Building communities through citizen participation
Societal initiatives and the effects on social cohesion

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Master thesis
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August 2018

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ABSTRACT

Social cohesion is a complicated process which can take place at various societal and geographical scales. In this research, the relationships between citizens or horizontal cohesion are the central issue. This thesis research discusses the contribution of three citizen initiatives, which the province of Gelderland has subsidised, on their contribution towards more social cohesion. The research aims to provide knowledge on the manifestation of social cohesion in society by this qualitative research on societal initiatives and their impact on three dimensions of social cohesion. This exploratory research has used a qualitative case-study approach. Moreover, this empirical research offers some valuable insights into the scientific debate on social cohesion about the direct and indirect approaches to enhance this. It underpins the previous research about the social relations dimension, contributes to knowledge about how social cohesion can appear on diverse geographical scales and social unities and thereby offers information on the process of connectedness. The results vary across the different cases, but one of the significant findings is that the social relations dimension is essential to societal initiatives. The projects have facilitated encounters between other participants whereby residents come into contact with each other while engaging in a citizen initiative. Moreover, the findings from the three cases suggest a relationship between the design of the initiative and the effects on place attachment. In general, this study demonstrates that such societal intervention techniques should not be overestimated and effects on social cohesion are more noticeable in the “mundane”.
PREFACE

First, I want to thank all of my respondents and particularly the initiators of the projects for taking part in this research. I am very grateful that you led me research your projects, although they were still at the critical beginning phase. Furthermore, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Mathijs for helping me with structuring my thoughts on my research and the supportive and helpful advice that has led to this finished thesis. Moreover, I cannot thank my family, friends and colleagues enough for pulling me through the tough moments of finishing this thesis. For the proofreading, for being a listening ear or for the offering of welcome coffee breaks.

This research was part of my internship at the province of Gelderland which entailed the researching, assessing and guiding of citizen initiatives on their eligibility for contributing to social cohesion. My interest in this research subject developed quickly while working at this program. Moreover, this internship provided an excellent opportunity to research how societal projects contribute to social cohesion while supporting the subsidy regulation. The knowledge I gained during the processes of assessing and guiding many diverse societal projects while reading their diverse goals, target public and spatial context gave me a profound understanding of the rationales towards enhancing social cohesion. Overall, the internship and the research were an excellent combination that helped me to understand the societal and theoretical relevance better. Furthermore, this internship did not only contribute to the realisation of my central research question but also provide me with vital insights on how social engineering is envisioned in the political but also the scientific debate.

I would, therefore, like to thank the province of Gelderland for offering me the opportunity to immerse myself in the exciting world of policy officers, and contributing to the field of citizen initiatives. However, most of all, I would like to thank all of my great coworkers of the program Livability for helping me to understand and grasp the diverse aspects the work of a policy officer offers in this exciting field. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to Petra Dhont, Tim Smit and Robert Haaijk for their guidance during this research process.

Amstelveen, September 2018

Solange van der Kolff
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A crumbling society?

Segregation along islands; especially ethnic, religious and social lines. You can see that coming back on all sort of issues.

The question of social cohesion must ultimately be solved in society itself. We give small moves to get people in the right direction. We really need those civil society organizations.

Social cohesion is developed from practice. . . . What matters is the permanent creation of a buzz, in which moments arise of communality. You should not have the illusion that we can tap into a common source of value. Social cohesion in our time arises in moments, in concrete projects and practices.

The theme of social cohesion is currently very high on the political agenda, which is demonstrated in the above quotes from a recent publication of Movisie (Boutellier, Roscam Abbing & Abdoelhafiezkhhan, 2018, pp. 5-6). An urgent need for research into the manifestation of social cohesion is moreover displayed by the involvement of ten different Dutch ministries on this policy theme. Policymakers in the Netherlands think there is an ongoing polarisation that leads to low levels of trust, participation, and integration, resulting in decreasing levels of social cohesion (Schmeets & Te Riele, 2014). These concerns also steer up the academic debates, whereby scholars occupy themselves with researching contemporary challenges in society such as increasing individualisation, globalisation, and immigration (Van Houwelingen, 2016). Another recent report (Jenissen, Engbersen, Bokhorst and Bovens, 2018) by the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) illustrates the pivotal role of social cohesion in Dutch national policymaking. The scientists in this report claim that the Netherlands is increasingly changing in diversity and this development has tremendous effects. Their research reveals a connection between the degree of diversity and cohesiveness in neighbourhoods: the higher the number of residents with a migration background, the lesser the degree of social cohesion is evident. The main conclusion from this report is that the coexistence of diverse groups in neighbourhoods is harmful to the overall bonding (Jenissen et al., 2018). This heavily criticised outcome and the overall
negative view that societal challenges such as increased migration form for the Dutch society, make policymakers rather busy trying to find ways to steer up the levels of cohesion. In this thesis research, the focus is on social engineering by the province of Gelderland in order to achieve more cohesion through concrete citizen initiatives.

1.2 Political discourse: social cohesion and citizen participation

1.2.1 Fixing social cohesion levels
Since the nineteenth century, people raise concerns about the cement of society. Dramatic shifts in society such as industrialisation, urbanisation and mechanisation were considered to negatively impact the common binding power of societal institutions and feelings of mutual trust (Van Houwelingen, 2016). Again, the phenomenon of social cohesion is a “hot topic” and part of a continuing somewhat pessimistic debate in Europe (Schnabel & De Hart, 2008). People consider social solidarity, including the notion that one should look after each other, like something from the past. In the political sphere, the discourse on social cohesion is mostly problem-oriented, and the debate about social cohesion is primarily a reaction to new social divides (Chan. et al., 2006). In 1999, the general beliefs about social cohesion centred around social inclusion and exclusion and influenced Dutch metropolitan policies (Schnabel & De Hart, 2008). Politicians believed that policies strengthening the social infrastructure offered the solution to exclusion (Schnabel & De Hart, 2008). This vision is still present in European policies which are set out to strengthen social infrastructure in individual member states (Jenson, 2010). The Council of Europe views societies as socially coherent when they are able to combat social inequalities and have the capacity to offer equal opportunities for welfare and wellbeing (Schnabel & De Hart, 2008). According to the research of Schnabel & De Hart (2008), the Dutch society experiences fewer overall problems with social inequality but primarily with the aspects in which social cohesion expresses itself in society; the taking and sharing of responsibility, dialogue and commitment and creation of trust in a shared future (p. 24). Weaker ties throughout the Dutch society seem evident, but at the same time research indicates the desire of residents for more sense of community (ibid).

1.2.2 Citizen participation as strategy
In 2010, Vreke, Salverda and Langers found that social cohesion developed in one of the most prominent themes on the Dutch political agenda. Through the Ministry for
Housing, Communities, and Integration the concept of social cohesion became common in the Dutch local policy discourse (Tonkens & Verhoeven, 2011). This time, the policy focus on social cohesion came about with a shift in the local policy discourse on citizen participation (Schnabel & De Hart, 2008). A revision of the role of the government took place, and the focus in social policies came on civic activation and individual responsibility (Dobbernack, 2010).

Slogans about more control and influence by and through citizens are popular today in urban governance (Tonkens, 2010). In recent years, the government tries to appeal to citizens to become more active and contribute among other things to social cohesion in their direct environment (Van Stokkom & Toenders, 2010). The withdrawal of the Dutch Government from the social domain in society had its onset since the introduction of the Social Support Act in January 2015 (Van Arum, Uyterlinde & Sprinkhuizen, 2009). Since then engaging, participating, and (socially) integrating are vital points for the responsibilities given to citizens (ibid).

Policymakers view social cohesion levels as decreasing and citizen participation as an important strategy to combat this. Vreke et al. (2010) further point out that the Dutch policy discourse on social cohesion entails two views that engage with fixing a considered decline of cohesion levels. On the one hand, policymakers view a lack of coherence as a source for all kinds of problems in neighbourhoods that are for instance related to integration, migration, individualisation, social isolation and decay of norms and values (Van Marissing, Bolt & Van Kempen, 2004; Vreke et al., 2010). On the other hand, policymakers tend to view an increase of social cohesion as the solution to these problems (Vreke et al., 2010). Policymakers believe that the problems deriving from a crumbling society are most efficiently solved on a small scale by citizens themselves (Dobbernack, 2010). According to policymakers, citizen initiatives are crucial in dealing with these societal challenges and associate them with experiment, creativity, innovation, listening and offering space (Hurenkamp, Tonkens & Duyvendak, 2006, p.11).

It is also from such a discourse that the province of Gelderland as a governmental institution subsidises local societal projects to contribute to the levels of social cohesion. This policy discourse embeds particular assumptions and expectations about the results that such social engineering can have in society. However, how and to what extent do citizen initiatives contribute to social cohesion? This is the central research question that will be addressed in this thesis.
1.3 Research objective, model and questions

1.3.1 Research objective
This research aims to contribute to the societal debate on the enhancement of social cohesion, and the scientific debate on how social cohesion develops. In this research, the focus is on social organisations that let their members engage in active participation via diverse ways that directly and indirectly try to promote social cohesion. Secondly, within this research I will investigate in what ways these activities and sometimes very concrete goals towards enhancing social cohesion contribute to social cohesion. Furthermore, I will evaluate if the hypothesis of the Province of Gelderland is a valid one. They have developed specific criteria which citizen initiatives should meet before they are eligible for subsidising. With these criteria, they try to influence the impact that these organisations have on social cohesion.

One of the assumptions regarding the activation of residents is the idea that they feel a sense of commitment to their immediate geographical environment (Vermeij & Steenbekkers, 2015). However, research (Van Stokkom & Toenders, 2010) indicates that the representativeness of residents that are active in neighbourhoods is questionable. The Dutch government acknowledges this as a problem and therefore tries to find ways to reach other parts of society than the usual suspects that engage in citizen initiatives (Denters, Bakker, Oude Vrielink & Boogers, 2013). However, there is also empirical evidence of examples that illustrate how other groups of citizens participate in citizen initiatives and “there are exceptions to the rules” (Snel, Hoogmoed & Odé, 2015). Therefore this research will also address the relationship between societal participation and feeling connected with the geographic environment that participants live in. Research has namely revealed that residents would sooner participate in their living environment when they experience (strong) social cohesion (Leidelmeijer, 2012). Does this mean that participants join societal projects because they are motivated to contribute to their living environment, or is the relationship between societal projects and increased social cohesion the other way around?

In this research, the focus is on how citizen initiatives work out in practice which leads to the following central research question: How do societal initiatives contribute to social cohesion? Furthermore, this thesis will address the policy question of the effectiveness of the strategy to reach more social cohesion through citizen participation. Current policies of the Dutch government focus on strengthening
participation but how does this work out? Does citizen participation work as a strategy in order to reach more social cohesion?

1.3.2 Conceptual model
This study uses a qualitative case study approach to investigate social cohesion based on primary research towards social cohesion. The following three dimensions are part of this conceptualisation; 1. Social relations and participation; 2. Attachment, belonging and identification 3. Orientation towards the common good and the degree of similar views. These dimensions are based on the model of social cohesion by Schiefer & Van der Noll (2016). Further explanation of this model and its merits will follow in the literature section of this research.

1.3.3 Research questions
The main aim/objective of this research is to provide insights on the process of social cohesion and to policymakers that aim to enhance social cohesion. The central research question is: how do societal initiatives contribute to social cohesion? This is explored by conducting a case study of three of such initiatives in Gelderland.

Sub-questions:
▪ How do the policymakers of the Province of Gelderland imagine that societal initiatives contribute to social cohesion?
▪ How do the societal initiatives contribute to social relations?
▪ How do the societal initiatives contribute to feelings of attachment or identification?
▪ How do the societal initiatives contribute to orientation towards common good?
▪ What do these findings imply for policymakers interested in strengthened social cohesion?

1.4 Relevance

1.4.1 Scientific relevance
Although extensive research has been carried out on the concept of social cohesion, there is no uniform definition of the phenomenon. For this reason, there is not much clarity on what the phenomenon entails. This makes it hard to discuss and compare the results of various studies. This study reflects on the primary research towards social cohesion, and addresses the concept with a model deriving from a dense literature review on primary research. The extensive literature review of Schiefer van der Nol (2016) offers clarity in the wide variety of definitions, aspects and indicators attributed to social cohesion. Their conceptualisation on social cohesion is used in this research because it is based on primary research towards social cohesion, and incorporates aspects that are in causal relation to this phenomenon. However the mechanisms that underpin social cohesion are not fully understood. Therefore this empirical research sheds light on the causal mechanisms behind social cohesion through the use of this conceptualisation. Furthermore, special attention goes to the relationship with social capital which leads to comprehension of the concept. Due to social capital being a widely used interpretation of social cohesion, which is a narrow definition of the concept, I would like to clearly distinguish the two concepts from each other.

Additionally, this research provides insights into the development of social cohesion in the context of diverse geographical scales and citizen initiatives with different goals and target groups. This study addresses place attachment on diverse geographical scales and thereby forms a contribution to the knowledge on this aspect of social cohesion. Much research towards this aspect of social cohesion namely is focused on the scale level of the neighbourhood, and knowledge on other larger scale
levels such as the city is underrepresented (Anton & Lawrence, 2014). Therefore, this study will contribute to the understanding of how attachment and identification with the district and city unit are relevant.

In general, this study contributes to the social, academic debate about the relational approach to societal challenges. Local citizen initiatives are namely forms of societal participation in which people together deal with particular problems or contribute to affairs that are of general interest and are meaningful to them (Jager-Vreugdenhil, 2014). The selected cases in this research address the challenges of integration of refugees on the city level, the isolation of elderly on the district level and the (decreased) collaboration and connections of residents on the neighbourhood level. Thus, this research sheds new light on how social cohesion develops through such projects with diverse goals or societal challenges on different geographical scales.

1.4.2 Societal relevance

Due to there being much fear for the falling apart of society, the degree of social cohesion is addressed as an urgent problem and policies are created to overcome this. Policymakers from the Liveability program and, more broadly speaking, policy makers in general, create all kinds of policies to stimulate social cohesion through citizen participation, but do not know exactly how to approach this. It is unclear what the ultimate effect is of such interventions, what the process entails, and whether it contributes to, for example, the quality of life. In addition, there is little empirical research on the relationship between societal participation and more social cohesion, which makes it unclear on how participation contributes to social cohesion. Furthermore, little is known about how social cohesion develops in such initiatives because few empirical studies have researched the effects of citizen initiatives on social cohesion (Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven, 2007). Therefore, Tonkens et al. (2011), encourage research towards participants and their experience of citizen initiatives because this helps in getting insights into the effects that citizen initiatives have. Hence this research contributes to filling this gap by providing knowledge on the effects of citizen initiatives that are focused on enhancing social cohesion.

The province of Gelderland considers the condition of social cohesion as crucial for the liveability in Gelderland. However, the enhancement of social cohesion is also a fundamental issue and priority that applies to policymakers broadly at the Dutch national level. Dutch ministries are differently involved in this theme and focus on different aspects that could harm the social cohesion through diverse social

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developments such as superdiversity and ethnic-religious segregation. They are busy with finding solutions to the problems that come forth from these social developments, to enhance social cohesion again. Although there is controversy about a considered decline of social cohesion, the question about the quality of relationships in the current society remains of great topical interest (Hurenkamp & Tonkens, 2011). Much research has demonstrated that the integration of diverse (ethnic) groups are one of the key challenges in the current Dutch society (Hurenkamp et al., 2006). It is therefore, interesting to research how citizen initiatives create new social bindings and contribute to bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000). By providing insights on how social cohesion comes about through citizen initiatives, this research questions the prevailing assumptions of policy makers (Thissen, 2008).

Moreover, citizen initiatives serve as intervention methods to overcome societal problems on a local and urban level; it is, therefore, interesting to research how it helps in overcoming these problems. The results of this research give valuable information and insights about the effectiveness of this intervention method. This is useful for several institutions of the government that invest in citizen initiatives, so they understand how a citizen initiative might contribute to social cohesion and what aspects are important in this. Furthermore, with this knowledge, they can anticipate on societal citizen initiatives through their policies.

Specifically, this research evaluates the hypothesis of the province of Gelderland that citizen initiatives contribute to social cohesion. The province has subsidised thirteen citizen initiatives in the year 2016, of which three were studied in depth. With the policy programme Liveability they want to contribute to social cohesion in Gelderland through the subvention of initiatives because they want to enhance the liveability within neighbourhoods and villages. In their programme, they focus on collective-reliance and the enhancement of social cohesion and social inclusion by focusing on collective activities. Hence, they have chosen to subsidise citizen initiatives because they consider civilians the ones that are the most knowledgeable and capable of improving their living environment. This research will be valuable for their policy programme in multiple ways. It will give insights into the process of social cohesion and how it develops through citizen initiatives. With these insights, they can check if and how they reach their policy goals, and if they can adjust their efforts or subvention rules in order to correspond with the preferred outcomes. Lastly, this research will underpin their policy efforts by demonstrating the importance of societal initiatives in the process of the development of social cohesion and communities.
2. SOCIAL COHESION AND SOCIETAL PARTICIPATION: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the following pages, I will present the theoretical choices for the use of the main concepts of social cohesion and societal participation. First, there will be a reflection on the ongoing debate to enhance social cohesion. Secondly, there will be an elaboration on the main concepts in this research. Thirdly, a more detailed account of social cohesion is given in the third section. Fourthly, the relationship between societal participation and social cohesion is set out. Fifthly, the conceptualisation of social cohesion is set out in a model and discussion about the added value of the use of this model is part of this section.

