The Sense of the Achterhoek

Explaining the influences on choosing a place of residence among young graduates from this region

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The photo on the cover page was made in Vorden by the author.

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Dear all,

I am very proud to present you this thesis, which is the last part of my masters in Human Geography. With this research, I gained insights in the group of young people from the Achterhoek who left the region for doing higher education and their reasons on whether or not they returned to their home region. Writing this thesis learned me a lot about the specific context and culture of the Achterhoek and also about the opportunities and difficulties of growing up and living in a rural place. I do not come from the region myself, but I have definitely understood why people feel connected with this beautiful part of the Netherlands.

Before you start reading, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who have been a great support during this research. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Pascal Beckers for his feedback and positivity, especially at the moments when I thought that I could never finish this thesis. Furthermore, I would like to thank Nikki Dijkstra and my other colleagues during my internship at Achterhoek Ambassadeurs for their help and suggestions. I am also very grateful to my friends who helped finding participants for the interviews, and my family who supported me during the last part of the writing process. Finally, I would like to thank all the participants I interviewed, for their time and willingness to share their story.

Marleen van der Meer,

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Summary

All over the world people are moving from rural areas to the city and these numbers are still growing. In the countryside of North-West Europe, the young population is an important part of the group that leaves their area. The proportion of young people that are doing higher education is also increasing, which results in a selective out-migration of this group, the so called ‘brain drain’. The Achterhoek region, located in the east of the Netherlands along the German border, is experiencing this. The options for higher education in the area are limited, so a lot of young people leave the area to do that elsewhere. After finishing this, people start to settle down somewhere. A part of this group chooses to return to the Achterhoek region at that point, the other part settles down somewhere else. The choice for a place of residence at this point in life is determined by several factors that differ for each person. In the case where one moves from a city to their rural area of origin, previous research shows that this could be influenced by the bond they feel with their place of origin which can be describes as place attachment. It is built by experiences and relationships that are related to the place. This research is about the role of place attachment to the region of origin in the residential location choice of young graduates (24 to 29 years old) originally from the Achterhoek.

This is researched by a review of existing literature and qualitative data collection and analysis. The literature created a framework around two relevant concepts: the residential location choice and place attachment. The data is gathered through semi structured interviews with the group of interest; 8 returnees and 10 non-returnees. These interviews are analysed by coding them with indicators following from the theoretical framework.

Firstly, the influencing factors on the residential location choice of the young graduates was analysed. For most of them, several influencing factors together created the space in which people searched for a place. Most of them were able to find a place that matches all their preferences. Some of them did some concessions because of the availability and prices of dwellings or the distance to family and friends of their partner, but these cases could still find a place within an acceptable distance. For a few, there was a decisive influencing (work related) factor that limited their options. They made a consideration of the same factors but within this predetermined area. Because of that they had to adjust some of their preferences such as the distance to friends and hobbies or a certain physical – or social environment. While looking closer at the influencing factors, there are some differences noticeable between the returnees and non-returnees. The influence of work is only present among a part of the non-returnees; some of them could immediately start with a job due to a previous internship. For the other non-returnees as well as the returnees, the availability of work or career possibilities around was probably a small contribution but no decisive factor. A few of the returnees even chose their place of residence while knowing there were no suitable jobs close. Friends are overall a very important influence. This is especially the case for the returnees; most of them live at biking distance from their best friends. For a part of the non-returnees their best friends have the same kind of influence on their choice to stay at their student city. For the other part, it is important to have some kind of social network at their place of residence but there is less of an influence of a main group of friends at a certain place. Family is mainly influencing the female returnees, who all live close to most of them. The others are okay with – or even prefer some distance between them and their family. The location of a hobby is influencing a part of both groups and is in all these cases related to friends. The accessibility of a place was influencing both groups in different ways. Among the returnees, several chose consciously a place within the region with a train station or an acceptable highway connection. Most of the non-returnees saw these possibilities more as obvious preconditions but did value their options. Yet some of them did consciously chose a place...
because of the mobility options. The physical environment was in most of the cases influencing the space within people searched and found their place of residence. The social environment had a similar effect but, in most cases, a lower influence. Available and affordable housing was in most cases not a big influence on the choice for a certain place. In a few situations where the choice was already limited to two options, an available house was the deciding factor. The group of returnees all found their house quite easy. This was not the case for some of the non-returnees, but the majority did not want to adjust their preference for a place because of that.

Secondly, the presence of place attachment to the place of origin (the Achterhoek) was analysed. This can be developed by experiences and relationships that are related to the place. Growing up in the quiet, green and safe environment of the Achterhoek was for all the returnees a very positive and similar experience. The differences between the groups can be found in the relations related to the place. All but one of the returnees have a partner from the Achterhoek. This generally strengthens their own attachment to the region. Among the non-returnees there is no one with a partner from the Achterhoek. Friendship relations are also more present among the returnees. Almost all of them have a big group of friends from the Achterhoek that goes way back. Yet, most of the male non-returnees have a similar group of friends from the Achterhoek; the female non-returnees have less of these friendship relations. Family relations are present in both groups. There are a little more returnees with all their family members in the region, but this is not a big difference with the non-returnees. The presence of place attachment can be expressed in two ways: emotional and behavioural. The answer to the question whether the returnees felt connected to the Achterhoek was an unanimously yes. The differences between the groups was on this expression only visible in their behaviour. All the returnees are participating in local activities and most of them visit local events. Although most of the non-returnees did continued activities in the region after moving, most of them quitted this eventually. The local events are also a bit less popular among the non-returnees, but the majority is bounded to these local events on a level that seems equivalent to the returnees. Besides the general presence of place attachment, the dimensions of place identity, sense of community and place dependence can also be indicators. In both groups most of the people are identifying themselves as ‘Achterhoeker’ and clearly proud of their roots. The experience of the dimension sense of community is different per village or city. Especially in the smaller places it was very present, in the bigger places this was less. The emotion about this was for the returnees neutral or positive. For the non-returnees only a few of them are positive. The others were not negative but for now glad that they did not live in a similar kind of community feeling. The dimension of place dependence turned out to be less relevant among this group of people.

The attachment to the Achterhoek does certainly have an influence in people their preferences for a residential location. The analysis on activity - and social space shows the importance of friends and family (and to a lesser extent hobbies) on spatial preferences. Within the group of returnees, these factors are for the biggest part determined by Achterhoek related experiences, relations and behavioural expression. The place attachment related influences on these factors is over all lower among the group of non-returnees. Over-all the returnees also find the closeness of these factors more important than the non-returnees when choosing a place of residence. The awareness space is also influenced by place attachment. This can especially be related to the experiences of growing up, emotional expression, the level of identification with the physical – and social environment and sense of community. Although the experience and identification is also very positive and present among the group of non-returnees, this did not overrule other factors as for example a physical preference for the city as it did for the returnees. Yet there is also a part of the spatial preference that cannot be influenced by place attachment to the place of origin. These more practical influences
are for these young graduates mostly related to work, availability of affordable housing and options for mobility.

In most of the cases people based their location on several influencing factors. In these situations, the ‘level’ of attachment seems to be reflected in their choice on whether or not to return. The returnees had especially in terms of relations, behaviour and sense of community a more present attachment to the region than the non-returnees. In terms of experiences, emotions and identification this was more or less the same in both groups.

Yet not all preferences are reflected in the outcome of this residential location choice. The situations in which people had one or two decisive factors limiting their options, the effect of place attachment is similar on the preferences, but very different on the outcome. The ‘level’ of place attachment matches in these cases not with the decision on whether or not to return. This was because the other (more practical) influences turned out to be decisive. In two cases there was a lot attachment to the region but work and mobility related factors withheld them from returning. In one case it was the other way around; work related influences resulted in returning to the Achterhoek.
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1. Introduction

1.1. Project framework

All over the world people are moving and these numbers are still growing. An important cause of this is the still ongoing process of urbanization. In all kinds of regions people prefer an urban place of residence instead of their rural place of origin. This results generally in growing cities and shrinking rural hinterlands. In 1950 only 30% of the world’s population was urban but in 2018 this is already increased to 55% and it is expected to be 68% in 2050 (United Nations, 2018). The changing world economy with a shifting focus towards the service sector and creative and knowledge intensive industries are a boost for the bigger cities. At the same time this puts pressure on the smaller towns and periphery. There is an increasing gap between the popular, well connected places with an urban character and the more rural less favoured areas (Bontje and Mustard, 2012). In the countryside of North-West Europe, the young population is an important part of the group that leaves their area. The proportion of young people that are doing higher education is increasing, which results in a selective out-migration of this group, the so called ‘brain drain’ (Thissen, Fortuijn, Strijker and Haartsen, 2010; Rerat, 2014).

