

# Young adults' decisions to stay in the rural

Motives for young adults to stay in the rural while working or studying outside the rural

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## Summary

Recently, an increasing number of rural areas in the Netherlands experience population decline. That is the result of ageing and dejuvenating populations. In terms of youth migration, most research has focused on young people leaving the rural. It is often said that the rural does not offer them enough to make it interesting for them to stay in the rural. The countryside is perceived as boring and too quiet. Also, conducting a higher educational program or finding a job is hard to realize in the rural.

But what about young adults who stay in their rural home region, despite having a job or following a study in an urban area? What are their motives? This thesis tries to find an answer to the following question: *What motives do young adults have to decide to stay in their rural home region even though they are employed or study outside the rural?* It is important to find an answer to this question as it might help improving circumstances and daily life for those who intend to stay.

Theory and field research show that young adults who stay in the rural are highly attached to the area due to social relations, mainly because of their attachment to and rootedness in the community and because of their dependency on, for example, part time jobs or sports associations. However, such social relations can only be maintained when the location of the village in the rural allows young adults to travel towards, for example, work within a distance that is perceived as acceptable. It seems that the access to mobility is a connector in this complex decision-making process of staying, supported by social media as an additional tool. The different motives need to be in balance in order to make it realistic for young adults to stay in the rural. This thesis explains how different motives and aspects of rural life influence young adults' decisions to stay in their home village.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Motivation and aim.

During life, an individual faces several points where decisions regarding the place of residence have to be made. These decisions are usually related to life course events such as changes in education, employment and/or household events. Especially young adults are in a phase of life in which they experience a significant number of life course events, and because of that they have to reconsider their place of residence relatively often. This applies to young adults in several different geographical contexts. However, in rural areas decisions to leave are more often instigated by the lack of education and employment within an acceptable distance (Thissen et al. 2010; Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006; Stockdale, 2006). The decision to either stay or leave the rural home region for education or employment is related to different types of motives of the individual, which are all taken into account in the decision making process. The opportunities in terms of mobility and social aspects play a role in this too. Crang (1998) explains that each place has different meaning(s) to people, which could make it hard for someone to leave the rural home region. It is clear that, decision-making regarding staying or leaving is not an easy and straightforward process.

Thus far, research into residential decision-making of young people in rural areas choices has strongly focussed on young adults that leave the countryside (Findlay et al. 2000; Thissen et al. 2010). It seems to be a generally accepted thought that young adults leave the rural area once pursuing higher education or when starting a working career. This master thesis research focuses on young adults who, at this point, decided to stay in the rural home region although they have a job or an education outside the rural. It intends to find out the motives of their decision to stay, while it is generally assumed that it is exactly this group that is most likely to leave the rural (Thissen et al. 2010). Clearly, for these stayers education and employment are no reasons to leave. What makes them decide to stay?

Based on previous research, it is expected that motives related to social bonds, place attachment and mobility aspects are important in the decisions to stay (Rye, 2006; Vanclay, 2008; Hadjar & Samuel, 2014). For example, Rye (2006) explains that young inhabitants of rural areas generally have a higher sense of community, which creates a higher sense of

place attachment. Friends play an important role in this. Place attachment also shows to be influenced by the rootedness of the young adult in the rural (Haug, 2008), which also explains the fact that social aspects such as social clubs and friends are reasons for return-migrants to move back to the rural (Haartsen & Thissen, 2011). These reasons could also be applicable to stayers.

Young adults have gotten greater communication possibilities and are, partly because of this, more mobile. Jamieson (2000), Bjarnason & Thorlindsson (2006) and Thissen et al. (2010) all explain that increased mobility, including digital mobility, creates a certain independency that does not restrain young adults to one place only. As Thissen et al. (2010) put it, one is now able to obtain more information due to technological developments in communication that could make the person feel less bonded to the area. These technological developments in communication mainly refer to social media. Thissen et al. (2010) state that it may be easier for someone to start a life elsewhere because of the developments. However, could it also be the other way around? This question is specifically stated because, so far, social media hasn't been linked with migration motives for young adults a lot yet. It may be possible that the use of social media use plays a role in young adults' their decisions to stay in the rural, next to other motives concerning socio-economics, socio-cultural, and mobility aspects.

## **1.2 Main question and sub questions.**

As mentioned before, most research conducted in this field focuses on young adults leaving the environment. Although it may not be as extreme as people may believe, it cannot be neglected that the Dutch rural environment faces population decline. Still, research shows that the group who decides to stay is a large group (Feiten et al. 2008). Feiten et al. 2008 show that people generally reside in the area they were born and bread. Therefore, this research focuses on the group of young adults that decided to stay in the rural although they have a job or an education outside the rural, and whether social media use plays a role in this or not. Often, research done in this particular field focuses on adolescents explaining what they think they will do in the future when making a decision on staying or leaving the rural (Haartsen, 2013). This research focuses on young adults who

already decided to stay in the rural region although they have a job or education outside the area.

As the motivation and aim of this research are clear, the following main research question has been formulated:

*What motives do young adults have to decide to stay in their rural home region even though they are employed or study outside the rural?*

The respondents' age will range from 18 to 30. This age range has been determined based on the fact that most people start their higher education or professional life at the age of 18, and people are considered to be adults from the age of 18. Furthermore, life course events that involve reconsiderations regarding decisions to stay or leave the rural occur relatively often between the ages of 18 and 30 (e.g. choice of education/job, leaving the parental home, starting a family). The following sub questions are formulated to support the main research question:

- What socio-economic motives do young adults have to stay in the rural home region?
- What social motives do young adults have to stay in the rural home region?
- What role does mobility play in the young adults' decision to stay in the rural home region?
- Do young adults who decide to stay in the rural home region feel that social media have played a role their decision to stay?

### **1.3 Scientific relevance**

As mentioned before, people tend to focus on the group of young adults who decide to leave the rural environment. Researchers have written a lot about this topic from that perspective. For example, research conducted by Elshof et al. (2014), Vader et al. (2008), Steenbekkers et al. (2006), Geurs (2014), Notten (2013), Driessen et al. (1995) all focus on young adults moving from a village to a city. Not a lot of researchers pay attention to the group of young adults that actually stays in the rural environment, in this case young adults.

The main aim of this thesis is to find out why young adults decide to stay in their rural home region even though they follow an education or a job outside the rural, and whether social media play a role in this decision. It is interesting to see if a digital communication tool such as social media can have influence on such a decision. Other researchers do not seem to have made this link yet, which is why it seems suitable to conduct research on this matter. The fact remains that, over time, developments in both migration and social media are at hand. Still, a link between these two has yet to be made. It is not said that the use of social media and young adults decision to stay in the rural home region are definitely related, but this research tries to find out if that is the case.

Results of this research can contribute to migration studies in regards to motives for young adults to stay or leave the rural, or studies on the behaviour of young adults in the rural. Also, they can help policy makers to understand why young adults may stay in, or leave a village. The results are based on expanded literature research and a qualitative research method in the form of interviews.

#### **1.4 Societal relevance**

Steenbekkers & Vermeij (2013) explain that, in most areas, small villages deal with population decline much more compared to urbanized areas do. Gardenier et al. (2011) agree on this. It shows that population decline is a factor the rural has to deal with. It is important to identify the motives young adults have when staying in their rural home region, as it could help to improve the rural living environment in order to allow potential future stayers to actually stay. Determining potential aspects that impede stayers to stay could also give an insight on this matter.

Steenbekkers & Vermeij (2013) do acknowledge that young adults may decide to stay in the rural, but they do not refer to them in a highly positive way. For example, they explain that young adults that stay in the village probably do not have a high ambition or do not have the opportunities/capabilities to move. This thesis questions this, as there is an expectation that those two reasons are not always the motivations for young adults to stay in a village.

## 1.5 Defining the Dutch rural environment

In determining what defines rural areas, it is advised to be aware that it is not only geographical aspects that define the rural environment. Rye (2006) explains this as following:

*“The rural is not described and defined solely by the concrete, tangible, objective features of rural areas (e.g., landscape, settlement and occupational structures. Greater focus rests on the more abstract characteristics of social life that evolve in these areas, for example, traditionalism, dense social structures, a feeling of community, and so forth.”* (p. 410)

This statement suggests that there may be more reasons for young adults to decide to stay in the rural than just the ‘concrete, tangible, objective features’. It shows that a distinction is made between concrete and abstract characteristics of the rural, expressing that abstract characteristics of social life are important assets of the rural. For example, young adults might feel extremely bonded to the area or have a very close group of friends around them in that particular area which makes them at place, making them wanting to stay in the rural.

Steenbekkers & Vermeij (2013) explain that the rural environment covered 66.6% of the Dutch land surface in 2008, and 32.1% of the Dutch inhabitants in 2010 (p.21). This indicates that, although two third of Dutch land surface is part of the rural, only one third of the inhabitants actually live in such an area. Consequently, it explains that the other two third of the Dutch inhabitants reside in an urban area. Still, the Netherlands is densely populated which means that a city and a village are never too far a part from each other, also considering economical and social relations (Pommer & Wildeboer Schut, 2006). The economical and social relations between the rural and urban environment are related to the change of a village from autonomous to residential (Steenbekkers & Vermeij, 2013). Basically, it means that more often, people reside in a village but can have employment or education elsewhere in an urban environment. In the Dutch context, this is relatively easy since villages are often located within commuting distance from towns and cities.

Also, the rural environment has faced several changes. Steenbekkers & Vermeij (2013) clarify that Dutch villages made a change after the 1950's, stating they converted from "autonomous villages to residential villages where people live life in the wide area of the village" (p.21). Considering this explanation, one refers to, for example, having a job outside of the residential village (Thissen & Loopmans, 2013). As it got accepted through time, today's young adults do not face the same barriers anymore that once existed considering this matter. For example, the autonomous village refers to a village where all people know each other, and where they do not need 'outsiders' (Steenbekkers & Vermeij, 2013). Residents of such a village have a very strong feeling of community (Vermeij & Mollenhorst, 2008) and feel deeply rooted in the area (Groot, 1989). However, as a change occurred from an autonomous village to a residential village, the previous mentioned characteristics changed too. People in a residential village do not just live their life in the boundaries of the village, which indicates that they have other obligations in regards to labour, study etc. outside the village. Because of that, education level rose amongst the residents of a village (Simon et al. 2007). With a higher education level amongst the inhabitants of a village also come different insights and opinions. This may be the reason why people were happy with the change in social control during this period, as it declined (Simon et al. 2007).

Brereton et al. (2011) give more information on the changes of a rural environment. They claim that agriculture is no longer the 'backbone' of rural economies although it still is an important factor in shaping the rural landscape (p. 204). Woods (2006) agrees, explaining that such a change asks for different use of rural space. The different use of the rural environment is something today's young adults grew up with, which makes it acceptable for them to decide to stay in the village although they study or work at a different location. However, from a different perspective, it also gives young adults the freedom to move, as there is not the pressure of an autonomous village to absolutely stay in the village.