2.1 Debates on social cohesion

Over the last twenty years, scholars from diverse disciplines have carried out much research towards the process of social cohesion (Beauvais & Jenson, 2002; Botterman, Hooghe & Reeskens, 2012; Chan, To & Chan, 2006; Hulse & Stone, 2007; Jenson, 1998, 2010; Kearns & Forrest, 2000; Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016). However, this does not mean that it is a new and contemporary concept. Research into social cohesion has a long history in debates about social order and has its roots in sociological studies (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016). In sociology, the concept of social cohesion is often analysed regarding broader issues in society such as social integration, stability and disintegration (Chan. et al., 2006). Scientists have monitored the social development of societies in general, whereby optimistic as well as pessimistic viewpoints have arisen regarding the future of the social cement (Komter, Burgers & Engbersen, 2000). Cultural pessimists argue that modern processes lead to the undermining of solidarity and cohesion in society (Komter et al., 2000). Whereas, others are more optimistic and claim that such adverse effects do not happen that quickly because societies find new forms of solidarity (Komter et al., 2000). Also, Botterman et al. (2012), argue that there is not so much a decline of social cohesion in many societies, but a change in forms of solidarity which result in new modern and structural forms. Schmeets and Te Riele (2014), for instance, claim in their research that the broad regarded notion of a decline of social cohesion stands on weak grounds when looking at the participation and trust levels in the Netherlands. According to the research of Schnabel and De Hart (2008), individuals in the Dutch society nowadays are connected differently with each other, and there are new ways in which people are committed to each other, which are less strict.
2.1.1 Sharpening divisions?
In general, the phenomenon of social cohesion and its effects convey a positive connotation - the more, the better. However, sociologists point out that groups having much internal cohesion is not necessarily a positive outcome. The stronger the internal group bonds, the harder the lines between other groups will be. When the internal coherence of a group becomes stronger, the more likely the individuals in this group will separate themselves from others, which can be accompanied with less warm or even hostile feelings (Tiemeijer, 2017). Therefore, the promotion of stronger ties does not necessarily account for positive effects in all contexts. Moreover, social cohesion at the local level is also controversial within academics. Several researchers think it can be harmful to the overall society when for instance strong cohesive communities contribute to a divided and fragmented city (Forrest & Kearns, 2001). Also, Dekker and Bolt (2005) agree with this and argue that an effective strategy to enhance social cohesion should depend on the social geographical context. However, there are also scholars that think that bonding in local communities is a condition for the sense of community at the societal level (Coser, 1956 in Van Houwelingen, 2016). In this way, enhanced ties on the local level contribute to the coherence at a greater societal level. Although different opinions in this regard have risen, research demonstrates that the bonding at one scale does not necessarily lead to enhanced ties at a higher scale (Van Marissiing et al., 2004).

The results in this research derive from the latter mentioned view on social cohesion that enhanced ties on one scale do not necessarily provide more bonding at a larger spatial scale. Statements made on the effects of societal participation in this research only apply to the bonding on the level of the citizen initiatives and not at the level of the entire neighbourhood, district or city. The group participating in these initiatives, are just a small representation on the whole of these geographical levels. Therefore, statements on the promotion of social cohesion, only account for the individuals that participate in these projects.

2.1.2 Communities lite
History has shown that the meaning of solidarity and communality within the Dutch society has changed radically because the binding power of societal institutions decreased and thereby so do familiar forms of living together (Schnabel & De Hart, 2008). In contrast to the former Dutch highly pillarized and organised society, sociologists see that in the current modern post-traditional Dutch society, people are
more loosely tied to each other, and that weak ties replace the strong ties of the former pillarized society (Duyvendak & Hurenkamp, 2004). In these new forms of connectedness, people are loosely tied to each other and have more fleeting, open and informal contact (Schnabel & De Hart, 2008). New and different types of social connections arise where citizens organise themselves informally and loosely in lighter forms of communities (Hurenkamp & Tonkens, 2011). With the term community lite Duyvendak and Hurenkamp (2004) refer to these dynamic and flexible communities. People nowadays tend to choose flexible and voluntarily membership which they can end easily instead of having strong ties in memberships for life, examples of these are sports clubs, friend clubs and, volunteering organisations (Duyvendak & Hurenkamp, 2004; Hurenkamp & Rooduijn, 2009). Citizen initiatives are built on these communities lite, but what ties come forth from these? This is the object of this study and underresearched.

2.2 Defining the concept

The main concepts in this research are social cohesion and societal participation which are discussed in this paragraph.

2.2.1 The quality of collective togetherness

The literature on social cohesion has highlighted several different aspects that are seen as relevant for this phenomenon. In general, it is regarded as a characteristic of a social system and not of individuals (Van Marissing et al., 2004). Moreover, it is a multidimensional concept and the phenomenon thus occurs in different societal systems like a family, group, or organization (Schuyt, 1997) but also at different scale levels like the neighbourhood, city or region (Kearns & Forrest, 2000). While most scholars agree that social cohesion, is the binding power of a social entity or system, there is no convergence of the different elements that constitute binding power and the indicators for this phenomenon. In addition, scholars disagree over the applicability of the elements of social cohesion. There are various societal systems (Chan et al., 2006; Wrong, 1994) but also spatial scales in the scientific debate that are considered to be appropriate or irrelevant (Kearns & Forrest, 2000).

Therefore, much of the research on social cohesion has focused on identifying and evaluating what elements are constituents of this concept and what indicators are significant to this phenomenon. However, findings remain unclear due to research in only specific societal and or geographical contexts. Moreover, some scholars criticise other scholars for including normative elements in their conceptualisation of social
cohesion. Elements such as individual freedom and equality are deemed to hinder critical monitoring of the social cement because these are not in a causal relationship with social cohesion (Komter et al., 2000, Forrest & Kearns, 2001; e.g. Huygen & De Meere, 2008). Schiefer and Van der Noll (2016) who have analysed the primary research on the concept of social cohesion, argue that such normative values are still in need of more empirical evidence and therefore should not be incorporated (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016). Following the disagreement on the conceptualisation, different criteria exist for the measurement of social cohesion. This has led to inaccessibility and confusion of the concept (Komter et al., 2000). Nonetheless, in much scientific research, levels of trust and participation in society are indicators for the measurement of social cohesion (Van Houwelingen, 2016). For many claim the decline of social cohesion is noticeable in the decay of mutual trust and social fabric (e.g. Schmeets, 2015; Van Houwelingen, 2016).

Although there is a wide variety of conceptualisations and approaches towards this concept, Schiefer and Van der Noll (2016) found in their comprehensive literature review on research towards this concept that there is overlap between these. According to them, previous approaches contain similar dimensions, and only the sub-dimensions of these differ because of specific ideologies or (political) agendas (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016). In this research, I choose to use their conceptualisation on social cohesion because of their extensive and critical review of the causal elements and indicators for this phenomenon. Their study found three essential dimensions for social cohesion: 1. social relations 2. identification and attachment 3. orientation towards the common good. Further, for clarification, when talking about social cohesion I refer to their definition: “... a descriptive, multifaceted and gradual phenomenon attributed to a collective, indicating the quality of collective togetherness” (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016, p. 595).

2.2.2 Citizen initiatives
Due to the recent and growing attention for citizen initiatives in Dutch policies, they appear as a new phenomenon, but this is not the case. Citizen initiatives were part of the Dutch society for many years but under different names such as private initiative or self-government (Oude Vrielink & Verhoeven, 2011). Citizen initiatives can have various meanings depending on the context and the conducted activities (Jager-Vreugdenhil, 2014). In general, they indicate as a cause for and by citizens in the social domain (Oude Vrielink & Verhoeven, 2011). The concept of citizen initiative can also have a political meaning in the sense that citizens can submit legislative proposals
(Oude Vrielink & Verhoeven, 2011). However, this definition does not account for this research because the focus is on the third generation of civic participation. This type of public participation entails the local initiatives of citizens and their contribution to the local society in the area of individual support to other civilians, the liveability of the neighbourhood or social cohesion (Movisie, 2015).

Throughout this dissertation, the term citizen initiative will be used to refer to forms of societal participation and not social participation (Jager-Vreugdenhil, 2011), because the goals of the selected initiatives are not only the increase of social contacts but broader societal objectives. Furthermore, I choose to view these citizen initiatives as societal organisations because this fits better with my overall research focusing on organised participation that pursue societal objectives. With this definition, I also want to emphasise the difference between the citizen initiatives in this study, from smaller forms of citizen participation such as watching each other’s children or taking care of neighbours’ houses during vacation (Oude Vrielink & Verhoeven, 2011).

### 2.3 Aspects of social cohesion

The existing literature on social cohesion is extensive and focuses particularly on the attitudes and behaviours of individuals for the analysis of this phenomenon (De Kam & Needham, 2003). Furthermore, previous research has established that social cohesion is evidenced by the quantity and quality of the social interaction between individuals (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016). In this research, the term social cohesion will be used in its broadest sense to refer to the degree wherein individuals and groups in society bond with each other.

In addition, it is worth noting that conclusions on the overall level of social cohesion should include the discussion of the differences per dimension (Bolt & Torrance, 2005; Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016). In other words, the dimensions of social cohesion can differ from each other on the degree of cohesiveness. An overlap between these dimensions will often occur, but it is possible that for instance people identify themselves strongly with their environment but at the same time are not having much contact with other residents (Forrest & Kearns, 2000). An interesting finding of the much-cited research of Lewicka (2010) about place attachment exemplifies overlap between the social relations and attachment dimension. She found that close relationships between neighbours predicted attachment to the neighbourhood but also to the city district and city (Lewicka, 2010). Another interesting example of other research of Lewicka (2011) is that the strength of community ties through for instance informal associational activities in the
neighbourhood predict place attachment positively. These findings suggest that residents that commit themselves to activities in their environments are probably in a certain way already attached to their social and physical surroundings.

For this research on horizontal cohesion, the extent to which residents feel a connection or identify with a social entity is central. Research has taken place on the group of participants and the associated scale level at which the activities take place, the neighbourhood, district and city. To determine the contribution of the three cases on cohesion, attention is paid in this research to the indicators of cohesive communities (see Figure 1) which are “characterized by close social relations, pronounced emotional connectedness to the social entity, and a strong orientation towards the common good” (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016, p.592).

Figure 1

*Dimensions of social cohesion*

![Dimensions of social cohesion](image)

2.3.1 Social connectedness - the primary component

**Social relations**: this dimension entails the social relations between groups and individuals and comprises of: social networks, trust, mutual tolerance and participation (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016). Social networks refer to the quantity and quality of social interactions between family, friends, acquaintances, and are for instance measurable through the frequency of visits to contacts in the neighbourhood.
Moreover, trust is also an important element because it forms an essential source for solidarity and strengthens cooperation, unity and identification. Mutual tolerance comprises of bonding and bridging social capital, whereby relations between diverse social groups entail networks and ties within as well across group boundaries. Finally, participation covers social interaction through civic engagement.

Many researchers regard the social relations aspect as the main pillar of social cohesion (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016). Often in studies on the concept of social cohesion, the social relations dimension entail Bourdieu’s (1986) popular conceptualisation of social capital. His terminology of social capital refers to the social networks in which individuals participate and the individual resources that people possess through their contacts, networks, mutual exchange, and norms and values (Van Stokkom & Toenders, 2010). Moreover, there are also some published studies (e.g. Kingsley & Townsend, 2006; Schnabel & De Hart, 2008) that describe social cohesion in terms of social capital. However, it is important to distinguish between social cohesion and social capital, because these concepts refer to different social phenomena (Woolley, 1998; Koonce, 2011). Social cohesion encompasses the internal binding power of a social system, whereas social capital relates to the social network on an individual level (Bolt & Torrance, 2005). The strong and weak ties, and the group memberships that individuals have, offer them the ability to be secured from personal risks (Gregory, Johnston, Watts & Whatmore, 2009). However, in this research, the focus will be on social networks because the research goal is to investigate the effects on the relationships within groups, instead of the opportunities that such a network gives to individuals.

Social networks refer to the social ties that individuals have with their kin, friends or neighbours. These form a core element of any social unity or structure because they are the primary medium for interpersonal interaction (Gregory et al., 2009). Therefore, social networks are a prominent aspect of social cohesion, because the relations ensure that individuals stay in a group (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016). These networks can be spatially concentrated because people choose to live nearby others that are already part of their networks, or people may develop ties with their neighbours (ibid.). Moreover, these networks may comprise of weak and strong ties. Strong ties are often part of networks in which people have much in common. (Granovetter, 1973). However, weak ties revealed to be highly relevant for exchange of new information and ideas between contacts (Granovetter, 1973).
The other two dimensions that are central to the concept of social cohesion, identification and orientation towards the common good, will be discussed in the next sections.

2.3.2 Emotional ties with place and community

**Belonging and attachment:** this component comprises of feelings of attachment or the identification with a social or geographical unit like a group, region, or country (Schiefer and Van der Noll, 2016). These are measurable on the degree wherein individuals perceive themselves as a substantial part of a group and the group as an important part of one’s self/identity (ibid). These entail emotional ties of an individual with a geographical place - place attachment - , and connections between people in a place, - community attachment (Brown, Raymond & Corcoran, 2015). The bonds among people or sense of community comprises of feelings of membership or belongingness to a group (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

The sharing of common living space does not necessarily create a sense of community, but it depends on the meanings that individuals give to a place which they express in their use of space (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Findings of major empirical research towards place attachment, however, indicates that social attachment – feeling connected with other residents - outweighs attachment with the physical dimension of places, for in particular the neighbourhood and district scale (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Lewicka, 2010). Another critical factor is the length of residence, which is of more importance to larger scales, such as the city (Lewicka, 2010). It is essential to distinguish between the social and physical attachment that people can have with their environment:

Some people feel attached to a place because of the close ties they have in their neighbourhood, generational rootedness, or strong religious symbolism of the place, that is, because of social factors; others may feel attached to the physical assets of places, such as beautiful nature, possibility of recreation and rest, or physically stimulating environment. (Lewicka, 2011, p.213)

Although research has demonstrated that social attachment is more significant than physical attachment (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001), characteristics of spatial areas also have their influence on place attachment and thereby societal participation. I,
therefore, deem it is important for this study, in particular for the contribution on attachment to the environment, to take these into account. Moreover, there are socio-demographic characteristics of these geographical contexts, which form indications or predictors for feelings of attachment towards the place and the residents (Lewicka, 2011). Socio-demographic predictors in this regard are residence length, mobility and home-ownership (ibid). Research, however, has indicated that there is no consensus on the relevance of physical indicators because there is a lack of theory about how emotional bonds between people and the physical surroundings come about (Lewicka, 2010). Moreover, place attachment seems also to correlate with sociodemographic characteristics, namely sex and age. Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) have found these essential predictors whereby women were more tied to space, and in general older people indicated to attach themselves more to places the older they get.

However, having strong community ties also affect an individual’s emotional bonds with place positively. Individuals can attach themselves to places with different scales ranging from the home, neighbourhood, district, city or higher scale levels (Anton & Lawrence, 2014). Research further suggests that the intensity of an individual’s place attachment which comprises of place identity and place dependence differs due to the amount of contact, the size and location of the place (ibid). However, studies towards the effects that scale or community size can have on attachment do not provide conclusive answers to this relationship and suggest that other factors are of more importance for feelings of attachment (Lewicka, 2011). Another study suggests that place attachment occurs more when it relates to definable spaces. For instance, the neighbourhood, as opposed to the home, is already harder to define by its boundaries and thereby harder to identify with as space (Anton & Lawrence, 2014).

2.3.3 Community commitment

Orientation towards common good: This dimension consists of two components; feelings of responsibility and solidarity, and compliance to social order (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016). A certain degree of commitment is needed whereby individuals are willing to act for the community instead of their personal needs. Moreover, feelings of attachment or solidarity towards others manifest itself in people’s willingness to care for each other. So do people help each other out in their living environment? The second sub-component acceptance of social order and compliance to social rules and norms, consists out of the acknowledgement of societal institutions
and compliance to the rules of living together. Societal institutions need to receive sufficient legitimacy so they can regulate and monitor the social order. In addition, the social order forms the basis for reaching common goals by individuals and their groups (Wrong, 1994).

2.4 The relation between societal participation and social cohesion

In this chapter, the relationship between societal participation and the three dimensions of social cohesion is set out. First, potential effects of citizen participation and citizen initiatives on social cohesion are discussed. After this, the assumption of societal participation and the promotion of social cohesion is critically discussed, by examining the direction of the relationship between the two variables, whether there is already a link between the participant’s initial participation and social cohesion. Are participants active because they have feelings of solidarity and therefore participate in an initiative in their immediate environment, or does more connectedness follow from participation in such an initiative? Finally, conditions and mechanisms for the promotion of social cohesion, based on research on green initiatives in the neighbourhood are discussed.

2.4.1 From local initiative to more social cohesion

Many studies towards citizen participation assume that participation of residents lead to more social cohesion in the neighbourhood (Van Marissing, 2008; Bronsveld, 2016). Citizen initiatives are deemed to have all sorts of positive effects and contribute to social cohesion in multiple ways (Bronsveld, 2016). However, there is a wide range of citizen initiatives that influence social cohesion in different ways.

Moreover, studies investigating the effects of citizen participation on social cohesion often focus on political citizen participation in the neighbourhood (Van Marissing, 2008). In these studies, there are expectations that citizen initiatives that affect the political decision process, helps creating bonds and feelings of responsibility for the neighbourhood and thereby has effects on social cohesion (Edelenbos, 2006; Tonkens, 2010). Other studies, are about active citizenship in general (Walraven & Odé, 2013), or other forms of citizen initiatives, for instance green initiatives such as community gardens (Buijs, Elands & Van Dam, 2015; Mattijssen, Buijs, Elands & Van Dam, 2015) but is not explicitly focused on how societal participation of citizens can affect more social cohesion. The few studies that have investigated the effects of societal participation and social cohesion were not conclusive on the effects that
societal participation can have on the bonding between participants and the environment. According to empirical research of the WRR (Tiemeijer, 2017), participation in a volunteer organisation or the mixing of groups is not relatable to more generalised trust. Such interventions were found to be only resulting in positive feelings among the individuals that had direct contact with each other. However, research of Van Marissing (2008) illustrates how societal participation in the neighbourhood enhances general trust in other residents because participants learn more new positive information about the neighbourhood. Moreover, this study found that involvement in the neighbourhood enhanced mutual trust, understanding and respect between residents (Van Marissing, 2008).