The Achterhoek region, located in the east of the Netherlands along the German border, is experiencing a departure of the young population. Still, the loss of population is not extremely high. The demographic decline was about 0.8 percent during the last 10 years (CBS, 2018). Statistician Te Grotenhuis (2018) researched the demographic decline, dejuvenation and aging in the Achterhoek. He concluded that the region is missing a group of people in the age category between 20 and 40 years old (Haggeman, 2018, CBS, 2018). The region that consists of seven cooperating municipalities (Aalten, Bronckhorst, Berkelland, Doetinchem, Oost Gelre, Oude IJsselstreek en Winterswijk, 2018) has an overall rural character. The city of Doetichem (57.292 inhabitants, CBS, 2017) functions as the centre of the region in terms of services and employment opportunities. Most of the other municipalities cover a large surface area. They contain multiple villages with sometimes quite a distance between them (Sterk Bestuur in Gelderland, 2015). The options for higher education in the area are limited, so a lot of young people leave the area to do that elsewhere. After finishing this, people start to settle down somewhere. A part of this group chooses to return to the Achterhoek region at that point, the other part settles down somewhere else.

The choice for a place of residence at this point in life is determined by several factors that differ for each person. Some of these are probably based on economic advantages, others on physical preferences. In the case where one moves from a city to their rural area of origin, it is expected that this is influenced by the bond they feel with the place (Laoire, 2007). This subjective feeling towards a place can be described by concepts as place attachment or sense of place. These both can be defined as the meaning that is attached to a spatial setting by one or more people. It is built by experiences and relationships that are related to the place (Pretty, Chipuer and Bramston, 2003, Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). According to Relph (1976) these influences can be unconscious and unnoticed, but still present in the everyday life of people. The Achterhoek region could be a good example of this because the region has traditionally strong social structures. There are a lot of villages that are uncluttered, and this small scale has created a strong social cohesion (Sterk Bestuur in Gelderland, 2015). However, one can wonder to what extent the concept place is still present in the world of today for young people. Looking at the processes behind the increasing mobility of youth in rural areas, place seems to lose value. These are socio-cultural processes as individualization and social mobility (Rérat, 2014; Thissen et. al., 2010) and technological processes like increasing
more approachable forms of communication and transport (Gustafson, 2001). The result of both developments is that it becomes easier to move from one place to another. The place of residence becomes less fixed in people’s lives and maybe also less important. With less attachment to a place, there are probably other factors that are more of an influence on whether or not to return to the region of origin.

One can wonder to what extent this place attachment to the region of origin, explains the residential choice of people. In other words: if the people who returned after graduation are really attached to the place and the people who do not return are less or not experiencing this kind of attachment. But this is of course not the only influence. The process is very broad with many other influencing factors. These are for example job opportunities, (public) transport, amusement and many more factors that differ for each person. For the group of young graduates who are originally from the Achterhoek, it is unclear which parts in the residential choice process are influenced by the ‘level of’ place attachment and which part by other factors. This is interesting to know because it will generate a better overview of the options and choices of this group of people.

1.2. Research objective and questions

Following the introduction, there is a lack of understanding of the decision-making of young graduates from the Achterhoek on whether they return to the home region and the role of place attachment in this choice. To get an increased understanding of this, knowledge about the influencing factors on the residential location decision-making after graduating higher education and the presence or absence of place attachment to the region of origin is needed. For a more complete overview, this knowledge should be gained from two groups: the young graduates who decided to return to the region after finishing education elsewhere and the ones who decided to settle down somewhere else. Therefore, the main goal of this research is:

‘To gain insights in the decision-making of young graduates from the Achterhoek on whether or not they return to the region and the role of attachment to their place of origin in this choice.’

The following main question is:

‘What role does the presence or absence of attachment to the place of origin play in the decision of young graduates from the Achterhoek on whether or not they return to the home region?’

This main question will be answered with three sub-questions. First, it is useful to gain insights in the background of the group of interest. Therefore, the situation of young people in the Achterhoek region will be studied. This will be done by answering the sub-question:

‘What is the situation of the Achterhoek and why do young people leave the region?’

Secondly, the reasons behind the choice for the current residential location of young graduates will be outlined. This will be done by appointing the influencing factors and to what extent they were decisive. This includes both people who returned to the Achterhoek and people who chose to live outside the region. This will be done by answering the sub-question:

‘What determines the choice for the place of residence of young graduates from the Achterhoek?’

Thirdly, the presence (or absence) of a feeling of attachment to the region of origin of young graduates from the Achterhoek will be analyzed. This again includes both people who returned to the region and people who chose to live somewhere else. This will be done by answering the sub-question:

‘Do young graduates from the Achterhoek feel attached to their region of origin?’
1.3. **Scientific relevance**

This research will generate insights in the feeling of attachment of young graduates to their rural region of origin and the role in the decision on whether they return to the home region. Analysing place attachment of young people and the relation to rural-urban migration contributes to different research fields. First, this is research on the expression and influence of place attachment in this kind of areas. Second, this is on the topic of residential choice of young graduates. The following part will specify the contribution of this research to prior studies in these fields.

Pretty et. al. (2003) used the concept sense of place to analyse the intentions to migrate in a rural area. The aim of their research has similarities with this one. They wanted to investigate if the dimensions of sense of place can distinguish the residents who did identify with their rural town and wanted to stay from those who did not. This research was done amongst a mix of adolescents and adults in two rural towns in Australia. They found that an individual or shared sense of community and identification with the place contributes to the intention to stay in the area. The way this ‘sense of place’ was experienced and expressed could not be explained in detail because this was a quantitative research.

Thissen et. al. (2010) also wrote about the migration intentions of rural youth in a Dutch and Belgian context. They found that employment perceptions and identification with the place of origin are the most important factors of influence in the migration intentions. They also concluded that the increasing individuality can possibly result in a selective out-migration of the more socially mobile young people. Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006) did a similar research in the rural areas of Iceland and had the same conclusions.

Rérat (2014) studied the moving behaviours of young people who (similar to this research) recently graduate from university from a rural region in Switzerland and focused on the features of the individual. He compared their characteristics with their choice to move back to the home region or not. He stated that internal migration is more complex than just the result of a spatial labour market mismatch. The individual’s choice depends on their socio-familial -, migration - and professional biography.

This previous research shows that place attachment is somehow related to the moving behaviour of young people in rural areas. This is especially clear in Pretty et. al. (2003) because they used the whole concept, but also the other ones looked at some indicators that are related to attachment. However, these scholars were all done in a quantitative way. This research will be done using a qualitative method, which includes that gathering information can be done in a more inductive way and without a pre-selection of variables. This increases the possibility to reveal new aspects and reduces the risk to miss important influences. Besides that, qualitative research implies to focus on the participants’ perspectives, meanings and subjective views which can be used to place certain behaviour in their context (Creswell, 2009). Exploring this theme in a qualitative way, will contribute to a more extensive elaboration of the presence of place attachment towards the area of origin of young graduates. By combining this with insights in other determinants behind the choice for their place of residence, it will also contribute to knowledge about their decision-making process and resulting movements.

1.4. **Relevance for practice**

Demographic decline in the more rural areas is an increasing process in several places all over the world. This makes it an important theme in both academic research as well as governmental policy (United Nations, 2018; Carbonaro et. al., 2018). The selective out migration of young people is something governments are concerned about. From their point of view, the economic and social
capital in the area should be good. They want young people to start their adult life there with a job, house and social network and form their identity. Loss of this age group is seen as failure for the region (Thissen et. al, 2010).

This is especially relevant for the situation of the Achterhoek. The population decreased 0.8 percent during the last ten years and the age group between 20 and 40 years old is under-represented (CBS, 2018). Especially the higher educated young people are missing in the region. This has amongst other consequences for the regional labour market. The region has traditionally had a lot of manufacturing industry and there are many companies settled. Several organizations must deal with a growing shortage of highly educated employees and this is also noticeable in the health care sector. The vision of governmental policies to solve this mismatch is for a significant part focusing on ‘keeping the talent from the region’ (Regio Achterhoek, 2017b). There are almost no options for higher education in the area, so people need to leave the region for that. This makes it necessary that a certain part of the group that left will return after their education. Gaining knowledge about the residential choices of this group of people can be helpful in policy. This may help to trace the decisive determinants in this choice, and it can be useful to predict the behaviour of this group in the future.