The characteristics of the countryside show that there are many factors that could have an impact on the decision a young adult makes considering staying or leaving the rural home region. These factors may relate to motives. As explained, some motives to move away or stay in the rural are related socio-economic motives such as employment or

education. Other motives concern social relations, mobility and the use of digital communication tools. The next chapter gives more attention to the motives young adults may have to stay in the rural home region.

## **Chapter 2: Motives for young adults to stay in, or leave the rural**

Before conducting field research, it is important to find out what motives one may have to stay in the rural by examining literature. For this literature review, both research into out-migration as research into staying and return-migration is used. International literature shows that return and out-migration are both well-known phenomena considering the rural (Von Reichert et al. 2014; White, 1992; DaVanzo, 1983; Findlay et al. 2000; Thissen et al. 2010; Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006). The motives of a young adult for deciding to stay in the rural home region usually concern socio-economic aspects, social aspects, and mobility aspects. These three usually form the core of the motives for one to either stay or leave, as they 'weigh' the heaviest in the decision making process.

This literature has been divided into three main categories that seem to be most applicable when finding the motives for young adults to stay in the rural home region: socio-economic and social motives, and mobility aspects.

### **2.1 Socio-economic motives**

Socio-economic motives relate to the economical aspects of living in the rural. Aspects of it (employment, for example) are generally accepted to be one of the most important factors in the decision making progress in regards to staying in the rural or moving away from it (Johnson & Salt, 1990). Practical issues such as living space and available facilities are part of the socio-economic situation as well. Given that education and employment are considered key motives for leaving the rural home region, it is highly interesting to explore socio-economic motives of young adult stayers who have a job or education outside this area.

### **2.1.1 Characteristics of the rural**

Thissen et al. (2010) explain that the characteristics of the rural home region highly determine whether young adults decide to stay in or leave the village. Basically, characteristics define the attractiveness of the rural home region in a socio-economic framework. In this case, such characteristics do not primarily refer to how beautiful or ugly the rural region looks. It refers to, for example, available labour, available facilities, public transport services (to reach universities or jobs), infrastructure, inhabitants of the region, and so on. Available facilities are closely related to the social motives of young adults to stay or leave the rural home region, and the presence of public transport services is linked with the motives concerning mobility. This already shows that all motives are interrelated, making it a complex decision.

It is important for young adults that previous mentioned characteristics are available in their rural home region as it could, for example, influence the career one wants to follow. For example, if a young adult cannot find a job in the rural home region but gets one in the nearest city, it is important that the infrastructure to get to the city is sufficient to get there by car, or by public transport which in that case also has to be available. If that is not the case, chances are high that the individual will choose to move to the place of work. It shows that socio-economic motives relate to motives concerning mobility. If that is not an issue, it could be the available facilities in the rural home region. If there are not enough facilities to, for example, meet basic needs, young adults may be tempted to decide to move away from the rural home region. Also, the same counts for available living space. All in all, numerous aspects concerning socio-economic motives are taken into account when a young adult decides on staying in the rural home region.

### **2.2.2 Employment & education**

As said, employment is of great importance regarding the decision of young adults to stay in the rural home region. Examples of developments creating employment for young adults are the expansions of commuting fields close to cities, or the restructuring of certain industries in favour of locations near a rural area (Findlay et al. 2000). As expected, employment has always counted as a significant motivation for people to move away from

the rural, as well as education (Johnson & Salt, 1990; Thissen et al. 2010; Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006; Stockdale, 2006). Often, employment has the highest priority for young adults, as they want to start a career after graduating. Therefore, the region has to offer some perspective in this matter for it to be attractive to young adults. Usually, rural areas do not offer too much opportunities considering employment (Van der Aa & Huigen, 2000). This especially counts for young adults with higher education, as Thissen et al. (2010) explain that this group of Dutch young adults usually leave the rural faster compared to young adults with lower education.

The position of the village in the rural area is also of importance; is a city nearby? That makes a difference too. If there is a city in range of commuting distance, it could count as a reason for young adults to stay in the rural home region as they might consider the distance to work or education to be not too far to travel. Thissen et al. (2010) and Stockdale (2004) also explain this, saying that some young adults choose to travel from the rural home region towards work/education as long as it is within commuting distance. Still, it is advised to keep in mind that life course events such following a study program or searching for employment remain common reasons for young adults to leave the rural home region (Van der Aa & Huigen, 2000). It shows that employment and education are compelling factors for young adults when deciding on staying or leaving the rural home region.

### **2.2.3 Available housing**

As mentioned, available housing could be an issue for young adults living in the rural. Less living space in rural areas has been created ever since the country (the Netherlands) had to deal with an economic crisis (Geurs, 2014). It is a very practical and clear reason why young adults could decide to leave their rural home region. If there is no living space available within their budget, there's a small chance of them staying. Maybe, in the case of young adults, they will argue that getting a small place in a city will be much more affordable making it more attractive for them to move towards an urban area. However, it could also be the other way around, depending on what life phase the individual finds him or herself. For example, if someone is at the point of life where he or she starts a family and never moved away from the rural home region, it is not likely for him or her to move away from it at that point as family houses are usually more available in the rural. It shows that it

depends on in what life phase one is situated. Still, fact remains that urban areas offer more living space, making it more likely for people to move towards an urban area than a rural area. Often, one has to wait longer to obtain living space in the rural when compared to the urban area. Related to this is the notion that living space is said to be more affordable in urban areas than in rural areas (Maathuis & Peters, 2004). This probably has to do with the fact that young adults have a wider range of choices considering the type of residence one is looking for, when compared to the choices in the rural home region. This development regarding available housing is desirable as Stockdale (2006) explains that young adults leaving the rural home region are viewed as a threat to the economic development of the rural (Stockdale, 2006). It makes sense, as it works the other way around when young adults decide to stay in the rural home region: that usually causes economical growth.

#### **2.2.4 Possible consequences of young adults staying in the rural**

Once young adults have decided to stay in their rural home region, it is possible that a higher demand of goods and services in that area occurs, which boosts the economy and possibly has job growth as a consequence (Findlay et al. 2000). One could see it as an interrelated circle, as young adults who decide to stay in their rural home region could potentially influence other young adults' decisions too. Therefore, it matters what kind of inhabitants already live in the village. For example, if the population of the village mostly exists of an age group above fifty years old, it is not very attractive for young adults to live in that village and it is also not very likely that the area offers them various job opportunities. It is much more interesting for young adults to stay the rural home region if others of their age group do so as well, next to the other mentioned aspects. Young adults staying in a village could "potentially play a critical role in rural areas in slowing population loss, rejuvenating the population base, generating jobs, and increasing human, social, and financial capital" (Von Reichert et al. 2014, p.201). However, it is important to bear in mind that young adults staying in their rural home region should have particular skills in order to achieve the developments Von Reichert et al. (2014) explain. This generally means that either education or practical experience during employment has given them these skills that are needed to accomplish such a process.

It shows that socio-economic motives mainly concern four aspects: education, employment, available living space, and available facilities of which the first two have high priority. The position of the village is important too as the person might be able to find employment or education in an urban area within commuting distance, which is the case for the target group of this research. If a young adult has a job in a nearby urban area and, therefore, decides to stay in the rural home region, social motives might explain why that choice has been made. Research has been conducted on this matter in order to find out what social motives young adults may have to stay in their rural home region.

## **2.2 Social motives**

When comparing the social qualities of the rural to the one of an urban area, both will be assigned different positive aspects. It is interesting to find out what these qualities are considering the rural. In the end, the rural home region usually does not offer that many opportunities in terms of education or employment. It is interesting to see whether the social qualities of the rural home region in some way could make up for the missing socio-economic aspects, creating the social motives of young adults to stay in the rural home region.

### **2.2.1 Community**

An important feature of the rural is the strong sense of community (Rye, 2006). Often, it is said that the urban environment creates anonymity. That means that most people do not know each other, which is sometimes seen as a positive aspect because an individual can do what he or she wants to do. It means that there is less social control. Bjarnason & Thorlindsson (2006) explain that too much social control could encourage young adults to leave their rural home region and search for an own identity. However, it could also create feelings such as loneliness and having the feeling that one does not belong to something. As Rye (2006) explains, that is not the case in the rural as people are often part of a strong community where they tend to give each other more attention and help when necessary. In a rural community, people rely more on each other, which creates a stronger connection. This could also count as a motive for young adults to stay, as the individual could lose social capital build up at that particular place when leaving the rural

home region (Haug, 2008). However, research conducted by Haartsen & Thissen (2014) explains that return-migrants who are young adults also mentioned social aspects, such as a partner, belonging to social clubs and the rural environment in general as reasons to return. It shows that an individual does not necessarily have to lose all social capital that is build up when moving away. The connection one has with a certain community is also related to the culture the person is from and the family one is from, in which the relationship with parents is important too. A bad relationship with parents usually results in migration of young adults (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006). However, it could also work the other way around: young adults might feel restrained by their parents' wish to rather not have their child leave the area (Haug, 2008). Such cases are called tied stayers. Also, a partner can play a decisive role in the decision to either stay or leave the rural home region (Haartsen, 2013). This is an aspect that is often underestimated.

The strong sense of community is partly related to the aspects of quality of life presented by Veenhoven (2000) as it is part of the social quality of the environment, which in its turn is part of what makes quality of life. Quality of life is related to the liveability of an environment. Aspects of quality of life concerning the liveability of an environment concern ecological qualities, economic qualities, and cultural qualities, next to social qualities (Veenhoven, 2000). A strong sense of community usually raises the feeling of belonging somewhere, which bonds someone to the place. It could be a motive for young adults to stay in the rural home region when a group of friends lives in that same area, creating a certain community the person feels connected to. This feeling of belonging to a community is usually the strongest when someone is living at the place where he is born and raised, expressing the importance of rootedness, which is also emphasized on by Haartsen & Thissen (2014) in their research. Feiten et al. (2008) explain that most people in general live in the area in which they were born and raised. They explain that over 60% of the group of the ages 18 to 40 years old resides in the rural after leaving the parental home. It shows that people feel bonded to the area, which is part of the 'sense of place' people have considering that particular area.

### 2.2.2 Sense of place

Sense of place is an important aspect of social motives young adults may have to decide to stay in the rural home region. Sense of place consists of three different aspects and they all have similarities. Place dependency, place attachment and place identity combined create sense of place (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). As they put it, sense of place is “a multidimensional construct representing emotions, beliefs, and behavioural commitments concerning a particular geographic setting.” Firstly, place dependency refers to the extent the rural home region, in contrast to other areas, satisfies young adults’ needs to fulfil their personal goals (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Considering place dependency, one can think of having a job or education in the rural home region, or being able to easily travel towards the place of labour or education outside this area, which also shows the importance of mobility. Also, it shows that socio-economic motives and mobility aspects are part of place dependency too. However, a social aspect such as being part of a sports community is part of place dependency as well. This information shows that all types of motives young adults may have to stay in their rural home region could be related to place dependency.

