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The role of sports organizations in retaining young people in rural areas: A case study of the North Netherlands.

Final version

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Date: July 2020
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Abstract

This research looks at the role that sports organizations play in retaining young people in rural areas. For this research a case study of the North Netherlands was used. The goal of this research is to link the existing theories on sports organizations, social capital, place attachment with each other. This is done with the purpose of describing their potential influence on moving behaviour among young people in rural areas. The research aims to contribute to the field of knowledge about out-migration of young people and population shrinkage and decline, and the potential solutions to cope with the problems that derive from these processes. This information could potentially be useful for future socio-spatial policy interventions regarding population shrinkage. The data is derived from semi-structured interviews with people that participate in sports organizations in rural areas and policy workers that cover the policy areas of sports, liveability and population shrinkage. Also, a 4-stage model is used to categorize and interpret the existing theories on the subject and describe how these aspects relate to each other in practice. Based on an analysis of the data from the gathered interviews, we conclude that the overall role that sports organizations play in retaining young people in rural areas seems to be quite limited. The research shows that the influence of sports organizations on social capital seems to be relatively big, while the influence on place attachment and moving behaviour is relatively small.

Keywords: Sports organizations, social capital, place attachment, moving behaviour, shrinkage areas, out-migration of young people.

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1. Introduction

The decline of the population in rural areas and the increase of the population in urban areas, is a trend that is occurring globally (Wood, 2008). Population decline in rural shrinkage areas usually leads to a set of problems, that have a negative effect on the liveability of these areas. Some of these types of problems are e.g.: ageing, unemployment and disappearing amenities (Elshof et al., 2017). For some towns this means that some local companies or amenities can no longer be profitable and therefore disappear, decreasing the overall liveability of these towns. This perceived decreased sense of liveability in turn also causes a further reduction of jobs and people leaving the area, leading to a self-enforcing effect on the decreasing liveability of these towns. Following this reasoning, population decline can both be seen as a driver and an effect of the decreased liveability (Beunen et al., 2020).

Young people make up the largest share of the people that are leaving these shrinkage areas. These towns can no longer fulfil this group in their needs for jobs, education or social contacts (Thissen et al., 2010). Highly educated young people in particular are inclined to leave these areas. Policymakers have become more concerned about this so called 'brain drain' and see the out-migration of young people as a threat to the economic development and liveability of those areas (Stockdale, 2006).

This research looks into the role that young people can play in anticipating towards shrinkage and shrinkage related issues, by looking into opportunities to retain more young people in shrinkage areas. The research aims to contribute to the knowledge about opportunities to retain more young people in shrinkage areas, by examining the role that sports organizations play in influencing moving behaviour among young people.

This is because sports organizations and sporting events have proven to be effective in creating social bonds (Misener & Mason, 2006; Spaaij, 2009; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2017). It is widely recognized in the literature that the social aspect of participation in sports events is important for the community. It is believed that sports events can bring positive social aspects to a community such as civic pride, social cohesion and community attachment (Inoue & Havard, 2014). One important social impact of sports events is the development of social capital, which can be built and strengthened through social interactions among various forms of participation (Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2017). Social capital can lead to a series of behavioural outcomes, such as civic engagement and social participation, that are beneficial to a community and can increase overall satisfaction with the place of residence (Misener & Mason, 2006; Putnam, 1995).

The overall satisfaction with the place of residence is especially important in influencing moving behaviour (Clark et al., 2015). This brings the topic of place attachment to the table. Judging from the literature, social capital seems to be an indicator for place attachment, and vice versa. A high perceived sense of place attachment often correlates with strong social ties, and a mutually high perceived place attachment usually leads to the increased prevalence of social capital (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Scannell & Gifford, 2009; Woosnam et al., 2018; Stefaniak et al., 2017). Research

also shows that a high perceived sense of social capital and place attachment has an influence on moving behaviour (Barcus & Brunn, 2009; Clark et al., 2015; Putnam, 1995; Stockdale, 2004).

This research connects the theories on sports organizations, social capital and place attachment with each other, and looks into the indirect role that sports organizations play in influencing moving behaviour. This is done by researching participants' perceived sense of social capital, place attachment and moving behaviour, and examining how these aspects relate to each other in practice. For the measuring of the presence of social capital and place attachment, we will be making use of literature that proposes indicators as how to measure the presence of these subjects. A **qualitative** case study of the **North Netherlands** will be conducted using **semi-structured interviews** to gain insights in to how the processes between these subjects work for influencing moving behaviour.

In order to do so, the following research questions are used. The primary research question is: **What role do sports organizations play in retaining young people in rural areas?** This is answered by a set of secondary research questions, which are:

- **To what extent do sports organizations influence social capital among young people, and how does this process work?**
- **To what extent do sports organizations influence place attachment among young people, and how does this process work?**
- **To what extent do sports organizations influence moving behaviour among young people, and how does this process work?**

The results of this study can be useful for contributing to insights and knowledge about the out-migration of young people and population shrinkage in rural areas. This information might be useful for local or municipal governments that are adapting strategies in order to battle the negative effects of population shrinkage and/or the out-migration of young people. Might sports organizations play a prominent role in retaining young people in rural areas, then this research could possibly contribute to creating policy towards anticipating the effects of population shrinkage and/or the out-migration of young people from these areas.

Another goal of the research is to contribute to the missing links between the different theories on the subject. There are existing theories about the out-migration of young people in rural areas, the positive effects that sports organizations have on social capital, the relation between social capital and place attachment and the effect social capital and place attachment have on moving behaviour. However, there seems to be a knowledge gap between these theories that directly link the role that sports organizations play in retaining young people in rural areas, which this research is aiming to contribute to. We do this by creating a 4-stage model that tries to measure the influence of sports organizations on moving behaviour, using different stages and categorizing different concepts. If proven effective, this model could also be used in further research.

This master thesis is divided into 6 chapters. This introduction being the first chapter, the paper proceeds with the theoretical framework depicting the literature on the subject in chapter 2. Chapter 3 elaborates further on the methodology of the research, while chapter 4 states its findings. Drawing

on the results of the conducted interviews, chapter 5 and 6 cover the conclusion and reflection of the research. The interview guide and the transcripts will be included in the appendix.

2. Theoretical Framework

Judging from the literature, there seem to be two concepts that indirectly link involvement in sports organizations with moving behaviour. These concepts are “social capital” (Misener & Mason, 2006; Spaaij, 2009; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018) and “place attachment” (Clark et al., 2015; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Stefaniak et al., 2017; Woosnam et al., 2018). Although it is worth noting that moving behaviour is usually influenced by a range of factors, this theoretical framework focusses solely on the social processes that derive from involvement in sports organizations.

The intention of this chapter is to establish the theoretical connections between involvement in sports organizations and moving behaviour, by describing the intermediate steps that connect these concepts with each other. The goal of this theoretical framework is to function as the input for the research strategy. The following sub-chapters will represent the four main concepts that are being used in this research. Each sub-chapter will feature the explanation of the concept, as well as how it connects to the subsequent concept. The theoretical framework will end with a conceptual model that stems from the theories that are put forward, connecting the literature on sports organizations, social capital, place attachment and moving behaviour.

2.1 Social capital

As this research looks into the role that sports organizations can play in retaining more people in shrinkage areas, we have to look further into the role that sports organizations can play in influencing moving behaviour among young people. This is because sports organizations and sporting events have proven to be effective in creating higher levels of **social capital** within the community (Misener & Mason, 2006; Spaaij, 2009; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018). Social capital can lead to a series of behavioural outcomes, such as civic engagement and social participation, that are beneficial to a community and can increase overall satisfaction and attachment to the place of residence, which could possibly have an impact on moving behaviour (Misener & Mason, 2006; Putnam, 1995).

This sub-chapter will further elaborate on the definition, importance, measurement and further details on the literature about social capital, in order to establish the connection between sports organizations and social capital.

Defining social capital

To establish the connection between involvement in sports organizations and social capital, we first need to determine the definition of social capital. In the literature on urban planning and economic development the concepts of physical and human capitals are widely studied, while the concept of social capital has received less academic attention. This is mainly due to the fact that social capital is a far less tangible concept, which makes it harder to describe and define in an academic setting (Misener & Mason, 2006). Multiple scholars have attempted to make definitions of social capital, but probably the most remarkable is the one of Robert Putnam (1995). Putnam interpreted social capital in a collective sense and characterized the ways in which community members interacted (Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2017). Putnam describes the phenomenon of social capital as “the features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that can facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit within communities” (Putnam, 1995).

To operationalize this definition of social capital, we look further into what the components of social capital are. Putnam (1995) states that social capital is made up out of three core elements, which are: networks, trust and reciprocity. However, Stone (2001) concludes that these three elements cannot be seen separately because the nature of these elements is different. She argues that **network** serves as the structural element of social capital because it reflects the structural forms of the social groups, while **trust** and **reciprocity** serve as the cognitive elements of social capital because of their subjective and intangible nature (Stone, 2001).

Drawing upon this distinction between the three elements, Stone (2001) also suggests that trust and reciprocity are the foundation for social capital. These two concepts together are seen as the **norms** within a community. Stone (2001) states that the norms (trust and reciprocity) are the input for social capital while networks are the outcome of social capital. As networks are the most tangible of the three concepts, it is useful to look further into the different types of networks that currently exist

in the literature about social capital. To be able to make sense of what these networks look like in theory and practice, we need to make a distinction between the different types of networks and how these networks operate in practice. It is suggested that there are three types of networks: bonding, bridging and linking social capital (Foxton & Jones, 2011; Latham, 2000; Putnam, 1995; Stone, 2001; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

Putnam (1995) makes a clear distinction between the first two mentioned types of networks: bonding and bridging. **Bonding social capital** entails the networks within homogenous groups where members of the group have similar identities, values and interests. According to Putnam, these types of networks are inward looking, close knit and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups. It mainly represents everyday contacts within an individual's social life, such as connections with families, friends, neighbours, colleagues or other acquaintances (Foxton & Jones, 2011; Narayan & Cassidy, 2001).