1.5. Reading guide
After this introduction of the topic of this research, the theoretical framework will be described in chapter 2. This contains a literature review, conceptualizing and operationalization of the two parts of this research: the residential location choice and place attachment. They will be combined in a conceptual model that is explained in the last part of this chapter. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of this research and describes how the collection of data and analysis is done in order to answer the main question. Chapter 4 answers the first sub question and provides the context of the region and group of interest. Chapter 5 answers the second sub-question and discusses the influencing factors on the residential location choice of young graduates from the Achterhoek. Chapter 6 answers the third sub-question about the presence of place attachment towards the Achterhoek. Chapter 7 concludes these results, describes the recommendation for further research and policy and reflects on the process.
2. Theoretical framework

To be able to find an answer to the main question ‘What role does the presence or absence of attachment to the place of origin play in the decision of young graduates from the Achterhoek on whether or not they return to the home region?’, two topics need to be elaborated. These are the residential location decision and the concept of place attachment. The first part of this chapter explains the residential location choice and describes and visualizes several categories of influences on the location decision of young graduates. The second part describes an operationalization of the concept of place attachment including its dimensions and expressions. These two concepts together are used to create a framework that can help to define the role of place attachment in the residential location choice of graduates.

2.1. Choosing a place of residence

A turning point in life

This research is about the influence of place attachment on residential choices of a specific group of people. They are originally from a rural area, moved to the city for doing higher education and completed this. Before going deeper into the theory about residential choices, it is useful to get an overview of their path and position.

The migration of young people from rural to urban areas is a generally known phenomenon, especially in North-West Europe. It is mainly the higher educated youth that is leaving, the so called ‘brain drain’. This situation is not only the case in rural regions that are far from any metropolitan area, but also in small urbanized regions in the Netherlands and Belgium (Thissen et. al., 2010). These numbers in general are growing, mainly because of the increasing social mobility. A larger share of the young people is doing high education nowadays (Rérat, 2014). Other clear influences are processes as globalization and individualization. Young people have become less dependent on the opportunities within the area where they are born. Nowadays, it has become commonplace to consider leaving the area, while in the past the majority did not even think about this. Also staying in the rural region is nowadays the result of an ‘individual life course decision’ (Thissen et. al., 2010, p. 428). The moment of switching from secondary to higher education is generally the first point on which young people decide to leave or not. Some will stay in their hometown and commute, do education in the area or start to work after secondary school. The group of this research will move to an urban area at that point. The second point of decision making is when people start to work after higher education. Some who moved out will stay in the same area or move somewhere else, some will go back (Thissen et. al., 2010). At that point in life people choose often a more permanent place to live.
The residential location choice

Defining the stage

Although there are multiple approaches to analyse this decision, there are two major stages in the process that seem to be clear. There is the residential mobility stage, in which people decide if they want to move or if they want to stay. Second is the housing choice stage, which includes the search for a location and the choice for a new residence. These two can be interdependent (Kim, Pagliara and Preston, 2005). They are visualized in figure 1.

The residential mobility stage is less interesting in analysing the choice of graduates. As mentioned in the previous part, most people are changing their place of residence after graduating. This place can be in the same area as where they lived during higher education but in most cases, it will be a different house. This means that theory about people who are unhappy about their current place of resident and the search for different alternatives to the situation (e.g. Speare, 1974, Brown and Moore, 1970; Wolpert, 1965) are less relevant. The choice of dwelling and location is the part of the process that is the most interesting for this research.

Choice of location: theory

This location choice can be researched by several approaches. Many theories use the assumption that people consider their costs and benefits. Looking at it with a neoclassical view, the choice of a place depends on the economic costs and benefits, such as a high number of employment opportunities or low housing costs (Barcus, 2004). The travel-cost/ housing-cost trade-off is one of the most developed theories with this market approach. It means that people take the price of their potential dwelling and the predicted transportation costs to places they need to visit (like the workplace) into consideration while choosing a residential location. About this theory is written by amongst others Alonso (1964) and Evans (1973).

The human capital approach uses a broader understanding of this model by also taking the non-monetary costs and benefits into account (Sjaastad, 1962). According to DaVanzo (1981) there are two influencing concepts in this consideration: information costs and location specific capital. The information costs mean the invested time in gathering information of places. This information is always limited because you don’t have time to consider all the possible destinations, so you probably just look at places where you have friends and family. Location specific capital means all the capital that is place bounded. Examples are friends and family, knowledge of area, specific work or clients. The more you have in a certain area, the more likely it is to go or return to that place.

This focus on costs and benefits in researching residential choice seems obvious but has important limits. Huu Phe and Wakely (2000) mentioned four main social developments that are left out in such a trade-off model but clearly have an influence. First, social status has an important role in the choice
for a place of residence. This can be in many different forms such as power, wealth, knowledge or culture. Secondly, as earlier mentioned, physical distance is becoming less and less important for people. This changes the influence of for example the workplace on the residential location choice. Thirdly, the residential location is sometimes chosen within a very wide range around someone’s preferences. In some cases, one needs to sacrifice a desire to fulfil another. Fourthly, place has a cultural and historical value and involves more than the visible physical properties. This influence on location decision goes back in the very early findings of appropriate settlement locations (Huu Phe and Wakely, 2000). This focus on societal processes as leading influence instead of the economic rational trade-off is part of the non-market approach (Kim et. al., 2005).

Since this research is about the role of place attachment in the residential decision, it seems to be clear that is in line with a more non-market approach. Looking at the position of young graduates originally from the Achterhoek, it is not expected that their choice for a residential location is predominantly based on financial incentives. It also seems too limited to describe their choice by counting the (non-) monetary costs and benefits. Still, it is helpful to use a certain categorization while studying location choice. Hooimeijer and Van der Knaap (1994) and Feijten, Hooimeijer and Mulder (2008) did this in on an individual level by describing spatial preferences that are behind the decision to move to a certain residential area. These preferences are limited by a ‘choice set’ determined by resources (which are mainly financial) and restrictions (like for example the distance to work). Besides that, there are also opportunities and constraints in the context, like for example the availability of dwellings (Feijten et. al., 2008). Hooimeijer and Van der Knaap (1994) divided these spatial preferences, resources and restrictions in a physical, a social and a mental part. The physical part is called activity space and refers to the radius within people have their daily activities. This includes actions as going to work or school, shopping and weekly hobbies. Secondly, social space covers the radius within people interact with their friends, family and other members of their social network. The mental part is called awareness space and means the space that people can identify themselves with. It refers to places where you can imagine yourself living. Some people would for example never see themselves living in a big city, so this kind of places are not a part of their awareness space. This is formed by own experience as well as information from other sources such as media or talks with others which both can be positive and negative (Hooimeijer and Van der Knaap, 1994). Feijten et. al. (2008) also wrote about the influence of residential experience. This can contribute to the development of the earlier mentioned parts of space and may be an influence to return to a previous place of residence. Someone is for example still participating in activities there (activity space), wants to be close to friends and family there (social space) or has a positive idea of living there (awareness space). Especially the awareness space can be influenced by the place where one lived as a child. It can give a certain security over the life-course. Activity space and social space are bounded to one location, which means it can only trigger a ‘true’ return migration. Awareness space is not location-fixed and can for example also influence the movement to a neighbourhood that is like the one you grew up in but located in a different area.

Theoretical approach

Following the previous review, location choice is researched here with a combination of non-market and market approach. Although listing costs and benefits is considered as too limited, it is still helpful to use a certain categorization of the process. For this the theory of spatial preferences (Hooimeijer and Van der Knaap, 1994; Feijten et. al., 2008) will be used. To get a more complete understanding of the process, these will be combined with the insights of Huu Phe and Wakely (2000). With this approach, the concept of residential location choice is visualized in figure 2.
In this figure, the factors that influence the choice for a residential location are visualized. The physical distance preferences and restrictions include the radius within people want to have the places that are important for them. Different then the division of Hooimeijer and Van der Knaap (1994), this includes both the activity space and social space. This because the maximum time you can handle or prefer between you and your (potential) workplace, sport club or friends is all about physical distance. These are influenced by personal mobility and the need of physical contact. Examples of this are the availability of a car or public transport and the possibility to work from home. The awareness space is the kind of environment people prefer for themselves. This includes among others the level of urbanity (or rurality), the neighbourhood, the kind of dwelling and the connection with other places. The awareness space is influenced by personal identity and social status (how people identify themselves and where they think they will fit in) and (partly related) physical preferences. The last pillar with the topics of resources, opportunities and constrains include the more practical influences. The main factors in this category are financial resources and the price and availability of dwellings. The concept is made more concrete in figure 3. This table shows the operationalization of the concept by creating indicators. These indicators represent influences of people their daily lives on the residential location choice. They are divided in categories based on the conceptual model.
2.2. Attachment to place

Concept of place
In geographical research there are a lot of concepts used to describe the relationship between people and spatial settings. This theme started to develop in the early 1970s by geographers as Tuan (1974, 1979), Relph (1976) and Rydin (1993). This started with questioning the concept of place, in relation to human experience (Seamon and Sowers, 2008, p. 43). Tuan (1979) described place as a center of meaning that emphasizes human emotions and relationships. Rydin (1993) wrote that place is more than just a point in space, it is involving the meanings people ascribe to the landscape by the
process of living in it (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001, p. 233). Although there is written a lot about the concept of place, it can be hard to grasp in people their everyday life. Because of this, Relph’s (1976) research method was ‘a phenomenology of place’. Phenomenology is in the field of philosophy the study of the structure of experience and consciousness. It tries to define and explain situations, events, meanings and experiences that are known in people their everyday life, but as something unconscious and unnoticed. In other words: discover what is obvious but unquestioned and then take a step back in taken-for-granted and start to question it. Place is such a concept, unnoticed but still a significant dimension in human experiences and their life in general. Relph tried to make the possible attachment to place visible with two concepts: insideness and outsideness. Insideness is the degree of attachment, involvement and concern a person has for a place. Outsideness is the degree of separation a person feels between his or her and a place. The intensities of both degrees should define the significant and ongoing influence of place in human life. These are individually built and result in different identities for different locations or places (Seamon and Sowers, 2008).