Next to place dependency, place attachment is an important part of the motives young adults may have to stay in their rural home region. Place attachment is described as the degree to which the individual has positive feelings towards the local area and/or community (Vanclay et al. 2008). Trell et al. (2012) explain that social aspects of places are most important in shaping the connection with a place, creating attachment. For example, places that give the opportunity to meet each other are important in such areas. Place attachment and a strong sense of community (Rye, 2006) are also related to how long someone has been living in the rural (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006). If a young adult has been living in the rural home region since he or she has been born, it is harder for him or her to leave the area because he or she will need to leave the build up social capital behind (Haug, 2008) as explained in part 2.2.1. Thissen et al. (2010) explain that place attachment also has to do with previous generations living in the same area. If that is not the case, it is easier for a young adult to leave the rural home region. That also counts when friends and family move away from the rural home region.

The last part of sense of place, place identity, refers to the extent to which someone feels that the local place is part of the individual's identity (Vanclay et al. 2008). If a person feels like he or she can identify himself with an area, the person usually feels highly attached to that particular place. They might even feel like they belong to that place (Vanclay et al. 2008). This does not necessarily only count for people who've lived their whole life at the particular place they identify themselves with, as it is about the meaning someone assigned to a place (Oakes & Price, 2008). The meaning someone assigns to a place is often related to the experience someone has with that place. It shows that it is a social construction. That, however, could also negatively influence the image young adults have of the rural. According to Thissen et al. (2010), young adults often identify the rural as boring and simple. This identification is taken from the social construction society has made in regards to the rural. However, it is expected that young adults living in the rural have a different perspective on this explanation as they probably have a better perspective on how to identify themselves with the rural due to their own experiences.

### 2.2.3 Rural idyll

Next to the strong sense of community and sense of place with all its components, aesthetics of the rural home region may also influence the decision of young adults to stay. In general, people move to, or stay in the rural as it is said to offer a higher quality of life (Findlay et al. 2000). Rye (2006) agrees with Findlay et al. (2000) explaining, "rural life is often conceived as being more 'natural' than life in the cities, and this quality of the rural is usually positively valued and perceived as a major advantage." (p. 410) Nature, or the natural, is considered to be the leading feature of the rural environment (Rye, 2006). This is because people perceive rural life as more natural compared with city life, which creates a positive perception of the aesthetics of the rural. Also, it is said that a natural environment partly offers better life chances, which gives a better chance of a higher quality of life (Veenhoven, 2000). For example, the rural usually has cleaner air than the city. This ecological quality of the rural gives one the life chance to be healthier and, as a consequence, have a higher quality of life. All in all, it refers to the liveability of an environment. It is important to realize that these aspects create better life chances but they do not give absolute certainty on a higher quality of life: it is about the life chances offered by (in this case) the environment. In general, the rural has an advantage from this

perspective compared to the urban area as everyone searches for a high quality of life. Still, it is important to realize that people between the ages 18 to 30 generally do not value the 'natural' of a village as much as people of older age may do, as it also related to being more quiet and maybe even boring as explained in part 2.2.2.

#### **2.2.4 Quality of residence**

Related to the point made by Rye (2006) and the quality of an area explained by Veenhoven (2000), Buckers (1999) refers to the fact that people value the quality of the residence and the residential area next to those factors that are related to education or employment when deciding on where to live. It is not only about education or employment anymore, but the quality of the residence became an important factor too. Steenbekkers et al. (2006) agree, stating that people used to live where they work but that this situation has changed. Implementing this information, one could assume that today's young adults also value the quality of the residence and of the residential area in such a way that they do not mind staying in the rural instead of moving towards an urban area. This is probably closely related to the other social aspects of the rural. It shows that the decision to stay in the rural is partly based on the relation between social and socio-economic aspects. It seems that, if a young adult is employed or studies in a different area than the rural in which this person resides, the social qualities make up for not having job opportunities or education possibilities nearby. Still, it must be realistic for one to stay in the rural home region considering the distance between home and potential job opportunities and education possibilities. Therefore, the quality of the residence and the residential area may only count as a reason to stay to a certain extent.

#### **2.2.5 Why leave?**

Next to social motives for young adults to stay in the rural, social motives to leave the rural must be mentioned as well. These motives often relate to the growth of cities. Geurs (2014) explains that cities are rising due to several reasons. The first reason he mentions is that investments to renew cities make a city more appealing to live in. Furthermore, Geurs (2014) explains that many of today's young adults do not start a family at a young age compared to other generations, which could also be part of the consequence of the

migration trend considering young adults. It shows that important life course events such as starting a family leads to young adults making a decision to either leave or stay in the village. The decisions considering the place to live also have driving factors related to age. Plane & Jurjevich (2009) clarify people want to live at different places during their life depending on their age, which, again, refers to life course events someone encounters. Such life course events are important to bear in mind, especially concerning young adults, as they are in phase of life in which lots of changes can take place such as the start of a family, leaving the parental home, completing education or finding employment. Also, Van der Aa & Huigen (2000) mention that there is a growing need amongst adults to live in one's own residence independently. Often, this means that young adults seek for this independency in another area such as an urban area. Because of that, young adults could leave the countryside. Young adults moving from the rural towards an urban area is often regarded as a loss or failure of the area (Thissen et al. 2010). Bjarnason & Thorlindsson (2006) explain that, from the same perspective, young adults are expected to stay in the community and develop in that environment as it could help to maintain a stable situation in the rural.

## **2.3 Access to Mobility**

As socio-economic and social motives for young adults to either stay or leave their rural home region have been discussed, mobility needs attention too. It is expected that aspects of mobility have great influence on the decision of young adults to stay in the rural. If someone owns a car and is physically mobile to drive it, it could have great influence on the decision to stay. Public transport is important as well. However, not only practical reasons matter. It also implies the mobility within social classes. The different aspects of mobility will show that it is an important factor in the decision to stay in the rural.

### **2.3.1 Social mobility**

Mobility often makes young adults feel less restricted to the rural and, therefore, feel freer to visit other places. Thissen et al. (2010) explain, "socially mobile young people tend to focus on educational and employment opportunities outside their home region" (p. 429). In other words, this statement suggests that young adults do not feel restricted to the home region when being socially mobile. It does not necessarily have to mean that an individual

feels the need to move away from the home region because a young adult is socially mobile. It could just mean that a young adult has more options in such a case. Being socially mobile is closely related to the socio-economic opportunities the young adult has. Part of it refers to the social class a person belongs to, but also the chances one has to switch social classes. Young adults living in the rural often study outside the area in order to be able to climb up the 'social ladder', as Hadjar & Samuel put it (2014). Next to that, Jamieson (2000) explains that the social mobility an individual has in some way implies the geographical mobility of that same person. Such a development has positive and negative influences in regards to young adults' decision to either stay or leave their rural home region. First, it could make it easier for young adults to leave their rural home region. However, for example, if education is offered within a distance that is perceived not too far to travel, it could eventually bring slight economic advantages to the rural home region. Steenbekkers & Vermeij (2013) mention that developments in mobility change the rural, stating that it gives a boost to prosperity and an increase in the level of education but, again, some young adults who have high education will not be able to find employment on their level and could leave the rural home region. Therefore, social mobility seems to have impact in different ways.

### **2.3.2 Digital mobility**

Young adults have access to different types of social media wherever they are. This relates to a statement made by Freudendal-Pedersen (2009), as it is explained that mobility does not only refer to distance covered. Brereton et al. (2011) also touch upon the subject of mobility focusing on the fact that ICT developments create better chances for communication (p. 204). For example, young adults can use WhatsApp Messenger to get in touch with each other quickly. The same goes for Facebook and Twitter. Moseley & Owen (2008) go deeper into this explaining the better chances for communication also create greater personal mobility, which helps to overcome distance easier. For example, because of such developments home working has gotten greater potential. Consequently, it also has its impacts on young adults, as they may not feel 'left out' of other events happening elsewhere as they can experience them through new tools of communication. In turn, this could make it easier for young adults to stay in the rural, although they also develop attachment to the area they work or study at. Such a development is also called place elasticity (Barcus & Brunn, 2010). They explain, "place elasticity is possible today because of the extensive

transportation and communication networks that facilitate greater interaction among people in distant places” (p.281). Furthermore, Barcus & Brunn (2010) explain that “place elasticity is the stretching of place boundaries through social-familial networks and perpetuated by advances in transportation and communication technologies” (p.284). Social media might be one of the reasons why place elasticity is possible. More about this will be explained in part 2.4.

### 2.3.3 Physical mobility

Mobility generally focuses on the potential of being mobile in different ways. That also includes the practical side of being physically able to move and also being able to use vehicles that allow you to move. It is known that different age groups are not all equally mobile (Geurs, 2014). For example, young adults tend to travel mostly by public transport and car, while people between 30 and 50 usually travel by car. After that age group, the use of a car lowers again (PBL, 2013). It shows that young adults use their options the most in comparison with other age groups, in terms of physical activity and the use of options in mobility. Also, considering the age group, it is likely that this group is usually physically in good condition in comparison to the other age groups. Garasky (2002) explains that, as a consequence of this development offering more choices in mobility (car and public transport use), it is no longer self-evident for young adults to always stay in the rural; the decision to go to other places is made easier by being able to go by car or using public transport. It is expected that such possibilities and facilities make it easier for young adults to decide to stay in the rural, instead of leaving. For example, Garasky (2002) means that the persons’ activities all take place within the boundaries of the village when stating the person does not leave the rural. That is not necessary when being mobile, and it also definitely not the case considering the target group for this research.

Still, the position of the village in the rural has to be considered when stating that young adults can travel to their work or education with either a car or public transport. Some villages are too isolated meaning that there are not that much facilities considering this matter. Thissen et al. (2010) explain that each rural region is different from the other which affects these opportunities. As they put it, “some rural areas offer fewer opportunities and are more distant from urban centres than others (...) and rural regions have a different

settlement history, which has consequences for whether the inhabitants feel that they belong and how they identify with the region” (p. 429). It is important to bear this information in mind, especially the last part, as it might be a reason for young adults to stay in their rural home region. If one does not have any possibilities considering mobility and the rural area is quite isolated, it is a logic consequence that most young adults will leave that particular rural area. It seems that the existing facilities in regards to public transport or the possibility of owning a car as a young adult can be decisive factors when a young adult considers staying in the rural.

### **2.3.4 Cultural mobility**

Cultural mobility is closely related to the regional culture and its identity. Sense of place seems to be highly related to this matter as well. As Schild & Wrede (2014) explain, ‘the regional autonomy of institutions related to the formation and maintenance of cultural norms and values, such as cultural and education institutions, seem to play a decisive role for regional cultural identity over the long term as well as over shorter periods of time (p.323).’ This also refers to the traditions of the area. This is important information considering the context of deciding to either stay or leave the rural home region. Traditions, norms and values form the core of how young adults may view moving away from the village. If most people around them leave the village and never come back, it is not hard for them to decide to do the same thing. Norms and values such as being active in the community or being part of sports club could all be factors for young adults to stay in the rural. It seems to depend on what people do to make the area more attractive, which is rooted in the norms and values. As explained in the part on sense of place (part 2.2.2), young adults may perceive the rural as boring. That is the image a village has to counter to make it more attractive for young adults to stay, which is where it comes down to the cultural mobility of a village. If a young adult in some way feels attached to the rural home region, one could speak of imperfect mobility (Wellisch, 1994). It means that the individual in some way is restricted in its mobility to move away from the rural because of the attachment one has gotten with a particular place.

