. Like the expansion of the roads and the greenery around Reeve, and the course of construction is sometimes delayed.’

¹⁵ ‘The municipality has made mistakes in terms of communication or has made commitments that would prove unfeasible in practice, like a direct bike path or the arrival or bridges around.’

4.5 Expectations and Desires in the Future

The last part of the interview revolved around gaining insight into how the interviewees envisioned and/or desired the future of Reeve in terms of the development of new facilities, services, or opportunities for a sense of community or belonging in Reeve. Not many seemed too stressed about the latter, and it is arguably a theme that is not as prioritized among the residents as of now and are rather concerned with improvements that would make practicalities easier in such an early stage of development of the village. The interviewees produced varying ideas and wishes, and in terms of facilities the idea of the construction of spaces like a school or supermarket found common ground.

[Interviewee 4] “We hopen op een school, want op termijn hebben wij een kindervens, die we hier willen laten opgroeien. Daarnaast zou dus kinderopvang mogelijkheden en misschien een kleine buurtsuper fijn zijn, maar ik denk dat dat pas aan de orde is als er meer mensen wonen.”¹⁶

[Interviewee 5] “Ik vind dat het buurtgevoel al best wel goed is. Faciliteiten zoals een supermarkt of school zouden wel helpen, dus ik hoop dat ie er op termijn komt. Verder hoop ik dus dat de gemeente meer prioriteit gaat geven aan snel doorbouwen van kavels en wegen zodat de verbinding en infrastructuur beter wordt.”¹⁷

The desire for public meeting spaces was certainly levelled by some of the interviewees, relating to Breen’s second criteria of the significance of public attractions. It illustrates that the residents care about the development of the neighbourhood altogether, even though it is early to draw conclusions based on a sense of community, with the interviewees assuming that many communal services will be adhered to in time.

[Interviewee 1] “Een buurthuis of ruimte voor sociale ontmoeting, zoals pakketophaaldienst, buurtwinkel, of cafeteria etc. Horeca ruimte of een plek waar vergaderingen en bijeenkomsten georganiseerd kunnen worden, en een speeltuin of veld voor kinderen.”¹⁸

[Interviewee 7] “Een suggestie is een school of een openbaar buurtgebouw die multifunctioneel gebruikt kan worden, dit helpt ook bij aan een beter buurtgevoel. Verder verwacht ik gewoon dat alles wel lang zal duren..”¹⁹

¹⁶ ‘We hope for a school, because we wish to have a child that we want to raise here. Besides, it would be beneficial for us to have options for childcare, as well as a small supermarket, but I think this will be on the agenda when more people have moved here.’

¹⁷ ‘I think the neighbourhood feeling is pretty good already. Facilities like a supermarket or school would help, so I hope they will come in time. Furthermore, I hope that the municipality will prioritize continuing the construction of lots and roads, so that the connection and infrastructure improve.’

¹⁸ ‘A community center or space for social gatherings, like a parcel collection service, local store, or café etc. Catering space or a place where gatherings can be organized, and a playground for children.’

¹⁹ ‘One suggestion is a school or public community building that can be used in a multifunctional manner, and this also contributes to a better neighbourhood feeling. Besides I just expect things to take time..’

5. Conclusion

In short, the promise of a rural idyll with waterside living, as well as the surrounding nature and experienced feelings of serenity and tranquillity, have proven to be important selling points to draw Reeve's first residents to the place, and therefore illustrate the theory on the growing influence on non-economic factors like leisure and a pleasant environment of nature and greenery. This line of response was thus anticipated, for the allure of the physical environment of Reeve was deemed instrumental in fostering satisfaction for residents amid the absence of crucial facilities and services as of now. The first experiences of Reeve's residents that were interviewed, as well as their expectations for the years to come, are primarily the product of communication with and consultation from the municipality. Relating to Arnstein's theory on citizen participation, communication with the Reeve project from the municipality towards the residents is best characterized as a degree of informing and in some cases consultation, as the residents are on various occasions invited to raise their voices and concerns about the project.

Some interviewees had mentioned that they were active in attending physical meetings, whereas others felt well informed by newspapers and newsletters. The interviewees indicated that their initial motivations for moving to Reeve on forehand were well fulfilled after settling in, which can lead to the conclusion that they have been well informed about the project during the project of moving and enjoy a sense of residential satisfaction, which is also confirmed when residents were asked to judge their residential satisfaction of living in Reeve so far.

However, it is also the very plans and promises made on the municipality's behalf that have delivered room for complaint among the interviewees, who on several occasions mentioned cases of development lagging behind, especially relating to the connection via a bike path between Reeve and the city of Kampen, or promised bridges and sluices that yet prevent open access to the bypass to connect the waters of Reeve to the fairway of the Reevediep. In light of infrastructure safety, these aspects should be prioritized in the eyes of the interviewees. The relatively young stage of development of Reeve seems to serve as an accepted reason as to why many of such services are not provided yet. The future development of Reeve sees a crucial role for municipality, in terms of contact with the residents and facilitating new construction in terms of dwellings, infrastructure and services, also to guarantee the institutions that can enhance a sense of neighbourhood attachment or belonging.