2.4.2 Mechanisms and societal participation
In the research of Van Arum et al. (2009) 140 interventions of societal projects and programs towards more social cohesion were analysed on their effectiveness and categorised into six functions. They defined social cohesion concerning neighbourhood-based residents involvement and bridging contact. I will use these functions (Van Arum et al., 2009, pp. 15-16) for the analysis of the cases in this research because the initiatives in this study are also about residents involvement and bridging contact between different groups. In addition, the differentiated functions will help in determining what the purpose was wherefore the projects were employed. Finally, by determining the functions of the projects, the relationship between societal participation and promotion of cohesion becomes analysable. These functions are:

1. the accommodating or organizing of social encounters
2. the accommodation of common interest in the forms of sport, culture and hobby
3. the sharing of knowledge: learning from each other
4. the supporting of common neighbourhood interest (liveability, social coherence, safety, etc.)
5. the solving of problems and conflicts
6. strengthening informal support and aid networks (neighbourly assistance)

It is important to take these functions into account, as stated earlier because societal projects with different functions target the enhancement of social cohesion in different ways. Therefore, the goals and functions of the societal initiatives will be brought into relationship with their effects on the three dimensions of social cohesion to investigate the mechanisms behind this process further.
Conditions

Research of Vreke et al. (2010) on green citizen initiatives, found necessary mechanisms or conditions for the involvement of residents and the enhancement of social cohesion. I made use of these conditions and mechanisms for this research because societal initiatives share common general characteristics with green initiatives which are useful for the analysis on the promotion of cohesion. Moreover, the mechanisms Vreke et al. (2010) differentiated are suitable for this study, because they maintained a somewhat similar conceptualisation of social cohesion, wherefore the link between societal participation and social cohesion can be made. The mechanisms reveal how the initiatives and the corresponding activities lead to the promotion of social cohesion.

Vreke et al. (2010) found in their research that the promotion of neighbourhood-based social cohesion depends on the creation of favourable conditions for the involvement of residents in their neighbourhood. Neighbourhood cohesion was found to be influenced by three conditions (Frieling, 2008; Völker et al., 2007 as cited in Vreke et al., 2010, p.16): 1. The number of meeting opportunities in the neighbourhood; 2. The low threshold of contacts between residents; 3. The motivation of residents to invest in relationships in the neighbourhood.

Initiatives can directly influence the first two conditions through their design and setup. However, the last condition is not susceptible to influence as research demonstrates that it depends on how long a person thinks he is going to stay in the neighbourhood; the longer residents intend to keep living there, the more they are motivated to invest in relationships (Anton & Lawrence, 2014). Also, then the likelihood that the individual identifies himself with the place is more significant, more so when this place contributes to feelings of distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Anton & Lawrence, 2014). Moreover, homeowners are also more motivated to invest in neighbourhood ties because their interests in a lively neighbourhood are financially driven.

In their research, moreover, Vreke et al. (2010) found that the green initiatives contributed to more social cohesion mainly because the initiatives functioned as meeting place and common good that residents cared for. They differentiated four categories of mechanisms whereby green in the neighbourhood such as shared vegetable gardens contributed to more social cohesion depending on the nature, size design and quality of the initiatives:
1) **Usage:** Through the initiative as a meeting place, residents can meet during activities (Vreke et al., 2010). Moreover, social networks can be built or extended during these meetings and regular moments of contact ensure that people are no longer unknown to each other (Van Marissing, 2008).

2) **Maintenance:** The initiative can function as an object of mutual activities, whereby these are managed or maintained.

3) **Influencing policies:** The initiative can function as common good, where participants try to reach specific goals based on shared interests. It is vital to distinguish participation based on common good, which might be a shared problem, from activities where people are active because of common personal characteristics (Van Marissing, 2008). In the first instance, participation aimed at solving a common problem has different effects on social cohesion, then in the second example whereby people participate out of common interests.

4) **Identification (ibid):** as a source of attachment or identification whereby residents feel involved with the living environment and its residents.

Moreover, Vreke et al. (2010) have found in their research that the green initiatives had small-scale effects attributable to the local and neighbourhood level. However, these initiatives were also found to affect the broader living environments wherein they took place (ibid).

I regard the conditions and mechanisms as significant findings for the analysis of the causal relationship between societal participation and social cohesion. Moreover, although these conditions are related to the neighbourhood scale, I expect that the mechanisms behind societal involvement on the other scales will recur somewhat similarly.

### 2.5 Conceptualisation and model

In the following paragraph, the chosen conceptualisation of social cohesion is set out with corresponding dimensions and indicators, whereby this phenomenon was measured. Moreover, the added value of this conceptualisation for the research of the enhancement of social cohesion is described. This research initially was focused on researching social cohesion at the neighbourhood level, but gradually it became clear that this scale was not relevant for all the projects. Thus during the research, questions were also asked about the district and city scale. However, because the neighbourhood level played such a central role in this research due to policy assumptions of
communities at the neighbourhood scale and because the neighbourhood scale is overrepresented in scholarly research, in the interviews the focus was primarily set on neighbourhood based cohesion.

**Table 1**

*Conceptualisation social cohesion by Forrest and Kearns*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common values and a civic culture</strong></td>
<td>Common aims and objectives; common moral principles and codes of behaviour; support for political institutions and participation in politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social order and social control</strong></td>
<td>Absence of general conflict and threats to the existing order; absence of incivility; effective informal social control; tolerance; respect for difference; intergroup co-operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities</strong></td>
<td>Harmonious economic and social development and common wealth disparities standards; redistribution of public finances and of opportunities; equal access to services and welfare benefits; ready acknowledgement of social obligations and willingness to assist others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social networks and social capital</strong></td>
<td>High degree of social interaction within communities and families; civic engagement and associational activity; easy resolution of collective action problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place attachment and identity</strong></td>
<td>Strong attachment to place; intertwining of personal and place identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The framework of Kearns and Forrest (2000) for social cohesion is widely used in scientific debates about social cohesion and is developed for evaluation of social cohesion on a macro level. Their framework forms the basis for the conceptualisation of social cohesion in this study. Kearns and Forrest (2000) discern five different dimensions that constitute a cohesive society (see Table 1); 1. Common values and a civic culture; 2. Social order and social control; 3. Social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities; 4. Social networks and social capital and, 5. Place attachment and identity. Moreover, according to Forrest and Kearns (2000), the dimension of social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities, is less relevant to the district and neighbourhood level as these are matters of national policy. Furthermore, Bolt and Torrance (2005) noticed the first two dimensions are similar to each other. So, on the
neighbourhood level, they argue that only three of these dimensions are valid for measurement. These are:

- Social interactions (behaviour)
- Common values and a civic culture (norms and values)
- Neighbourhood attachment (experience)

### 2.5.1 Differences and values of applied models

The model of Bolt and Torrance (2005) and that of Schiefer and Van der Noll (2016) (see Table 2) are very similar to each other, as their dimensions and the descriptions are almost identical because these are both based on the general and primary model on social cohesion of Kearns and Forrest (2000). However, differences between the two models exist in their relevance for different scales. Bolt and Torrance’s (2005) model focuses on the neighbourhood scale and therefore does not fit the geographical scale of all the cases in this research. However, the model of Schiefer and Van der Noll (2016), applies to the micro, meso and macro level of social systems and any spatial level wherefore it fits with this research on social cohesion of participant groups at the neighbourhood, district and city level.

Moreover, in the model of Schiefer and van der Nol (2016), the second dimension of attachment and identification focuses not only on place attachment but also on community attachment in a social entity. Therefore, this conceptualisation is beneficial to this research, because it aligns with the hypothesis in this research that societal participation in a citizen initiative contributes to more feelings of belongingness within the social unit, but also with the geographical unit where the projects take place.

The main benefit of using the model of Schiefer and Van der Noll (2016) is that through their literature review they differentiated the core elements and subcomponents, with which analytical research is possible. Only the aspects that are in a causal relationship with social cohesion are part of this model, which is based on broad, extensive literature research towards the concept (ibid). The dimensions and components they differentiated as essential, follow from a critical analysis of the order of relationships between components, antecedents and consequences (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016). Their literature review has resulted in an adequate set of measures for this phenomenon and therefore allows critical empirical research towards researching the promotion of social cohesion through citizen initiatives.

Furthermore, Schiefer & Van der Noll (2016) also identified the identification with the geographical place where social interactions take place, as a critical aspect of
social cohesion, and especially in reference to participation. It should be stressed that, without this element, the other dimensions of social cohesion could also reflect the overall humanity of people instead of social cohesion (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2016). In this research, I also depart from the assumption that feelings of involvement with the geographical scale where the societal initiatives take place are essential for the overall feeling of connectedness. Because their conceptualisation allows to research this relationship in diverse societal systems as well as at various geographical scales this conceptualisation also suits better. For these reasons, I choose to conduct my research further with the dimensions and indicators in this model.

### Table 2

**Constituting elements of social cohesion by Schiefer and Van der Noll**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social relations</strong></td>
<td>Social relations between groups and individuals</td>
<td>• Social networks: quantity + quality of social relations (individual) and social networks (group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Participation: political and socio-cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Trust: horizontal and vertical relations in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mutual tolerance: intergroup attitudes and social distance (support for diversity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attachment and identification with a social unity</strong></td>
<td>Feeling attached to or identify with the social entity (a group, region, country, or trans-national entity such as the European Union)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation towards the common good</strong></td>
<td>Feelings of responsibility for the common good and the compliance to social rules and order.</td>
<td>• Feelings of responsibility for the common good, solidarity (acting for the needs and benefits of the group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Acceptance of and compliance to social order and social rules. (acknowledgement of societal institutions and compliance to “the rules of the game” of living together)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


#### 2.5.2 Adjustments

Table 3 provides the overview of the adjusted model on horizontal cohesion that applies for the inquires in this research. I adjusted the model of Schiefer and Van der
Noll (2016), so it aligns with researching horizontal cohesion at the neighbourhood, district and city scale. The three dimensions of social cohesion are mostly concerned with the coherence between groups of residents, or horizontal cohesion (Van Marissing et al., 2004). However, in the social relations dimension, I adjusted the trust indicator, so the focus concerns only the relations between residents, instead of vertical cohesion with residents’ organisations, and other formal parties within the neighbourhood such as the district office, district council and municipality (Van Marissing et al., 2004). Due to this research focusing on the enhancement of horizontal cohesion through citizen initiatives, vertical cohesion is excluded from the model.

Furthermore, I have added indicators of the model of Bolt and Torrance (2005), because as earlier stated the primary aim was to research neighbourhood cohesion and the model of Schiefer and Van der Noll (2016) was not specified at a geographical scale. Moreover, one of the shortcomings of Schiefer and Van der Noll (2016) their model was the limited number of indicators for the differentiated dimensions. Therefore I used relevant indicators of the similar dimensions of the model of Bolt and Torrance (2005) to overcome these deficiencies. In the social relations dimension, I have added bonding and bridging social capital, and changed participation in to formal participation. In the attachment and identification dimension, I have adjusted the indicators for measurement of the social unities central in this research – the participant group and the corresponding geographical unit. The experience of the participants of the initiative becomes central and measurable through the adjusted indicators of this dimension on the level of the community initiative and the scale on which the activities take place. Also, in the orientation towards the common good dimension, I have added asking and willingness to help neighbours as indicators. Moreover, the levels of analysis of Bolt and Torrance’s model - behaviour, experience and norms and values - are added to the dimensions of Schiefer and Van der Noll that are closely related and used for the analysis of the results.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social relations (behaviour)</td>
<td>• Social networks: quantity and quality of social relations (individual) and social networks (groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Participation: active involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Individual commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Collectively oriented commitment/ societal participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Trust: horizontal (between individuals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mutual tolerance: intergroup attitudes and social distance (support for diversity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bonding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Contact with other participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Place of residence of friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Place of residence of family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bridging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Contact with residents (depending on case: neighbourhood/district/ city)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Interactions between diverse residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attachment and identification with community initiative and its geographical unit (experience)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-perception in groups/perception of the social group as an important part of one’s self-identity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Individual identification with community initiative and its geographical context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social connectedness with community initiative and its geographical context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Orientation towards the common good (norms and values)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Feelings of responsibility for the common good, solidarity (acting for the needs and benefits of the group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Acceptance of and compliance to social order and social rules (Recognition of social institutions and compliance to social norms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Asking help neighbours</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Willingness to help neighbours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

3.1 Qualitative research

In this qualitative research, I conducted field research in the three cases where multiple meanings that the participant group of the citizen initiatives gave to social cohesion were studied in their context (Braster, 2000). This study was explorative by nature because there was not much research towards the effects of societal initiatives on social cohesion. Because of an empirical lack of knowledge, this exploratory research tried to map the different aspects and effects of the process that social cohesion entail. Also, I tried to gain insight into the rationales behind the subsidy regulation of the Liveability policy program for analysis of their assumptions regarding social engineering. I did this by analysing the policy documents and conducting interviews with policymakers - and advisors. This research investigated if the hypotheses that underline the subvention rules for eligible projects are correct and thereby the research findings contribute to policymaking.

Moreover, the three dimensions of social cohesion were researched on a micro level collecting the perspectives of participants through interviews, participant observations and document analysis. In this multiple case study, the phenomenon researched entails the development of social cohesion, and the context of the case is the citizen initiative. The focus was on societal participation where participants worked on broader societal goals through their enrollment in the projects. Furthermore, the research population was the participant group in the initiatives: the initiator(s), the implementer(s) and the participants.

3.2 Data collection

To determine the influence of citizens' initiatives on social cohesion, interviews and participatory observations were held and internal documents analysed. With the framework of Schiefer and Van der Noll (2016) who differentiated the three dimensions of social cohesion, the phenomenon became measurable, and it was possible to research how the activities influenced these. As a result, I inventoried opinions and attitudes, and observed behaviour related to the constituent elements of social cohesion. Thus the influence of societal initiatives on the degree of social cohesion was analysed on the individual level. When looking at the impact, these organisations can have on the social cohesion of society; it is difficult to measure and
achieve this because the impact is always on just a part of society (Koonce, 2011). On the other hand, it is possible to look at the impact that the activities have on the group of participants that participate. That is why this research focused on the group of participants in these organisations.

Because of the explorative nature of this multiple case study, I chose to study diverse cases that had, in general, some similarities. However, the most important feature which the projects share is that they are funded from the same policy program and the underlying assumptions that they would generate more cohesion. On this principle, the cases are similar and comparable to each other. Moreover, because the three initiatives are societal projects, this research will also help with developing a broad base for a theory regarding these types of projects and the mechanism behind these which cause more social cohesion.

3.2.1 Research population

The fieldwork was based on initiatives that the province of Gelderland subsidised, and therefore this research took place in the context of the province. The case selection was thus partially limited to the list of funded projects of the subsidy regulation and their definition of societal projects. The requirements that were set out in the subsidy regulation for the activities in the project proposals were projects that: contribute to experienced liveability problems, are carried out by cooperating citizens, consist of substantive themes where citizen power is noticeable, and have a high likelihood of contribution to social cohesion on the local level. Moreover, citizen initiatives were defined as joint activities, which serve the general interests of citizens, that are non-profit and voluntary.

Although the case selection was thus influenced by the selection already made by the province, I still was able to choose projects within the funded list. Within this list, I made use of purposive sampling (Boeije, 2005) for the case selection. Criteria for the selection of the projects were as follow projects that clearly met the criteria of the policy; projects that already commenced for some time; a diversity of spatial contexts where the projects took place; a diversity of project goals and population groups.

Moreover, the case selection in this study was made for practical reasons, because only three of the citizen initiatives had started for a more extended period which made proper research possible. Besides, these projects also met substantive criteria. The projects were all long-term projects that had societal goals, which tried to bridge gaps between diverse population groups and took place on the local level in urban areas.
Another important reason for this case selection was the location of these projects. The projects all took place in different urban areas, whereby I took the physical characteristics into account for their influence on social cohesion. Often empirical studies towards the phenomenon of social cohesion research this phenomenon in problem neighbourhoods whereby the results can distort the image of how this process takes place (Forrest & Kearns, 2001). Overall, the neighbourhood Spijkerkwartier has gone through a gentrification process and has become a desired destination to live, whereas Apeldoorn-Zuid, is a city district with many societal problems, and Doetinchem as a city has over the years become the centre of the Achterhoek region because of its many facilities. These diverse urban areas, provided the research with a broad perspective in the context of diverse physical environments on social cohesion.

3.2.2 Multiple case study
Three citizen initiatives were researched with a multiple case study research design whereby social cohesion as a social phenomenon was studied in depth for over a more extended period (Yin, 2013). The strength of this research method was that the ability to research the process of social cohesion in depth in the diverse citizen initiatives with their many characteristics and functions, through multiple levels of analysis (Braster, 2000). Also, social cohesion is a process that develops differently per social entity, and therefore a multiple case study was the most apparent research design. This research design made it possible to give the most insights into how it develops in diverse social entities and social geographic contexts. Moreover, the concept of social cohesion in this study was operationalized to the corresponding spatial levels of the societal projects in order to research the effects on the various scales. This in-depth research made it possible to determine how social cohesion was affected in diverse project settings, but also spatial settings, and which mechanisms were behind the process of more social relations, more feelings of connectedness and more orientation towards the common good.