Place attachment

Terminology of the concepts

The literature about the attachment of people to place is in terms of content mainly agreeing with each other. On the other hand, the terminology is not similarly used. The concepts sense of place or place attachment are the most known and can be defined as the meaning that is attached to a spatial setting by one or more people. These two terms are often used interchangeably. Also, the relation with the concepts of place identity and place dependence is not always the same (Pretty et al., 2003, Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). The application of Jorgensen et al. (2001) uses sense of place as the umbrella with place attachment, place identity and place dependence as dimensions. Pretty et al. (2003) added the dimension of sense of community. Because the first mentioned dimension of place attachment is broader and can be all-encompassing, Scannell and Gifford (2010) used this one as main concept. This thesis will follow this division too. The previous mentioned terms will be explained in the following part, starting with place attachment.

Place attachment is literally the attachment to a place. This attachment is built by experiences and relationships that are related to the place. If these are positive there is a stimulation of development of place attachment. If these are negative, you can say there is an absence of - or negative attachment to the place (Fried, 2000). Place attachment is expressed in two ways; emotional and behavioral. The first is about the personal emotion related to the physical area and can be described as the ‘subjective feeling towards the geographical locale’ (Pretty et al., 2003 p. 275). The second contains the social involvement and behavior in the specific area. Part of this are the local relationships and the commitment of personal resources (Pretty et al., 2003). Time is an important influence in this development. The longer you live in a certain area, the more likely it is to develop place attachment (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001).

The opposite or consequence of the absence of place attachment is called placelessness. This concept of Relph (1976) is describes as the erasing of distinctive places and creating standardized landscapes by ‘kitsch’ (uncritical acceptance of mass values) and ‘technique’ (= looking for extreme efficiency). Also, modern technologies and mobility can be an influence (Gustafson, 2001). The place of residence of people is nowadays for example not necessarily related to the place of work or where their friends live. This can create a different level of attachment to the place of living.
The dimensions: place identity, sense of community and place dependence

**Place identity** is about personal identification with a place. This is generally with one’s current or previous residential place. Place identity is seen as a psychological way of structuring which results in the self-categorization your social identity. This aspect of personal identity answers the question ‘Who am I?’ with the question ‘where am I?’ (Pretty et. al., 2003). If the experiences and mental images of this place have such a personal meaning, this creates a part of the self (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). Place identity is developed by activities in this place, which can be part of an everyday routine, as well as during exceptional conditions (Pretty et. al., 2003). It can be positively influenced by common shared values, goals in life, preferences and believes with fellow inhabitants. This can result in similar behavior. You are comfortable with being yourself and you are feeling at home. On the other hand, people who have less similarities looking at their personal identity, experience the feeling they must confirm to the environment. This creates less personal identification with the place. (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). The place where you parents come from can also be an influence. If they are originally from the region it is more likely that you develop a sense of belonging (Rérat, 2014). Besides the social- also the physical environment can have an influence. People can also find their identification in the landscape of a place (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001) or the settlement history (Thissen et. al., 2010).

The **sense of community** can be described as the feeling of being part of a group. This can be found and expressed in many ways, but in this research, it is just about the sense of community at the place of residence. Like place identity it is built upon aspects like shared values and behaviour, but the expression of the concept is focusing on the connection with other members and the personal contacts. One has the feeling to belong somewhere and to be part of something. Members are caring, look after each other and share their sources (Pretty et. al., 2003). The presence of a large social network or an extended family can be a positive influence on this (Rérat, 2014).

**Place dependence** is the more functional or instrumental use of or bond with a place. The most important question to answer is if the place provides the possibility to reach the ‘living goals’ of a person (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). According to Pretty et. al. (2003) this consists of two parts. The first is are the presence of social- and physical resources at the place. At what level are they available and what is the quality? This can for example be a certain location you need for your own company or the presence of a regular clientele you depend on. The second is the position of this place compared to other places and if someone is aware of that. People are not constant monitoring the position of their (potential) place of residence compared to others. They sometimes have a vision in their mind about where they have the best options and do not check if this is really the case.
**Conceptualization**

Figure 4 visualizes the relations between the concept of place attachment and its dimensions following the previous described literature. It also contains the ‘building blocks’ of the development and the forms of expression (Fried, 2000; Pretty et. al., 2003).

![Diagram of place attachment concept]

**Figure 4: Conceptual model of place attachment (based on e.g. Relph, 1976; Pretty et. al., 2003; Fried, 2000; etc.)**

The following indicators are listed in figure 5. These indicators represent the influences and consequences of the concepts in people their lives. First, the general and overarching part of the concept of place attachment is described. This contains the way it is build (experiences and relationships) and the way it is expressed (emotional and behavioural). Then it zooms in on the three dimensions as described in the literature. Place identity is focussing on personal feelings of identification and therefore only includes indicators of expression. Sense of community is also about feelings and expressions, but also contains specific influence of experiences with the presence (or absence) of this community. Place dependence is a somewhat different dimension that focusses on the functional bond with the place instead of a certain feeling. Therefore, it doesn’t include the same building blocks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place attachment and its dimensions</th>
<th>Building blocks</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The concept in general              | Experiences    | - How is growing up there experienced  
  - As a kid  
  - As a teenager  |
|                                     | Relationships  | - Partner (from) there  
  - Friends there  
  - Family there  
  - Other acquaintances there  
  - Parents originally from the area  |
|                                     | Emotional expression | - Feeling towards the place  
  - Feeling towards the inhabitants  |
|                                     | Behavioural expression | - Number of visits to the place (while not living there)  
  - Activities there (sports, hobby, etc.)  
  - Visiting or participating in (annual) events  |
| Place identity                      | Emotional expression | - Identification with the area  
  - Proud of local or regional things  |
### Table: Components of Place Attachment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Expressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identification with the inhabitants</strong></td>
<td>- Identification with the inhabitants (shared values, goals in life, preferences and believes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Behavioural expression** | - Showing regional signs  
- Speaking regional language/dialect |
| **Sense of community**     | - People know each other  
- People talk about each other  
- People help each other  
- People organize things together |
| **Experiences**            | - People know each other  
- People talk about each other  
- People help each other  
- People organize things together |
| **Emotional expression**   | - Personal feeling towards the community |
| **Behavioural expression** | - Whether or not participating in this |
| **Place dependence**       | - ‘Functional’ bond (like work that prefers or needs to be in that specific physical or social environment) |

### 2.3. Conceptual framework

The first part of this chapter outlined an operationalization of residential location choice. This creates an overview of the influences on this choice for young graduates and is therefore relevant in answering the main question. The second part of this theoretical framework described the components of the concept of place attachment. For the main goal of this research, understanding of its development, dimensions and expressions is also necessary. With this knowledge, the presence or absence of attachment to the Achterhoek can be discussed and determined. The link between these two parts is visualized in figure 6 and explained in the part below.

![Figure 6: Conceptual model of the link between place attachment and residential location choice](image-url)
This conceptual framework hypothesizes the influence of place attachment on the decision for a residential location. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, place attachment is developed by experiences and relations which are (in the case of this research) related to places in the Achterhoek region. These can stimulate both *insideness* (the degree of attachment, involvement and concern a person has for a place) and *outsideness* (the degree of separation a person feels between them and a place). The presence of this attachment can be expressed emotional (a certain feeling towards the place) and behavioural (behaviour related to social involvement in the place). These components of place attachment all together have a certain influence on the earlier mentioned dimensions of space within people choose their residential location. If people have for example friends in the Achterhoek or if they are still a member of a sports club there, this influencing their activity- and social space. The three dimensions of space can also be influenced by the experience people have with the mentality in the Achterhoek. If this experience is positive, they will probably look for a job and a house around there. With these examples, there are many more emotional and behavioural expressions that could be a possible influence on people’s activity-, social- and awareness space.