Imperfect mobility shows to be linked with place attachment and, therefore, sense of place. This already starts in the cultural institutional setting known as the family, as can be

interpreted from the statement made by Schild & Wrede (2014). If a young adult has a healthy relationship with his or her parents, it is likely that the person feels attached to the area as well. However, imperfect mobility could also be created by a situation in which young adults feel restrained by their parents' wish to rather not have their child leave the area (Haug, 2008). Such cases are called tied stayers. A bad relationship with parents usually results in migration of young adults too (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006), as also mentioned in part 2.2.1. It shows that cultural mobility, next to the other factors of mobility, has an influence on the decision of young adults to stay or leave the rural home region as it impacts them on obvious and less obvious ways.

## 2.4 Social media

Before putting social media use in the context of young adults staying in the rural home region while working or studying in a different area, the term social media is briefly explained. As claimed by Mangold & Faulds (2009), social media contains "a wide range of online, word-of-mouth forums." This includes, for example, 'moblogs'. Mangold & Faulds (2009) explain that 'moblogs' are sites that contain images, digital audio, photographs, and movies. Furthermore, social networking websites (for example, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube) are part of social media. These types of social media are also available on applications that are suitable to be used on smartphones and create lots of new possibilities. This makes it easier for people to get the information they want, as it is literally only one click away. It is expected that young adults mostly use the previous mentioned components of social media. Sigala & Chalkiti (2014) explain why the possibilities created by social media are important. They explain that social media enables people "to connect, communicate and collaborate." In addition, Hemsley & Mason (2012) state that those possibilities lead to collaboration and knowledge sharing and generation within a community. This explanation strengthens the expectation that young adults who use social media have a greater chance to share and generate information about certain events, maybe giving this group the feeling they do not miss out on events happening in the area of work or education. In short, social media gives an individual the most successful open information distribution mechanism, giving people the option to network, debate, and share and learn from each other (Chalkiti & Sigala, 2008; Wagner & Bolloju, 2005). One could

almost start to think that, while using social media, any kind of information is available for everyone.

The use of social media is closely related to the digital mobility of the individual. Keeping in mind the evolutions electronic technology has made since Findlay et al. (2000) expressed their thoughts on urban to rural migration, their following statement is interesting to this research: “the liberating effects of new electronic technologies, as well as enhanced personal mobility, have permitted more home-working as well as higher levels of long-distance commuting” (p. 335). It shows that the electronic evolution, at that time, was seen as a ‘liberating’ means of communication and a way to ‘overcome’ distance. Findlay et al. (2000) basically explain that new electronic technologies make it possible for people to live further away from cities. Interpreting their statement to this time and age, one could argue that home working is usually done through systems particularly build for the business they work for. This could consist of different types of applications that a particular company uses, as well as the use of WhatsApp groups and other.

Geurs (2014) explains that society is still digitalising. It seems that greater possibilities created by having a higher rate of digital mobility makes young adults less dependent on the rural home region they live in and the opportunities it offers. Barcus & Brunn (2010) seem to agree with this statement as they explain that internet, thus social media, “extend the individual’s range of experience by bringing distant environments into an individual’s home or immediate surroundings, thus allowing individuals to selectively choose to interact with people or places outside of their immediate environs” (p.284-285). It shows that young adults have a choice now: they are not restricted to the rural home region.

To support the statement that digital communication tools such as social media have become, and are still becoming, more important, information on mobile Internet use is presented. Mobile Internet use is closely related to the use of social media as almost each way to communicate through mobile Internet is constructed by a social media application. Research has shown that there has been a rise in the use of mobile Internet amongst young people (12 to 25 years) from 20% in 2007 to 86% in 2012 (CBS, 2012). Also, the group that follows (25 to 45 years) shows a rise in mobile Internet use from 23% to 69% in 2012 (CBS,

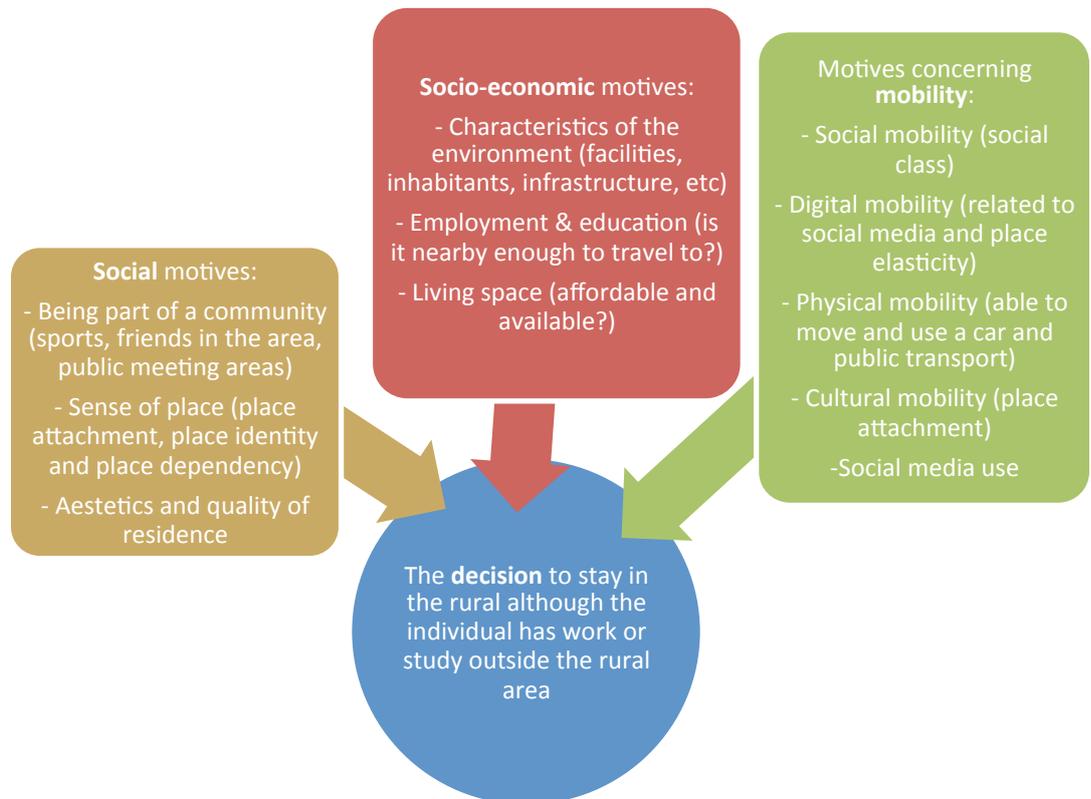
2012). It is likely to assume that the invention of social media was probably an influencing factor in this rise of mobile internet use, as the same article explains the rise is partly due to using the internet with communication, news and leisure purposes, which is what social media mainly is used for (CBS, 2012). The numbers show that young adults living in the Netherlands are definitely using mobile Internet more and more, which gives reasons to presume it is easier for this group to stay in touch with the place of employment or education. In this case, staying in touch with the place of employment or education for example implies the people who live there, the activities taking place at that place, and the communication considering work or study activities.

Previous information on both social media but also digital mobilisation shows that it can influence a young adults' life in different ways, however, it is yet to be proved that it actually influences the decision to either stay or leave the rural home region. Such an influence might be discovered later in chapter four, discussing the outcomes of the fieldwork research. Before that, a conceptual model is presented and the method is explained.

## 2.5 Conceptual Model

To visualize the previous findings in this chapter, a conceptual model has been developed. Also, the main question is kept in mind when creating the conceptual model as this research focuses on young adults who, until this point, decided to stay in the rural home region but work or study outside that area. To keep the model transparent, the main question is restated: *What motives do young adults have to decide to stay in their rural home region even though they are employed or study outside the rural?*

Figure 1: conceptual model. This model shows the information gathered and explained in this chapter only



## Chapter 3: Method

### 3.1 Choice of method

The method used to obtain data in the conducted field research needs explanation and clarification, as it must be suitable with regard to the main question and sub questions of the research. "One of the main distinctive features of qualitative research is that the approach allows you to identify issues from the perspective of your study participants, and understand the meanings and interpretations that they give to behaviour, events or object" (Hennink et al., 2011, p.9). This is exactly what this research is looking for. Because of that, this research uses a qualitative data collection method. Hennink et al. (2011) explain that a qualitative method gives insight on the perception on certain events of the participant, which is exactly what is aimed for. Denzin & Lincoln (2008) also emphasize this by explaining that the researcher needs an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the world. Hennink et al. (2011) and O'Leary (2010) explain the meaning of this: "qualitative researchers study

things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of it, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p.9). It is especially that last part that is important to this research, as the reasons behind the decision to stay in the rural until this point must be interpreted.

This research implemented in-depth interviews to get the needed data. This makes it possible to gather data from different perspectives on the research problem. The method chosen is a deductive method: theory is being tested with the data of the field research (Hennink et al. 2011). Twelve interviews have been conducted in order to explore the deeper motivations behind the decisions made by the interviewed young adults on staying in their rural home region. To ensure that all information could be used, a voice recorder was brought to every interview. Although it helps to conduct the interviews, it could also intimidate people, which is why the voice recorder was not placed right in front of the participant but on the side of the table instead. Also, the researcher told the participants to try and ignore the voice recorder and handle the interview as a normal conversation. The interviews usually lasted 40 minutes to one hour. The main question was often asked in the beginning of the interviews. After that was answered, a general idea of the motives of the participant was already constructed. From that point on, the interview continued half structured with questions concerning the motives as mentioned in chapter two: socio-economic motives, social motives, motives concerning mobility and, in addition, the influence of social media. Furthermore, the location of the interview was to be decided by the participant. This choice was given to the participant in order to make sure the person would feel comfortable. Often, the interviews were held at the residences of the participant. One of the interviews was conducted in a café in Groningen.