On the contrary, **bridging social capital** is built between heterogenous groups, where social connections are built among individuals with different identities, as opposed to bonding social capital. These networks and ties are outward looking and comprise people of different social identities (Putnam, 1995). Bridging social capital has the potential to forge connections, as heterogeneity of social connections promotes linkages with diverse groups and across a broad range of individuals outside everyday social life. Bridging capital is often seen as an indicator of the inclusiveness of a community, and measures of tolerance of diversity (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001; Onyx & Bullen, 2000; Skinner et al. 2008).

Elaborating on Putnam's (1995) work, Woolcock (2001) further identified the third type of network of social capital, which is the concept of **linking social capital**. Woolcock (2001) identified linking social capital as a different addition to bonding and bridging capital, as these two do not integrate social hierarchy within its definitions. Linking social capital is concerned with "vertical" connections between the different levels of social hierarchy. These vertical connections can include individuals from entirely outside the community and provide extended opportunities for access to wider networks (Skinner et al., 2008). Linking social capital is therefore important because it can possibly play a role in the exchange of power, wealth and status among social groups (Portes & Landolt, 2000).

Now that we have determined the different types of networks that make up social capital, it is important to know how these different types of networks relate to the social capital that was derived from participation in sports organizations. This will be further explained in the section 'Sports organizations and social capital'.

The importance of social capital

In the face of this research it is also important to determine why social capital is perceived to have a positive effect on community life. From Putnam's (1995) point of view social capital is viewed as a public good, which serves to bind communities together. Communities that have a high level of social capital are being characterized by three main components: strong social networks and civic infrastructure, strong social norms, and mutual trust and reciprocity among members of the community. Putnam (1995) especially points out the importance of the role that organized voluntary associations play in this process. Putnam views the level of civic engagement, associational life and volunteering that are associated with social capital as important because they have the power to improve the efficiency of communities in pursuing their collective interests (Coalter, 2007). This is because it brings people together to work for their shared goals and cope with community issues cooperatively (Arai & Pedlar, 2003; Jarvie, 2003; Woolcock, 2004).

Coleman's (1988) theory on social capital brings together several aspects of social theory with a simple premise: Investments in social capital will have positive effects on the macro level and favourable returns in the marketplace. There appears to be theoretical and empirical evidence to suggest that social capital is causally linked to higher rates of economic growth, lower crime rates, better population health and higher efficiency of local governments (Halpern, 1999).

The dark side of social capital

It has been mainly suggested that social capital has positive outcomes for the development of a community, but to get a better overall view on social capital we must also look for possible negative outcomes. Putnam (1995) also notes that caution should be taken when only evaluating the positive sides of social capital. Putnam stated that social capital could potentially have negative impacts when there is an imbalance between bonding and bridging social capital. Putnam (1995) argues that a high presence of bonding social capital combined with a low presence of bridging capital, can potentially lead to social exclusion that facilitates hostility and decreases the tolerance towards outsiders of the community (Tonts, 2005).

It has been pointed out that when the level of bonding social capital is high, this could potentially lead to inequality since the benefits of social capital only exist when other people are excluded. Blackshaw & Long (2005) argue that this is because those who have privileged access to social capital, use this to exploit their position in order to gain greater interests. Keeping this in mind, the presence of social capital alone might not necessarily lead to development of the community. Blackshaw & Long (2005) state that power relations and cultural norms (e.g. respect and tolerance) also play a crucial role in enabling the benefits of social capital for the community. Concluding, social capital has great potential to benefit a community in multiple ways, but it is not a 'silver bullet' that will have a positive effect on the community regardless of any circumstances. The conditions mentioned above have to be present in order for social capital to have its desired positive outcomes.

Difficulties measuring social capital

It turns out that social capital remains difficult to research in practice. Johnston and Percy-Smith (2003) argue that this is particularly difficult because there is a certain degree of circularity, which they describe as the fact that social capital is often defined in terms of a set of characteristics which are then measured and taken as evidence that social capital indeed does or does not exist. Portes (2003) argues that in terms of communities, social capital is simultaneously a cause and an effect of positive aspects of that community. It leads to positive outcomes in a community such as e.g. economic development or less crime, but the existence of social capital is also an effect of the previously mentioned outcomes. At the same time, cities that are doing well in terms of governance and are moving forward economically do so because they have high social capital, while poorer cities lack this potential because they do not possess the same high level of social capital within their community (Coalter, 2007; Portes, 2003).

It is important to be aware of the fact that the outcomes of social capital should not be confused with social capital itself. There is a common practice of mistaking collective participation as the concept of social capital itself, while it is actually an outcome of social capital (Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2017). Likewise, community safety has been associated with the concept of social capital. Increased trust combined with strong social ties with others makes people feel more at ease, confident and safe about their surrounding environment, thereby contributing to the perception of community safety (Onyx & Bullen, 2000).

As a result of these difficulties in defining and measuring social capital, Stone (2001) looks further into the basic components of social capital to determine a better way of measuring social capital. As has been discussed earlier in this chapter, the three components that make up the concept of social capital are trust, reciprocity and networks. As Putnam (1995) had already stated in his research, trust and reciprocity (together named as the norms within a community) are the intangible elements of social capital. Stone (2001) concludes that a distinction between the **indicators** and the **outcomes** of social capital is crucial. To be able to do this Stone (2001) focusses on the remaining, most tangible element of social capital, the **networks**.

Having set forth a conceptual framework for the measurement of social capital in her research, she presents a series of guidelines for the empirical investigation of social capital. The main takeaways of these guidelines include the importance of the empirical recognition that social capital is a multidimensional concept comprising networks of social relations characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity, and the recognition of the fact that there has to be an empirical distinction between social capital and its outcomes. For example, it must be recognised that reliance upon measures of the outcomes of social capital as indicators of social capital itself poses a risk, because then the conclusion could be drawn whereby social capital is said to exist whenever the indicator is present (Stone, 2001).

Nevertheless, Stone (2001) does not completely discourage measuring social capital and drawing conclusions upon this by examining its indicators. However, she does note that it is empirically crucial to have a clear recognition between the indicators and outcomes of social capital, when looking into measuring and basing conclusions on the indicators of social capital. To prevent prematurely drawing

these types of previously mentioned conclusions, Stone (2001) argues that it is important to look into the characteristics of that network or community. With regard to looking into the networks to measure social capital, she argues that these **network characteristics** are an important factor in measuring the presence and degree of social capital within that network. This is because network characteristics affect the nature and capability of social capital itself (Stone, 2001).

Drawing on the proposed framework from Stone (2001), while considering the practicalities and difficulties of measuring social capital, Zhou & Kaplanidou (2017) present their own take on the research on the subject with their research on social capital within sporting events that can have a benefit for the community. In their explorative research on measuring building social capital within sporting events they put forward four outcomes of social capital that can be an indicator for the presence of social capital. These outcomes are: a supportive attitude and behaviour, positive influence on others, prosocial behaviours and increased everyday socializations. These elements had been based on the existing literature regarding the core elements of social capital and used Stone's (2001) notion on attempting to determine the network characteristics within a community to effectively measure social capital. Evidently, they had been proven effective as indicators for measuring social capital among participants of sport events, according to Zhou & Kaplanidou (2017). To operationalize the concept of social capital for the sake of this research, we will be relying on this proposed framework by Zhou & Kaplanidou (2017).

Sports organizations and social capital

Sports organizations and sports events are often used as a means to generate social benefits and achieve community goals (Tonts, 2005). This is because the associational nature of sports participation (and particularly sporting clubs) is seen as a forum for the creation of social capital (Jarvie, 2003). There also seems to be empirical evidence that sports provide opportunities for the development of both bridging and linking capital. It is suggested that sports can be used to build new friendships and social connectivity, with the capability to surpass differences of class, religion and ethnicity. This applies to playing participants, non-playing participants (e.g. coaches and trainers) but also spectators and can eventually also lead to increases of the norms (trust and reciprocity) in a network, as Putnam (1995) described these (Harris, 1998). In other words, it provides **bridges** and **links** between different groups and social networks.

But there is another component that makes sports organizations an important factor in building social capital, which is similar to the process of **bonding** social capital. This is because sporting events 'glue' people together, because sporting together makes them perceive a sense of identity, pride, common purpose and commitment to a place (Bale, 2003). This may also have positive spill-over effects on the community. Delaney & Keaney (2005) found that members of sports groups were more likely than non-members to engage in civil behaviours, which were associated with being more active in the local community.

This seems to be especially the case in rural regions, as Atherley (2006) argues that sports participation is important to rural community everyday life. She states that district sports clubs are a key focus of community life. Social inclusion in such organizations can influence the daily life, social

networks, community engagement and a stream of information that helps a resident create a sense of belonging to their locality. She also states that particularly sports clubs are often regarded as a central element in rural life (Atherley, 2006; Skinner et al, 2008).

While the literature seems to be suggesting that sports organizations are an effective means to build social capital, it is important to also shed light on the potential negative effects of sports on social capital. This is because there are also a number of studies that point to inequalities and social divisions that are associated with sport. Sometimes these can be linked to the negative outcomes of social capital, as Putnam (1995) described these. Strong bonds within sporting clubs or organizations can in some cases result in homogeneity in membership and a relatively hostile attitude toward outsiders. The outcome is that clubs or organizations tend to be exclusive in a certain way and can be unwelcoming for those that seem to be 'different' from the dominant group.

Tonts (2005) points out that there also might be a geographical dimension to the relationship between social capital and sport. This tends to be true in particular for team sports that are anchored to particular localities. The research of Atherley (2003) also corroborates this, as the research on competition between football teams in rural Australia suggests that intense local bonds that are formed by particular clubs can undermine efforts to behave cooperatively with other sports organizations, but also towards outsiders in general. This could suggest that the formation of social capital around sporting teams within a locality could prevent the formation of social capital at wider geographical scales. This could mean that the social capital derived from these sports organizations might be mainly **bonding** social capital, and to a lesser extent **bridging** and **linking** social capital.