Moreover, the case study method was the most suitable for this research because small group behaviour and attitudes were central to the understanding of the process of social cohesion on a micro-level (Yin, 2013). Moreover, this method allowed empirical data collection under the participants of the citizen initiatives with various characteristics (Yin, 2013). The projects had different features and goals and took place on the neighbourhood, district and city level. These aspects affected social cohesion in many different ways and therefore were worth to consider in this case study.
Lastly, it was a suitable design because the case study method is particularly important for organisational and policy research (Boeije, 2005). The cases for this research were selected as a sample of the broader projects domain that the findings contribute to (Swanborn, 2013). I assessed the assumptions of the policymakers of the program of Liveability with the results I gained through this research. Thereby I was able to give recommendations for the future funding of societal projects that likely will contribute to more social cohesion.

The main criticism on case study research is the lack of generalizability and verifiability of research results (Braster, 2000). In this research, I countered these critiques by studying multiple cases with various data collection strategies (Yin, 2013). I studied these three diverse cases thoroughly by the qualitative data research methods of in-depth interviewing, participant observation and document analysis by which internal validity raised. The results became verifiable and comparable through the use of the different measurement procedures (Yin, 2013), and demonstrate how social cohesion develops in three distinct societal initiatives with different geographical contexts.

Moreover, external validity was raised because of the multiple cases selected on their representability of their contribution to the process of social cohesion. As earlier stated the criteria with which the cases were selected allowed comparison of results. These three initiatives were diverse in design and goals but were comparable on the policy of the program of Liveability. Moreover, the three cases took place in urban areas, had societal goals and were all funded with the same assumption about the mechanism that was thought to enhance social cohesion. Therefore, the external validity lies in the comparing of the cases on the same policy rationale, and their contribution to the process of social cohesion measurable on the three dimensions.

### 3.3 Data analysis

For the purpose of analysis, I compared the empirical data; namely the interviews, participant observations and documents of each case separately. The first step in this process was to transcribe all the interviews and to process all of the field notes that emerged from the participant observations into coherent descriptions. After this, I provided the collected data and the documents with codes in the programme Atlas-Ti whereby I could compare the data through the codes. Through the adding of codes, important themes came forward, and relationships between the codes were made. Through this process, a network with a hierarchy of codes developed, which resulted
in an overview of how the three projects served each dimension of social cohesion. After this, I continued the analysis of the collected data by comparing the diverse results with the research findings of the literature from the chapter on the theoretical framework.

To understand the role of societal initiatives, I brought the functions differentiated by Van Arum et al. (2009), and the conditions that Vreke et al. (2010) differentiated for neighbourhood involvement, described in the literature section, in relation to the three differentiated dimensions of social cohesion. The citizen initiative as a meeting place, as a common interest, as a source where knowledge is exchangeable and as a source of support for common neighbourhood interest were helpful for the analysis of the relation between activities and more social cohesion (Van Arum et al., 2009). Overall, the findings of the research of Van Arum et al. (2009) and Vreke et al. (2010) complimented each other and formed important markers for the mechanisms behind the societal initiatives. These helped in identifying if and how the projects as social organisations influenced the degree of bonding.

Eventually, the comparance of results with the literature findings resulted in thick descriptions of attitudes and behaviour of the participants through which patterns of connectedness became visible, and the mechanisms behind social cohesion were abstracted and put in the context of the citizen initiative.

3.4 Methodological reflections

At first, this multiple case study set out to investigate how societal initiatives contribute to specifically neighbourhood cohesion. However, during the empirical research, it appeared that the effects of social cohesion that were measurable predominantly applied to enhanced ties between participant members of the group. Participation in most cases did not result in more ties with the neighbourhood, district or city. Moreover, the results of this investigation demonstrate that only the Spijkerbed hotel case succeeded in contributing to more bonding with the neighbourhood environment. As a result, the phenomenon was approached more broadly by studying connections of the participant’s groups within the societal projects and with the geographic scale on which the projects took place, instead of neighbourhood cohesion alone. Therefore the aim of this study changed to providing insights on the process of social cohesion instead of neighbourhood cohesion, and to provide insights to policymakers that attempt to enhance social cohesion.

Moreover, study over a more extended period was recommended by other research (Van Dam, Salverda, During & Duineveld, 2014; Schiefer & Van der Noll,
2016) because social cohesion is a gradual phenomenon and effects of citizen initiatives also appear after a given period. However, in the process of the research, I studied the three different cases separately and therefore had less time overall to study them intensively over a longer period.

3.5 Introduction cases

In table 4 on this page, there is a quick overview of the three pilot projects with the information deriving from their corresponding subsidy documents. When looking at this table, it is noticeable that the citizen initiatives differ much in activities and goals. However, when looking at the functions of the initiatives, it can be said there is also a lot in common. The projects all provide opportunities for people to meet each other, they support common interests, and the projects are focused on the enhancement of the social capital of the participants. In chapter 5 there will be a more in-depth discussion per case, to place them in their geographical context, and with overviews of the rationales and goals of the projects, which are based on the internal documents of the projects.

Table 4

A quick overview of the three cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spijkerhotel</th>
<th>Buurtrestaurant</th>
<th>Meet &amp; Connect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration activities</strong></td>
<td>Nov. 2016 – Nov. 2017</td>
<td>1 June 2016 – 1 June 2018</td>
<td>1 jan. 2017 – 31 dec. 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geographical scale</strong></td>
<td>Neighbourhood</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target group</strong></td>
<td>Local residents</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Urban citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td>Guests book overnight stays and activities in the neighbourhood which residents arrange together.</td>
<td>Elderly and socially vulnerable groups can eat and follow activities at the restaurant.</td>
<td>Dutch citizens participate in a befriending program with holders of a residence permit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
<td>Arranging social encounters, supporting common interest, enhancing social capital.</td>
<td>Accommodating social encounters, supporting common interest, enhancing social capital.</td>
<td>Arranging social encounters, supporting common interest, enhancing social capital, accommodating common interest &amp; sharing knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>Enhancing sustainable connections between residents through cooperation.</td>
<td>Social integration, letting people take part and be part of a community.</td>
<td>Friendship, social integration, learning the Dutch language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intended results</strong></td>
<td>Bridging (intergenerational) gap</td>
<td>Bridging (intergenerational) gap</td>
<td>Bridging ethnic-cultural gap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. PROGRAM LIVEABILITY: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN POLICY GOALS AND RESIDENTS’ COMMUNITY LIFE

The policy program Liveability of the province of Gelderland has been running since 2016 and focuses on establishing mutual connections between citizens of Gelderland and an inclusive society. This program promotes social cohesion by supporting citizen initiatives through subsidy and also by professional support through alliance partners that give practical support to citizens during the project proposal phase. Moreover, through this program, initiatives of municipalities are also supported, and an important theme is enhancing local democracy. Lastly, an important component of this program is the facilitation and organisation of knowledge exchange on the topics of youngsters and democracy, refugee integration, and the LGBTI community.

In the following sections of this chapter, the intentions, assumptions and ambitions regarding the subsidy regulation for citizen initiatives will be discussed. These reveal the imaginations of the policymakers about the mechanisms behind societal projects and are relevant to discuss because these relate to the decisions that led to the financing of the initiatives in this study.

4.1 Policy imaginations

With the subsidy regulation for citizen initiatives, financial boosts could be given to projects that citizens wanted to undertake in their living environment. The initial idea was to subsidise big societal projects in for instance the area of energy renewal or other themes that relate to the quality of life. Policy officers saw that citizens were enthusiastic to improve their living environment, and thereby were willing to commit themselves to set up projects. One of the policymakers that created the policies at the beginning of the policy program articulated the connection between citizen initiatives and their primary objective of reaching more social cohesion as follows:

The assumption that citizen participation would lead to more social cohesion was based on common sense. When people do things, that provides something for the neighbourhood. Working together on something, that gives cohesion. People also have the heart for those things and also care to maintain those things. This is how people who have never seen each other learn to know each other. Moreover, an extreme example of this is for instance that someone who is lonely occasionally starts drinking coffee with someone else.
This quote illustrates the rationale behind the functioning of the subsidy regulation, whereby policymakers assumed a relationship between people performing activities in their neighbourhood and social cohesion based on common sense. The policymakers thought that citizen initiatives contribute to social cohesion because citizens work together on something that they are passionate about and want to care for in their environment. Therefore, primarily they thought that citizen initiatives fulfil a network function, but also act as common good for the neighbourhood by which it contributes to social cohesion. Residents meet each other through working together on something for their neighbourhood and thereby ties strengthen.

4.2 Connecting policy goals with practice

This paragraph explores shifts in the program and the rationales regarding these are discussed. Moreover, only the general objective of the policy program and the specific set up of the policy line on citizen initiatives is used and relevant for this analysis. The assumptions and design of policy practices that were set out in internal policy documents are visualised in a matrix. In this matrix, the focus is on the objectives, strategies and policy measures that led to the specific policy implementation. Also, changes in objectives and strategies over the course of the project implementation will be discussed.

4.2.1 Objectives and strategies

Various policy goals were set at the beginning of the residents’ initiatives scheme in order to reach the primary objective of more social cohesion in Gelderland. The program of Liveability began in 2016, and over time the definition of social cohesion and objectives in the regulation changed due to lessons learned in the policy implementation. The objective of the scheme supporting residents initiatives in the field of social cohesion was at the beginning of the policy program in 2016: “to strengthen the quality of life and social cohesion in neighbourhoods, villages and cities”.

By the concept of liveability, the policymakers meant the extent to which the social and physical environment meet the needs of the residents. Moreover, they defined the concept of social cohesion as the cohesion within - and between population groups, as well as the relationship between citizens and government.

Eventually, the policy officers adjusted and refined the objective of the subsidy regulation. In practice, the term liveability caused much confusion among applicants
because it is a container concept that can cover many topics apart from the enhancement of social cohesion. For this reason, the policymakers obliterated the concept entirely from the regulation scheme, and the policy objective from then on only focused on promoting social cohesion: “Subsidy . . . may be provided for activities of residents of neighbourhoods, villages or municipalities that focus on strengthening cohesion within a population group or between population groups including their evaluation”. This new policy objective also illustrates that they changed the definition of social cohesion for the resident’s initiatives subsidy regulation. For example, there is no longer a focus on the relationship between citizens and the government for this policy line, as they previously stated as their ambition through the promotion of social cohesion. Now the focus is only on the enhancement of cohesion between citizens.

Moreover, the transitions in the policy regulation on a substantive level, were also made based on reports of the WRR: *Vertrouwen in de buurt* (WRR, 2005) and *Wat is er mis met maatschappelijke scheidslijnen?* (Tiemeijer, 2017). Essential insights deriving from these reports that guided these policy transitions were according to the interviewees the limited feasibility of social engineering and the importance of creating encounters between people that the contact theory suggested. The policy advisors of the program sharpened the criteria notably including the demand that projects need to focus on the same group coming together on a frequent basis and that mutual activities in communities need to be central. Self-supportive activities were non-eligible because these activities focus on individuals instead of groups whereby they expected that these would not have effects on social connectedness in the community. In the following Table 5, in the box of policy measures, the assumptions and conditions regarding these policy changes are set out.

The three projects that are subject of this thesis were all submitted in 2016 under the old policy regulation. This is important to note because one of the three projects does not meet the new regulations anymore. The criteria for eligible activities changed to undertakings of joint activities that take place within larger population groups and not only between individuals or in small groups. The project Meet and Connect entails the meeting and connecting of families or individuals with their status-holders alone. This project would therefore not have received funding if the initiators submitted the proposal at a later stage.

**4.2.2 Reflection on objectives and strategies**

In the following reconstruction, the different objectives of the Liveability program are brought together as they feature in the different policy documents. Specifically, the
analysis of the rationallys and accompanying intervention strategies behind the citizens’ initiatives scheme is central in this matrix.

This matrix is based on the logical framework approach which is used extensively for the planning and management of development projects (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005). Such logframes are usually set up at the beginning of projects so these can be evaluated afterwards (ibid). However, this matrix does not serve as an evaluation tool, but an analytical tool and was constructed during the research. It provides an overview of the objectives and underlying rationales of the policy program and the subsidy regulation. Moreover, the matrix below helps in structuring the components of the policy program, to see these activities in relation to each other (Gasper, 2000). It also identifies the measures whereby the policymakers tried to achieve results (ibid).

It is important to note that this is a simplified reconstruction and representation of the citizen initiatives regulation based upon policy documents and thereby needs to be used with care because it can portray an authoritative evaluation of the social engineering in projects (Gasper, 2000). Specifically, the indicators, assumptions and conditions that are now part of this regulation were evaluated, analysed and adapted intensively during the policy implementation processes since the beginning of the program.

When analysing the general objective of the program of Liveability, it is striking that the policymakers regard the neighbourhood and village level as the spatial scales through which the enhancement of social cohesion as feasible through activities. Table 5 illustrates in the assumptions and conditions box of the general objective that the relationship between the support of activities in neighbourhoods and villages is made on the rationale of effectiveness. Policymakers regard the level of neighbourhoods and villages as the geographic level where interventions are the most effective because they think citizens have there the most capacity and influence.

It is furthermore noteworthy how the three dimensions of social cohesion are incorporated into the policy program and subsidy regulation. In the general objective of the policy program, the attachment dimension features through the acknowledgement of the importance of the feelings of belonging to the environment through connection with the historical and cultural identity of an area. Furthermore, the stated objective of the citizens regulation is only concentrated on the social relations dimension of the societal projects. Despite this, the dimension of orientation towards the common good, comes back in the explanation on the support of this subsidy regulation. As shown in Table 5 in the results sections, the activities may be carried out in the areas of sports, culture, living, nature, energy and economy because
the “initiatives in these areas touch people in their immediate environment”. This illustrates the assumption that activities in these substantive themes are of relevance for residents to undertake and to care for as common good in the local environment.

Moreover, what stands out from the data shown in Table 5 is that the policy measures do not have specific substantive requirements that need fulfilment for project proposals to be eligible for financial support. The only requirement stated is that proposals should incorporate frequent group activities at the core of the grant application. In contrast, there are five formulated requirements that projects should not meet, as these rule out possibilities for a subsidy.

Overall, these results indicate that the financial support of communal activities has a wide-ranging approach and thus a somewhat vague ambition to contribute to more social relations between diverse population groups. Moreover, although, the attachment and common good dimensions are also incorporated in the policy objectives and rationales, the strategy or specific objective of the subsidy regulation is only focused on the social relations dimension.

Table 5

*Matrix on policy program & subsidy regulation*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General objective</th>
<th>Citizen power, level of neighbourhood and villages, substantive themes with energy.</th>
<th>&quot;Civic strength and cohesion are essential conditions for effective, successful citizens' initiatives.&quot;</th>
<th>Vision Liveability for Provincial Executive January 19th, 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific goals</td>
<td>Coherence between population groups - and cohesion within population groups.</td>
<td>&quot;Connecting groups in society is one of the objectives. It is beautiful when activities are organized, different groups of people come into contact with each other. For example, between the elderly and young people, but also only the elderly, young people, status holders.&quot;</td>
<td>PowerPoint BOT 2018; Internal document on the assessment of applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Activities of residents of neighbourhoods, villages or municipalities that focus on strengthening cohesion within a population group or between population groups including their evaluation.</td>
<td>&quot;Without wanting to exclude certain areas, we believe that initiatives in the areas of sports, culture, living, nature, energy and economy are promising. Initiatives in these areas touch people in their immediate environment and fits our core tasks.&quot;</td>
<td>RRvG paragraph 2.10; Vision Liveability for Provincial Executive January 19th, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy measures</td>
<td>▪ the municipal council has no objection to the activities ▪ the activities align with the core tasks and the underlying plan objectives of the province; ▪ the activities are not already or are being carried out at the time the application is submitted; ▪ the application shows how the activities are evaluated; ▪ the activities do not have a profit motive; and ▪ the activities are regularly organized</td>
<td>&quot;It is especially important that the same target group comes together, this contributes to increasing social cohesion.&quot; &quot;Activity is more central than ever. It is really about doing things together. Free activities (walk-in hour, living room) or the possibility to (for example, a playground) are still not eligible.&quot; &quot;Incidental or annual activities are not eligible, they must be regularly and recurring.&quot; Mutual self-reliance - Doing things together - With frequency, the same target group Not: - Personal support - Noncommittal activities such as walk-in hours - Celebrations and parties - Physical adjustments</td>
<td>RRvG paragraph 2.10; Internal document; powerpoint new regulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Conclusion

This chapter reflected on how the policy program took shape in implementations and gradually shifted in its ambitions by progressing insights on the relationship between societal initiatives and the promotion of social cohesion. At the start of the program, the policymakers saw project proposals of citizens that were highly motivated to contribute to their environment. Policymakers, therefore, assumed that also other residents would also be already attached, to a certain degree, to their local environment and are already orientated towards the common good in some degree as their project proposals focus on shared goals for their community. Moreover, as can be deduced from the presented data in the matrix, the policymakers assumed a relationship between citizen initiatives and the promotion of more social cohesion based on the mechanisms of – identification, maintenance and usage (Vreke et al., 2010). These initiatives were deemed to function as a source of common good, for which residents are motivated to take care of as a source of joint activities; as a source of attachment whereby residents feel involved with the environment and its residents; and as a meeting place whereby people get to know each other, and social networks are built.
5. PURPOSEFULLY CREATING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RESIDENTS? CITIZEN INITIATIVES AND THEIR APPROACHES TO LOCAL COMMITMENT

In this chapter, the three citizen initiatives with descriptions of the geographical context and the content of the projects are set out. Social, geographical context is given on the neighbourhood Spijkerkwartier, the city district Apeldoorn West, and the city Doetinchem. Moreover, the detailed overviews of the projects are based on the documents applied for the subsidy application process. The social, geographic context reveals if it is likely that citizens that live there, are already attached to their place, and thereby predicts the (further) influence of the projects on identification and attachment with the spatial scales on which the projects take place. Furthermore, the overviews of the citizen initiatives provide background knowledge about the goals and rationales followed in the execution of the projects. The overviews help with the analysis of how social cohesion develops through these initiatives, as social cohesion is influenced differently according to the diverse set up of the projects.