### **3.2. Area of research**

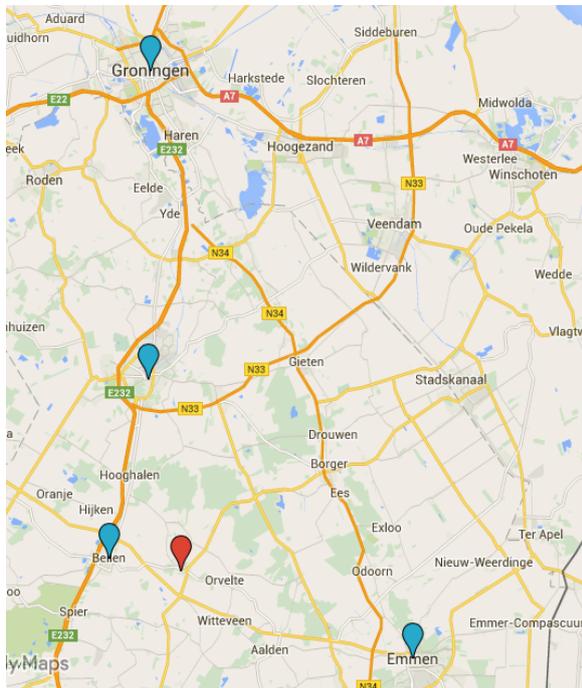
The fieldwork location chosen for this research is the village of Westerbork. Westerbork is situated in the province of Drenthe, the Netherlands. It is part of the municipality of Midden-Drenthe. Midden-Drenthe mainly consists of villages with less than 500 inhabitants. The three main villages in this municipality are Beilen, Smilde, and Westerbork. Westerbork had 4742 inhabitants in 2015, making it the second largest village of the municipality ([www.middendrenthe.nl](http://www.middendrenthe.nl)). In 2010, Midden-Drenthe counted 33.650

inhabitants (CBS, 2011). Considering population decline, numbers of the CBS show that most other municipalities in the province of Drenthe have faced higher population decline than the municipality of Midden-Drenthe (CBS, 2014). The CBS (2015) explains that the whole province of Drenthe has faced population decline, however, areas such as South-East Drenthe has faced a much higher population decline than Midden-Drenthe. In fact, when discussing population decline in Drenthe, Midden-Drenthe is not explicitly mentioned. This makes this area interesting for this research; it faces population decline but not as much as other, surrounding areas do. Therefore, it seems suitable to conduct research in this area as it could give an answer on what motives young adults have to stay in the village. Westerbork has been chosen because of several reasons. First, it is one of the largest villages in the area, making it more suitable for research as it has something to offer to young adults in terms of facilities. The other reason for picking Westerbork and not, for example, Beilen, is the fact that the researcher is from the village. This has several drawbacks and advantages, which will be pointed out in part 3.5, but in the end it did make it easier to find participants and to conduct the research.

Westerbork is a village that offers the following facilities that seems to be most important: it holds two supermarkets, two primary schools, different churches, over three hairdressers, three cafeterias, six restaurants, a football club, a tennis club, a volleyball club and other sports facilities such as gyms. It also has public transport connections (bus) towards Emmen and Assen. The bus connection towards Assen stops in Beilen, where people can take the train towards Groningen and Zwolle. Furthermore, the infrastructure towards the closest cities such as Assen, Emmen, and also Zwolle and Groningen offers the opportunity to travel by car.

The following map shows the position of Westerbork:

Map 1: Westerbork and nearby cities (retrieved from maps.google.com)



On the map, Westerbork is marked with a red pointer. It is situated in between Beilen and Emmen; the pointer near Orvelte indicates the village of Westerbork. The nearest blue pointer on the left represents Beilen, where a train station is situated. Other nearby cities pointed out on this map are Emmen (blue pointer at the right bottom) Assen (blue pointer in the middle), and Groningen (the highest blue pointer). It shows that Westerbork is situated in a central position in regards to the nearby urban areas. The distance between Westerbork and Beilen is 6.48 km, the distance between Westerbork en Emmen is 20.5 km, the distance between Westerbork and Assen is 16.5 km and the distance between Westerbork and Groningen is 41.2 km. These distances are measured in a straight line. The central position of the village could also be a helping factor in the decision to stay in the rural home region, as it is not isolated.

### 3.3 Recruitment of participants

As the area of the research and the motivation of choice have been clarified, the way participants of the research have been recruited needs explanation too. Generally, the most difficult steps that have to be dealt with in qualitative research are being granted permission

to conduct the interviews and providing the participants with adequate information on the research (Hennink et al. 2011). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research “not only requires a small number of participants so that issues can be explored in depth, but also necessitates the recruitment of participants with specific characteristics that can best inform the research topic” (Hennink et al. 2011. p.84). The specific characteristics the participants had to have to fit into this research were: being aged between 18 and 30 years old, living in Westerbork while currently studying or working in an area outside the area of residence. People are said to be an adult at the age of 18. At that age and the ages after, it is expected that people face certain life course events such as conducting a study, being employed, or starting a family. These events could have influence on the decision to stay or leave the rural, as mentioned in part 1.2 and also in chapter two. This is also a reason why this age group has been picked. It does not matter if the participants have lived somewhere else at an earlier stage of their life, as long as they were raised in the village of Westerbork. So, in some way, some of the participants could be both return-migrants and also, according to the current situation, stayers. This indicates that some of the participants might have been out-migrants as well. Haartsen & Thissen (2014) explain that out-migration does not have to mean that a young adult never returns to the rural area where the person previously lived, as the following motives such as completing a study, getting a job, or finding a partner may bring them back to the village where they grew up. Haartsen & Thissen (2014) show that it is not a ‘one-way transitional process’. Furthermore, they explain that such decisions are also related to the degree the young adult feels attachment and belonging to the rural region they return to (Haartsen & Thissen, 2014). This creates the expectation that those participants who are return-migrants feel attachment and belonging to Westerbork, regardless of the fact that they have lived in a different area as well. This is important to keep in mind while conducting the research as it may fit into the situation of some of the participants, for example in the situation of those who work and already completed a study. Also, it gives insights on the motives they have to stay in Westerbork.

The participants have been recruited through social media. A clear message was posted on Facebook explaining all the characteristics a potential participant had to possess; being a young adult in the age group 18 to 30 years old, currently living in Westerbork but studying or working outside that village. It was explained that the area in which the young

adult works or studies had to have the characteristics of an urban area. Next to that, the purpose of the research was briefly explained. Such a recruitment style is known as purposive recruitment (Hennink et al. 2011). As the researcher is from the research area, it was easier to get in contact with young adults' fitting into the profile that was searched for. It proves the advantage of the practical aspect of being rooted in the area, as the researcher could be seen as a community gatekeeper in this matter (Hennink et al. 2011). Furthermore, using social media was also a must for those who were willing to participate. If that wasn't the case, the influence of social media use on the decision to stay in the rural home region couldn't be examined. That aspect was dealt with right in the beginning of recruiting participants. Furthermore, by using such a tool to recruit participants, young adults were not directly asked to participate in the research. It was their choice to react to the post, indicating that they were participating on free will.

In the end, twelve people have been interviewed of which six were women and six were men. It was tried to select young adults from different groups: not a group of friends. This was possible because of the high response on the Facebook post. Also, it was tried to balance students and people who are employed. As the information on the participants is kept private, they will be referred to as, for example, S1: stayer 1. The following chart shows complete information of the participants:

*Figure 2: participants*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Residential situation</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education or employment in area outside Westerbork</b>
S1	With partner	24	Female	Employed (Wolvega, previously conducted a HBO study)
S2	With partner	27	Female	Employed (Heerenveen, previously conducted a HBO study)
S3	Parents	26	Female	Employed (Assen, previously conducted a HBO study)
S4	Parents	20	Female	Education (Groningen, University)
S5	Independent	29	Female	Employment (Emmen) & education

(HBO, one day)				
S6	Independent	23	Female	Education (Assen, HBO)
S7	With partner	25	Male	Education (Groningen, HBO) & employment (Bosschoord)
S8	With partner	25	Male	Education (Groningen, HBO)
S9	With partner and child	29	Male	Employment (Assen, Emmen, previously conducted a HBO study)
S10	Independent	24	Male	Education (Groningen, HBO)
S11	Parents	26	Male	Employment (Zwolle, previously conducted a MBO study)
S12	Independent	27	Male	Employment (Groningen, previously conducted a HBO study)

In addition to the information in the figure above, short residential history of the participants is given. As explained, all participants have been raised in Westerbork. However, S1, S2, S3, S5, and S12 have lived in Groningen while conducting a study, but all of them have lived in Westerbork again since they started working. Also, S5, S11 and S12 moved towards Westerbork when they were small children. Their parents are not completely rooted in Westerbork; they have also lived a significant part of their life in another place (or places). Furthermore, S7 has lived in Assen for a while as a young child. However, the father of this person stayed in Westerbork while the parents of this person were divorced, to whom S7 moved again at a young age. It is important to keep all this information in mind as the context of the participants may also provide an explanation to their motives.

### 3.3 Data analysis

The interviews have been analysed following the guidelines of Hennink et al. (2011). First, the interviews have been transcribed. All interviews were conducted and transcribed in Dutch. After that, parts of the texts have been assigned to categories, also known as codes, and, finally, connections between theory and the interview texts have been made. These connections will be explained in the results (part four). The program ATLAS.ti has been used to analyse the transcriptions, assigning codes to specific parts of the texts. The program

helps to create an overview of the gathered data, making it easier to analyse. Also, it shows whether the outcomes of the interviews relate to each other. In the end, main categories, sub codes and sub-sub codes have been created derived from the theory presented in chapter two. Such codes are called deductive codes (Hennink et al. 2011. p.219). The following figure gives an overview of (most of) the used codes:



Image 1: used codes in atlas.ti.

### 3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations had to be made while conducting the in-depth interviews. Hennink et al. (2011) explain that ethical challenges are more present when conducting qualitative research as it searches for perceptions, beliefs and feelings of people. In order to find these, the researcher must build a trust relationship with the participants. The most important factor in the ethical considerations is sticking to the promise of keeping the information secure and anonymous. However, next to that, it was also important to carefully approach the participants about certain topics in the interviews. As in-depth interviews

search for the deeper meaning of the answers, some sensitive topics might be touched upon as well (Hennink et al. 2011).

Ethical considerations already start at the design cycle of the research project. In that process, the researcher determines what the research is about and how to approach the participants. Once that has been done, the participants can be recruited. In this case, the researcher was a gatekeeper to the study population, making it easier to contact potential participants. Also, the participants needed to be aware of the contents of the interview. Therefore, an interview guide was set up. The interview guide informed the participants about the research project. Furthermore, it was very important to minimize harm while preparing and conducting the in-depth interviews (Hennink et al. 2011). In this case, harm refers to mental harm such as shame or embarrassment (Hennink et al. 2011). However, such emotions have not been identified while conducting the interviews.

### **3.5 Positionality, reflexivity, and 'Verstehen'**

It is important to critically review the position of the researcher before conducting the interviews. The researcher has three aspects in common with the target group: the researcher is a young adult, the researcher is a stayer who currently studies in another place, and the researcher lives in Westerbork. These are facts that cannot be ignored. All these aspects and also characteristics play a role in positionality. As Hennink et al. (2011) explain, "how you portray yourself and your own characteristics can influence the information collected and therefore the quality of the data" (p.122).