2.2 Place attachment

In the previous sub-chapter on social capital, it was explained how sports organizations could have a positive effect on building social capital. In this sub-chapter the focus will be on how the outcomes of social capital can have an influence on the overall satisfaction with the place of residence, and will give an overview of the literature on the link between social capital and place attachment.

This sub-chapter will further elaborate on the definition, measurement and further explanation on the literature about place attachment, in order to establish the connection between social capital and place attachment.

Defining place attachment

To establish the connection between social capital and place attachment, we need to determine the definition of place attachment. Unlike social capital, the concept of place attachment is actually relatively much more straightforward. The broad meaning of place attachment is referred to as: the positive bonding that occurs between individuals and their meaningful environments (Giuliani, 2003). However, the concept of place attachment has been researched quite broadly which has resulted in multiple definitions on the subject, which makes it hard to determine a universal way of measuring (Scannell & Gifford, 2009).

Multiple authors suggest that place attachment is actually a component, that is part of the larger concept of **sense of place**. Jorgensen & Stedman (2001) state that sense of place is an overarching concept that describes the relationship between people and spatial settings. Sense of place is made up out of three elements: **place attachment**, **place identity** and **place dependence**. While there is a certain degree of overlap among these concepts, they have distinctive characteristics.

Sense of place

In the theory on sense of place, **place attachment** is described as a positive bond that develops between individuals or groups with their environment (Altman & Low, 1992). The emphasis with this bond is that it explicitly contains emotional content towards a place. It is described as the relationship that contains affection between people and the landscape that goes beyond cognition, preference or judgement (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001).

Place identity focusses more on the process of how an individual self-identifies with a certain place or environment. Place identity involves the perceptions that define the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment. This can include patterns of conscious and unconscious ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals, behavioural tendencies and skills relevant to the environment (Proshanky, 1978).

Place dependence is defined as an individual's perceived strength of dependence between themselves and a specific place or environment. The degree of dependence is measured by how well a setting serves a goal for a particular person. This process involves a comparison of the current ability of goal-achieving of a place to those that would be obtained by selecting an alternative place. It is important to note that place dependence can be different from place attachment. Contrary to place attachment, place dependence can also be negative because it can limit the achievement of desired goals. This would be the case when the alternative options for goal-achieving through the means of a place that are available to a person, are even worse than those of the current place. In this sense, individuals would be place dependent because they have no better options (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001).

In order to be able to measure place attachment, it is useful to see it in a broader perspective to be aware of the differences between the concepts that are mentioned above. For the sake of this research it is important that the emphasis of place attachment is positive, regarding its potential capability to influence moving behaviour.

Measuring place attachment using the PPP framework

Because of the application of place attachment to many subjects, many definitions have been formed. To make sense of this definitional diversity, Scannell & Gifford (2009) have accumulated the literature on place attachment. By exploring its commonalities across the different formations on the concept, they structured and highlighted its essential features. To operationalize the concept of place attachment for the sake of this research, we will be relying on the proposed framework by Scannell & Gifford (2009).

Based on their research, Scannell & Gifford (2009) propose a three-dimensional framework of place attachment that usefully structures the different definitions that exist in the literature. The framework acknowledges that place attachment is a multidimensional concept that overlaps with related similar concepts but gathers its main components and puts them into three categories. The three dimensions of the framework consist of three factors: **person**, **psychological process** and **place** dimensions.

The first dimension, the **person**, consists out of individual and collective place attachment. At the individual level, it involves the personal connections an individual has to a certain place (e.g. experiences or achieved milestones in that place). At the group level, attachment is made up out of the symbolic meanings of a place that are shared among members (e.g. culture or religion regarding that place) (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). As this is especially relevant for the connection between social capital and place attachment, more is explained about this in the next section.

The second dimension is the **psychological process**, which is concerned with the nature of the psychological interactions that occur in the environments that have a meaning to individuals or groups. The psychological aspects consist out of a bunch of factors. The first of all, is **affect** towards a place which focusses on the emotional connection towards a particular place (e.g. emotions of happiness, pride or love). The second factor is based on **cognitive elements**, which consist of

memories, beliefs, meaning and knowledge that individuals associate with a certain place that make them personally important (e.g. familiarity with a place). It also has to do with an individual's search for social identity, which will be described further in the following section. The last factor of the psychological process is the **behavioural level**, in which attachment is expressed through actions (e.g. homesickness or nostalgia towards a certain place). These actions are mainly founded on the desire to remain physically or emotionally close to a place (Hay, 1998; Scannell & Gifford, 2009).

The third dimension is the **place** dimension and focusses on the place itself and what attributes of that place it is that people connect to. This dimension has been divided in to two levels: the **social** and the **physical** level of place attachment. The social aspect focusses on the way that places facilitate social relationships and group identity, while the physical aspect focusses on the physical attributes of a place (e.g. buildings or nature) (Riger & Lavrakas, 1981). However, it is stressed that these two do not completely co-exist without each other. Hidalgo & Hernandez (2001) note that physical and social attachments both influence the overall bond, but that the attachment to physical attributes mainly exists because it has been shaped by social factors. As this is also especially relevant for the connection between social capital and place attachment, more is explained about this in the next section.

Social capital and place attachment

In the previous section, we have already briefly touched upon the connection between social capital and place attachment. This section will further elaborate on the details regarding the relation between social capital and place attachment.

Much literature on the subject shows that place attachment is largely based on social factors (e.g. Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Scannell & Gifford, 2009; Woldoff, 2002; Woosnam et al., 2018). Hidalgo & Hernandez (2001) looked into the social and the physical levels of place attachment and concluded that both these factors are important to an individual in the contribution to attachment to a place. However, they argued that the social dimension of place attachment was stronger than the physical dimension for most people. This social dimension seems to consist out of social ties, belongingness to the neighbourhood and the familiarity with fellow residents (Riger & Lavrakas, 1981).

Like in social capital, the “sense of community” seems to be an important social concept regarding place attachment. People are attached to places that facilitate social relationships and group identity within a community (Scannell & Gifford, 2009). Additionally, the research of Woldoff (2002) shows that the perceived place attachment is largely comprised of the attachment to the people who live there and to the social interactions that the place affords them.

As mentioned in the framework of Scannell & Gifford (2009), place attachment also exists at the group level. Low (1992) states that place attachment at the group level consists of symbolic meanings of a place that are shared among its members. Examples of ways in how these symbolic meanings tend to be formed, are culture and religion.

Culture forms attachment towards a place through shared historical experiences and values (Scannell & Gifford, 2009) while **religion** also contributes to place attachment due to the process that meanings of certain places become elevated to the status of sacred (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004). As culture and religion are mainly social constructs that exist at the group level, the social capital that is associated and derived from these aspects can be seen as sources for the empowerment of the perceived sense of place attachment. (Low, 1992; Riger & Lavrakas, 1981).

Another connection between social capital and place attachment is the fact that an individual usually seeks a balance of similarity to in-group members and distinctiveness from out-groups (Brewer, 1991). Brewer (1991) argues that place may play an important role in this process, as place provides a sense of identity about a person that determines one's distinctiveness or similarity to one another. The **similarity** that people in a place or environment share represents a sense of belonging to that place, which can be both beneficial for the development of social capital and place attachment. **Distinctiveness** in place identity would depend on distinguishing features such as location, landscape features or climate. Due to this process, individuals may connect to a place in the sense that it comes to represent who they are (Scannell & Gifford, 2009; Woldoff, 2002).

2.3 Moving behaviour

In the previous sub-chapters, we determined the connections between involvement in sports organizations and social capital, and between social capital and place attachment. This sub-chapter will focus on the connection between place attachment and moving behaviour, which represents the last intermediate step in describing the theoretical connection between sports organizations and moving behaviour.

This sub-chapter shortly elaborates on moving behaviour's definition, components and rural context and establishes the connection between place attachment and moving behaviour.

Defining moving behaviour

Moving behaviour is a relatively straightforward concept, as it refers to an individual's behaviour regarding migration (Mulder & Malmberg, 2014). It must be acknowledged that moving behaviour can be influenced by a broad range of factors. As Lu (1999) states, moving behaviour is influenced by a lot of determinants such as: income, life cycle stages, house size, housing quality, location and the neighbourhood. The **residential satisfaction**, that is determined by the previous named factors, is the main influence on moving behaviour. Lu (1999) states that residential satisfaction is measured by the differences between households' actual and desired housing and neighbourhood situations (Lu, 1999).

Regarding the subject of this research, we will mainly be focussing on out-migration and the potential effect that the built social capital and place attachment might reduce an individual's willingness to out-migrate.

Moving behaviour in a rural context

In the face of this research it is mandatory to zoom in on the moving behaviour that occurs in the rural context. It seems that especially young adults seem to be out-migrating from rural areas as opposed to older adults or children. Because of processes of globalization and increasing mobility, young people become less bound to their region for their opportunities in education or employment (Haartsen & Thissen, 2013). People who undertake these kinds of moves tend to move over longer distances and are usually highly educated. This is because the opportunities for education or employment in rural regions tend to be scarce (Elshof et al., 2017).

Overall, rural areas seem to be experiencing a net out migration of (especially highly educated) young adults. This tends to be problematic because young people play a key position in the future of remote rural areas, because without renewal of their population from within, these areas cannot remain liveable and economically viable (Stockdale, 2004).