Due to no convergence in the academic debate on which physical features are in causal relationship to place attachment, I do not take these into the context description. Nevertheless, in the interviews, I was aware of the influence that the physical features of areas can have on place attachment, for instance, “size of building, upkeep, level of area personalization, presence of greenery, and type of housing, predicted attachment to the . . . neighbourhood better than to city district and to city” (Lewicka, 2011, p.218). However, the physical feature that I deem important regarding place attachment is the boundedness of the neighbourhood, city district and city. The physical boundedness of the geographical unites or places are important, because as stated earlier, they also influence the feelings of identification and attachment.
5.1 Spijkerkwartier - neighbourhood in Arnhem

The quarter or larger neighbourhood Spijkerkwartier in the city of Arnhem is divided into three smaller neighbourhoods; the Hommelstraat, Spijkerbuurt and Boulevardwijk. This neighbourhood is an example of city expansion with a systematic approach. It is named after the two Spijkers, storehouses, which lay in the area (toelichting bij aanwijzing Spijkerkwartier-Boulevard Kwartier, Rijksdienst voor de Monumentenzorg, Zeist 2005). The northern border of the district and the neighbourhood Spoorhoek is determined by the railway that was built in 1845 to connect Arnhem with Amsterdam and eventually got extended to Germany in 1852 (Deel 11 van de Arnhemse Monumentenreeks “Spijkerkwartier en Boulevardkwartier”, Derks & Crols, 2002). The activities that took place in the societal project had a clearly defined spatial scale, namely the Spijkerkwartier where the organized activities took place and residents offered their beds. The aims, rationale and activities of the project are summarized in the following logframe.
5.1.1 Overview of Spijkerbed Hotel

**Spijkerbed hotel**: Generating societal values and strengthening of neighbourhood cohesion

**Goal**: Evolving into a sustainable, societal initiative where neighbourhood residents can be of significance for each other

**Activities**:
- Plan preparation
- Communication with neighbourhood
- Decorating guest houses
- Developing arrangements
- Periodical evaluation
- Distribution knowledge and skills

**Outputs**:
- Realized stays
- Arrangements
- Tours
- Dinners
- Meetings
- Profile film
- Societal business case

**Rationales**:
Exploiting resources already available in the neighbourhood. Because neighbourhood residents work together, share personal stories, experiences and talents with each other, so that durable connections can be made.

**Assumptions**:
Active, expert neighbourhood residents that want to participate, available resources in the neighbourhood, different neighbourhood entrepreneurs that want to support the initiative, and there is demand for such an initiative.

**External factors**:
Motivation participants, experience participants and guests, preparation and decoration of guest houses by participants, availability of guests, and participants, resources and networks in Spijkerkwartier.

**Figure 2**

In the neighbourhood Spijkerkwartier in Arnhem, there is a broad array of initiatives that residents take for their living environment. An overarching initiative there is called the BlauweWijkEconomie and is a social organisation for and by residents of this neighbourhood. They help educate and coach residents with their dreams and ideas for the neighbourhood, and by stimulating social entrepreneurship. The initiative of the Spijkerbed Hotel is built on this philosophy. It is developed by two active residents that wanted to contribute to a more connected and cooperative neighbourhood. The province of Gelderland funded this project because of the intended purpose to increase the social cohesion between residents of the neighbourhood and the innovative way of stimulating meetings.
In this pilot project, the initiators invented the “Spijkerbed Hotel” by composing surprising tailor-made arrangements for guests that live outside the neighbourhood and temporarily make them part of the Spijkerkwartier. The aim is to give the guests the full experience of being a neighbourhood resident by letting them stay with other neighbourhood residents and by inventing and creating activities that take place in the Spijkerkwartier. Often, guests are getting excursions through the lively neighbourhood and explanations about the history and different areas within it.

Furthermore, the coordinators or initiators of this project, match guests with activities that comply with their preferences which they could give beforehand. Moreover, they are always busy with finding a special place for dinner where they also invite other neighbourhood residents to come over. Unique to this project are the residents that volunteer to collaborate in such hotel arrangements and work together in preparing activities or providing a room for guests to sleep. Participants can become bed providers’ and offer their homes for the duration of the stay of the guests. Residents then offer the guests a room which they have made up in their style and provide guests, amongst other things, with breakfast and try to make them feel at home. Other participants, also residents from the neighbourhood, also often prepare meals together for the dinners in the evening and also attend these.

Moreover, residents are invited to also join in organised neighbourhood activities outside of the arrangements for guests. Such activities are a tour through the Spijkerkwartier or walking dinners, whereby residents eat at other residents’ homes.

Figure 2 shows the activities funded for their contribution to social cohesion in the activities section. These entail the coordination work of the project leader which make the actual activities where residents participate in, possible. The coordinators relied on the participation and commitment of residents for the accommodation of guests at their houses, the dinners, meetings, tours through the neighbourhood, and specific activities in the arrangements of guests. The last mentioned specific activities took place in the neighbourhood and were diverse, ranging from pole dancing in the local dance-bar to painting personal saucers at a painters studio.

The rationale from which the initiators thought this project would contribute to social cohesion, is mostly concerned with the potential influence on the quality and quantity of social relations. In this initiative, the goal was to evolve into a sustainable, societal initiative where residents could be of significance for each other. The initiators expect that through the activities, on which residents work together, the participants get to know each other better because they share stories, talents and experiences with each other.
Social cohesion expresses itself then in the outcomes of more cooperation, sustainable relationships between residents, decline of social isolation and meetings between residents (see figure). This project design with its goals and rationales indicate that it was intended to function as a meeting place where residents can meet and used as a source of support for common neighbourhood interest specified on more social cohesion. Moreover, the rationales indicate that the processes or mechanisms wherefore the project should lead to more social cohesion are the usage, whereby residents meet through the participation in activities, and maintenance because the residents help to maintain or manage the activities (Vreke et al., 2010).

5.2 Apeldoorn Zuid-West – Urban district of Apeldoorn

The urban district and large neighbourhood Apeldoorn Zuid-West is composed of two sub-districts, Apeldoorn-Zuid and Ugchelen. This district further is limited by the physical boundaries A1 in the South, the railway Amersfoort-Apeldoorn in the North West and the Apeldoorn Canal in the East. It further consists of eleven neighbourhoods; the Brummelhof, the Heeze, the Vogelbuurt, the Staatsliedenbuurt, Westenenk, the Metaalbuurt, the Componistenbuurt, the Rivierenbuurt, the
Edelmetaalbuurt, Winkeweijert and Ugchelen. In the case of the neighbourhood restaurant, the project was targeted at residents of the district Apeldoorn Zuid-West. However, the activities took place only in the meeting centre and nowhere else in the district, so the spatial scale was only relevant for the potential participants. Still, the hypothesis is that because residents meet other residents from the city district, it will have effects on their feelings of attachment and identification with Apeldoorn Zuid-West.

5.2.1 Overview of Buurtrestaurant Apeldoorn-Zuid

**Buurtrestaurant:** Meet the residents’ wish to start a neighbourhood restaurant in the district

**Goal:** Offering a place where one can meet, and eat inexpensive, healthy and good food so malnutrition is prevented, social isolation is lifted and people can participate

**Rationales:**
Neighbourhood residents will cook and eat together in the neighbourhood restaurant. Hereby people will meet each other and this further will lead to new contacts. Individuals will hereby emerge out of their social isolation. They participate again, and belong to something.

**Assumptions:**
Demand from present members (60) to weekly use the neighbourhood restaurant. Community centre ‘Ons Honk’ is the meeting place where one can cook and eat together.

**Activities:**
- Installation and purchase of kitchen
- Placement of disabled toilet
- Cooking together
- Eating together

**Outputs:**
- Realized neighbourhood restaurant
- Eating 3x in the week
- Cooking 3x in the week

**Outcomes:**
- More meetings between neighbourhood residents
- Increase of sustainable relations
- Neighbourhood residents find a “home in the neighbourhood”
- Decrease social isolation
- Reduction of malnutrition

**External factors:**
Availability, condition, motivation and experience of participants. Availability of cooks and chauffeurs.

**Figure 3**

*Buurtcoperative Apeldoorn-Zuid* is an organisation that was established in 2013 by two initiators that are also neighbourhood residents and devoted to the interests of their neighbourhood. They initiated this organisation after dramatic changes in the Dutch health and welfare sector because they saw this had an immense impact on the
residents that live here. This organisation offers help to residents that struggle with the consequences of the changes that took place. Another reason wherefore the initiators created this organisation was to combat loneliness amongst the elderly. In their view, this is one of the most significant problems in the city district. Overall, the initiators want to promote mutual contacts between residents.

In their community centre “Ons Honk” residents can meet, drink coffee, play games or perform creative or sportive activities. One of their main projects is called “Zuid Doet Samen” or South acts together. This project is central to the cooperation and entails seven *neighbourhood assistants* who pass by residents’ doors in their residential area in Apeldoorn-Zuid to make connections at that level. They are the eyes and ears of that part of the South of Apeldoorn and try to influence commitment on the neighbourhood – and street level. During their neighbourhood visits, the neighbourhood assistants encountered a common problem, lonely elderly who do not drink or eat enough. These problems seem to correlate with each other. Generally speaking because of the loneliness people forget to eat or drink. They do not feel they enjoy it anymore because it is not cosy or pleasant to do this on their own. Furthermore, often when the neighbourhood assistants passed by the homes of residents, they came across the lonely elderly. Hence, these assistants tried to bring them to the community centre so they could meet other people again.

As a result, the initiators were notified about the encountered problems and asked the people that already came to the community centre if they would like the idea of eating there well prepared and hot meals. The residents that already came there acknowledged the need and wish to eat together in the community centre. The experiences of the neighbourhood assistants with the lonely and malnourished elderly, combined with the wish of residents that already visited the community centre thus gave rise to the establishment of the neighbourhood restaurant. Because of this, the initiators started first with one day a week a hot meal that soon grew out successfully into three days offering meals for residents of which most are elderly.

The funded activities in this project entail the setting up of a neighbourhood restaurant where residents can meet for at least once a weak to come together to eat. These activities were expected to contribute to social cohesion because of the regularity in meeting moments. Central in this application is the joint cooking and eating for the lonely elderly, up to three times a week (see Figure 3). The idea was that the elderly prepared and cooked together a meal, which they could eat afterwards. The rationale behind the activities is that these promote social cohesion because people meet each other and thereby gain new social contacts. Thereby social isolation
would be prevented because people participate socially and belong to a group again (see Figure 3).

The initiators thus focused on the increase of social networks and social participation of the elderly within a group in order to reach more social cohesion. In the outcomes section of Figure 3, the expected results of the activities are set out, whereby the influence of the activities on social cohesion is measurable. The primary function of this initiative is thus a meeting place whereby people can socially encounter each other regularly which can result in strong social ties between residents. The proposed mechanisms whereby these activities promote social cohesion are the usage of the initiative as a meeting place and as a source of attachment whereby through participation at this place residents will feel involved with each other.

5.3 Doetinchem – City scale

In the case of the Meet and Connect project, there was not a clearly defined spatial scale on which the activities took place. Citizens that wanted to become a buddy in the Meet and Connect project may live throughout the municipality of Doetinchem. The contact between buddies and the statusholders families thus could take place throughout the whole municipality. However, all of the organised joint activities took place in the city centre of Doetinchem, and therefore I deemed the spatial scale of the city to be important in this study for feelings of identification and attachment. The city Doetinchem is the capital city of the municipality Doetinchem and located at the Oude IJssel river and the A18 motorway. The river Oude IJssel flows through the city and Doetinchem is also a hub of public transport. It is a middle-sized city which has
approximately 50,000 inhabitants and consists of the neighbourhoods: Halle-Nijman, IJzevoorde, Langerak and a part of the former village Wijnbergen.

5.3.1 Overview of Meet and Connect

**Meet and Connect**: Having a positive influence on the integration and participation of refugees with a resident permit in society

**Goal**: Establishing a sustainable connection between Dutch citizens and refugees with a residence permit

**Rationales**: Receiving status-holders hospitably and bringing them in contact with “normal” Dutch civilians will have a positive influence on the integration and participation in the Dutch society. Also the Dutch language will be practiced extra.

**Assumptions**: There is a need from Dutch citizens to contribute to integration but also to build a friendly relationship with status-holders. There is demand from status-holders to come into contact with Dutch citizens.

**Activities**: - Recruiting families - Organisation of information meetings - Having intake conversations - Assessing suitability - Maintaining contact with Vluchtelingenwerk & Buurtplein - Match conversations - Intermediate evaluations - Organizing training meeting - Restart conversation - Intervision - Final evaluation

**Outputs**: - Registration host families - Registration families holding a residence permit - Matchings Dutch host families with families holding a residence permit - Information meeting - Intervision meetings

**Outcomes**: - Less loneliness and isolation amongst status-holders - Increase knowledge of Dutch language - Evolving of equal and reciprocal relations between families - Increase of the awareness of problems regarding status-holders - Decrease anxiety/reluctance regarding status-holders

**External factors**: Motivation participants, experience participants, availability families, cooperation organizations.

*Figure 4*

The initiator started this project because she wanted to contribute to the integration of statusholders. In her social environment, she heard about the wishes of statusholders in Doetinchem to come into contact with Dutch citizens. This project has eventually been placed with the organisation Present Doetinchem because it fits with their
mission. In cooperation with a local refugee organisation, Vluchtelingenwerk Oost Nederland and another local neighbourhood organisation, Buurtplein BV, the coordinators of Meet and Connect work to connect Dutch citizens with status holders. At the time of the project proposal, in mostly Syria and Eritrea there were threatening situations, which increased the number of refugees that came to the Netherlands. These refugees try to integrate into the Dutch society and culture, but this proved to be very difficult as they do not meet many Dutch citizens apart from social workers. This project therefore aimed at building friendly relationships between Dutch citizens and status holders, as this is deemed critical for the integration in the Dutch society. Moreover, this project also emerged because there were signals of the residents of Doetinchem to come into contact with status holders and contribute to integration. Ultimately, the idea was that this contact would have a positive influence on integration and participation in Dutch society.

The project received a subsidy for the activities that lead to the connecting of status holders with Dutch families in order to build friendly contact and to work on integration. The funded activities are outlined in the scheme of Figure 4 and entail for the most part coordination work; the matching of status holders and Dutch citizens, the evaluation of contact, and the organisation of training and intervention meetings for the buddies.

Furthermore, refugees have often suffered multiple hardships, and have diverse backgrounds in culture and language which make having contact challenging. Therefore, the coordinator offers help in the form of advice or a sympathetic ear during moments of evaluation. Also, the organised training and intervention meetings for host families offer tools for the improvement of contact. Here buddies get advice from professionals, can exchange tips and discuss obstacles regarding the contact.

In general, all of the activities aimed at the goal of establishing a sustainable connection between the Dutch buddies and their status holders. The primary purpose of this initiative is thus functioning as a meeting place and opportunity for status holders and Dutch citizens. The intended social relations are further described as equal and reciprocal because the focus is on friendly contact and not contact based on the providing of assistance. Moreover, the Meet and Connect project has different goals (see Figure 4) regarding the contact for the two target groups.

For the status holders, the moments of contact mean opportunities to build friendship and to prevent social isolation or loneliness. Additionally, the contact offers opportunities for them to practice with learning the Dutch language. Equally, the contact means for the Dutch citizen an opportunity to build a friendship. Moreover,
another goal is to learn more about the background of statusholders resulting in raised awareness of the problems that statusholders face which may resolve any feelings of reluctance against statusholders.

The project was thus initiated to accommodate and organise social encounters, whereby the two groups come into contact with each other. Moreover, this initiative is a source where knowledge is exchangeable, and both groups can learn from each other; about the Dutch language, norms and values, but also about the background and problems of statusholders. The mechanisms that lead to more social cohesion, then are the usage of the initiative as a meeting place, and as a source of identification.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the different contexts of the citizen initiatives were set out. Both the geographical context and the design of the initiatives are essential for determining the influence of the initiatives on the degree wherein the participants bonded with each other and the living environment. The scales of the initiatives differ in size, where the Spijkerkwartier is the smallest scale of the neighbourhood, Apeldoorn South West, is a large neighbourhood or city district, and Doetinchem the largest scale of the city. Moreover, the design of the initiatives with the determined goals and rationales are of influence because these reveal how the approaches towards social cohesion differ within functions and intended mechanisms. The intended outcomes which also apply to the expression of social cohesion thus also differ due to diverse target populations and goals. The three cases, however, were all primarily intended to function as a meeting place where sustainable connections between residents may arise because of the usage mechanism whereby residents meet through their participation in the initiative. Moreover, the Spijkerbed hotel was also intended as a source of support for common neighbourhood interest specified on more social cohesion. Through the help of residents with the maintenance of the activities, social cohesion is expected to be promoted. In the case of the neighbourhood restaurant, the rationale behind the societal participation of elderly and the contribution to more social connectedness was the mechanism of identification. Elderly will feel part of a group again, and thereby also social isolation is prevented. Lastly, the Meet and Connect project was also intended to function as a source where knowledge is exchangeable, and people learn from each other. The mechanism which promotes social cohesion here would be identification because the participants get to know each other better based on knowledge exchange whereby they can identify sooner with each other.
6. COMMUNITIES LITE: MEETING EACH OTHER IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, DISTRICT AND CITY

The research aim was to investigate how and to what degree societal initiatives contribute to the promotion of social cohesion. By providing answers on the separate dimensions eventually, this analysis will result in an answer to the question by what mechanisms social cohesion develops and if it is an effective strategy to do so. In this chapter, discussion takes place on what each of the cases demonstrates about the three dimensions of social cohesion; the contribution to the quality and quantity of social relations, feelings of belongingness and development of common goals.