First, the influence of being a young adult must be discussed. Positionality refers to the power relations between interviewer and interviewee (Sheppard, 2002). In this perspective, being a young adult could be an advantage as the participants are from the same age group. This might make it easier to openly communicate, as the participants may not feel distance due to age difference or a generation gap. However, it could also be a disadvantage because of the same reasons; the participants might not feel it is an official interview for a research project, which might make it too informal. This could lead to invalid results. Therefore, it is important to find a balance between creating the right, not too formal atmosphere and not being too informal.

Second, the influence of being a stayer who studies outside Westerbork must be discussed. This aspect of positionality may also influence the interviews both positively and negatively. Being a stayer who studies outside the area already gives the researcher some ideas on what the motives for the participants might be to stay in Westerbork. Questions could be asked on this and, also, the researcher might be able to understand the answers better due to the researcher's situation. However, it could also blur the researcher's vision, making it hard to be objective. Therefore, and also because of the other aspects considering the positionality of the researcher, a qualitative data research such as this one has a need for reflexivity. "Reflexivity is a process that involves conscious self-reflection on the part of the researcher to make explicit their potential influence on the research process" (Hennink et al. 2011. p.19). The reflexivity process also asks for the understanding of the researcher on the fact that this person is also part of the social world that is being investigated; the researcher is not an outsider (Berg, 2007). In the end, the researcher had to "take constant stock of the actions made and the role of the researcher" during the research process (Hennink et al, 2011. p.19).

Finally, being from Westerbork also needs to be kept in mind while conducting the interviews. This is closely related to the fact the researcher is a stayer. Again, it could be an advantage, as the researcher for example knows the village its facilities, its shortcomings and its social aspects. However, these are all perceptions of the researcher, making them subjective. That is why the researcher needs to be sure that such feelings will not influence the interpretation of the outcomes of the interviews. Still, the knowledge on the researcher has about the village could be used as an advantage when asking certain questions and trying to find the deeper meaning behind certain answers. The findings of the research will be presented in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the interviews. It has been tried to link the presented results with the findings in chapter two, by discussing the different types of motives as structured in chapter two. However, it must be stated that the first and most important finding is that all motives are interrelated: it is not just one motive on which the

decision to stay in the village is based. That is why, when for example discussing socio-economic motives, aspects of other motives are mentioned as well. The presented quotes are selected because they examples represent the message at its best. Furthermore, it is important to know that the quotes presented in this chapter are translated from the native language of the participants to English.

#### 4.1 Socio-economic motives

As explained in chapter 2.1, socio-economic motives usually concern leaving the rural home region. An aspect of this is the information that most young adults who decide to leave the rural home region do so because of employment or educational related reasons. Still, employment and education outside the village can be perceived as motives to stay according to the following interpretation: as long as the distance towards the place of work or education is perceived as not too far, it allows a young adult to stay in the village. All participants' explanations give an indication that they do not mind to travel some distance towards their work or study, as long as it is doable travelling wise. Instead, most participants seem to enjoy travelling. Still, distance is only accepted to a certain extent which is shown in the following quote: *"if I would get a job in, let's say Amersfoort, and my partner as well, I wouldn't mind moving towards that place. But I'd rather stay here if it's not necessary to move"* (participant S1). This participant explained that it could be the case that this person would be transferred to Amersfoort to work. In that case, the participant would find such a distance too far to travel and would want to move. As the quote shows, the participant also includes the partner into the consideration of moving towards that place, indicating that the partner is an important part of the social world of the participant. It seems that, when considering moving, the participant wants to bring a certain part of the social world along to make it more acceptable to move.

Continuing the perspective of considering the social world one lives in, work or education within a certain range of Westerbork could be a motive to stay as it offers them a solution: they can still live in the village in which their social world is mostly based, but they can also start a career. As shown in the figure in chapter 3.3, almost all participants completed higher education, of which chapter 2.2.2 gives information explaining that most young adults who complete higher education are likely to move away from the village.

However, this research shows that this does not apply everyone. It could be argued, based on the previous presented findings, that the participants can combine their social and socio-economic worlds by having access to mobility in order to overcome the distance to work or study, making it possible for them to stay in the village in which their social world is mainly based.

It seems the previous interpretation is mainly applicable to the participants who work, as participants who study all indicate that they have thought to move out to the area in which their study is based because they feel it could be a positive experience. This is based on what they hear from people who are part of their social network through study. It shows that participants who are students might have a larger social network in their place of study compared to the network employed participants have in their area of work, which makes sense as it fits more into the image of a student. Still, the participants of this research who study indicate that they do not want to move away from the village due to several reasons. For example, part time jobs could be mentioned as a reason for a student to stay in the village: *“my motives to stay here have been the same for a while now, although I do consider my part time job as a very important motive to stay” (participant S6)*. One could assume that a student has more main motives to stay in the village than only a part time job, as that also does not always offer steadiness in terms of income. For example, a partner or friends could also be of high influence. This participant (S6), however, indicated that there is no partner involved, and most of the persons’ friends also live in another city. Next to that, the participant explains that the friends the participant has in the village are nice to have around, but are not too important when considering the decision to stay or leave the village. Furthermore, the other participant who studies but does not have partner (S8) also mentioned the part time job as an important motive to stay. This participant also explained moving towards the city in which the study is situated may not be a smart idea as it might not improve his performances because of investing too much time in social life. This could be interpreted as self-protection, which is an interesting motive. Considering the participants who study and do have a partner, no one mentions their part time job as being the most important motive for them to stay in the village: that is all connected to having a partner. Still, most of them explain that the part time job they have does establish a connection with the place, which could add up to other motives to stay in the village. However, one of these

participants (S4) explains that quitting the part time job the person has would not be a problem when discussing whether the participant would want to move away from the village when not keeping in mind the social motives. Interesting fact in this case is that this participant was the only student with a partner who wasn't living together with the partner.

Also, some of the participants who work explained they enjoy working outside the village of residence because of the nature of their work: they work at a bank, and they do not want to know all the financial issues people they know may have. That is why they like to work outside the village, as it is easier for them to handle the confidentiality that comes with their job. All other employed participants explained they all knew that, when starting to search employment, they had to keep in mind that travelling is part of the new situation. However, none of them explained they saw that as a real issue. Also, some participants indicated that they were happy to even have a job, as they feel that it is hard to find a job which why they found it easier to accept the distance between the village and the place of work. More about the acceptance of travelling a certain distance will be explained in the chapter on mobility and the motives to find the distance to work or education acceptable are being discussed in the chapter on social motives.

The influence of available facilities and housing on the decision to stay in the rural needs attention too. It is generally accepted that a village has less available facilities than a city. However, the size of a village makes a significant difference. In very small villages, one cannot expect to have a great amount of facilities. Sometimes, facilities do not meet basic needs in such villages. Westerbork, however, does offer certain facilities as explained in chapter 3.2. When asked whether the participants feel that Westerbork offers enough facilities, all participants explained that they feel that Westerbork offers all basic needs. Participant S7 answered as follows: *"I don't miss anything here. I don't mind driving some distance to watch a movie at a cinema. I think that's because I have been raised with this thought. I've basically lived here my whole life, and that idea has never changed during my life. I don't know any better"*(participant S7). All other answers by the other participants seem to be in line with the answer of this participant. Breaking down this answer, one could say they do actually miss some facilities, however, they have learned to accept this. This acceptance seems to be influenced by their access to mobility, which erases the feeling of

actually missing such facilities. It shows that access to mobility is an important aspect of the participants social world: if they would not have a certain access to mobility they would not be able to have certain entertainment, such as visiting a cinema with friends or a partner, which is part of their social world. Still, it is important to realize that these are not facilities one would miss on a daily basis. If, for example, Westerbork would not have a grocery store, the answers on feelings towards travelling to such a facility might be way different.

When considering available housing, different opinions can be reported. Still, most of the explanations of the participants proved to be in line with the information (Geurs, 2014) presented in chapter 2.2.3: all participants who live independently or with a partner had to wait a while in order to get a house in the rural home region as the area did not offer that much in terms of available housing. The next quote gives in insight on the situation some participants faced: *“I enrolled to get a house in this area right after I completed my study. I had to wait a year before this place was offered to me. I’ve lived at my parents house during that year” (participant S5)*. This participant is also a return-migrant as this person lived in Groningen during the completion of a study. Now, this participant has lived in Westerbork for a few years again while working and, partly, studying outside the village. Important information in this case is that the parents of this participant also still live in the village. If they did not live in the village anymore, it would’ve been hard for the participant to return. This was the case for four participants in this research. Some other participants also moved from their parents place to their current home, however, they are not return-migrants. Also, some participants who did live in a different area before due to conducting a study moved in with a partner when returning, which also makes it easier to return. It shows that being rooted in the area is generally of high importance when finding available housing, as those social aspects give young adults opportunities to find or get housing. Again, it shows that the different aspects are interrelated. Furthermore, it is interesting to realize that not all participants agree when considering the financial aspect of finding available housing. The participants often started to compare prices of the houses in Westerbork with those in cities such as Groningen or Zwolle. Some said they thought it would be a waste of money as they would get much less space compared to the space they have in Westerbork for the same price; *“the space that you get in comparison to the price you pay isn’t available in city when you look for available housing in such a place” (participant S1)*. Because of that, they would

rather stay in the village instead of paying the same money in a city. However, some participants explained that living in Westerbork is regarded as expensive compared to cities, while they do acknowledge the fact that housing in cities comes with less space, which explains possible price differences. For some, the first explanation on having the idea that cities are too expensive might count as a motive to stay in the village. For others, the statement that the village is more expensive than an urban area in terms of available housing could be justified by explaining that they pay for the space they get. In this perspective, it may count as a reason to stay as they value this space and do not mind paying for it.

## 4.2 Social motives

It was explained in chapter 2.2 that it would be interesting to find out what social motives young adults may have to stay in Westerbork. Chapter 4.1 gave one insights on what might be socio-economic motives for young adults to stay in the rural home region. During the fieldwork research, it became clear that the social motives are the most important motives for young adults to stay in the rural home region. All twelve participants explained that social aspects of their life in the rural home region were the driving factor behind their decision to stay in the rural home region. Still, every young adult could have a different social aspect to be a motive to stay, as they all live in a different context. It seems that socio-economic aspects are related to social aspects, as young adults living in the rural are willing to build their life around this place, as this is where they have most of their social life. This part will point out the most important social motives as explained by the participants.