Place attachment and moving behaviour

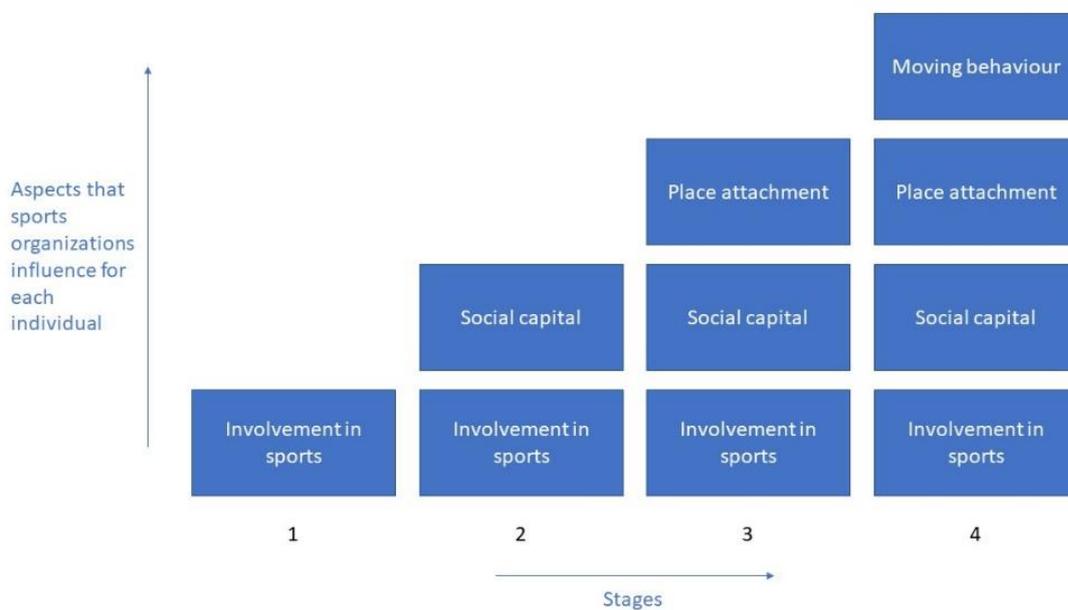
Research has shown that a higher level of place attachment is a predictor for being less likely to move. Especially the elements of family roots, community connections and satisfaction with the neighbourhood were proven significant for being effective in negatively influencing the desire to move. These elements seem to be indicating higher levels of social capital and place attachment (Clark et al., 2015). Moreover, the research of Clark et al. (2015) also showed that the analysed movers that chose new dwellings in the same neighbourhood admitted that social bonds remain a powerful force in the decision to stay locally.

Barcus & Brunn (2009) also concluded from their research that family and friend networks, involvement with local organizations and leadership positions within the locality were important to residence satisfaction and continued residence. Surprisingly, it was also found that some people were in fact attached to their place of residence but nonetheless decided to move for various reasons. However, most of them did have the intention of returning to their place of residence or a similar place in the future.

It is important to note that not moving is not always an indicator for the presence of place attachment. For some people immobility is actually imposed rather than chosen. For this group individual circumstances such as caring for (elderly) family or relatives, job loss, family dissolution or housing insecurity is an important factor for keeping them in their current place of residence (Barcus & Brunn, 2009). Regarding the purpose of the research, it is important to keep in mind that this form of immobility is not an indicator of place attachment but merely an unfortunate turn of events.

2.4 Conceptual (4-stage) model

The model as it is shown below stems from the theories that were put forward in the previous sub-chapters, linking the literature on sports organizations, social capital, place attachment and moving behaviour with each other. Each stage represents the different aspects that sport organizations influence for each individual. The goal of the conceptual model is determining the influence that sports organizations have on the respective subjects. The conceptual model aims to contribute to a better way of visualizing, categorizing and interpreting the theories that are used in this research. The concepts of social capital and place attachment are used as the intermediate steps to link the concepts of involvement in sports organizations and moving behaviour with each other. This leads to the conceptual model as shown below:



The four stages that are visualized above represent the different “levels” of influence that sports organizations can have on the respective subjects.

Stage 1: describes the stage where people participate in sports, for the purpose of sporting/exercise purely. Participation is either for fun, staying fit or for more professional (career) purposes. Social relations are not the most important in this stage.

Stage 2: describes the stage where people participate in sports, also with the purpose of improving and maintaining social relations. This stage adds the social factor.

Stage 3: describes the stage where people participate in sport for the same reasons as mentioned in the previous stages. However, people in this stage have experienced an increase in place attachment towards the town/rural area where they live because of their involvement in the sports organization.

Stage 4: describes the stage where people participate in sport for the same reasons as mentioned in the previous stages. However, people in this stage acknowledge that their (future) moving behaviour is influenced by their involvement in the sports organization.

The 4-stage model will be used as a tool to do research and aims to measure which stage of the four is the most prevalent one while also explaining the relations and processes connecting the different concepts based on the gathered data. The **hypothesis** is that the concepts sequentially influence each other (e.g. involvement in sports organizations influences social capital, social capital influences place attachment etc.). To be able to test the accuracy of the hypothesis, the interviews will also allow room for input that potentially indicate other ways of influence.

The interview questions are divided into categories, each representing one stage in the model. The interview questions are meant to determine if and how the concepts relate to each other in practice, while also trying to capture in which category the interviewee is most likely to fall in to. This combination is used to get an in-depth perspective on the role that sports organizations play in influencing moving behaviour.

3. Methodology

This chapter will elaborate on the methodology of the research. First of all, a literature study was held to derive more insights about the topics of **involvement in sports organizations** and **moving behaviour**. As was mentioned in the theoretical framework, the literature indicates that the moving behaviour could hypothetically be influenced by involvement in sports organizations through indirect causes and effects. The literature review suggests that these causes and effects are **social capital** and **place attachment**.

Following this reasoning, one might hypothesize over ways in how these concepts are related to each other in practice. It also raises the question of how and if sports organizations in rural areas can indirectly influence the out-migration of young people. These findings from the theoretical framework function as the input for the hypothesis.

The hypothesis for this research is that sports organizations have an indirect effect on moving behaviour, through the influences of social capital and place attachment. The prognosis is that these four concepts sequentially influence each other (e.g. moving behaviour influences social capital, social capital influences place attachment etc.) The accuracy of this hypothesis will be tested during the data gathering. This hypothesis is also included and explained in the conceptual model.

3.1 Research questions

The main goal of the research is answering the following **primary research question**:

- **What role do sports organizations play in retaining young people in rural areas?**

This is done by answering a set of **secondary research questions**, which consist of the following three sub questions:

- **To what extent do sports organizations influence social capital among young people, and how does this process work?**
- **To what extent do sports organizations influence place attachment among young people, and how does this process work?**
- **To what extent do sports organizations influence moving behaviour among young people, and how does this process work?**

For the defining of “**sports organizations**” it is important to stress that that this research does not focus on “individual” sports. For the sake of the research it is important that these sporting events potentially facilitate social contacts. This is why the research solely focusses on sports organizations

that play sports in **teams** or other formations of multiple people. As was mentioned above, only sports organizations in the North Netherlands were approached, as this is the case study of the research. The choice for the **Northern provinces of the Netherlands** was made because this area has a sufficient level of rural and shrinkage areas (Haartsen & Venhorst, 2010) that are suitable for the research. Also, this was in terms of proximity the most convenient option.

For the defining of “**young people**” the age distribution from 17 to 29 years old is being made, as this is the same age distribution that is being used in similar research on the topic conducted by Haartsen & Thissen (2013).

3.2 Research goals

The combination of involvement in sports organizations, social capital, place attachment and moving behaviour is quite unrecognized in the literature. Therefore, the aim of the research is meant to be mainly **explorative**. The research aims to make sense and gain insights about the role that sports organizations play in retaining young people in rural areas. It aims to not limit itself to answering whether sports organizations have an impact on moving behaviour, but also possibly provide a more in-depth analysis into the reason why it does or does not have an impact on retaining young people in rural areas.

The goal of the research is to look for patterns in the answers from the interviews with the purpose of generalizing certain types of behaviour. This qualitative type of study at the micro level aims to contribute to the knowledge about this subject that can possibly be used for making decisions at the macro level. However, it must be acknowledged that the process of deciding between moving or staying is different for every individual. It is important to note that every individual is different in their personality and preferences, which means that this research does not aim to contribute to a ‘one fits all’ type of solution.

This is why the research aims to contribute to a combination of two goals: measuring and understanding. With **measuring** is meant examining the extent to which sports organizations influence the subjects of social capital, place attachment and moving behaviour. This is done by determining which stage of the conceptual model the interviewee is most likely to fall into. This also tests the validity of the conceptual model in practice, in order to see how the used concepts from the theory relate to each other in a practical setting. It must be noted that the emphasis of this research is **not** towards this measurement, but rather towards understanding why this is the case. This measurement only functions as the input for the goal of the understanding.

With **understanding** is meant understanding more about how the concepts of social capital, place attachment and moving behaviour relate to each other and the reasons why these concepts do or do not have an effect on moving behaviour. This is done by linking existing theories on sports organizations, social capital and place attachment with each other in an innovative way, as is described in the conceptual model.

Because of the mentioned duality in research goals and the explorative nature of the research, the choice was made to do a **qualitative** type of research. The choice for **semi-structured interviews** was made because this provides the best possibility for new and unexpected input on the research subject, that can contribute to a better understanding on the theoretical concepts and how they relate to each other in practice.

A more quantitative type of research using e.g. surveys on a bigger group of participants was also considered but was chosen to be less preferable because this type of research captures less motivations and explanations of the respondents. It also offers limited possibilities for unexpected input that can also be useful for the research. Because of these reasons the choice for semi-structured interviews was preferred, keeping in mind the explorative nature of this research.

The research aims to contribute to the field of knowledge about out-migration of young people and population shrinkage, and the potential solutions to cope with the problems that derive from these processes. For future **socio-spatial** policy interventions regarding population shrinkage and its undesired effects, this information might be useful.