This conceptual framework does not suggest that this ‘spaces’ are fully determined by the degree of attachment and separation a person has for the Achterhoek. Things like a job opportunity are also influencing them and have nothing to do with the ‘degree of’ attachment to the Achterhoek. Besides that, there are also (financial) resources, opportunities and constraints which are not influenced by place attachment and have no influence on people’s activity-, social- or awareness space but clearly do have an influence on the options for a residential location.
3. Methodology

This chapter describes the execution and conduct of this research. This includes the strategies that are chosen for the research methodology. Firstly, the research philosophy of this thesis will be described. Secondly, the research strategy will be explained and argued. Thirdly, the methods for data collection and analysis will be explained.

3.1. Research philosophy

The way a research is designed and the methods that are used are related to a certain philosophical worldview. Being aware of this worldview is the first step in creating the methodology. The worldview is about the question of how one should think about the world, social phenomena and reality. How should one understand the world and what are the assumptions that are used while studying it? The constructivist worldview is the philosophy that underpins this research. Constructivism states that reality should be recognized as a construct of the human mind interacting with ‘real world experience’. While including “human mental activity in the process of knowing reality, you have accepted constructivism.” (Elkind, 2005, p. 334). As already can be derived from the theoretical framework, place attachment is understood as a socially constructed phenomenon and its influence on the choice for a residential location is therefore approached with this point of view. Looking at the world from this constructivist perspective, means that reality is always perceived in a subjective way. This implicates for a research like this that when one tries to understand social phenomena, it is necessary to include different perspectives and multiple participant meanings. It is also useful to study the context and settings of the participants. Because the researched phenomenon is socially constructed, it is not assumed that there is one possible outcome. This contrasts with post-positivism which has a more deterministic view that allows only one true result. Constructivism looks broader than that and aims to generate theory by trying to collectively understand the world better. Different from pragmatism that is focusing on transforming problems, constructivism tries to increase the understanding of phenomena. The goal of this research is to generate better understanding of the phenomenon and its influence (Creswell, 2009).

3.2. Research strategy

Qualitative –, quantitative – or mixed methods

After understanding the research philosophy, the most suitable method will be described. As described by Creswell (2009), there are three main types of research design. These are qualitative -, quantitative - and mixed methods. This research will be using qualitative methods. This chosen method is not supposed to present an opposite of the other ones, they should be understood as different ends of a whole. This means a study can be more on the qualitative side, more quantitative or located in the middle and be a mixed method. The more qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meaning an individual or a group ascribe to a social phenomenon. The researcher collects data in the setting of the participant and makes an interpretation of the meaning afterwards. The way of gaining knowledge is inductive (using the particular to say something more general) and the focus is on rendering of the complexity of a situation and the individual meaning. Quantitative research is about testing the more objective theories by investigating the relationship between variables. These variables can be measured and used as numbered data in statistical procedures. Similar like qualitative methods, this research is also using deduction to gain knowledge. Mixed methods research enhances a combination of the previous described forms of research. Besides collecting and analysing the two kinds of data, it also involves combining the data (Creswell, 2009). The more qualitative method is chosen because this kind of methods have the aim to
understand the social reality of the participants. It tries to explain the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of a social phenomenon or behaviour. With for example open questions in an interview, the researcher can develop real insights of a participants understanding of a situation (McLeod, 2017). In gaining insights in a social phenomenon as the existence of sense towards a place and the reasons behind moving behaviour, this seems to fit the research objective better then quantitative methods would.

Choosing a qualitative strategy

Within qualitative research there are several types of inquiry strategies. These are models that give a direction for procedures in the design of a research. The most suitable strategy for this research is the phenomenological research. As already described in the theoretical framework, phenomenology is the study of the structure of experience and consciousness. It tries to define and explain situations, events, meanings and experiences that are known in people their everyday life, but as something unconscious and unnoticed. In other words: discover what is obvious but unquestioned and then take a step back in taken-for-granted and start to question it. Relph (1976) described that place is such a concept, unnoticed but still a significant dimension in human experiences and their life in general. Its role in the choice for a residential location is probably seen as obvious but can because of that also be unquestioned. Taking a step back and question the phenomenon and the role in this process helps to get a better understanding of the situation.

The phenomenological research strategy uses the description of participants to identify the essence of human experience about a phenomenon. This requires an intense study of a small number of subjects to create patterns and relationships of meaning. Different from the case study strategy, it is only focussing on the phenomenon. The situation of the studied group is only investigated to provide context. The choice for this approach is because the concepts of place attachment and spatial preferences are both human experiences that can only be research with the description of the people who experience them (Creswell, 2009).

3.3. Data collection

The Achterhoek region as research site

Creswell (2009) describes that choice for the area that is used for gathering empirical data needs to be based on what is optimal for answering the research question. The choice for the Achterhoek region is also based on this. This area is in the east of the Netherlands and consists of seven cooperating municipalities. The location is shown on the map in figure 7. This region is chosen in the first place because a significant part of the young population leaves the area for doing higher education. This can be understood because of the absence of HBO- or WO education in the region. It is also visible in the underrepresentation of the age group between 20 and 40 years old (Haggerman, 2018) and in the overall population decline with as result being one of the nine ‘shrinking areas’ of the Netherlands (Ministerie van BZK, 2016). This makes it interesting to gain knowledge about the residential choice of young graduates from this region. In the second place, the region has traditionally strong social structures. Streets, neighbourhoods and villages are uncluttered, and people know each other and greet each other on the streets. Because of this small scale, there is a strong social cohesion and a high number of clubs and associations (Sterk Bestuur in Gelderland, 2015). This makes investigating the presence of place attachment and its influence on residential decisions of young graduates from this region interesting as well.
Design of the research
Prior to the gathering of qualitative data, a review of the available literature on residential location choice, place attachment, the situation of young graduates and the regional context of the Achterhoek is carried out. After that the qualitative data is collected. As mentioned earlier, phenomenological research uses the description of participants to identify the essence of human experience, so the data is gathered through interviews with young graduates from the Achterhoek region. This information is analysed and interpreted to be able to answer the main question. The design as described is visualized in figure 8. The major part of this research is conducted in this order, but it is important to mention that it is also approached as an iterative process. New insights that are probably gathered during the data collection can for example call for new literature research. The used methods are further explained in the next paragraphs.

Desk research
The first part of this research is done by the desk research method (Verschuren en Doorenwaard, 2007; Creswell, 2009). This includes a literature review of previous research on the topics of choice of residential location, young graduates and place attachment. This information is used to create the theoretical framework. This review is also compared to the gathered empirical material to generate a more relevant answer to the research questions. The literature study is useful to gather possible influences on the residential location choice of young graduates and helps to create possible links with the concept of place attachment. This functions as a guideline that is explored with the
empirical research. The method of desk research is also used to partly answer the first sub question in which the context and local opportunity structures of the Achterhoek will be outlined. For this, sources as statistical data and policy documents are used.

**Internship**

To get a more complete view of the local opportunity structures of the region for young graduates, it was also helpful to do an internship at the regional cooperation Achterhoek Ambassadeurs. I went to meetings and sessions about related topics and did two interviews with experts who work there. These are Marianne te Linde, program officer Education and Labour Market and Wilma Stortelder, counsellor on amongst other Living and Real Estate and Mobility and Accessibility.

**Respondents**

The respondents are born and raised in the Achterhoek region and left the area for doing higher education elsewhere. After they graduated, they reconsidered and possibly changed their place of residence. To generate an objective overview of the experience of this group of people, there are two sides needed. On the one hand, approximately ten people (in the age category between 24 and 29) who decided to return to the Achterhoek region are interviewed. They graduated from an HBO or WO, moved back to the region within three years after that and did not have children at the time of moving. This because the residential preferences of people with children are so different from people without children that this is hard to compare (e.g. Feijten et. al, 2008). On the other hand, approximately ten people (in the age category between 24 and 29) who did not return and live somewhere outside the region are interviewed.

The previous described characteristics are all similar in order to make a good comparison. For other factors it is aspired that both groups are more diverse. Gender, relationship status and the region of origin of your partner and your parents may have an influence on the choice of whether or not to return to the region of origin (e.g. Feijten et. al., 2008; Thissen et. al., 2010). The place of origin (within the Achterhoek region) and the place of living during education can also be an influence (e.g. Thissen et. al., 2010, Rérat, 2014). Because the number of respondents is low, maximizing the diversity of this aspects in the research group is important to get a better representation of the region and a higher validity in results. The approach to find these respondents will be through my own network and with help of the network of my internship at regional cooperation Achterhoek Ambassadeurs. From there, I also used snowball sampling, which means reaching respondents through previous respondents (Atkinson and Flint, 2001).