### 4.2.1 Sense of place

A lot of information on this matter can be derived from the answers given by the participants. To start with, sense of community needs attention. Rye (2006) explains that, in general, the rural comes with a high sense of community. This contributes to the place attachment an individual feels considering a certain place (Vanclay, 2008). Young adults could feel attached to the village because of the community they feel they belong to. The following quote shows how most participants view their decision to stay in the village: *“the*

*social aspects such as friends, football, family are very important to me. And for me, financially, it doesn't matter too much whether I live in Zwolle or here, so in that case I'd rather stay here. I feel at home, and I think the social aspects are very important in this feeling" (participant S11).* It shows that this participant feels attached to a community that is highly valued. In this case, the community that the person feels he belongs to is the local football club. The friends of this participant are, mostly, also part of this community, which probably creates this strong and interrelated bond with friends and the local football community as a whole. This participant (S11) has a partner, but lives in the parental house. Almost every other participant, with and without partner and irrespectively of their residential situation, explained that they feel that the local football club is an important asset in creating the strong sense of community and, therefore, creates place attachment amongst the young adults living in Westerbork. Other sports communities have been mentioned as important as well, but the local football club was mentioned the most. It shows that sports associations could also create place dependency, as most of these participants all feels like they belong to a community that is build around the sports club. However, it is not just the sports club that creates place dependency, as it could also be a part time job that gives a person this feeling (S6), or the employment of a partner (S6).

Only two participants (S2 and S6) did not explicitly mention that they feel local sports clubs are highly important in their decision to stay in Westerbork. These are also the only two people who are not active in a local sports club, and the only two people who do not consider social aspects such as a group of friends as the most important motive to stay. It shows that being part of a community such as sports clubs create different reasons for place attachment and sense of community. Most other participants do mention friends as an important aspect of their decision to stay. Moreover, friends and the community the participant belongs to were often mentioned as one and the same. According to most participants, this is because friends usually have the same interests: *"friends are obviously part of the motives to stay, and family as well. I guess I consider sports, family and friends as the same" (participant S8).* This could strengthen their attachment to the place.

Also when asked whether the participants feel like other young adults who moved out of the village are likely to return, they all answered that it was likely for people to come

back as that group of young adults is already visiting the village a lot in order to see friends and to have a drink in the local pub. This is in line with the information as presented by Haartsen & Thissen (2014), explaining that staying or moving away from the village is not a one-way transitional process. These aspects made it easier for the participants of this research to decide to stay in the village. Also, it shows that facilities are important in establishing place attachment and in maintaining social relations. If such facilities were not available, the participants may not feel as attached to the place as they do now. Again, the relation between socio-economic aspects and social aspects seem to create the motives for one to stay.

Still, place attachment does not only depend on being part of a community. Although almost all participants mentioned that the local football community is important, not all mentioned it as their most important motive to stay in the village. The interviews showed that those who live together with a partner all mention their partner as the most important motive to stay in the village, whereas those who do not live together with a partner mentioned the local sports community as most important: *“my partner is my number one motive stay here. And after that I guess sports (participant S8)”*. They all mentioned that the influence of the partner has changed since the moment they shared a house together. One could say that having a partner changes the whole perspective on the situation of either staying or moving. For example, all participants living together with a partner keep the wish of the partner in mind when answering questions about the future: *“you can’t just say: I want to stay here. You have to make such a decision together. It depends on where she will get a job, but in the end you’ve got to reach a decision together” (participant 11)*. It shows that, once someone has a partner, the decisions to either stay or move are becoming more complicated. In most cases (S1, S2, S7, and S8), the partner the participant lives with comes from Westerbork as well. This probably strengthens the feeling of place attachment, as they understand each other in these feelings. Also, it creates place dependency, as the partner might have a job in the area making it harder for that person to leave. The only participant (S9) who has a partner who is not from Westerbork but lives together in this village explained that a combination of available housing and him being part of the local football community made it hard for him to move to the place where his partner is from. Also, the birth of a child made the decision to stay here easier as they felt the child would have a

friendlier environment to grow up in when compared to an urban area. It shows that the village is perceived as a friendly area in which it is safe for children to grow up in, which is in line with the information presented in chapter 2.2.3.

The final feature of sense of place that is mentioned in this part deals with the rootedness of young adults when considering their motives to stay. This mainly comes from the fact that all of the participants have been raised in the area, which is why they build up social capital (Haug, 2008). As has been explained in the previous paragraphs, it is clear that the participants feel attached to the place, mainly because of social reasons. These social reasons, such as friends, being part of a community, and a partner are all important in this process of building up social capital. However, the influence of parents and growing up in the village need to be mentioned as well, as these factors partly create the rootedness of a person in the village. If a young adult has spent his or her childhood and adolescence in the home village and has positive memories about this, it is likely the person will feel a positive sense of place as they are rooted in the place. Parents have an influence on this, even if it is only a practical one, as they have been the decisive factor to live in the village of Westerbork. In the end, that is why the participants of this research feel attached to this village and not another place. It can be argued that all participants have a high sense of rootedness in Westerbork as they all gave statements that are in line with the following quotes: *"I have been brought up in this place. My social life has mainly been situated here"* (participant S5), and: *"I would say that the meaning of this village would best be described as familiar and safe feeling, and as cosy and congenial"* (participant S1). It shows that being brought up in the village creates feelings as explained above. It is in line with the theory presented by Haug (2008) and Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006). Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006) also mention that a positive attitude towards a certain place is related to the relationship a young adult has with his or her parents. When asked, all participants made clear that they feel that they have a positive relationship with their parents. They feel they are free in their decisions and they do not feel restrained in their options. Furthermore, living together with a partner could also have an influence on the rootedness; if the partner is from the same area, the feeling of rootedness may be strengthened, which is related to the idea that the place attachment of a young adult might be strengthened because of the same reason. However, it does seem that, when the participant has a partner from outside

the village, it is easier to accept the idea of leaving the village. Still, these participants explain that they would rather stay in the village but understand that it might not be possible in each situation.

Being rooted in the area creates a certain sense of place that does not necessarily have to fade away when moving away from the village. For example, Haartsen & Thissen (2014) show in their research that most return migrants mention several social motives, such as social clubs or a partner, as being quite important reasons to return to the village even though these people have left this area for a certain period. Again, it shows that either staying, but also leaving the rural does not have to be a one-way transitional process (Haartsen & Thissen, 2011).

A final notion that is interesting to mention in this chapter is the fact that all participants had the idea they live in a unique village. This sense of living in a unique village mainly comes from the idea that Westerbork organises lots of events in comparison to other villages. Also, the participants felt that the inhabitants of the village who are part of the same community played an important role in this. The following quote explains this feeling: *“people are always trying to make it cosy and lively. I once attended an event here and people just told me that they had to send out only one message to ask for volunteers, and it was arranged. That’s what keeps the village lively; I think that’s very unique here. I think that’s special”* (participant S2). This participant has a partner who is an owner of one of the restaurants in the village. It was explained that, because of the profession of the partner of this participant, the participant had the feeling a trustworthy view has been constructed considering this matter. The participant felt quite sure Westerbork is unique when considering the organised events and the contribution of the community to these events. All other participants seemed to agree. Still, one can never be sure this is actually the case. It seems that the participants tried to compare their view of Westerbork with other places, explaining that they would never expect to see or experience such events in other areas, which was interesting as it shows similarities with the concept of othering (Said, 1978). In the end, none of them were really sure that Westerbork is unique considering this matter. Still, they judged other places on this to maybe positively influence their view of the community they live in.

### 4.3 Access to mobility

Chapter 4.1 already gave an insight on the findings considering the impact of mobility. The research made clear that mobility should not be viewed as a self-contained motive to stay in the village. It seems that it should be seen as the connector of both the social and socio-economic worlds the participants are part of. Access to mobility is the reason why the participants of this research can still conduct a study in an urban city, or can still start a career in a city. Access to mobility seems to be vital for the participants in order to maintain the situation they have constructed: to work or study in an urban area but to live in Westerbork. Next to connection of the socio-economic and the social world of participants, chapter 4.1 also explains that access to mobility extends the social world of the participant as they could go to, for example, a movie theatre. In order to get a better view on this finding, some interesting quotes are presented. The first one could be seen as an extensive explanation on how all participants view the distance they face when travelling to work or study: *“no, I don’t mind the distance. Like I said, I don’t hate driving a car, and I don’t even want to work in this area. I’d rather work some distance away from here because I don’t mind driving and, well, we live in a village so everybody knows each other. I don’t think that’s a problem, but it’s nice to escape that environment for a bit”* (participant S2). It shows that, in some cases, the distance was even favoured as it gave the participant a chance to escape the social world of the village for a while. Again, participants seem to appreciate the benefits of combining both the socio-economic and the social world. It is not said that the participants who are employed only have social relations in Westerbork, however, they all mentioned they do not have many social relations based in the place they work. This did not seem bother them. Still, most participants realized that not everyone would be willing to travel a certain distance every day to get to the place of work or study: *“It wasn’t a big step for me to start working a certain distance away from the village, but I can understand people who aren’t willing to do this every day”* (participant S12). The fact this participant, and also all other participants, accept that overcoming distance is something they have to deal with is part of rootedness as explained in chapter 4.2. The participant has been brought up with the knowledge that not everything is within close range, making it inevitable for them to travel. All participants who work made clear they possess a car. They all feel that a car is indispensable when living in Westerbork but working in an urban area. However, when

asked how they would deal with the situation if they would not have had a car, all of them would simply answer they would first try to buy a car. This is an interesting mentality, as it shows these participants immediately think about ways that can maintain the connection between both the socio-economic world and the social world, expressing the importance of it.

It seems that the access to mobility for students has a slightly different impact compared to the situation of employed participants. Not all of the students who participated own a car, making them rely on public transport. However, both students and employed participants have one thing in common: they all had to travel quite some distance to high school when they were younger. This seemed to have had influence on the way they perceive distance and travelling, for both students and employed participants. Again, rootedness and being raised in the village proves to be important in the way certain aspects of life in Westerbork are viewed. The participants who study explain that they feel that the public transport service could be improved, however, they also understand that it is impossible to do so because of the size of the village they live in: *“of course, I would rather be able to travel by a bus service that leaves every 15 minutes, but I understand this simply impossible. As far as possible, everything is arranged fine”* (participant S8).

In the end, all participants seem to accept the distance they have to travel and do not mind doing so. Sometimes, it is even seen as an advantage. The findings presented show that the fact they accept the distance mainly comes from their rootedness and the aspect of being used to the situation. Still, the distance was only accepted up to a certain extent. If it would a job or a study would be considered to be too far from the village, they would probably move. However, as long that they can combine both the socio-economic world and social world, they will rather choose for that option.