3.3 Research design

For the purpose of this research the (sub)topics were divided into 4 main categories, which are: involvement in sports organizations, social capital, place attachment and moving behaviour. The categories represent the concepts from the theoretical framework and the conceptual model, each meant to facilitate a better categorizing of the findings from the research. The categories were used to provide a better way of comparing them with each other and comparing the influence that sports organizations have on each category.

To be able to research the presence of **social capital** the interview questions made use of the proposed framework from the research of Zhou & Kaplanidou (2017). As mentioned in the theoretical framework, it turns out that social capital is quite difficult to research in practice. Stone (2001) acknowledges these difficulties in her research and presents a series of guidelines for the empirical investigation of social capital. These guidelines mainly focus towards network characteristics. We relied on the indicators that Zhou & Kaplanidou (2017) propose in their research, which are based on the proposed guidelines by Stone (2001). The interview questions are based on these indicators. The questions are used to be able to determine whether social capital is present among the interviewees and their respective sports organizations, and also aim to gain qualitative insights from the interviewee as to how the social capital manifests itself.

For researching the presence of **place attachment**, the interview questions are based on the framework that was proposed in the research of Scannell & Gifford (2009). This research sums up the different dimensions of place attachment and divides them into three categories, with the purpose of making it easier to categorize and research the different aspects of place attachment. The interview questions are based on the three dimensions that are proposed by Scannell & Gifford (2009) and by doing so the presence and nature of these three dimensions are determined.

The research is conducted in qualitative way, through 9 semi-structured interviews in total. 7 interviews were held with people that participate in sports organizations in rural areas in the Northern provinces of the Netherlands (Which are: Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe and Overijssel). This entails both participants and board members from sports organizations. Because of newly introduced EU-privacy laws, sports organizations could not share any personal information which is why all of the participants were found through social media and mutual acquaintances. The reason **why** these people were chosen as suitable for the research was because they all met the following criteria that were chosen to be useful for selecting appropriate participants:

- They are or have been active in a sports organization in a rural area in the North Netherlands
- They are or have been active there for 5+ years
- They are or have been living in the town of their sports club since their childhood
- They are between the ages of 17 and 29

In addition, 2 semi-structured interviews were held with policy workers from the Province of Groningen that cover the policy areas of sports, liveability and population shrinkage. The reason why these two interviews were conducted was to also shed a light on the subject from a different perspective which could possibly lead to new insights.

A complete chronological list of the interviews that were conducted is shown below. The interviews marked in blue represent the interviews that were conducted with policy workers of the Province of Groningen, while the interviews marked in white represent the interviews that were conducted with participants of a sports organization.

Number	Organization	Location of the organization	Moved away from the town of the sports club	Date	Location of the interview
1	Province of Groningen	Groningen, Groningen	N/A	13-11-2019	Groningen, Groningen
2	BEW	Vledder, Drenthe	No	15-11-2019	Vledder, Drenthe
3	Olyphia	Noordwolde, Friesland	No	16-11-2019	Noordwolde, Friesland
4	Province of Groningen	Groningen, Groningen	N/A	20-11-2019	Groningen, Groningen
5	Old Forward	Wilhelminaoord, Drenthe	Yes	23-11-2019	Steenwijk, Overijssel
6	Ritola	Zuidlaren, Drenthe	No	06-12-2019	Groningen, Groningen
7	SV Steenwijkerwold	Steenwijkerwold, Overijssel	Yes	18-01-2020	Steenwijk, Overijssel
8	SC Elim	Elim, Drenthe	No	24-02-2020	Online
9	Old Forward	Wilhelminaoord, Drenthe	No	26-02-2020	Online

For the analysis of the data, the interviews have been recorded and transcribed. For the labelling and the categorizing of the raw data, ATLAS.ti is used in order to code the interviews. The codes were created inductively with the use of a codebook, which is included in the appendix. The codes are used to process the raw data from the interviews into useable information, which is the input for our analysis which we use to answer the research questions. More on this will be explained in chapter 4.

3.4 Practicalities and ethical considerations

Before the interviews took place, the respondents were asked for their permission to record the interview and received a copy of the interview guide (see appendix) with the questions that would be asked. At the beginning of each interview, the respondents were once again asked for their verbal consent to record the interview and their agreement on the use of the information for scientific purposes. The anonymity of the respondents has been guaranteed, which is why this research will not contain any personal information. Names have been left out, and any personal information has been removed so that the data can not be led back to an individual. Also, the interviews were conducted in Dutch. This was because both the interviewer and the interviewees were both Dutch in all cases, hence this was the best option to prevent any type of language barrier.

It must be noted that the purpose of this research is mainly guided towards gathering information about the young people that are willing to stay or to those that are in doubt about whether to stay or not. The goal is to look for ways to improve the liveability for certain towns, by looking into the role that sports organizations play in this. We try to do this by looking for possibilities in order to stimulate overall satisfaction for the inhabitants of the town that choose to remain living there, with the purpose of slowing down further population shrinkage in these towns. The purpose of this research is **not** guided towards discouraging young people to leave their town, thereby restricting their freedom of movement.

4. Findings

This chapter will present the findings from the conducted interviews. After the interviews were conducted, the data was inductively coded using ATLAS.ti (an overview of the codes that were used are included in the codebook in the appendix). We used these codes as a tool to categorize and interpret the raw data to give them meaning. Based on this information we conducted an analysis which included the generalisation of the most frequently mentioned subjects and the subjects that are most important in regard to answering the research questions. The results will be represented in the following sub-chapters below.

To summarize the outcomes, the subjects of social capital, place attachment and moving behaviour are again used as sub-chapters for the results of that particular subject. The last sub-chapter will give an overview of the additional findings that were not part of the subjects covered in the original interview guide and the conceptual model, but were nevertheless determined to be useful in the face of this research and answering its research questions.

The quotes that are used are meant to give a more accurate depiction of the conducted interviews, but it must be noted that these quotes are translated from Dutch into English. Text that is marked between brackets are not the literally spoken words: they are either replaced with additional text with the intent of a clearer explanation of the quote, or they are replaced with a descriptive text of certain left-out words with the purpose of ensuring anonymity of the interviewees.

4.1 The influence on social capital

All the interviewees that participate in a sports organization stated that they had been part of their sports organizations for a long time. The most of them had been a member since their childhood. Often a friend or family member from the same town was the one that introduced them or encouraged them to join also.

What was interesting to find out was that 6 out of the 7 interviewees that participated in a sports organization mentioned that the social contacts were very important to them, even before this subject was brought up in the interview questions. When it was asked what the most important reason for participation in a sports organization was, most of them answered that it was the duality between sporting and the social bonding with their teammates.

Most of these interviewees stated that they were happy about the combination that this brought them, because by their participation they were able to combine their need for physical exercise and also provide them to build and maintain their social relations with their sports mates. It was also stated several times that their original motive for joining a sports organization was mainly the

physical exercise and the enjoyment of playing the sport itself, and to a lesser extent the desire for social contacts. However, when evaluating the importance of the social contacts derived from their participation (after a longer period of time), the vast majority stated that they valued the act of sporting itself and the social aspects as equally important. One interviewee described this process as the following:

“The social contacts that you build from participation. At first you are not aware of this, because then you will just have something fun to do on the Saturday morning, just playing soccer. It is just a fun activity. But the most important, at a certain moment, when I got a little bit older it was more the social events that go with it that were important to me. And obviously also staying fit.”

Multiple interviewees also mentioned that participating in a sports organization is an effective way of being more involved in the community of the town. It is also perceived as a good way to know what is going on in a town and made it easier to reach out to other town members for e.g. a personal favour. This seems to be coherent to Putnam’s (1995) notion on civic engagement and its benefits. This process was described as following by an interviewee:

“Yes definitely! Especially in a small town [it is an effective way of being more involved in the community]. I don’t know what that is like in a bigger city, but in a small town it is more like: When you are new in a town like this you get a lot more involved by participating in a soccer team. For example, your across the street neighbour is also your teammate. So, the social contacts are very important.”

When we measured the indicators of social capital using the framework of Zhou & Kaplanidou (2017), all of them were present in the most cases. 5 out of the 7 interviewees that participate in a sports organization, stated that they felt that by participating they felt more connected with the lives of the social contacts at their sports organization. All of them stated that through participating they had built close relationships and friendships with some people and would consider (some of) them as their close friends.

Some of them also described their team bonding as a possibility to build a deeper form of bonding with each other, which would likely not have happened in connections derived from social events without a team-experience. They stated that they saw their team as a group of friends on whom they could rely in times of personal setbacks. One interviewee described this process as following:

“Yes, for sure, you just know a lot about what is going on. For example, if people have some personal setbacks in their life, and they do not feel well, then you hear about those kinds of things, what is going on in their personal lives. So, you really establish a kind of connection within your team. Especially when you are playing first team of a club. Then you are just involved with that about 3 or 4 days of the week, and you see each other often. You also kind of have to build a sort of bond with your teammates because you have to be able to play together as a team. And that is what you will have to do.”

Another interviewee added to this, by saying:

“Yes of course, you are a part of a team so when there is something going on in your personal life that has a big impact, then you share that with your team. And by doing so, you will get to know each other really well.”

This also seems to be the difference between team sports and individual sports. One interviewee mentioned that they favoured team sports over individual sports because of the lesser extent of team bonding:

“Yes, I don’t know what it would be like without. That for sure. But it would just seem a little bit lonelier to me [without a team]. I have also played tennis and that was just a very different kind of sport. And you were just able to tell pretty quickly that you would build a lot less friendships in a sport like that, than when you are playing teams.”

6 out of the 7 interviewees that participate in a sports organization mentioned that they considered the social contacts at their sports organizations to be a positive influence on their lives. This was mainly due to the friendships that people had built by participating, and they considered those friends and their relationships with them as an important part of their life. Multiple interviewees mentioned that they thought of their teammates and friends as the same group of people. Even after quitting the sports organizations, these built relationships would not necessarily decrease, one interviewee mentioned that their childhood teammates were still their today friends:

“Yes, well one of my groups of friends is just one that is really just my team from the soccer club. We still call it the old A’s. And it just stays that way, we will still talk about the stupid moments that happened on the soccer field in the past. And we still talk about every weekend about how the soccer match went. So, it is kind of your life, and the common theme within your group of friends. So, you will really notice that.”