Because it was hard to find people within these criteria who are willing to participate in an in-depth interview, the division of characteristics is not perfectly even. This is lined out in figure 9 and 10. The places of origin and the roots of the parents are quite diverse. In the student cities and places of residence, Nijmegen is a bit overrepresented. The presence and roots of a partner are also not very diverse; the group of returned graduates has no one without a partner and the group of non-returned graduates had no one with a partner from the Achterhoek. The approach of the influence of the partners will be explained later. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized for all higher educated graduated from the Achterhoek. Nevertheless, the interviews with the respondents are giving in-depth insights in the specific group of people that moved for higher education, their recent decision whether or not to return and the meaning of their place of origin in that decision.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Student city</th>
<th>Place of residence</th>
<th>Place of origin</th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>One from the Achterhoek</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>Vorden</td>
<td>Kranenburg</td>
<td>Yes, from the Achterhoek</td>
<td>One from the Achterhoek</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Nijmegen</td>
<td>Doetinchem</td>
<td>Doetinchem</td>
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<td>Woman</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Utrecht</td>
<td>Dinxperlo</td>
<td>Breedenbroek</td>
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<td>One from the Achterhoek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Nijmegen</td>
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<td>Silvolde</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Nijmegen and Tilburg</td>
<td>Varsseveld</td>
<td>Westendorp</td>
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<td>Both from the Achterhoek</td>
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<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Groningen</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Tilburg and Groningen</td>
<td>Vorden</td>
<td>Vorden</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9: Characteristics of the respondents who returned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Student city</th>
<th>Place of residence</th>
<th>Place of origin</th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
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<td>Utrecht</td>
<td>Ulf</td>
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<td>One from the Achterhoek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Nijmegen</td>
<td>Nijmegen</td>
<td>Gendringen</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Both from the Achterhoek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Nijmegen</td>
<td>Arnhem</td>
<td>Breedenbroek</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>One from the Achterhoek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Nijmegen</td>
<td>Oosterhout (GLD)</td>
<td>Meddo</td>
<td>Yes, not from the Achterhoek</td>
<td>Both from the Achterhoek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Nijmegen</td>
<td>Nijmegen</td>
<td>Vorden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Breda</td>
<td>Arnhem</td>
<td>Doetinchem</td>
<td>Yes, not from the Achterhoek</td>
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<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Tilburg</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Nijmegen</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: Characteristics of the respondents who did not return

Semi-structured interviews

The empirical data in this research is gathered through semi-structured interviews. Interviewing is a way to generate an in-depth understanding of the thought process of a person (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007). Open questions in an interview generate real insights in the participants experience (McLoad, 2017). Semi-structured interviews are suitable for a research like this because they offer the flexibility to approach each respondent differently but cover still the same area of data
collection (Noor, 2008). These interviews consist of two parts. The first part attempts to identify the factors that determined the current residential location of the respondents. The second part tries to unravel their attachment to the Achterhoek region. All the respondents are asked the same set of questions. The interviews are recorded with permission of the respondent.

Data analysis
The recordings and transcripts of the interviews need to be analysed to get a conclusion out of it. This is done by coding; one of the main data analysis processes in qualitative research. This is the conceptualization of raw data and includes interaction with the data, creating and comparing concepts and eventually conceptualization of theory. Coding often starts with ‘open coding’ which means looking at the data with an open view and assigning codes and categories to all the information that could possibly be useful regarding the research objective. After that, these codes can be related to each other and described as categories which is called ‘axial coding’ (Verschuren and Doorenwaard, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Priest, Hohl and Woods, 2002). In the case of this research, the coding in the beginning was not entirely ‘open’. The used codes are based on the pre-devised indicators in the theoretical framework. The code groups that link them are based on the theoretical concepts in the used framework. The computer program Atlas TI is used for this. A list of this codes is added below in figure 11. Coding was in this research useful to get an overview of the factors that determined the choice for the place of residents of the young graduates. Therefore, they were also valued on their presence of influence. Also, the presence of (dimensions of) place attachment is analysed. It was not possible to value this part during the coding because of the varying and context specific answers during the interviews. That is why the codes are in this part only used as categorization. With this output, the overlap of the first- and second part as well as the differences and similarities between the graduates who returned and the ones who did not, can be compared during the analysis. This results in a conclusion that describes which part of the residential location choice of young graduates from the Achterhoek is related to place attachment to the region and which part is not related to that.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code groups</th>
<th>Codes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity space</td>
<td>Work: options</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work: options in your field</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Work: career possibilities</td>
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<td>Work: travel time</td>
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<td>Work: job offered</td>
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<td>Work: owning a company</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hobby: options</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hobby: at place of origin since before moving</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hobby: at student city since student time</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hobby: not bounded to a place</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social space</td>
<td>Friends: main group living nearby</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends: some living nearby</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends: living somewhere else</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends: living at several places</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family: all living nearby</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family: parents living nearby</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family: siblings are living nearby</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family: all living somewhere else</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family: living at several places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal mobility/ need for physical contact</td>
<td>Car owner or not</td>
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<tr>
<td>Car connection</td>
<td></td>
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<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Connection highway</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public transport: bus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public transport: train</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bicycle distance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology instead of being somewhere</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Awareness space

| Physical surroundings: quiet |
| Physical surroundings: green |
| Physical surroundings: private space |
| Physical surroundings: liveliness |
| Physical surroundings: facilities |
| Physical surroundings: entertainment |
| Physical surroundings: no specific preference |
| Social surroundings: similar life stage |
| Social surroundings: social status |
| Social surroundings: mentality |
| Social surroundings: anonymity |
| Social surroundings: no specific preference |

### Resources, opportunities and constraints

| Search for a house: at preferred place: easy |
| Search for a house: at preferred place: difficult |
| Search for a house: changed place because of availability |

### Place attachment in general

| Experiences: social contacts |
| Experiences: facilities |
| Experiences: entertainment |
| Experiences: distances |
| Experiences: general memory of growing up |
| Experiences: environment |
| Relations: family |
| Relations: friends |
| Relations: partner |
| Emotion: feeling about the area |
| Emotion: feeling about ‘Achterhoekers’ |
| Behaviour: visits as a student |
| Behaviour: visits now (while not living there) |
| Behaviour: (sports)clubs |
| Behaviour: events |

### Place identity

| Emotion: identification as ‘Achterhoeker’ |
| Emotion: being proud |
| Behaviour: regional signs |
| Behaviour: regional language |

### Sense of community

| Experiences: presence of community |
| Emotion: feeling about sense of community |
| Behaviour: participation in community |

### Place dependence

| ‘Functional’ bond |

### Leaving earlier

| Influence leaving in first place: distance of education |
| Influence leaving in first place: everyone did it |
| Influence leaving in first place: living in the city |
Research ethics, reliability and validity

This thesis is part of the master programme of the researcher and does not serve any other interests. The respondents were informed about the content of this research before they agreed participating. They accepted that their answers are used in this master thesis without using their names. Besides that, they also had the opportunity to leave (parts of) their interview out of this research. They also agreed with the recording of the interview on behalf of this research. This information is used confidentially. Most of the interviews took place in people their homes or at their job. This created a setting in which people were open to share their story. Besides that, the questioned subjects were not very sensitive for people. Therefore, one can assume that they gave open and honest answers during the interviews. As already mentioned, the results of this research can not be generalized. This because the number of respondents is too low, and the group is not representative at some points. Yet there is tried to reach the highest representativeness as possible within this capacity and period.
4. Situation of the Achterhoek

This chapter provides some insights in the context of young graduates from the Achterhoek region. It describes a short profile, the current demographic situation and the reasons why a significant part of the young people left the area. This information answers the first sub-question: ‘What is the situation of the Achterhoek and why are young people leaving the area?’

4.1. Profile of the region

The Achterhoek is a region that is in the east side of The Netherlands, along the border with Germany. The area is part of the province of Gelderland and does not have a geographical or historical border (Iżerman, 1957). The municipalities that are part of the regional cooperation are often used to locate the region and will also be used in this research. These are Aalten, Bronckhorst, Berkelland, Doetinchem, Oost Gelre, Oude IJsselstreek en Winterswijk (Regio Achterhoek, 2018). Until the 19th century most people in the area made their living with small agriculture. During the industrialization, this was supplemented by iron industry along the Oude IJssel river and textile industry on the east side of the region. A result of this development was the realization of highways and railroads that improved the connection with nearby cities as Arnhem and Zutphen. After the Second World War, the biggest part of this industries disappeared because of the competition from countries with lower wages (Iżerman, 1957).