#### 4.4 Social Media

The final motive considering young adults' decision to stay in the rural home region concerns social media. This is also part of digital mobility. The research made clear that all participants have sufficient access in terms of digital mobility: they can use internet and all have a smartphone. In chapter 2.4, it is questioned whether social media could maybe give

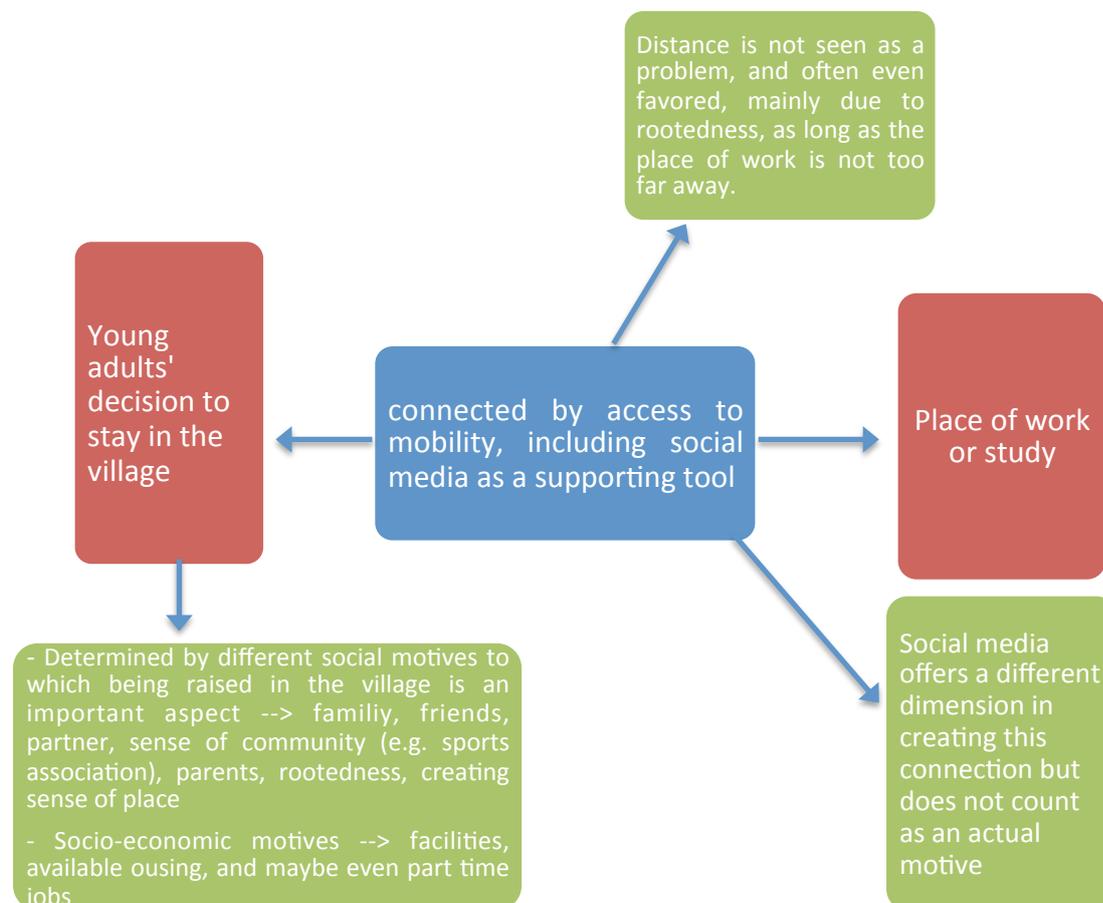
young adults the feeling that distance can be overcome, in a figurative sense, when using social media. Also, participants were asked whether they feel that the use of social media could be another motive for them to stay in the village or not. After conducting the research, the findings show that social media should rather be seen as a supporting factor to the role access of mobility has in the decision of young adults to stay in the rural. It helps connecting different worlds with each other as it makes it easier for the participants to communicate with people they know from work or study. The following quote is applicable considering the general thought on social media use amongst the participants: *"I do feel that such media can give the feeling that the distance is reduced. I also like to know what happens in other places and social media makes such things possible. I don't think it will have influence on the decision to either stay or go. It's just fun and easy"* (participant S2). So, although having the feeling that using such media reduces the distance, it is not seen as a decisive motive to stay or go. Most participants explained that they do not feel that such media can ever replace the factor of being physical present in certain situations, which is why it cannot count as a decisive motive. Some saw it as a process that is still developing, indicating that it could actually lead to being a motive to stay in the village. However, it must also be kept in mind that not every participant used social media as intensive as someone else does. Some simply did not find it interesting to use, and others just use it for entertainment. The participants who work generally use social media to stay in touch with some colleagues and, at times, use certain apps to work at home which is considered practical. However, none of these participants mentioned that, if these media would not be at hand, they would move out of Westerbork. Most participants who study felt the same way about social media, however, one participant (S4) did feel that it has a large influence on the fact she did not miss anything that was related to her study. All that she needed could be found through social media. This is a perfect example of how social media could help as a supporting factor in connecting the village the participant lives in with the place of study. In the end, it can be said that social media was mainly used for entertainment or socializing purposes; most participants did not see it as a tool they deliberately used to keep in touch with work or study as it is used in other cases as well.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

It was explained at the beginning of this research that previous research concerning young adults' migration motives generally focussed on the group moving away from the rural home region. However, because a significant part of the rural young adults actually stay in their home region, it may also be interesting to find out why young adults stay in the rural home region. Moreover, by focussing on those young adults who study or work outside their rural home region while still living in their home village, this research aimed at selecting convinced stayers. Despite experience several life course events that may have resulted in a residential relocation outside the home village, they decided to stay.

Based on the findings presented in chapter four, it can be said that the decision for young adults to stay in the rural is based on a complex number of aspects and motives that influence this decision. However, it is clear that social motives are the main reason for young adults to stay in the village, under the condition that they can create a situation in which young adults can fit socio-economic motives as well. Access to mobility makes it possible to connect the socio-economic world with the social world the young adult has, which shows the importance of this aspect. Chapter four has shown that social motives consist of different aspects, which could be differently important to each individual depending on the social life a young adult has. Parents, friends, having a partner and living together with this partner, growing up in the village, being part of a sports club and, therefore, feeling connected to a certain community, all could be social motives for young adults to stay in the village. Still, other socio-economic aspects in the village such as part-time jobs, available housing and facilities could count as motives to stay as well. This shows that the place of work or education is not the only socio-economic world that is experienced, explaining the complexity of the decision. The social world a young adult has in the village is likely to be connected with the socio-economic world by mobility to which social media is functioning as a supporting instrument. Chapter two presents a conceptual model on how different aspects and motives could have an influence on the decision to stay in the village. After obtaining the information presented in chapter four and summarized in this paragraph, the following model seems to be more applicable to conclude with:

Figure 3, final model



To summarize this model, the decision of young adults to stay in the village is often determined by social motives and, partly, socio-economic motives. However, all other aspects need to fit into this situation for it to be possible: access to mobility has to be at hand and the place of work or study should not be based too far away. If that is the case, the young adult has all possibilities to maintain the valued social life but also create a socio-economic world in which, for example, a career can be started.

After giving the main results and conclusion, it is important to bear the following information in mind. First, the rural region itself also influences the decision whether young adults stay in the rural home region or not, as not all villages are alike. For example, some villages are smaller than the other, which has its consequences. Next to that, the location of the village in relation to urban areas is of importance. Is it not too far away? This research has shown that such factors are of importance. Finally, it is not always a deliberate choice to stay in the village at a certain point: sometimes it just happens. Although most participants

of this research explained they feel it was a deliberate choice, it cannot be assumed that it is always the case for each young adult.

This research also gives opportunities for further research. For example, the relation of the motives and related aspects could be further examined. This research has shown that all motives and aspects are interrelated, however, further research could show how these relations are constructed and could maybe be influenced. It is an interesting area of further research as broader insights on improving these relations could actually help municipalities to keep young adults in the village.

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## Attachments – Interview questions (Dutch)

Notitie: dit zijn de vragen waar aan vast wordt gehouden, maar het kan natuurlijk voorkomen dat de onderzoeker tijdens het interview mogelijkheden ziet om andere vragen te stellen of ze in een andere volgorde stelt.

### Achtergrond

- Leeftijd, onderwijsniveau/werk
- Woongeschiedenis: waar ben je geboren en getogen? Wat waren de positieve en negatieve aspecten van die woonomgeving?
- Waarom ben je tot op heden in Westerbork gebleven? Wat zijn hiervoor de redenen?

### Socio-economische motieven

- Welke voorzieningen zijn voor jou belangrijk in het dorp (winkels, supermarkten, sport, café? Wat voor dingen mis je? Hoe los je dat op? Waar ga je daarvoor naartoe? Zie je dat als een groot probleem?
- Hoe kom jij op de plek waar je werkt/studeert? Zie je dit als een last?
- Heb je er ooit over nagedacht om te verhuizen naar de plek van werk/studie? Wat waren de overwegingen? Was het voor jou een grote stap om te gaan werken/studeren buiten de omgeving van Westerbork?
- Waar en hoe ben je vroeger naar school gegaan? Heeft dat ook invloed gehad op het feit dat je nu in Westerbork woont? Heb je daar een positieve ervaring aan over gehouden?

### Sociale motieven

- Heb je er bewust over nagedacht om tot op heden in het dorp te blijven wonen? Zo nee, waarom niet? Zo ja, wat waren voor jou de belangrijkste factoren om te blijven?
- Hebben je ouders er ook een rol ingespeeld om te blijven? Of hebben ze jou hier vrij in gelaten? Zijn zij hier altijd opgegroeid en heeft dat nog iets voor jou betekent?
- Speelden familie en vrienden een belangrijke rol in het besluit om tot zover in het dorp te blijven wonen? Wonen zij ook in het dorp of ergens anders?

- En je partner?
- Denk jij dat er veel jongvolwassenen wegtrekken uit Westerbork of denk je dat het mee valt?
- Zijn er veel mensen die hier altijd al wonen of is het een mix met nieuwe bewoners?
- Is je beeld van het dorp waar je in woont ook veranderd voor jou? Kan je de betekenis van het dorp voor jou misschien kort omschrijven?
- Heb je ook wel eens het gevoel dat je bepaalde dingen die gebeuren buiten de regio, bijvoorbeeld op de plek waar je werkt/studeert, mist omdat je daar niet woont?

Mobiliteit motieven = mogelijkheden om vrij te bewegen maar ook de mogelijkheden om digitaal actief te zijn

- Heb jij genoeg mogelijkheden om mobiel te zijn? Noem ze alsjeblieft eens en leg uit wat ze voor je betekenen. Denk aan je eigen mogelijkheden om mobiel te zijn qua lichaam, het gebruiken van het ov, de auto, maar ook digitaal.
- Werk je wel eens thuis? Heb je het idee dat thuiswerken middels digitale programma's invloed kan hebben op jou besluit om in het dorp te hebben?
- Denk je dat jou mogelijkheden om mobiel te zijn ook invloed hebben op je keuze om tot op heden in het dorp te blijven wonen?

Sociale media motieven

- Gebruik je vaak sociale media zoals Facebook, Twitter, nieuws apps, Youtube etc? Wat betekenen dergelijke media voor jou?
- Heb je het idee dat sociale media jou dichterbij de plek van je werk/studie brengen zodat je sneller informatie kan krijgen over bepaalde gebeurtenissen die daar gebeuren? Sommige evenementen kan je bijvoorbeeld digitaal volgen via de voorgenoemde media. Denk aan het antwoord dat je gaf op de vraag of je soms dingen mist omdat je niet op de betreffende plek woont.
- Denk je dat sociale media daarom indirect invloed kunnen hebben op de keuze om niet uit het dorp te vertrekken?