6 out of the 7 interviewees that participate in a sports organization mentioned that they felt a sense of community that is derived from participation in their sports organization. The reason for this was that they felt more enjoyment in playing the sports and being a member because of this sense of ‘being part of a group or community’. One interviewee described this as the following:

“Yes, it is kind of like, a family would be a bit exaggerated, but it is definitely a group that makes you feel like home when you are there. And it probably also depends on the club because you do not feel at home at every club. But I have been playing here for a long time, so you really have a connection with everybody. You really know everyone very well. So, when you arrive you will always be greeted by everyone and you will always feel welcome.”

Also, being recognized as a team member from a certain sports organization gave people a kind of identity which contributed to the sense of community. Sometimes being recognized led to increased socializations in everyday life, because they were recognized as a team member and other people had seen them play:

“Especially because at a certain moment I started playing for the first team. And then people who will come to watch the game, will really know you by name. And then at a certain moment, everyone you will run into will wave at you and greet you. That is kind of what happens because of that.”

Another interviewee said that the sense of community was an important enough reason for switching sports organizations:

“Yes, it has been a reason for me to go from [old sports club] to [new sports club] because that team attracted too many players from other places, which made it less fun. Although I have nothing against them though, it did decrease the sense of community that we previously had.”

4.2 The influence on place attachment

Using the framework that was proposed by Scannell & Gifford (2009), we measured the presence of the different dimensions of place attachment among the interviewees that participate in a sports organization. All of them seemed to be present among some individuals, but it was noticeable that this was to a lesser extent than the previously measured presence of social capital.

When asked whether participation gave them a sense of identity regarding their town, 5 out of the 7 interviewees that participate in a sports organization agreed. However, in their answers the sense of identity seemed to be more guided towards the sports organization itself rather than the town. It seemed that most of the interviewees that had agreed, felt that they considered themselves more to be a 'member of' the sports club than a 'member of' their town. A quote that remarkably represents this distinction is the following:

"Yes, I think that if you live in a particular town then it is quite straightforward to join the sports organization from that town, and not the one of another town. But I think it is the sports club itself that defines you. You are part of that particular sports club and not another one."

In a few cases, it was also mentioned that the feeling of identity was also guided towards the overall perception of the rural. It seemed that people felt that their rural background had somehow affected their identity, but that identity was not specific nor limited to the town that they were from. It was considered to be more of an overall 'rural' identity:

"I am currently living and working in [major city in the Netherlands] and I really notice, I notice that as a person I keep longing for the sense of that "town feeling", the feeling of that pure [province they were from]. I keep having that which I had not expected that it would, so I notice now that that has actually become part of my identity."

When it was asked whether sports organizations changed the way one looked at their town, only 1 out of the 7 interviewees that participate in a sports organization agreed. Most people admitted that their attachment was more towards the sports organization and the people that are involved with it rather than the town in general. This suggests that the attachment to the social aspects and connections are bigger than the overall attachment to the town.

This seems to be in line with the theories on place attachment that make the distinction between the social and the physical level (e.g. Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Riger & Lavrakas, 1981; Scannell & Gifford, 2009; Woldoff, 2002; Woosnam et al., 2018). Some interviewees acknowledge this distinction themselves as well. The quotes from the interviews below literally describe this distinction between the attachment to the social aspects and the overall attachment to the town:

"Well, I don't think [I have attachment] for the place itself really. But for the persons that are there. Not really towards the town or the location."

“Not necessarily [attachment for] the town but for some people that live there. I mean, your perception of a person can really change when you get to know them better at the club, otherwise you might have just seen them in the street and not really know them at all. That could be two very different persons to you. But your relationship with them could really improve through being at the club together.”

When it was asked if past experiences have an effect on how the interviewees that participate in a sports organization looked at their town, their answers were largely similar. Also, only 1 out of the 7 interviewees agreed with this statement. Here also seems to be a distinction between the attachment to the social aspects of a sports organization and the attachment towards the town in general. The most prevalent form of attachment seems to be social. The following quote also illustrates this:

“Not really the experiences at the sports club, but rather towards the people that are part of the sports club. In particular the people that are indispensable for the sports club.”

4.3 The influence on moving behaviour

When it was asked whether the involvement in a sports organization and the social benefits derived from this process were a reason to be less likely to move, the answers were more mixed. 4 out of the 7 interviewees that participate in a sports organization claimed that it would be a reason for them to be less likely to move, although multiple stated that being a part of a sports organization would probably not be a decisive factor for them in deciding whether or not to move to another place. It was mainly stated that sporting and the social contacts that go with them were perceived as important, but not the most important factor for influencing moving behaviour. Also, it was stressed that when moving to another place, one could again choose to join the sports organization in their new place of residence and use this to establish new social contacts and friendships. The other 3 out of the 7 interviewees stated that their involvement in their sports organization would probably not be of influence when deciding whether or not to move.

Things that were often mentioned as important in influencing moving behaviour were **family, education, employment or personal development**. Especially career seemed to be a recurring theme in influencing moving behaviour, which was illustrated by a policy worker from the Province of Groningen as the following:

“Well, being successful is what the society is like nowadays. We are supposed to have everything. And that also means being successful, but it also means career, sporting, a family, a car, three vacations a year. Those kinds of things. And sporting and sports organizations, that is one of those aspects but there are a lot of those same aspects that are equally as important. I could easily name 6 others. But when those other five are somewhere else, and the sports are not, then people usually choose to move. Not in all cases though, but in general. I do not think that a sports organization is a big enough reason for people to stay where they are. If you can not get a job, or can not get a house, or if you find someone with whom you want to grow old together and that person is not from here, then you are inclined to leave. Those are important things. You are not going to say: I am sorry, I will have to let you go because I like my sports organization that much. I am sure that there are exceptions though, but generally speaking I do not think that that will be the case.”

The answers of the interviewees that participate in a sports organization seemed to suggest that the involvement in their sports organization would not be the decisive factor in deciding whether to move or not. However, it was often mentioned that the involvement in their sports organization was perceived to be an important factor to them, especially regarding their social life. It was mentioned frequently that interviewees themselves or their teammates would sometimes make the decision to move out of their town but chose to remain active in their sports organizations. Especially on the weekends, when most of the matches would take place, members of their sports organizations would take the effort to travel from their new place of residence back to their old town to engage in their sports organizations' activities. The quotes below illustrate this process further:

“Yes, I have seen a lot of my teammates move to a bigger city for their studies, but they would very often come back on Friday. Then they would train here on Friday night and then play the match on Sunday with us. And if you are able to combine that, it is a good reason to be here in the weekends. I

think if I would move away to another town, I would probably still come back here to play. I do not think the sports organization there would be that different, so then I would rather just go back to my old sports organization. I would be willing to drive back and forth for that.”

“There is just a certain bond that you have with each other. I also see a lot of teammates that are living in [major city in the Netherlands] for school or a job but they will come back to [old town] to play, just for the sake of the sports club. Also, because it is not a very big club, and you are willing to support your team of course. You have a kind of commitment towards your team, so leaving is quite a big decision to make. And of course, because we all have known each other for a very long time, many make the decision to travel back and forth.”

Although it was mentioned frequently that after moving away people were often willing to travel back and forth to remain an active participant of their sports organization, it was also mentioned that this effect would likely eventually decrease over time. Policy workers of the Province of Groningen have stated that they thought that this process would mainly happen in the first years after moving, but that after a longer period of time this would eventually stop occurring:

“I do not think that someone will remain to live in their town, just because of their involvement in a sports organization, I do not think so. It can give you a reason to come back for, for a couple of years, that does happen often. But at a certain moment it is just too difficult to combine all that, and they will stop coming eventually. Or they will move back, that also happens, but that really depends on the person’s perspective and the available housing.”

“I think that people would like to still be able to play sports in their old town. And if you leave, a lot of young people move to a bigger city but still choose to play sports in their old town for as long as they can. Until they really can’t anymore. For example, if you live in Amsterdam you can not make it to the training as often as you used to and eventually you will not be lined up anymore. Or you just can not combine it. But what I do know is that people try to play sports in their old town for as long as they can, it is important for your friendships also.”

4.4 Additional findings

This sub-chapter will present the findings from the interviews, that were not part of the initial research questions but are nevertheless important towards the research subject. Below, some of the subjects that were mentioned during the interviews are presented, which contribute useful information towards the research subject.

Mobility

Mobility was a subject that was mentioned several times. Especially in the face of remaining active in your sports organizations after moving to another place, this factor was found quite important. The distance that people had to travel and the time that it took to go from one place to another, was an important factor in deciding whether or not it was feasible to travel back and forth between places to remain active in the sports organization:

“I think it also depends on all the distances that you have to travel, I do not think that I would stay here so that I can play sports at my own sports club. It is just because it was not convenient, going back and forth. It just used to be very impractical when I lived there. Especially with the bus connection, it is just very inconvenient.”

“I can imagine that an influence in moving behaviour might also be the fact that nowadays it is easier to be somewhere else. It is a lot easier to go to studying in Groningen, Amsterdam or Australia for example. This means that you are more inclined to leave but coming back may also be easier.”

The decline of community life

It was also mentioned that people thought that the overall participation in team sports was declining. This seems to be in line with the notion of Putnam (1995) about the overall declining involvement in community life. It was mentioned in the interviews that especially in the shrinkage areas, where there is already a decreasing amount of people, this effect seemed even more noticeable. Reasons for this were e.g. the increasing diversity of available sports or the shift in popularity from a certain type of sports towards another type of sports. An interviewee that participates in a sports organization explained this as the following:

“Yes, it is an overall problem that is noticeable in all of the Netherlands. The community life is decreasing, more sports such as fitness are starting to get more popular. That is probably because you can choose yourself at what time you want to go. And also, there are just a lot of new sports so for example soccer is not the traditional sport anymore, that everyone used to go to in the past. There is just a lot of new stuff such as judo, squash, tennis. Whatever. Those kinds of sports.”