Nowadays, there is a mix of employment in agriculture, manufacturing industry and services. The region has still a rural character, some nature and historical places and is popular for tourists. Most of the old fashion industry is removed or got a different function. For example, the iron foundry DRU is changed into a well-known cultural centre (Sterk Bestuur in Gelderland, 2015). The city of Doetinchem (57.292 inhabitants, CBS, 2017) functions as the centre of the region in terms of services and employment opportunities. Most of the other municipalities cover a large surface area (they were reorganized in 2005, the smaller ones were put together). They contain multiple villages with sometimes quite a distance between them (Sterk Bestuur in Gelderland, 2015). These rural parts have a lot of economic activity. There are several small and middle-sized companies located in mainly the sectors of agriculture and manufacturing industry (Regio Achterhoek, 2017b). The public transport in the area currently consists of two railways and multiple bus lines in the area. These options are limited in especially the smaller and more remote places, so most people daily use the car. There is one highway in the region which is along Doetinchem and ends at Varsseveld. These two places are in the south of the region and with this way connected to the city of Arnhem. Most of the area is north of these places and has no connection to a highway (Sterk Bestuur in Gelderland, 2015). Traditionally, the region has strong social structures and the people behave themselves involved. Streets, neighbourhoods and villages are uncluttered, and people know each other and greet each other on the streets. Because of this small scale, there is a strong social cohesion and a high number of clubs and associations (Sterk Bestuur in Gelderland, 2015). For the bond between people who live in the same village or neighbourhood is a specific regional word: naoberschap (freely translated as neighbour-ship). This naoberschap includes the duty you have, to care for your neighbours and at that they will do the same for you (Salverda et. al., 2009).

4.2. Demographic situation

The region is nowadays experiencing demographic and economic decline. Compared to other declining regions in The Netherlands their situation is still manageable, but within the province the area has for example the biggest loss of employment opportunities (ING Economisch Bureau, 2014). The population decreased 0.8 percent during the last ten years (CBS, 2018). This number compared to the context of the province and the country is visible in figure 12.
The main reasons behind this are the processes of dejuvenation (there are less children born, and a lot of young people leave the region) and aging (people get older and the old people stay in the region). As earlier mentioned, looking to the specific development in the Achterhoek you can conclude the region is missing a group of people in the age category between 20 and 40 years old. This means that a lot of young people around the age of 20 leave, and a certain amount of people at the age of 40 moves towards the region. If these people in their forties are the same as the ones who left at their twentieth is unclear (Haggeman, 2018). This is visible in the graph in figure 13 which shows that the percentage of the population between 15 and 20 years old is in the Achterhoek a bit higher than the share in the province and country. This contrasts with the region’s percentage of people between 20 and 25 years old which is clearly lower than in the province and country. In figure 14 is visible that the share of people above the age of 45 is higher than the average in the province and country. Decline of the working population, decline of facilities like schools and shops and the vacancy of buildings are some of the consequences for the Achterhoek. That is why they are one of the nine ‘shrinking areas’ that are defined by the government of the Netherlands. These areas are experiencing or expecting a population decline and a decreasing number of households. Because of the risks for the socio-economic vitality of the region and the quality of life for its inhabitants, the Dutch government tries to monitor these areas (Ministerie van BZK, 2016).
4.3. Distance to higher education

There are several options for education in the region, but these are more focused on the MBO level. Besides this there is only one option for an HBO degree and no university. This means that most student must leave the area for this level of higher education. This was also the case for the participants of this research. They left their hometown in the Achterhoek around the age of 18 and moved to Dutch student cities as Nijmegen, Amsterdam, Breda, Groningen, Tilburg, Enschede and Utrecht. The map in figure 15 visualizes this. A part of them did this mainly because of education and had no preference to leave the area in first place. One of them is a woman (28, non-returnee) who moved from Ulft to Amsterdam to study Human Movement Science at the university. She explained: “I didn’t like it to go to Amsterdam at all. I really went there to study, not for the city.” A man (25, returnee) who studied economics in Nijmegen said: “I didn’t do that because I wanted to leave home, more because it was more practical with exams and lectures. If you want to study without that much travel time, you will not get far in Westendorp.” The last part of this quote also shows the influence of the accessibility of the region on the decision to leave. Most of the participants are from towns with limited public transport and didn’t own a car at the time. This makes it hard to commute to student cities as Arnhem, Nijmegen or Enschede although they are relatively close. A woman (25, non-returnee) who grew up on a farm in Meddo explained why she moved to Nijmegen: “In first place it was because of the travel time. I had to bike for half an hour to the train station in Winterswijk and then an hour and a half train journey to Nijmegen. That was too much for me.” Another women (25, non-returnee) told: “… it takes two hours to get from Breedenbroek to Nijmegen by public transport” and a man (24, non-returnee) from Lichtenvoorde said: “My parents stimulated me to look for a place in Nijmegen because they were afraid I wouldn’t be able to spend enough time studying while also travelling three hours a day”.

4.4. The attraction of student cities

Besides these practical reasons, a lot of young people also prefer leaving the area to experience new things. Therefore, all but three of the interviewed graduates liked to move to the city at that time. They wanted to live separate from their parents, try out life in the city and experience their student lives. For most of them, this felt like a logical thing to do after finishing secondary school. One of the women (25, returnee) explained: “I actually don’t remember why I moved to Nijmegen. It seemed nice and felt logical, also because everyone did it.” They heard the experiences of siblings or friends.
who also went to college and saw this movement as a part of their student life. A man (27, non-returnee) said: “Both my brothers also studied here, and I stayed there a lot when I was younger, so I already had a good impression and I really wanted to go to Nijmegen”. They wanted to experience a new phase in their lives but none of the graduates told that they wanted to ‘escape’ their hometown. A man (25, returnee) said about that: “It is not that I was done with my hometown, but it seemed really nice to have everything for yourself. You’re quite young at that time and it is fun to discover and to do the things you think are right for you.” Besides this independence, they also enjoyed the possibilities of the city. A man (27, non-returnee) from Vorden said about his movement: “…it is nice to go from a village where you have like two pubs to ‘the big city’ with everything around the corner” and a man (24, non-returnee) from Lichtenvoorde said: “… suddenly everything is within reach. I lived really close to the city centre and I even had a supermarket, hairdresser and bicycle repair in my street.” Most of the respondents from villages referred to the distance to facilities compared to their situation in the Achterhoek. While living there they often needed to cover quite a distance to get somewhere. A woman (28, non-returnee) from Ulft explained: “… it was nice to have everything at once so close. In the Achterhoek you always had to cycle quite far to get somewhere.”

Figure 15: The places of origin (blue) and student cities (red) of the respondents (edited in Google Maps, 2019)
5. Residential location choice

In this chapter, the reasons behind the choice for the current residential location of young graduates will be outlined to answer the second sub-question: ‘What determines the choice for the place of residence of young graduates from the Achterhoek?’ This will be done by describing the influencing factors on this decision. The categories of the theoretical framework are used to order them. All of them outline the influence of the factor separately for the interviewed returnees and non-returnees. Because the region-specific influence, the factors of work, mobility and housing also contain a brief description of the context.

Besides that, it is also important to mention that the influence of the respondent’s partner is not described as a separate factor. As came forward in the literature review, partners can have a lot of influence on the residential decision. Therefore, this is certainly discussed, but within the category of the topic. Was the job of the partner for example influencing the respondent’s place of residence, this will be discussed in the category of work.

5.1. Activity- and social space

As described in the theoretical framework, people generally choose their place of residence within a preferred radius of locations that are important for them (a.o. Hooimeijer and Van der Knaap, 1994). This physical distance preferences and restrictions are determined both the activity space and social space. This because the maximum time you can handle or prefer between you and your (potential) workplace, sport club or friends is all about physical distance.

Work

The situation of the Achterhoek

Because of the absence of higher education in the region, it is necessary for the region that there are highly educated people who move (back) there to work or commute from somewhere else. Because this inflow is not as high as the demand, the labour market of the region is over all positive for job seekers. The unemployment rate is structurally lower than the national average (Regio Achterhoek, 2017). The demand for higher educated people grew the last years but the supply remained relatively low. This created a mismatch in especially the technique and healthcare sectors. Overall, it is also in other sectors not hard to find a job on this level. This is different than the rural image of the region maybe suggests. Governmental organizations and employers trying to change this image by providing internships and promotion of working in the region in multiple ways. Yet it is true that the variety of jobs is not as high as in the bigger cities and the west of the Netherlands. For graduates who focus on jobs in a specific discipline, it is probably harder to find something within their wishes here.

Returnees

For almost all the respondents who came back to the region, work was not a primary influence on their residential location choice. They generally thought about it like this man (25, living in Varsseveld): “I want to live in the Achterhoek and that is where I start from. Then I will look for a job in a radius that is acceptable.”

For a part, their job opportunities in the region have probably made this decision a little easier. A woman (25, Doetinchem) who studied Human Resource Management explained: “… for HR you don’t have to go to the West or the bigger cities (...) there are plenty of smaller and bigger companies here. So yeah, I saw enough opportunities in Doetinchem.” A woman (29, Silvolde) who studied Communication and already worked for a couple of years in the area, agrees with that: “I prefer a job
that is less than half an hour away by car (...) but there are a lot of companies here. I’ve never had any problems with that.”