5.1 Limits to the research

As mentioned, the fact that Reeve finds itself in an early stage of development with most residents having only lived in the place for around a year or slightly longer, might imply that it is hard to form adequate answers on the questions posed. Opinions may change significantly over time amid a continued or changing stance of the municipality, and the development of Reeve in the near future is crucial to continue guaranteeing satisfaction among the residents.

Furthermore, a substantial limit to this research is the fact that Reeve counts, as of June/July 2024, a population of less than 100, of which only 10 residents were consulted as interviewees for this study. Some stories with different insights may thus have been unintentionally left out, and people who move into Reeve in the near future have different stories, may have other means of getting acquainted with the project, or move in with different or bigger expectations.

5.2 Recommendations for further research

In light of these conclusions, one interesting suggestion of further research is to revisit these themes during a later stage of development in Reeve. The premise that certain aspects of development are bound by the number of residents in Reeve, which is below 100 at the time of writing, may be adhered to or challenged in a few years. The perceived slow pace of development and realization of services, as perceived by the residents, may be questioned again in time, and it would be interesting to test if their complaints are upheld, have intensified, or are mostly silenced.

Furthermore, it could be insightful to relate and/or compare this study to the case study of the Blauwestad project east of Groningen, where similarly to Reeve, the principle of turning arable land surrounded by a natural area into residential space as a new village, has become a reality. Though the circumstances and physical environment are different, and the plans of Blauwestad being decades older, it might be interesting to identify comparisons and differences between the projects, for example by asking similar questions to interviewees there.

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7. Appendix

A. The Interview Guide

Beste,

Mijn naam is Lennard van Wijnbergen, en voor mijn bachelor scriptie aan de RUG in Sociale Geografie doe ik een onderzoek naar Reeve. Mijn focus ligt op de motivaties voor verhuizen, en verwachtingen en ervaringen die gepaard gaan met het leven op een compleet nieuwe plek als Reeve, en wat de rol daarvan is of kan zijn voor haar eerste bewoners.

Om dit onderzoek vorm te geven ben ik op zoek naar huidige bewoners van Reeve, die mij hierover meer kunnen vertellen. De input die u geeft zal volledig anoniem blijven, en vragen kunnen leeggelaten worden indien gewenst. Alvast bedankt voor de bereidheid om tijd vrij te maken voor dit interview en het willen helpen met mijn onderzoek. Ik zal beginnen met het stellen van de vragen.

1. Introductie

1.1 Hoe lang woont u op dit moment in Reeve?

1.2 Kunt u kort uw woonsituatie beschrijven voordat u naar Reeve kwam? Bijvoorbeeld waar, de omgeving (in de stad, op het platteland, dorp etc.) en het type woning (vrijstaand, appartement, twee onder 1 kap)?

1.3 Wat is uw gezinssamenstelling? (grootte van het huishouden, kinderen, huisdieren, etc.)

2. Verhuisredenen

2.1 Hoe heeft u kennis vernomen van en/of informatie ingewonnen over de mogelijkheden om in Reeve te wonen? Denk aan vergaderingen of enige vorm van contact met de gemeente, kennis over de bouwplannen, of het inschrijvingsproces?

2.2 Wat waren de voornaamste redenen om te verhuizen naar Reeve? Wat sprak u het meeste aan over de mogelijkheden?

2.3 Was er daarnaast misschien ook reden tot onzekerheid, of waren er aspecten die voor twijfel zorgden om in Reeve te wonen?

3. Eerste ervaringen

3.1 Wat bevat u tot nu toe het beste aan het wonen in Reeve, en komt dit overeen met wat u het meeste aansprak vooraf (zie 2.2)?

3.2 Zijn er zaken waaraan u zich stoort in Reeve op dit moment? Denk bijvoorbeeld aan belemmeringen door bouwvak (geluidsoverlast, of het feit dat er veel constructie aanwezig is), of misschien vindt u dat bepaalde zaken langzaam gebeuren of op een slechte manier?

3.3 Eerder vroeg ik u naar de kennis over het Reeve project met betrekking tot de plannen voor het dorp vanuit de gemeente, en het contact hiermee tijdens het verhuisproces. Misschien is het wat vroeg om hier iets over te zeggen, maar heeft u het gevoel dat u hier goed van op de hoogte bent gehouden, en dat uw eerste ervaringen aansluiten op de verwachtingen die u had?

3.4 Op een schaal van 1 (zeer slecht) tot 10 (zeer goed), welk cijfer zou uw leven en het wonen in Reeve tot nu toe geven?

4. Afsluiting

De komende jaren gaat er volop bijgebouwd worden rondom Reeve, en zullen er meer mensen naar toe trekken. Zijn er bepaalde verwachtingen of wensen die u heeft voor de ontwikkeling van het dorp? Denk aan de bouw van nieuwe faciliteiten of mogelijkheden (een school, sportclub, supermarkt, etc.), of het ontstaan van een hecht gemeenschaps- of buurtgevoel, of iets anders wat in u opkomt.

Einde