6.1 Spijkerbed Hotel – Arnhem

This initiative was thought to be unique according to the respondents, as they claimed that people in this particular neighbourhood are creative, have positive energy and are active in organising things for their environment. According to the interviewees, this project cannot take place elsewhere due to the high neighbourhood commitment, and socio-demographic composition of creative groups that live there, which are both attributed as a success factor and regarded as unique to this neighbourhood. The Spijkerbed hotel functions as a meeting place where residents encounter each other during the organisation and management of the activities for the arrangements. Moreover, residents also connected with each other and the local environment through activities where only residents are present such as tours or walking dinners in the neighbourhood. The reasoning was correct that more solidarity in this area arose because the participants got to know each other and the area better. This influence on bonding had to do with the sharing of stories, talents and experiences during the joint participation in the initiative. Thus, by the participation in the joint activities, residents met, and connections came forth of the shared experiences.

6.1.1 Social relations

This case, in particular, seems to conform to the assumptions of the policymakers about how the Liveability policy might contribute to social cohesion. Illustrated by the goal in their activity plan: “through collaboration between neighbourhood residents bringing sustainable connections in the Spijkerkwartier”. Answers were sought to the question of how the participation as a bed offerer or active resident resulted in more
quality and quantity of social relations. I asked respondents if their participation had increased in the neighbourhood due to their role in the Spijkerbed hotel, if they came into contact with new people and what kind of relations developed with other residents through this participation. This case stands out from the other two cases on this aspect, because it built on a social network that was already quite active in the neighbourhood. In this respect, it is particularly interesting that the participation of residents affected the quantity and quality of social relations still, albeit the most were already active to a certain degree in other projects in the neighbourhood.

The first objective of this project is to connect people with each other in the neighbourhood; this illustrates how the initiators contributed a significant role to the network function. The initiative is about bringing people together and letting the initiative function as a meeting place for all the residents of the Spijkerkwartier, but also for guests outside of the neighbourhood. However, the majority of the participants claimed they were already active participants in the neighbourhood, as they were already engaged in neighbourhood activities. This finding demonstrates that the aim of the project to bring diverse people together has not been met yet, as predominantly already active participants had their part. Also, this illustrates that the project was still in the beginning phase, which the initiator commented, that one of their challenges was to make their initiative known further in the neighbourhood and to attract other participants. One of these respondents further explained that he probably would have met the other participants somewhere else during another activity in the neighbourhood. Therefore, the influence this initiative had on the increase of social connectedness of participants is doubtful. Moreover, the participation of rather active residents indicates that many already knew others in the neighbourhood, indicating that their motivation to invest in more social ties in this environment was probably low.

A striking finding was that most respondents noted that their network did not widen but that more intensive relationships between other residents evolved: “You do not necessarily need to have intense contact with everyone, but it is about widening your network”. This statement reveals how this active resident viewed upon the goal of the project as a meeting place. He thought it was a pleasant way of meeting new people, but in reality, found just as most other participants that his network until then does not have indeed widened but more intense contact has come forth of his participation. Moreover, he noted that this contact did not have to be intense like friendships to be regarded as an extension of social networks. He liked getting to know
others but preferred a lighter form of contact where he did not have real obligations such as with a friendship. He thus sought weaker ties, and other respondents also noted that their motivation was not to widen their network, but it was a way to get to know other residents better. In practice, the participants knew their social network was intensified throughout the area because when they encountered a familiar face, they greeted each other in the neighbourhood. However, one respondent noted that her network had widened in the neighbourhood because of this initiative. She told about her loneliness and motivation to become part of something in the neighbourhood. This statement reveals that she sought more social connectedness with others through contact, and this provided an opportunity for her. Another respondent who was already societally active in the neighbourhood explained that his participation in this initiative was also one of the many experiences which generated more individual commitment in the local environment:

Yes, the more people you know in the neighbourhood, the more involved you are in the neighbourhood, of course. . . . . I saw a few months ago, a day was organized a cleaning day, they do one time, where you clean up the whole neighbourhood of litter. I thought by myself that is nice, and a year ago I would never have given myself up but this time I did, and then you will also meet new people. (respondent 4)

The coordinator of this initiative also observed what this respondent commented on about his involvement in the neighbourhood. She told about people that came to know each other through the initiative, who talked about their participation in the neighbourhood in for instance the local vegetable garden, which also generated interest and sometimes in further participation in other projects in the neighbourhood. However, also another respondent explains how he got inspired to also become active by creating his initiative in the neighbourhood: “Well it does have significant influence, I know for sure, it only inspires me, but also feeds me just to achieve something original, to also organize something again” (respondent 7).

In conclusion, sustainable relationships between residents were not noticeable or sought after the majority of the participants because they were already active and had already a social network in the neighbourhood. However, one participant commented on the increase of her social network throughout the neighbourhood, and for some more participation was generated because of knowledge of participation opportunities in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the participants knew from each
other that they were active participants and therefore claimed if they did not meet them through this initiative the residents would have probably met through another activity. So weak ties developed through the initiative that resulted in knowing more people in the neighbourhood but significant effects on more trust or bonding between residents were absent. However, small forms of contact which occurred, like greeting each other on the street, were acknowledged by the participants as knowing each other, and forms of extensions of social networks.

6.1.2 Attachment, belonging and identification

A prevailing view amongst interviewees was that feeling connected with their environment starts with feeling connected with the people that live there. “Look if you have a connection with the people there, then everything around it will come to live” (Respondent 4). Most of the participants felt somewhat more socially engaged with the Spijkerkwartier because they learned to know other residents through this initiative. Feeling at home in the neighbourhood meant for many of those respondents to be connected with the other residents that live there, and participating in activities such as these aimed at the neighbourhood. Through these activities, their feelings of connectedness with the residents and the neighbourhood increased. An interesting comment from a neighbourhood resident illustrates this point: “It is a way to be involved in the neighbourhood again. You do not just sleep there; you learn what’s going on” (respondent 2). This participant explained that because of the activities he became active in the neighbourhood and did not only live or sleep there but came to know it on a deeper level. Through other participants and the organised activities, the participants got to know more about what happened socially in the neighbourhood and about the background and different places of the neighbourhood. Thereby, participants claimed that their feelings of attachment had increased towards the community and the physical environment. Moreover, the activities formed an entrance through which people build up a positive experience with each other, which helped in creating a sense of belonging.

For guests, in contrast to the residents, the coordinators wanted to offer a pleasant and exciting experience and make them feel a temporary part of the neighbourhood. They did this by letting guests stay over at the houses of residents, by undertaking activities in the neighbourhood and showing them the environment. One of the coordinators explains: “An additional effect may be that people [guests] come
more often in the neighbourhood, but we do not have such intentions. However, we have had, for example, old residents coming back again”.

Moreover, the activities relate specifically to what is available in the neighbourhood regarding social capital but also possibilities to organise the activities. Moreover, due to this, the respondents noted that they specifically came to know more about one another, about what is happening in, and different places in the neighbourhood. Through neighbourhood tours where residents tell about the area and show different spots, through dinners at diverse places in the neighbourhood, and storytelling at the homes of residents, other participants learned more about the residents and the environment. As a result of this increase in knowledge about the environment, they felt more engaged with the Spijkerkwartier:

Well, you know, recently we also had guests from outside the neighbourhood, of course, and I also regularly help with dinners . . . there where we have eaten, there was already for so many years a jeu de boule court, and I had never played it there. And then those people came here . . . and then we played there. Moreover, we ate at that place where I had never sat for ten years. So if you talk about things like that, then yes it really broadens your ties with the neighbourhood and the places where you come. (respondent 4)

This quote, of one of the active residents, illustrates how his participation has increased his feelings of attachment with the Spijkerkwartier, even while he was already active. By coming at unfamiliar places in the neighbourhood and gaining more knowledge about the neighbourhood and the other participants, his feelings of association with the place and community increased. Respondents indicated a likewise process in which they came to know other residents of the neighbourhood and the background of the environment better which resulted in increased feelings of association. Participants indicated that the activities gave them a better picture of the neighbourhood and its residents. The feeling of being better acquainted with others and the neighbourhood also resulted in feeling more at home, because of the fun things they discovered about the neighbourhood and the residents during activities.

Moreover, other participants explained that they felt more connected with other residents during group activities like dinners as these function as meeting moments or places. People then come into more intense contact with each other and learn to know each other more deeply than participating in individual activities where
only guests are present. A respondent explains what she felt during an activity she organized for guests only:

No, I mean I see those guests and they come for an hour and then they leave again, and that's it. So yes, then I do not have much connection with the rest of the event, and that is of course different at the time that I am at such a dinner. (respondent 6)

She indicated that she felt more part of the initiative and the neighbourhood during joint activities, such as dinners. But when contributing to activities where only guests are present, she did not feel like she was a part of the initiative.

In conclusion, this initiative contributed a lot to the dimension of attachment and feelings of belonging because the initiative ensured that residents felt part of the neighbourhood through more knowledge of the residents that live there and the background and places in the neighbourhood. Moreover, although the majority was already active and feelings of attachment could be expected of them, most of the participants claimed that through the joint activities they came to know a lot more about the neighbourhood. The activities resulted in increased knowledge about the environment through visitations of unexpected places in the neighbourhood and intense contact between residents at times of the activities. In contrast with the other two cases, this dimension was in particular striking for the Spijkerbed hotel because it impacted the feelings of belonging of participants for their neighbourhood to a great extent.

6.1.3 Orientation towards common good
When it comes to the contribution of this initiative on developing an orientation towards the common good, it is essential that the Spijkerbed hotel was developed and supported by the BlauweWijkEconomie. The BWE is also a neighbourhood initiative and supports other neighbourhood initiatives that want to become social enterprises in the Spijkerkwartier. According to the BWE principle, the organised arrangements are focused on keeping money and liveliness in the neighbourhood. “We prefer to work together irrespective of residents, with all local entrepreneurs. . . . With the underlying idea, of course, just as well, that you just keep the money in the neighbourhood again” (respondent 1). The general good here is then to keep the
liveliness and activity in the neighbourhood. Moreover, the initiator explained it was important to her to make use of what is present in the neighbourhood; what entrepreneurs and residents of the neighbourhood had to offer. She moreover explained that she wanted to discover and make use of the values that the Spijkerkwartier has to offer. With this, she meant that residents were motivated to contribute by doing the things and activities they enjoyed and not something the coordinators wanted them to do.

Some respondents further noted that by participating in this initiative, they became more aware of social affairs in the Spijkerkwartier, which caused them to feel responsible to a certain extent. However, another group of respondents discarded the notion of feeling responsible for the neighbourhood because in their opinion local leaders or residents in general as a group are responsible for the common good. This view was echoed by another informant that stated: “I am involved in the Spijkerkwartier, that is something else. I do not feel responsible. Because I am not a governor. I also have no influence on what happens. I feel involved” (respondent 5). Thus, according to him feeling responsible for the living environment goes hand-in-hand with having an influence on the affairs there, which in his opinion is not possible as a resident.

Furthermore, through this societal initiative, the initiators hoped that residents learned to pay attention to and to help each other out again. In some instances, observations by respondents indeed revealed that this ambition was achieved, e.g. they commented on the increase of solidarity with other residents they got to know through the initiative. People were overall more open to offering help to the residents they had met. An example of this:

Recently came ... who came by with a big sofa she had bought, very clumsy on a trolley. Yes, I did not know her before that time. So she passed by me and I said: “Shall I help you?”, because I know she lives quite some distance away. . . . . It is that little threshold, that you think I know you. So of course then I help. How easy is that. (respondent 2)

So solidarity was influenced by the initiative as a meeting place for participants. Due to the experiences in the activities, they shared with each other through joint participation in the initiative they learned to know each other better. Consequently, participants indicated to feel more motivated to help each other out when an appeal for help was made.
To summarise, this initiative functioned as a source of support for common neighbourhood interest specified on more social cohesion. The initiators wanted to contribute to this objective by making use of the talents of residents and local entrepreneurs in the organisation of arrangements for guests. Implicitly this initiative in itself thus was oriented towards the common good in the neighbourhood. For some participants, influence on this dimension was noticeable in their feelings of responsibilities which increased due to the knowledge of the affairs in the neighbourhood. For most, however, influence on this dimension was noticeable through more feelings of solidarity towards each other. Residents that participated came to know each other on a deeper level, whereby they became more open to helping others out in cases of need.

### 6.2 Buurtrestaurant Apeldoorn-Zuid

#### 6.2.1 Social relations

In the community centre, Ons Honk, residents of Apeldoorn-Zuid can at least meet once a week for a shared meal. Mostly elderly come here for relaxation and cosiness in addition to the shared meal. Also, some volunteers like to come here for meeting others, as one volunteer put it:

> That food is only a side issue for me. I just like to eat together. And one time it is better than the other time, but that does not really matter to me. You are among people, you talk to people, you have fun with people, and yes when I come in, the greeting alone! (respondent 7)

This quote from a volunteer and participant at the same time reflects what most elderly think about this initiative: it fulfils an essential function for the providing of social contact they would not have otherwise. For example, some elderly come every three days because otherwise, they do not see anyone or eat poorly. The community centre and the opportunity to dine together with others is an important element for lonely residents. This initiative provides a meeting place where residents can meet each other, with whom they can chat, play games, eat and do other activities. The meeting centre, therefore, fulfils a crucial function for mostly lonely elderly. They
often have few contacts in their environment, because close contacts have deceased, families are busy, or because they find it hard making new contacts again. Therefore the elderly come to this community centre to fill their days, through joint activities and eating together. The comment below illustrates the meaning of this centre and the activities for the elderly: “It fills up a void in my life. Well, you feel very lonely. Look Apeldoorn Zuid is big. I am very lonely” (respondent 3).

Neighbourhood assistants (employees) who go around in the neighbourhoods of the Apeldoorn-Zuid district, ask if people need help and whether they want to come to the community centre for activities or food during the days when the restaurant is open. There were already several elderly who came to the restaurant thanks to the neighbourhood assistants. They had not heard of this initiative otherwise or did not dare to come. Neighbourhood assistants also take part in the meal for the first time and then present the elderly to the rest of the elderly so that they feel at ease and help them over a threshold. Elderly are often scared to go somewhere where they do not know anyone, or the place, and are hesitant to become part of something they might not like.

Although the idea behind this initiative was to prevent social isolation, the majority of the participants indicated to prefer having contact only at the community centre. The most declared not being interested in maintaining contact outside of it, due to privacy reasons. However, the participants indicated to be very pleased with seeing each other again in the community centre. As one interviewee put it:

Just for fun. You do not remove people here, because they also have their own problems. They also come here to fill the day and then it just stops. And I also come here to fill the day. And when I come home at one o’clock or one quarter past one then I am very happy and satisfied, then I had a nice morning. I had a nice dinner, done. Then it’s done for me. I just like that. (respondent 4)

Other elderly indicated that they occasionally made appointments outside the initiative, and for example do grocery shopping or cooking together, or visiting each other’s birthday. There were also instances where the residents took other residents to other events in the neighbourhood, for instance, to play cards at other meeting places. In general, respondents mentioned not expecting to have close contact with other residents. This finding relates to the life phase of the elderly; they indicated to have already lost all sorts of acquaintances and saw other participants struggling with (health) issues which made them reluctant in investing in new intense contacts.
Therefore, this initiative provided an enjoyable opportunity to meet others primarily only at the community centre.

In some cases, the reluctance to maintain further contact outside of the initiative related to trust issues, in other cases, this related to not feeling the need to see others outside of the initiative. For example, one interviewee said: “I am very busy myself, but I do not share more than I want to myself. I will never gossip about other people, I am not waiting for that”. This respondent was hesitant in sharing stories with other elderly because she did not trust them with this information. Thus her fears of creating gossip about herself led her to not share much personal information with the other residents.

To sum up, the social relations dimension was the primary aspect of this initiative. Elderly came to the initiative mostly for a nice pass time with other people, in which they could enjoy the company of others and perform activities with them, while also having the opportunity to join a shared meal. The initiative significantly impacted the social relations of the elderly, because this initiative helped in getting a new social network albeit mostly present at only the initiative. Furthermore, the intensity of the contact differed per person, as some elderly did not want to have contact outside of the initiative, and saw others only during the activity days at the community centre. However, others liked to meet outside the initiative as well. In both cases, the influence of the initiative on the social relations of the elderly was significant, as in most cases they did not have an extensive social network anymore. Also, sometimes residents meet outside of the initiative to undertake other activities as well. Moreover, many of the lonely elderly did not participate in the city district, or somewhere else anymore because of physical limitations or experienced thresholds to search for ways to participate with others. This initiative fulfills thus a function of providing the elderly with a way to come into contact with others, from which in some cases the social networks stretched outside of the initiative. However, in general, this initiative and meeting centre on its own offers a place with a social network to them.

6.2.2 Attachment, belonging and identification
The overwhelming majority of the participants indicated that they had the feeling they engaged in social life again through their participation. Most of the elderly indicated to feel strongly part of the initiative at the community centre, whereby their lives got meaning again. The following quote of the director confirms this finding: “Well what
most believed, what they feel and experience, is what they give feedback on is that they experience a warmth and a strong family atmosphere, a feeling of belonging. Everyone can be there, and everyone is okay”.