A difference between big and small towns

It was frequently mentioned that people perceived that there was a difference between big and small towns regarding the effect it would have on influencing moving behaviour. It was stated that they figured that the smaller a town was, the closer its inhabitants would be with each other. This distinction would allegedly also be noticeable in sports clubs from big and small towns. The quotes below elaborate further on this distinction. A policy worker from the Province of Groningen described this as the following:

“I think that the smaller a town is, the closer and more social its inhabitants are with each other. I think that in bigger towns that will be less. And in sports clubs it will also be noticeable, if you play in the same team from the age of nine until the age of eighteen, then that social aspect will be very big. But if you switch teams a lot, and you are constantly surrounded with other people, I think that then you are inclined to leave a lot earlier. I think that the smaller the town is, the more likely it is that the people that live there stay together.”

“I think that the smaller the town is, the closer its community is also. Because everyone knows each other, and you will run in to each other very often. And like that, the sports club will be the place to meet each other in such a close town, but that can also be the town centre or another local spot.”

One interviewee that participates in a sports organization also added to this by saying the following about the difference between sports clubs in big and in small towns:

“I think it also depends on the club. Because in bigger cities there are also smaller sports clubs, but I think that is different. I think that at a sports club in a small town you will have a closer connection with the persons around you because there are just so few people and you will already know everybody. You will at least have seen their faces before, and you probably have had a chat with them at some point. And I think that is the difference with a big club, because then you will more often run into people that you do not know, and you have never met. You have never talked to them before, so you will feel less of a sense of community, but also less of a sense of obligation towards them. Obligation might not be the right term, but probably more the sense of social connections that will make you less likely to move away.”

The process of population shrinkage also was argued to play a role in this. Population shrinkage occurs more often in smaller towns, and the impact it has is also bigger in smaller towns than it is in bigger towns (Stockdale, 2006). It was mentioned that population shrinkage and the problems that it creates for a town could also contribute to the closeness of the inhabitants of that town:

“Yes, you see that more and more sports clubs have to merge with each other, because otherwise they just can not keep up financially. And then you will have, for example, the playing field and the sports canteen in the one town but the people that play there will live in another town. And that way, it just keeps together those people that are involved.”

Moving back to the town

The possibility of moving back to the town at a later point in time after moving out was also a subject that was mentioned several times. It was mentioned that leaving at a younger age, did not always mean leaving the town forever. The overall image of living in a town and the formed experiences in the earlier parts of life were stated to play an important factor in whether or not to return to the original town. It was stated that the involvement in the sports organization would likely not be the decisive factor in this process, but rather the overall picture and the memories that people had of their town. A policy worker of the Province of Groningen described this as the following:

“No, I do not think it will [that sports organizations have an impact on influencing moving behaviour]. Because otherwise there would not be that much people leaving. Because the attachment towards a sports organization is really strong, especially during the childhood period. And when people get older, that will just eventually decrease over time. But people will still move out of their town because they just have different needs. But they can also come back at a later point in their life. But I do not think that that will be because of that particular sports organization, but more about the experiences and the overall picture that people have of their town. Just your memories of the fond childhood that you had there have an impact. But I do not think that you will stay in a town just for your involvement in your sports organization.”

Another policy worker of the Province of Groningen added to this, by saying:

“I think that the sense of community in a town is important in evaluating the liveability in that place, and that it would be an important factor in deciding whether or not to eventually move back there. Of course, there are people living there that will always stay there, but I think that in general the most people will move out at a young age, and a portion of that will eventually move back there.”

5. Conclusion

This chapter covers the conclusion of the research. First, the three secondary research questions will be answered individually, drawing on the analysis from the data from the interviews that were conducted. Secondly, and as a concluding remark on the secondary research questions, the main (primary) research question will be answered, and the validity of the conceptual model will be evaluated.

5.1 The influence of sports organizations on social capital

Drawing on the findings from the interviews that were conducted, the influence of sports organizations on social capital seemed to be the biggest in this research (as opposed to the influence on place attachment and on moving behaviour). Although many stated that the (establishment of) social aspects at their sports organizations were not their initial reason to join, all interviewees that participate in a sports organization agreed that the social aspect that was derived from the participation in their sports organizations were important to them. For most people, the duality between playing sports to stay physically fit and playing sports to build and maintain social contacts, where a reason for them to stay active in their sports organization.

When the indicators of social capital were measured using the framework of Zhou & Kaplanidou (2017), all of them seemed to be present in most cases. Many stated that because of their participation: they felt more connected to the lives of their team mates, considered the social contacts at their sports organization to be a positive influence on their life and felt a sense of community that was derived from their involvement. The presence of these factors and the degree in which they were present, would indicate that the influence of sports organizations is an effective way of building, preserving and further strengthening social capital.

5.2 The influence of sports organizations on place attachment

As opposed to the perceived influence of sports organizations on social capital, the influence that sports organizations have on place attachment seemed to be noticeably less. Some people did experience a sense of identity, but this sense of identity seemed to be more guided towards the sports organization itself rather than the town. Most interviewees did not think that their participation in their sports organization had changed the way that they looked at their town. In the literature there appears to be a well known divide between the social and the physical level of place attachment (e.g. Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Riger & Lavrakas, 1981; Scannell & Gifford, 2009; Woldoff, 2002; Woosnam et al., 2018), which also seemed to be present among the interviewees in this research. Those interviewees stated that their perceived sense of attachment was mainly guided towards the social aspects of the sports organization. This would

indicate that place attachment is partially present, but this is mainly because of the presence of the social dimension of place attachment. This is also in line with the literature. Their perceived attachment was mainly guided towards the people that live in their town, rather than the town as a whole. The same goes for the experiences and memories that could potentially influence one's place attachment (Scannell & Gifford, 2009), which are that these aspects were also largely based on social factors. It was mainly mentioned that the interviewees viewed their sports club and their town as two separate things.

Concluding from the analysis of the interviews that were conducted, the influence of sports organizations on place attachment seemed to be relatively small. There were some forms of attachment that were expressed during the interviews, but this attachment was mainly towards the social aspects of a town. Of course, the social aspects are also part of place attachment. However, we think that these findings only add to the evidence of the relatively big influence on sports organizations on social capital and not the influence on place attachment, as the attachment towards the town in general did not seem to be influenced that much by participation in sports organizations.

5.3 The influence of sports organizations on moving behaviour

Surprisingly, involvement in sports organizations seemed to be more influential on moving behaviour than the influence it had on place attachment. The answers of the interviewees seemed to be more mixed when it was asked whether the involvement in a sports organization would be a reason for them to be less likely to move. About half of the interviewees agreed with this statement, although it should be mentioned that they unanimously stated that being part of a sports organizations would probably not be a decisive factor for them in deciding whether or not to move away. Although they considered playing sports and social contacts to be important for them, things such as family, education, employment or personal development were regarded as more important in influencing their moving behaviour.

Again, the social contacts seemed to be playing an important role. Many interviewees that participate in a sports organization, especially students, stated that after moving away they or their teammates would often come back to their original town to remain active in their sports organizations. This showed that the involvement in sports organizations could not prevent people from moving out, but it did give them a reason to travel back to their original town often. This way, people would live in another place but remain socially active in their sports organization or town, which would "slow down" their process of leaving the town completely. Policy workers of the Province of Groningen stated that this process was mainly temporary and would eventually decrease over time.

5.4 The role that sports organizations play in retaining young people in rural areas

Using the outcomes of the secondary research questions, we answer the primary research question: **What role do sports organizations play in retaining young people in rural areas?** Based on the findings of this research: **the overall role that sports organizations play in retaining young people in rural areas seems to be quite limited.** The research shows that the influence of sports organizations on social capital seems to be relatively big. However, the influence that sports organizations have on place attachment seems to be negligible, while the influence it has on moving behaviour also seems to be relatively small. In the cases that it does influence moving behaviour, this is usually because of the overall attachment towards the social contacts. These social contacts can be facilitated and strengthened by the involvement in the sports organization, though.

The conceptual model seemed to be partially flawed when it was put into practice. The prevalence of the second stage in the conceptual model (the influence of sports organizations on social capital) seemed to be confirmed by the results of the research, as it was shown that sports organizations had a positive influence on building, maintaining and strengthening social capital. However, the third stage that represented the potential influence on place attachment seemed to be negligible. The fourth stage, representing the potential influence on moving behaviour, also seemed to be relatively small. When this was the case, moving behaviour would be influenced largely by the presence of social capital and to a negligible extent the presence of place attachment. This would suggest that stage 4 “skips” the place attachment level in that stage.

As mainly the second stage in the conceptual model seemed prevalent, one might conclude from this that the role sports organizations play in influencing social capital is relatively big, while the role of sports organizations in influencing place attachment and moving behaviour is relatively small.

What this could contribute to the field of planning theory and practice is the fact that the role of sports organizations on young people in counteracting population decline is limited. This information could potentially be useful for future socio-spatial policy interventions regarding population shrinkage and decline. The findings suggest that young people value social contacts derived from their sports organization as important, but it does not actively influence their moving behaviour.

6. Reflection

This chapter will discuss the outcomes of the research and reflect on the overall process of the research. It will acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of the research, and also elaborate on the possibilities for further research on this subject.

6.1 Strengths and weaknesses

What we considered as useful was the use of the conceptual model, and the clear distinction between the four subjects of involvement in sports organizations, social capital, place attachment and moving behaviour. This facilitated a clear way of organizing different kinds of data, and also provided a clear basis for the structure of the research. Also, when interviewing different persons and evaluating their motives for moving behaviour, this was an easy basis to hold on to when asking follow up questions.