The participants on the whole demonstrated to feel part again of the social life because they were participating with others in activities organised for them. A respondent further illustrates this result: “Yes then I am back among the people. Because otherwise, you sit between four walls in your apartment huh”. Moreover, a common view amongst interviewees was that the shared dinner is an important added value of the project. For them, eating alone at home is dreadful because these moments remember them of their loneliness.

Interestingly, the shared dinner led to the socialisation of the elderly and thereby a sense of togetherness. Participants were learned to be social again by the volunteers and staff because many had forgotten social etiquette due to usually eating alone. The elderly are for instance learned to wait on each other before eating and to help each other out with cutting food. The comment below illustrates how eating together resulted in feelings of attachment with the participant group:

Yes, one helps with bringing the food to someone else his plate, and you pass on a small plate, and another person gives you salad and the other gives you potatoes, and the other gives you vegetables, that is togetherness, that you fit in. I think that is very important, the food. (respondent 3)

Helping each other during the meal and looking out for each other created the feeling they belonged again to a social group. This activity, which perhaps sounds simple, is thus vital for the elderly. Many interviewees commented that they came for the shared dinner because they often experienced tremendous feelings of loneliness at home during dinner. Moreover, some respondents argued that the community centre is a place where they feel respected and listened to. As a result, they felt socially connected with other elderly, employees and volunteers.

Participants, volunteers and employees indicated that their feelings of belonging to the district overall did not change based on the activities. Knowing more people through the initiative gave the feeling of belonging to the initiative when they socially encountered other participants during for instance grocery shopping in the district. Moreover, for the elderly, the city district had a functional meaning predominantly. For them, the district signified the place where they do their grocery shopping but does not contain a social meaning anymore because their social
networks had fallen away. One interviewee argues: “But here in Apeldoorn there exists few. Because everything falls away. Well, what you have to friends, acquaintances who are all old and who are falling away”.

Although some activities such as a radio broadcast one a month, and a photo quiz with photos of the neighbourhood centre increased knowledge or brought up reminiscences about the district Apeldoorn-Zuid, it did not make them feel more part of the district. In general, the respondents indicated that the activities at the community centre are separate from what happens in Apeldoorn-Zuid. Only one respondent, a volunteer, who recently moved to the district, felt that her feelings of connectedness to the district grew because of her engagement at the initiative. The main finding thus was that overall, the participants felt more part of the group at the initiative but not with the whole district because of their participation.

Another interesting finding was that a volunteer who did not grow up in Apeldoorn-Zuid, explained that through his participation as a volunteer at the community centre and other voluntary work in his neighbourhood council, was accepted by the elderly as part of the group.

Look, you know the expression: unknown makes unloved. And, everything that is not actually out of us, and is coming from elsewhere, is a bit suspicious and a bit strange. It is just that you do not entirely belong to the group. . . . . They have more confidence and do not expect a double agenda. (Respondent 5)

The residents got to know him through his participation and learned to value and gain trust in him by which he got accepted. However, before this, he claimed that the residents were biased against him because he does not originate from Apeldoorn-Zuid but the city. According to this fact, they judged him as being part of urban people that are more restless, a little bit harder and meaner.

Altogether, the attachment and belonging dimension was also significantly influenced by this initiative, however not on the aspect of place attachment. Residents got an opportunity to participate socially in a group, and by their participation, they felt part of the initiative. The initiative has significant meaning for the lonely elderly because most of their social contacts in their environment had fallen away. Moreover, this initiative offers them a place where they feel listened to and respected, which also
increased feelings of belonging to the participant group at the community centre. In specific, the shared dining caused more feelings of attachment, because during this moment people help each other out by which it becomes a shared experience.

6.2.3 Orientation towards common good and degree similar views

In general, influence on this dimension was noticeable on the increased feelings of solidarity amongst participants of this initiative. Residents’ feelings of solidarity increased because they came to know each other and could relate to one another. The elderly often experienced the same kind of health issues, or troubles in life, and came for the same goal of relaxation. The same life phase, personal situations and motivations created a bond between the participants because they could identify themselves with each other’s situation. Some interviewees argued that they had started to look out for each other, while others did not feel necessarily responsible for the others, they sympathised with each other’s situation.

Through feelings of solidarity, some residents who had come to know each other at the initiative felt responsible for looking after or helping each other out. Examples of this were residents that brought a visit to other residents that lied in the hospital, or that send a get well soon card when another resident was recovering from surgery. Talking about this issue an interviewee said:

Look, I have always been very social, I have sat in the residents' committee . . . , several years, now I still organise the bingo, then I call the numbers at once in the month with us in the flat because otherwise there is no one to do it, so well then I want to do that. . . . And then you also clean up together and well you are just there for everyone. And, if someone does an appeal to me, then I am there, that is how simple it is. (respondent 4)

This quote suggests this respondent in general feels responsible for others. However, in this initiative, she came to know another resident in which she saw the same type of person that cared much for others and therefore was willing to ask her to help her out. She explained that she usually does not ask others for help but eventually, she dared to ask this resident for help because their bond had grown over time while meeting each other intensively at the initiative. She furthermore explained she would ask her again for help because she gained trust in her over time and needed help in the future because of an operation on her hand which would make doing groceries impossible. Therefore, this example, illustrates that the increased feeling of bonding
between participants also had effects on the willingness to ask others for help which is also an aspect of this dimension.

The participants, on the whole, demonstrated that they did not feel that their feelings of solidarity increased towards the whole city district because of their participation. The following quote represents a shared vision among the interviewees: “I have contacts in the neighbourhood, and I keep up to date about the affairs in the neighbourhood. However, I do not really worry about the city district as a whole”. Another interviewee, when asked about her orientation towards the common good in the district, said: “I live here for 28 years, I live here for a long time, but that does not mean I am married with it. I am there for the house not for the neighbourhood or the district”.

In general, the volunteers and employees indicated that they felt responsible for their tasks and the elderly at the meeting centre, in order to help them have a pleasant time. Moreover, the initiators that had set up the initiative felt already involved with the district and its residents and therefore wanted to contribute to the feelings of loneliness and the state of malnutrition among the elderly.

Generally speaking, the domain of orientation towards the common good, was influenced by participation in this initiative through the generating of more feelings of solidarity towards other participants. Respondents that did take care for each other felt already personally afflicted with taking care of others, so minimal influence on this dimension can be noted. Another interesting finding was that people’s orientation towards the common good in the whole city district was not affected. Overall this confirms also with the findings of the second dimension that people only felt involved with the residents that came to the community centre and not with the whole district of Apeldoorn-Zuid.

6.3 Meet and Connect

This initiative is a societal initiative in which the participants met, shared knowledge and learned from each other. Also, participants shared interests in the Dutch culture, as well as hobbies. The initiative focused primarily on establishing close contact and connections between the two groups of Dutch buddies and status holders. For status holders, it meant that they finally could make contact with residents from Doetinchem. They often reside with other status holders in a neighbourhood and do not have work wherefore having contact with Dutch residents was difficult. However, through this buddy project, it was possible for them to get in touch with other Dutch
people. The host families explained that they participated in this project mainly because they felt a particular responsibility for status holders and their integration. Moreover, this had to do with a general feeling of willingness to contribute to the well-being of others or a general feeling of propagating Christian principles. Furthermore, the social capital of the participants in this initiative played also an important role. Interviewees indicated that they as the host families helped the status holders with learning language and culture, but that they also as Dutch buddies learned from their and their culture.

6.3.1 Social relations
Initially, the initiative aimed at bringing status holders into contact with Dutch residents. The coordinator matched the status holders and buddies by the conversations with the host families, on interests, family composition, motivations and characteristics of the families. Most interviewees indicated to be satisfied with the matches. In general, the families indicated that there was a click between them and their status holder(s). Though, the main finding for this dimension was that the majority of the respondents described the contact between them and their status holders as not very intensive. Most families indicated that the contact related more to the contact between good acquaintances. They indicated that this was due to the limitations in the language in particular, which meant that in-depth conversations did not take place, whereby they could not get to know each other on a deeper level. Talking about this issue, an interviewee said:

Yes, language is indeed an obstacle because you cannot have in-depth conversations with them so that they do not become friends. It is perhaps a friendly contact. Of course it has something friendly, and of course, they are friendly people, but you do not talk to them like friends about things that occupy you or that move you. So it is one superficial contact about what they eat and what they do, and so on. Moreover, the language is the biggest impediment. (respondent 2)

So because of the language barrier, the contact could not be characterised the same as the buddies have with friends. However, cultural barriers also prevented more intense contact between families. For example, in some families, it was not self-evident that female status holders met outside her family with the female buddies. Some respondents told about these experiences whereby they could only have contact with
the male because he is the assigned head of the family. As a result, for example, no activities could be held for only the women of the families, or female status holders were quieter than their men during contact moments with the families. However, most interviewees indicated that the contact was growing and that a bond of trust between the participants grew as the participants saw each other for a longer time. One participant commented on this:

We do not have an end date in our head. I do have the feeling, you step in, you go to build relationships with each other and well you hope you can help them to integrate. It could be the case with this family that a friendship grows out of it that does not have to stop. (respondent 7)

In his opinion time was necessary for being able to tell how the contact between both parties would develop, if apart from the intended integration of the status holders also a long-lasting friendship follows. Another respondent shared this vision and explained: “so how often do we have seen each other really factually, twenty times? . . I think you must also allow time to things”. During the intervison meetings, respondents explained that over time status holders began to trust and share more about their past, or their background. Also, buddies learned more about commonalities that they shared with their status holders which created bonds.

Furthermore, the buddies explained that the contact between them and their status holders often consists of chatting and eating together at home. As a result, they got to know the culture of their status holders better and the habits and customs that were ordinary over there. Also, some families told about events in Doetinchem that they visited with their families, such as a football match. Going to events felt for the respondents as an essential addition to the contact because the families could enjoy themselves together in another setting, which they would do with other friends. Another respondent commented on the type of contact she had with her statusholders:

So that you now already really say oh they are friends, I think that is a huge word. However, if you say it is very relaxed and friendly, I think so. . . . However, in our case the unrestraint of saying uhm oh I come today or oh I cannot manage to come, you have that in friendship too. That you think uh oh a bit annoying, but it does not suit me anymore. (respondent 4)
In her view, it was too soon to say that she and her status holder were friends, but she enjoyed the contact with her status holder the same as with other friends because of the freedom in seeing each other. The majority of respondents expressed the significance of the theme of freedom in the contact. According to them, this related to having an equal and reciprocal relationship. For example, many host families had also experienced that they were called upon to help their permit holders with all kinds of practical matters which threatened equal contact. Often, status holders made an appeal on their buddies which they found hard to turn down but at the same time felt it could harm their friendly relationship. One informant reported that: “The first time they asked if we did not have a bike for them. And then I thought of yes, should we arrange that? If you go to help you go further and further, they want more and more”. (respondent 6)

The coordinator and trainers also paid a great deal of attention to such dilemmas during the intervision and training meetings. A trainer of the Refugee Work organisation indicated that minor instances of help were not harmful to the overall contact between the families. However, the coordinator still warned the Dutch buddies not to take upon the role of a helper in the contact, and to maintain friendly contact, that yields something for both sides. Approaches in contact differed between the participants due to personal preferences. One interviewee put it: “I can give tips, but I also want to keep it in a friendly way”. Also, another respondent commented: “I, of course, I treat him respectfully and equally. However, I also just take a bit of that parenting role”. However, overall respondents suggested in the interviews that an equal and reciprocal relationship was sometimes hard to maintain, which also prevented a friendly relationship.

In essence, buddies indicated during an intervision meeting, that they felt the difference in the contact they have with other friends because they are on an equal footing in life regarding possibilities, and language so that the bond with their status holders is expected to be less intense. However, this project has indeed contributed to enhanced social ties between Dutch natives and newcomers, although these contacts did not immediately have the character of a friendship.

6.3.2 Attachment, belonging and identification
The main finding on this question was that performing the role of a buddy increased feelings of identification with their status holders family. Moreover, a common view amongst interviewees was that the city of Doetinchem was irrelevant to the activities
and thereby increased feelings with the spatial environment did not occur. The participants, on the whole, explained that this related to the character of the activities that aimed at the contact between them and their status holders, and not on Doetinchem. Moreover, one interviewee articulated it this way: “I think that is a national thing anyway? Hey, they came to the Netherlands, they did not come to Doetinchem specifically”. Because the integration of status holders is not a local but international problem, respondents indicated that their connection with Doetinchem did not increase due to the activities with their status holders. The reasoning behind this was according to participants that the project was not entitled to specifically Doetinchem. It could in principle have taken place somewhere else in the Netherlands and did not engage explicitly with the local living environment.

The aim of the project was also not to enhance connections with Doetinchem but to create relationships between Dutch buddies and their status holders through regular contact. Respondents commented indeed on feeling more attached with their buddies, which was also illustrated by the fact that all Dutch buddies wished to stay in contact after the official period of being a buddy. However, it turned out that it differed significantly to what extent the buddies felt connected to their status holders, depending on the regularity of the contact and the presence of earlier stated language and cultural barriers. Buddies experienced the barriers differently because the status holders originate from different countries. In all cases, however, the informants reported that the feelings of attachment grew as they came to know their statusholders better, and shared more experiences.

Furthermore, some respondents indicated to feel somewhat connected to the other participating buddies. They identified with each other during intervision meetings and training sessions because they shared similar experiences in contact with their status holders. Because of this, they understood each other better, and they could give each other advice and empathise with each other’s situation. An interviewee commented on this:

That gives contact again because I met people at the Meet and Connect day, and I saw them later in the city. That you still have a chat, just a little swing. So that is nice again that you feel connected because you have only seen each other in one day, not have spoken once, but you think you were there too, oh, hi! so that gives you a connection again. (respondent 4)
This respondent commented that she felt connected to other buddies of Meet and Connect when she recognised them on the street. However, the majority of the participants indicated that they did not feel part of the group as buddies. Due to seeing other buddies only sporadically at training and intervision meetings, there was no bonding according to them. Moreover, interviewees added that outside of the sharing of casuistry around their status holder, host families have nothing to do with each other in their role as a buddy.

6.3.3 Orientation towards common good and degree similar views
The third dimension was the least relevant to this case, and the main finding was that the feelings of solidarity of buddies increased for the integration and well-being of their status holders. As mentioned earlier, the growing trust relationship between the buddies and their status holders resulted in sharing more personal information with each other. Buddies were made more aware of the personal situations of their status holders. Interviewees explained that because of this, they felt more involved with them and wanted to help them when minor problems occurred. Because the relationships had grown over time, the feelings of solidarity for the situation of their status holders grew, not only out of concern but also in a friendly way. The Dutch host families wanted to help out their status holders with minor problems because they felt more involved with their overall wellbeing.

The primary motivation for most participants to volunteer and become a buddy was to be meaningful for status holders. Moreover, the initiator of this project indicated that she felt compelled to contribute to this social problem from a sense of responsibility. From a certain sense of duty, the informants also indicated to be activated to help the status holders. Primarily, participants from the church or acquaintances of the initiators have been called upon to help integrate newcomers. Religious norms and values thus were also of influence in their decision to join as a buddy. However, also some respondents commented that they acted out of their wish to show as Dutch citizens that the Dutch are also welcoming to refugees. One interviewee commented about her motivation: “Yes, also to make them feel that we are open to that. That we accept those people and respect them, and also want to give a chance”. These buddies wanted to oppose the negative opinions about the arrival of refugees, by contributing to this project.

Finally, all respondents claimed they were not aware of the need for buddies in Doetinchem. In their view, this project evolved from national integration problems.
Participants were only aware of the problem through national news. Moreover, buddies reported that they became knowledge of the opportunity to become a buddy when asked by their local church or the network of the initiators. Therefore, feeling responsible for the integration problems in Doetinchem, was not applicable to this case, as the participants did not know of the group status holders in Doetinchem that were in need.
7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our goal is to strengthen social cohesion, and we do this by supporting initiatives from citizens that have this effect. We would like you to go into the field to investigate whether the social cohesion of these initiatives is really enhanced. I imagine that with your research we gain more insight into what kind of projects reinforce social cohesion in a neighbourhood or district. (Project manager, Liveability)

This research started initially with the above-formulated policy question of the province of Gelderland about how their subsidised projects contributed to more social cohesion. This intriguing question is also part of broader debates on social cohesion. Moreover, there is not much empirical research on the effects that citizen initiatives can have and on the development process of social cohesion. The following main research question thus guided this thesis: How do societal initiatives contribute to social cohesion?

In this chapter, I will answer this central question. First, I will summarise and discuss the main findings. In the next section, I will discuss the implications of these findings for policymakers and practitioners. After this, I will give a general conclusion. Moreover, lastly, I will discuss the strengths, limitations and implications of this research, and make suggestions for future research.

7.1 Discussion

In summary, in this research towards the contribution of three citizen initiatives on social cohesion, the main finding was that the relationship between societal initiatives and social cohesion lies primarily in the connecting of people. It is interesting to note that in all three cases of this study, participants claimed that being connected with other people precedes feelings of belongingness or orientation towards the common good. In general, the participants expressed that they felt connected, some more than others because they came into contact with other participants that also joined the societal initiatives whom they did not know before. This result confirms with what other researchers have claimed; that the network function appears to be the most fundamental. This study provides empirical evidence that underpins the influence of
the social relations dimension through the accounts of individuals and their behaviour on the other two dimensions of social cohesion.

The answer to the first subquestion as to how societal initiatives contribute to social relations, is the facilitation of meetings between residents, creating a relationship between the individuals who participate. Furthermore, initiatives provide opportunities and entrances for participants to come into contact with each other and the affairs of the neighbourhood, or city in a low-threshold way.

The researched initiatives in this case study were in the start-up phase, and therefore the enhancement of relations between the group members was an ongoing process. Most participants reported that they were still in the process of getting to know other participants better. Because of this, it was sometimes hard to reflect for respondents on the contribution that their societal participation had on this dimension. Therefore only some argued that their social networks had widened. Furthermore, the majority of the participants declared they were not actively trying to widen their social networks. For the most, being active at the initiative and thereby getting to know more people was sufficient. Surprisingly, however, close contact was often unwanted due to already having, for instance, a prominent social network, busy schedules or other privacy-related matters. These results reflect the work by Duyvendak and Hurenkamp (2004) about communities lite, in which the members enjoy non-restrictive forms or weaker ties during membership.

Interestingly, in the case of the Spijkerbed hotel, the participants also acknowledged that knowing more residents through the initiative, resulted in a more pleasant living experience in their environments. Although intense contacts were often not sought after, the weaker forms whereby the participants recognised each other on the streets and were able to greet each other in passing by’s influenced their liveability in the neighbourhood. These small gestures in their everyday lives made them also feel part of the neighbourhood. However, in the case of the neighbourhood restaurant and the meet and connect project, these forms of contact outside of the initiative were not overly present. A logical explanation for this is that the larger spatial scales on which these two initiatives operate prevent everyday encounters in comparison to the neighbourhood initiative.

The most obvious finding to emerge from this study regarding the second subquestion, on the contribution on the attachment and identification dimension, was that enhancing emotional connectedness with the environment does not follow immediately from organising activities in the area. Participants of the neighbourhood restaurant and meet and connect project explained that the activities did not explicitly
engage with the district or city. The activities and project goals of the two initiatives did not actively incorporate the district or city. Therefore participants in these initiatives claimed that place attachment did not increase. Generally, all participants of the three initiatives felt more attached and identified themselves more to the societal project and the people there than with the spatial environment where the activities took place, albeit to a different extent. In the case of the Spijkerbed hotel, residents expressed to feel more connected with the neighbourhood because the environment played a central role. Another interesting finding was that although not every participant actively contributed, being present also created emotional connectedness with the societal initiative. This finding relates to the neighbourhood restaurant where the elderly felt intensely engaged with everyone at the community centre through their participation and contact with others in organised activities. So although not yet “active” and responsible for helping with cooking and creating dinners, the elderly felt part of this community.

On the third sub-question of how the initiatives contributed to an orientation towards the common good, this study found that the norms and values of the initiators influenced the participants. The initiators started their projects in the communities interests with norms and values that lived through in the goals of these projects which were executed by the participants and had thereby their effects on social cohesion. This finding corresponds with what Heuser (2005) has concluded about societal organisations in his research: “[they] exert great influence over how such codes and norms are guided into action. As such, they have a great impact on the societal level of social cohesion” (p.28). In the case of the Spijkerbed hotel and the neighbourhood restaurant, the characteristics of the neighbourhoods inspired both initiators. They wanted to contribute to and work with the people from these neighbourhoods to improve the livelihood.● In specific, the Spijkerkwartier is regarded as a highly creative and active neighbourhood by the initiators, by which they saw chances to create arrangements in collaboration with other neighbourhood residents in order to improve feelings of livelihood and solidarity. Residents that collaborated or came together at activities became more aware of what the neighbourhood and other residents had to offer, which increased their orientation towards the common good. ● The initiators of the neighbourhood restaurant knew the district Apeldoorn-Zuid and its societal problems very well through former political functions. They wanted to improve the liveability and the social involvement, by which they started their neighbourhood cooperation. Participants and volunteers from the neighbourhood restaurant became more engaged with the others that came there and sometimes also with the district itself. As a result of the increased feelings of responsibility and
solidarity, the participants began to look after each other, also sometimes outside of the project. ● The hardships refugees endured with their integration in the Dutch society inspired the initiator of the Meet and Connect project. She wanted to improve this situation, by helping to find matches for refugees that want to integrate into the Dutch society. Participants that signed up to become a buddy also felt the need to help refugees with their integration and felt responsible for the integration of their status holders. Many reported to have become more involved with the situation of their status holders and want to help them to thrive in Dutch culture and society by prolonged contact.

7.2 Conclusion

This study confirms previous findings that the social relations dimension is the most prominent dimension of social cohesion. Furthermore, the findings suggest that indicators of social cohesion are primarily affected by the degree of participation, the motivation of residents to invest in relationships with others and the low threshold of contacts. The conclusion as to the effects of societal initiatives on social cohesion, then, is that they, in general, provide opportunities for citizens to meet each other and perform activities in their environment which can contribute to strengthened ties.

In short, the results of this study both support and contradict the hypotheses of the policymakers regarding the influence of societal initiatives on social cohesion. This study has illustrated that regular encounters between residents during activities can create ties and thereby contribute to more social relations, feeling of connectedness and orientation to the common good in the initiative itself, while working at the project goals. However, it depends heavily on the goal of the initiative if it influences feelings of connectedness with the spatial environment. Furthermore, this study provides additional evidence to the findings of Vreke et al. (2010) for the conditions of neighbourhood involvement. This study demonstrates that the characteristic of meetings is also of great importance for social cohesion based on the geographical unit. Do the meetings only involve contact between others, or are these meetings placed into the social, geographical context of that environment? This study reveals, that although societal initiatives take place in particular spatial environments if the activities do not necessarily take this environment into account, participants do not feel they are more connected with this environment. The Spijkerbed hotel case illustrates this point interestingly, as all the activities revolve around what happens in the neighbourhood. Therefore participants got to know their environment better, and
along with more knowledge of fellow residents, they felt more engaged with the neighbourhood.

Moreover, participants explained the larger the spatial scale, the harder it is to feel connected or be engaged with the common good in the area. These results are likely to be related to the incapacity of knowing what takes place outside of the direct living environment. However, the two cases on the district and city level also demonstrate that participation influenced place attachment and orientation towards the common good also indirectly.

In summary, in all the cases social cohesion overall was influenced mostly by the meetings between others created through the activities. This finding corresponds with the empirical research of Dewit et al. (2015), in which they found that “small meetings” during activities in community initiatives lead to forms of recognition by which contacts better established. The activities make it possible to bring residents together in a low-threshold way. Nevertheless, engagement with the environment outside of the organised initiatives remains a difficult task but is feasible when activities include the social, geographical environment.

7.3 Recommendations for policy

The policymakers of this program tried to steer the levels of cohesion by supporting activities based on the rationale deterring from the common sense idea that collaboration of citizens on their projects works to create more solidarity and responsibility. Furthermore, practical guidelines that were set up during changes of the regulation moreover illustrate how they assumed that social cohesion could be enhanced if projects meet some general requirements. I will reflect on some assumptions and give recommendations based on this study.

When it comes to societal projects and their contribution to social cohesion we can envision all sorts of great effects; such as the creation of social networks, feelings of belongingness with the residential area and others that live there. However, the results of this study indicate that we should not have too high ambitions for these types of projects and their impact on social cohesion. Nevertheless, I must warn that we should not lose sight of the “smaller” aspects that social cohesion consists of, which societal projects can influence. This study, in particular, demonstrates that societal projects cause new forms of social interaction to happen, which was the most crucial aspect for the participants. Societal projects can introduce individuals of one group to one another, whereby interaction and bonding in that group increases. Moreover, the findings suggest that attempts of policymakers to create cohesive neighbourhoods,
and feelings of neighbourliness, are reliant on projects that explicitly focus on increasing neighbourhood attachment.

- **Citizens need to come together on a regular basis**

The findings in this research can confirm this assumption. Respondents commented that the quality of togetherness also depend much on regular meetings by which individuals get to know each other better and moments of contacts and social ties increase. Moreover, this also corresponds with literature findings that social networks as part of this phenomenon takes time to develop. However, more fleeting contact in the initiatives also led to more social cohesion but resulted in weaker ties. Overall, residents that were regularly active or present at the projects indicated to feel more part of the initiative because they got to know other participants better. People recognised and noticed each other more outside the initiative, and greeted each other which made them feel more part of their neighbourhood and the initiative.

- **Activities need to have some form of commitment**

The assumption that participants need to be committed to a certain extent in order to reach more social cohesion is also related to the regularity of social encounters between participants. In principle, nobody was obliged to take part in the activities organised at the Spijkerbed and the neighbourhood restaurant. Moreover, respondents reported that when they see each other with regularity, a bond is built up more deeply rather than during fleeting contact moments. However, individuals mentioned that when they experienced a great time during their activities, they come back because they are internally motivated to contribute or to perform their tasks in the societal activities. People returned and regularly helped after they learned the people, the activities and the project better. Still, the question remains how much a project leader can ask of the volunteering participants, as they do not want to overload them but also are in some form dependent on them. This was a more crucial question for the Spijkerbed hotel. Due to there being only volunteering neighbourhood residents, in contrast to the neighbourhood restaurant, where also paid employees help in keeping the activities running.

- **The activities need to be organized in relation to a specific spatial setting**

This is a recommendation that I found is related to one of the main findings of this study. Namely, when you want to reach social cohesion based not only on the societal
initiative but also on the spatial environment in which it takes place, activities should directly take the spatial environment into account. Participants namely mentioned that for them, the most important was the contact with the other participants and the initiative on its own. Hence if the initiative did not explicitly engage with the spatial environment, people not necessarily felt more attached to the environment in which the activities took place. The organised group activities then become the object on its own, and increased social cohesion remains exclusive to the participant group. Policy officers that are interested in contributing towards a more lively neighbourhood or more neighbourliness thus should be attentive that initiatives not become private affairs of active citizens but incorporate the whole social and physical environment in which it takes place.

7.4 Limitations, reflections and suggestions for future research

A limitation of this study is that the societal projects in this study were at the starting phase during the period of research, which limits the analysis of the development process of social cohesion over time. The issue of increasing social cohesion thus deserves further empirical research over a more extended period. As social cohesion takes time to develop it is interesting to research how this process of togetherness is further affected by societal participation. A further study could assess the long-term effects of societal initiatives on the three dimensions of social cohesion. Moreover, additional empirical research is needed on more societal projects on the diverse scales of the neighbourhood, district and city, so the relationship between the societal project and the geographical scale can be better specified. This would also help in the generalisability of the results, on which this study is lacking.

Despite its exploratory nature, this empirical study does offer insights into the development of social cohesion and how societal initiatives might contribute to this social phenomenon. Moreover, notwithstanding the relatively limited sample of three cases, this work offers valuable insights into how social cohesion develops in groups that participate in diverse societal projects at various geographical scales. The findings suggest that societal initiatives form valuable opportunities for individuals to meet each other by which the contact that arises during the activities contribute to the three dimensions of social cohesion.

Moreover, further work needs to be done to establish whether, societal participation in a societal initiative is motivated by already feeling connected with other residents or place attachment, or if it results because of other reasons. This helps
in getting a better understanding between the relationship of societal participation as part of the attachment dimension and with social cohesion in general. Also if the debate is to be moved forward, a better understanding of the principal factors that a societal initiative should meet in order to contribute to social cohesion needs to be developed. So to what extent are basic conditions necessary in order for enhancement of the quantity and quality of togetherness? Should there always be a certain degree of societal participation, type of social networks, feelings of identification, or orientation on the common good, or solidarity, before social cohesion occurs in a societal initiative?

Moreover, this study demonstrates that initiators organise involvement in citizen initiatives and therefore the role of initiators is vital in the development of this process. The initiators organise and set up goals which participants execute in the project and its activities. Moreover, the initiators ensure the incorporation of certain norms and values in the activities of the projects, including engagement with each other and the living environment, which is an integral part of social cohesion. Further research should determine the influence of the central players in a societal initiative, what their role is and the importance of them in the realisation of social cohesion in a project. Does it mean that when such individuals are not present in communities, that no activities will be undertaken that relate to the involvement with the living environment or the people of that specific area?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Werken aan sociale cohesie in de Gentse wijken - jaarverslag 2014.pdf


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## 9. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: LIST OF RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province of Gelderland</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Livability</td>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Policy officer/advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Policy officer/advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Policymaker/advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Policymaker/ temporary program manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Program manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spijkerbed Hotel</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stichting De Blauwe WijkEconomie</td>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Initiator coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Bed provider (1,5 years/20 years in neighbourhood) + organizing activities (tour +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Initiator/bed provider (42 years in neighbourhood)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Active resident (organization of arrangements)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Active resident (cook, organizing activities, guiding tour, designing website, writing texts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>Active resident (tarotcard reading, giving recitals of stories, giving dance lessons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td>Active resident (cook, theatre, website, walk through neighbourhood)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 8</td>
<td>Guest</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buurtrestaurant Apeldoorn</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood cooperation ‘Zuid doet Samen’</td>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Initiator/financial director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Initiator/director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Volunteer (host)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>Volunteer (cook/host)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td>Volunteer/resident (hostess)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 8</td>
<td>Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 9</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meet and Connect</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stichting Present Doetinchem</td>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Project coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Dutch host family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Buddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Buddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Buddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>Buddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td>Buddy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE – POLICY OFFICERS

Interviewguide beleidsmedewerkers

Algemeen
- Introductie
- Toestemming
- Rol binnen beleidsprogramma
- Achtergrond subsidieregeling en focus burgerinitiatieven

Subsidieverstrekking
- Op basis waarvan hebben jullie besloten om subsidies te verstrekken?
- Wat zijn de doelen van de subsidies?
- Welke eisen worden aan een initiatief gesteld?
- Welke stappen doorlopen jullie in het besluiten welke initiatieven wel/ of niet passend zijn?

Sociale cohesie
- Wat versta je onder sociale cohesie?
- Hoe leidt burgerparticipatie tot meer sociale cohesie?
APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE – SPIJKERBED HOTEL

Interviewguide deelnemers Spijkerbed Arnhem
Het doel van dit interview is om te achterhalen of deelnemers meer binding voelen met buurt n.a.v. initiatief door te vragen naar de ervaring en motivatie van deelnemers.

Algemeen
- Introductie
- Toestemming
- Leeftijd, herkomst, residentiële jaren (Spijkerbuurt)

Individuele betrokkenheid bij initiatief
- Hoe lang bent u betrokken bij Spijkerbed?
- Wat is volgens u het doel(en) van het Spijkerbed?
- Waarom heeft u zich aangesloten bij Spijkerbed?
- Wat is uw rol /hoe vult u deze rol in?
- Hoe lang wilt u dit blijven doen?
- Wat vindt u tot nu toe van het Spijkerbed en uw rol?
- Wat voor rol speelt het Spijkerbed in uw leven (invloed)?

Sociale relaties en participatie
- Kunt u de wijk voor mij omschrijven?
- Doet u mee aan wijkactiviteiten?
- Hoe vindt u het contact in de buurt (houdingen t.o.v. anderen/diversiteit/vertrouwen)?
- Heeft u contacten/vrienden/kennissen in de buurt wonen? Verschillende groepen? Hoe is dit contact?
- Heeft u nu meer contacten in de buurt sinds Spijkerbed?
- Voelt u zich nu meer betrokken bij de buurt sinds het Spijkerbed?
- Komt u op nieuwe plekken sinds u zich inzet voor Spijkerbed?
- Zet u zichzelf ook nog op andere vlakken in voor uw buurt (andere vereniging/ individueel)?

Oriëntatie op algemeen goed
- Bent u op de hoogte van wat er in de buurt gebeurd?
- Voelt u zich verantwoordelijk voor wat er gebeurt in de buurt, verandering sinds deelname?
- Denkt u hetzelfde over uw buurt als de andere buurtbewoners?
- Heeft u dezelfde normen en waarden als de rest van de buurt?
- Vraagt u hulp aan mensen in de buurt/buren?
- Bent u ook bereid om mensen in uw buurt te helpen?
Gehechtheid en saamhorigheid
- Hoe vindt u het om in deze buurt te wonen?
- Wat betekent de buurt voor u?
- Als u moest verhuizen, zou u dan in deze buurt willen blijven wonen?
- Voelt u zich sociaal verbonden met uw buurt (waarom voelt u dit zo/hoe uit zich dit)?
- Voelt u zich meer verbonden met de buurt door deelname Spijkerbed?
- Wat kan het Spijkerbed betekenen voor de binding en betrokkenheid van buurtbewoners?
- Is er ook een keerzijde hieraan, is het wel wenselijk (bv. uitsluiting, beklemmend gevoel door bemoeienissen)?
In this thesis, which analyses three citizen initiatives in the province of Gelderland, the underlying mechanisms of social cohesion are demonstrated in diverse societal and spatial contexts. This multiple case study further contributes to the lack of empirical knowledge regarding the enhancement of social cohesion through societal projects. With the conducted fieldwork, I will give a new perspective on the debate of social cohesion by emphasising the spatial context in which these projects take place that has a significant effect on the different aspects of social cohesion. Three pilot projects on different geographical levels (neighbourhood and city) in diverse urban areas are examined for their contribution to social cohesion; the first being a hotel run by residents of the Spijkerkwartier in Arnhem, the second being a neighbourhood restaurant in Apeldoorn-Zuid and the third a buddy project implemented in Doetinchem.

Policymakers have high expectations when it comes to residents and their motivation to contribute to their living environment and the effects that citizen activities have. Through social engineering, policymakers try to influence societal issues, which in this case is the considered decline of social cohesion. In this multiple case study, I researched three various cases that the province subsidised for their assumed contribution to the social cohesion in neighbourhoods, villages and cities. These societal projects matched with the requirements of the corresponding subsidy regulation that assumed thereby a contribution on social cohesion. However, the assumptions in their subsidy regulation lacked empirical evidence. Therefore, this research also addressed their policy rationales and assumptions.