A limitation of the research was that the indicators that were used for measuring social capital and place attachment were quite difficult to translate into interview questions. This had both to do with the English-Dutch language barrier, and the fact that these indicators were difficult to put into the form of a question. We tried to translate these indicators into questions as best as possible, but a complete conformity can not be guaranteed.

Some caution must be taken because of the fact that the research focusses on a duality in research goals, measuring and understanding, as mentioned in the methodology. The **measuring** part of the research also gathers data that can be described as quantitative. The measuring part of the research examined the extent of the influence of sports organizations on the subjects of social capital, place attachment and moving behaviour using the conceptual model. Caution must be taken when trying to form generalized statements based on this data, as this research is a qualitative research. Personal differences between people and groups of people should be acknowledged.

The measuring part of the research was supposed to only function as the input for the **understanding** part of the research, which focusses on how the concepts of social capital, place attachment and moving behaviour relate to each other and the reasons why these concepts do or do not have an effect on moving behaviour. The emphasis of the research was intended to be on the understanding part, but due to the fact that the research also gathers (some) quantitative data this was sometimes a little confusing for both the researcher and the supervisor. In hindsight, it would have been easier to make a clearer choice between qualitative or quantitative data gathering.

6.2 The data gathering process and own process

The research first started out with an idea on the effects of sports organizations on bringing people together. As I was personally interested in shrinkage areas and had previously done a research on local initiatives among young people in shrinkage areas, I decided to combine these concepts. This made the idea for researching the role of sports organizations in retaining young people in rural areas.

During the literature review, it became clear that social capital and place attachment were important in the subsequent steps of sports organizations influencing moving behaviour. This led me to draw the conceptual model as a 4-stage framework. My supervisor also seemed to be excited about this, so I decided that I would use this model as a tool to do research. In the data gathering process this seemed to be very useful, because the clear distinction between the four subjects facilitated a clear way of organizing and interpreting data. Also, when typing out the research this was a useful structure in presenting the data.

Like I mentioned in the previous section, I initially thought that it was useful to create a duality in the research goals between measuring and understanding. However, this turned out to be more confusing than helpful because it became unclear whether the focus of the research was qualitative or quantitative at some times. I think it worked out fine in the end, but in further research I would not use this duality again.

The gathering of participants for the interviews turned out to be more difficult than I expected. The initial plan was to get in touch with participants of sports organizations, through contacting the (board of) sports organizations directly. Due to the newly introduced EU-privacy laws, this seemed to be problematic because these sports organizations were not at liberty to share any personal information in this way. Subsequently, overarching sports organizations were approached but the same problem seemed to be present. At this moment, I was in doubt whether I should continue the research in this way or whether I should gather data in a different way. During this stage I lost some of my motivation, and due to my busy schedule at that time I did not spend a lot of focus on my thesis. This resulted in some first time delay. Eventually, the participants were found through social media and mutual acquaintances and the interviews with the policy workers of the province of Groningen were found through an internship.

Because of these unexpected difficulties and the simultaneous partaking in an internship that also produced some time constraints, the data gathering process took more time than was initially expected. In hindsight, a better estimate of the gathering of respondents and the expected time distribution between the time used for the internship and the thesis would have been more useful.

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 also caused some difficulties because personal encounters were forbidden by university policy which made gathering additional data impossible. This also resulted in some additional time delay. Because of this, the last 2 interviews were conducted digitally instead of personally which also was effective, but to a lesser extent than the personal interviews because some questions and follow up questions would not always be answered as detailed as was intended. It was at this moment (February 2020), when I felt that the interviews were not delivering new useful

data anymore. Together with the introduction of the COVID-19 restrictions, I decided that this was the right time to stop the data gathering process.

Summing up, a lot of things went different than expected and especially took a lot more time than initially expected. In the data gathering process of the research I had already expected that it was likely that the thesis would not be finished on time. At that moment I figured that I preferred quality over finishing the thesis in time, so I took some extra time for gathering data. In the end, I am quite satisfied with the data I managed to gather so I think I made the right choice.

Despite the fact that some things did not go as I hoped for, especially time-wise, I am convinced that this research has taught me a lot about doing research and about the subjects of the research. Also, my supervisor was very helpful in giving me suggestions and to-the-point feedback, which I am thankful for.

6.3 Ethical considerations

A question that was often asked about the purpose of this research was if it was really necessary to be looking for ways to counterattack the out-migration of young people from rural areas. Reasons for this were that discouraging people to move away, might have consequences that restrict their freedom in moving wherever they want for whatever reason. A thing that was often mentioned was that if people deliberately wanted to move away, they would do so either way and that there was probably no point in persuading them to stay. While these comments are justified, it must be noted that the purpose of this research was mainly guided towards gathering information about the young people that were willing to stay or to those that were in doubt about whether to stay or not. The goal was to look for ways to improve the liveability for certain towns, by looking into the role that sports organizations play in this. As mentioned in the methodology, this was done by looking for possibilities in order to stimulate overall satisfaction for the inhabitants of the town that chose to remain living there, with the purpose of contributing to slowing down further population shrinkage in these towns.

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Appendix

Interview guide

Sport/Inleidende vragen

1. Wat is uw functie/rol binnen deze sportclub?
2. Hoe bent u betrokken geraakt bij deze sportclub?
3. Hoe lang bent u al betrokken bij deze sportclub?
4. Wat is voor u de belangrijkste reden om betrokken te zijn bij deze sportclub? Waarom?

Social capital (Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2017)

5. Zijn de sociale contacten bij een sportclub een reden voor u om deel te nemen? Waarom wel/niet?
6. Heeft u het gevoel dat u meer betrokken bent geworden met uw clubgenoten sinds uw deelname? Waardoor komt dit?
7. Hebben de sociale contacten bij uw sportclub een positieve toevoeging aan uw leven? Waarom wel/niet?
8. Heeft u het gevoel dat u deel uitmaakt van een “gemeenschap” door uw betrokkenheid bij de sportclub? Waardoor komt dit?

Place attachment (Scannell & Gifford, 2009)

9. Geeft uw betrokkenheid bij de sportclub u een gevoel van identiteit? (Bijvoorbeeld: zoals bij Ajax: “Ajacied” of “Amsterdammer”)
10. Verandert uw betrokkenheid bij de sportclub de manier waarop u naar uw dorp kijkt? Zo ja, wat voor effect heeft dit?
11. Hebben uw ervaringen en herinneringen aan deze sportclub een effect op hoe u naar uw dorp kijkt? Zo ja, wat voor effect heeft dit?

Moving behaviour

12. Zou uw betrokkenheid bij de sportclub een reden zijn om minder snel te verhuizen uit uw dorp?
13. Hoe belangrijk is deze reden? (In relatie tot andere dingen)

Codebook

PRIMARY CODES	SECONDARY CODES	TERTIARY CODES	EXPLANATION
1. Involvement in sports organizations	1.1 Function/role within the sports organization		This section mentions the function/role that the interviewee has in the sports organization.
	1.2 The way someone got involved with the sports organization		This section mentions the way that the interviewee has got involved with the sports organization.
	1.3 For how long someone has been involved with the sports organization		This section mentions for how long the interviewee has been involved with the sports organization.
	1.4 The most important reason for participation in the sports organization	1.4.1 Social aspects mentioned	This section mentions that social aspects are an important reason for participation.
		1.4.2 Social aspects not mentioned	This section mentions that social aspects are not mentioned as important reasons for participation.
2. Social capital	2.1 Whether social contacts are a reason to participate	2.1.Y Yes	This section mentions that social contacts are a reason for participation.
		2.1.N No	This section mentions that social contacts are not a reason for participation.
	2.2 Whether people feel more connected with the lives of the social contacts at their sports organization	2.2.Y Yes	This section mentions that the interviewee feels more connected with the lives of the social contacts at their sports organization.
		2.2.N No	This section mentions that the interviewee does not feel more connected with the lives of the social contacts at their sports organization.
	2.3 Whether the social contacts have a positive influence on their lives	2.3.Y Yes	This section mentions that the social contacts from the

			sports organization have a positive influence on the interviewee's life.
		2.3.N No	This section mentions that the social contacts from the sports organization does not have a positive influence on the interviewee's life. (This is not an indication for a negative influence).
	2.4 Whether people feel a sense of community	2.4.Y Yes	This section mentions that the interviewee feels a sense of community that is derived from participation in their sports organization.
		2.4.N No	This section mentions that the interviewee does not feel a sense of community that is derived from participation in their sports organization.
3. Place attachment	3.1 Whether participation gives people a sense of identity	3.1.Y Yes	This section mentions that the interviewee perceives a sense of identity regarding their town from participation in their sports organization.
		3.1.N No	This section mentions that the interviewee does not perceive a sense of identity regarding their town from participation in their sports organization.
	3.2 Whether participation has an effect on the way people look at their town	3.2.Y Yes	This section mentions that participation has an effect on the way the interviewee looks at their town.
		3.2.N No	This section mentions that participation does not have an effect on

			the way the interviewee looks at their town.
	3.3 Whether past experiences have a positive effect on how people look at their town	3.3.Y Yes	This section mentions that past experiences have a positive effect on how the interviewee looks at their town.
		3.3.N No	This section mentions that past experiences do not have a positive effect on how the interviewee looks at their town. (This is not an indication for a negative effect).
4. Moving behaviour	4.1 Whether participation is a reason for people to be less likely to move away	4.1.Y Yes	This section mentions that the interviewee's participation is a reason to be less likely to move away.
		4.1.N No	This section mentions that the interviewee's participation is not a reason to be less likely to move away.
	4.2 The importance of participation in sports organizations compared to other factors		This section mentions the interviewee's personal view on the importance of participation in sports organizations compared to other factors that might influence moving behaviour.