For others, the search for a job was less easy after they decided to return. Three respondents have therefore adapted their preferences to the possibilities in the region. For one of them this resulted in a job in a completely different discipline. He (25, Aalten) studied Human Movement Science and tried to find a job at a professional soccer club. After this proved too difficult, he started to look at jobs in the region and found one as data analyst for an agricultural wholesale. He explained: “... I think you can easily find a job if you’re highly educated. It is not that I have my dreamjob but it depends on how picky you are (...) but yeah, in the Randstad it would have been easier to find something which is closer to my dreamjob”. One of the women (27, Vorden) also couldn’t find a suitable job in the area. She solved this different and chose to drive a little further then preferred: “...rehabilitation care is mainly in the bigger cities (...) Enschede is an hour away, not so close but I’m okay with it”.

In the described situations work didn’t influence a person’s residential location. Although, their chosen place of living somehow influenced their choice for a job. There are also situations in which work and residential location aren’t related at all. One of the interviewed graduates (man, 25, Varsseveld) has his own web shop and isn’t bounded to a place by that. Another man (27, Vorden) works as a pilot for an airline: “I only have to drive two times a week. I drive to Schiphol airport, then I am away for a few days and then I drive back”.

For one of the respondents there was an influence of work on her residential location. She (25, Varsseveld) and her boyfriend wanted to live together. He was already working in the Achterhoek and couldn’t move his job for now. After she found a job close to the Achterhoek, they chose to look for a home in the region.

**Non-returnees**

For the respondents who did not came back to the region, work seems to have a bigger influence on their residential location choice. In some situations, work was the main reason for their decision but in most cases, it seems to be an additional factor. This influence contributed in some cases to a movement. One of them is a good example in how work can be a decisive factor in this choice. She (28) studied Human Movement Science in Amsterdam and started working at a professional sports complex in Arnhem after this. At the same time, she moved to Utrecht to live together with her boyfriend who works in Gouda. They mainly chose their current place of residence because they could easily reach both workplaces from there. In the three other movements made after graduation, work seemed more of an additional factor. An example of this is the movement of a woman (25) who works at a law firm in Arnhem. She said: “I still lived at my student house in Nijmegen when I started working in Arnhem, which of course is not far from there (...) so I searched for apartments in both cities and I found this one in Arnhem. My work is only 5 minutes by bike from here.”.

Work related factors can also convince people to stay at their student city. This can limit your options for a residential location. A man (29) who studied for nurse started working at the hospital in his student city Nijmegen after he graduated. He is considering returning to his place of origin Lichtenvoorde but he is afraid that he can’t find such a nice job there as he has now: “It is a bit odd because everyone talks about a shortage of people in health care, but the number of vacancies at hospitals near Lichtenvoorde is disappointing so far”.

In other situations, work seemed more of a positive influence that contributed to the decision to stay. One of the interviewed graduates who studied in Nijmegen, could directly start at the hospital there: “After I graduated, I immediately got a job here. If that didn’t happen so fast, I would probably
have looked further.” Another respondent (25, Tilburg) started his own company during his student time: “My office is not something that can easily be moved, also because I have employees. The recruitment of new employees is also good here.” A woman (25) who studied pedagogics told that she could work at the place she did an internship and her boyfriend also worked in the Nijmegen area. This was part of the reason why they only searched in that area while looking for a home.

Yet two of the non-returnees said that work did not have any influence on their residential location. They chose to stay in their student city with a similar approach as most of the returnees: “…and of course my job keeps me here, but I consciously chose that. I only looked in the area around Nijmegen so I could stay here.” (Man, 24, working as IT consultant).

Friends

Returnees

For all the respondents who returned, their residential location was somehow influenced by the presence of friends. The fact that their main friends were living there, was in many cases one of the main reasons to return. A woman (28) said: “Yes, that certainly had an influence. If they all stayed in their student cities, we didn’t necessary chose Dinxperlo” and another woman (29, Silvolde) told: “… because many of my friends live in the village or in villages around us and I really appreciate that. On a Friday I like to grab my bike and be there in a minute”. Most of them have maintained the group of friends they had before they moved out and their partners have theirs around the same place. One man (25) had a different situation because his girlfriend’s place of origin is in another part of the Achterhoek then his. He studied and lived in the city of Groningen for a couple of years but still had his main friends living around his home village Etten. His girlfriend who studied in Nijmegen at that time, had her friends in Aalten. They live in a rental apartment in Aalten right now: “From Aalten to Etten is like 25 minutes. I prefer to live in Etten so I can walk or go to by bike to my friends and have a drink with them on a Friday night. She has her friends here so yeah, it is compromising now. We are now in a phase where our friends are starting to buy a house and settle down (…) we’ll see how that goes and what we do”. Some of these graduates also have friends they met during their student time. However, this is a lower number and they are often living at several places. “I also have friends I know from my student time in Nijmegen and Tilburg so I sometimes drive to places outside the Achterhoek to see them. (…) but most of my friends live here, most people I know live here.”

The earlier mentioned woman (25, Varsseveld) who moved because of the job of her boyfriend, had a somewhat different situation. She has her main friends living in her student city Nijmegen so that was not a reason for her to move. Nevertheless, the fact that she also had some friends here did contribute to her movement: “I have a good friend from school who lives close and also some friends I worked with at a supermarket here (…) that did influence my choice to move here. If I didn’t have any social contacts here, the step would have been much bigger.”

Non-returnees

For the graduate who did not return, their residential location was also somehow influenced by the distance to their friends (and friends of their partner). However, the way this affected their residential location choice is less consistent then for the group of returnees. Three of them had a similar story with most of the returnees and told that their friends were one of the main reasons to stay in their student city. A man (27, Nijmegen) explained: “Most of my friends live here, my whole social life is here. So that is the reason why I want to live here (…) it is important to me, that I can go to them by bike. Drinking beers and not having to stay overnight.” and a woman (25, Nijmegen) told: “My friends keep me here. Fellow students and colleagues who became my friends. They also work and settle down here.” They also have friends in the Achterhoek but prefer to live with their friends
here. A man (24) who lives in Nijmegen explains why: “My friends in Lichtenvoorde all live with their parents and some also outside the village so it is not so easy to have dinner together or something (...) here I have friends from study and volleyball living nearby, which is very nice.”.

Others did not have that much friends left in their student city and focus more on their friends from the Achterhoek. In the case of a respondent (man, 28) who studied in Breda and now lives in Arnhem, these friends did still influence his place of residence. He explained: “We studied tourism, so everyone left Breda and went abroad (...) I have a group of friends with people from Doetinchem who also live in Arnhem and my girlfriend is from a village close to Arnhem and has also friends living here”. For two others, most of their friends are currently living in the Achterhoek, but this did not influence their residential location choice so far. One of them (man, 29, Nijmegen) said: “I go back in the weekends so then I see my friends. That is fine for now.” and the other (man, 29, Nijmegen) explained: “I have some friends here but I have more in the Achterhoek (...) that’s a shame sometimes because they easily get together on a Friday or Saturday and you can’t always join them. But that’s just the way it is right now”.

Four of the non-returnees explained that their main friends are living at several places. In these cases, the distance to friends seems to have a smaller influence on their place of living. Having some friends at a certain place functions just as an extra reason to stay or move there. A man (25) living in his student city Tilburg explained: “I have some friends here from university but there are also a lot who went to other cities like Amsterdam, I have friends who studied and now live in Nijmegen and also some who stayed in the Achterhoek (...) I’m fine not having everyone next door, I have a car and a train station around the corner. So yes, my friends live everywhere but I can easily get there.”

Family

Returnees

Like friends, family somehow influenced the residential choice of most of the interviewed returnees. Nevertheless, there are some differences in this influence. Four of the returned women told that it is important for them to live close to their parents. A woman (27) who lives in Vorden and has her family in the neighbouring village Kranenburg told: “It is important to me to have my parents close; I really like to live nearby my mum”. Another woman (28) who lives in Dinxperlo and has her family in the neighbouring village Breedenbroek told “... it’s not that I always need them, but I like that it is so easy to stop by and drink coffee or something. My sister lives in Arnhem, she often comes a whole weekend when she’s visiting”. A woman (29, Silvolde) said: “My parents live a kilometre away from me. I know that they like the idea that I live nearby. They don’t expect me to visit them every week but they like that I’m around and can help with for example the groceries of my grandpa when they can’t do that.”

The others also like to have their family within a certain distance, but for them it seems less important to live in the same or a neighbouring village. The earlier mentioned man (25, Aalten) who lives in the home village of his girlfriend said about the nearness of family: “For my girlfriend it is more important to live close to her family, I think. Parents, grandparents, they all live in Aalten. That is a little less important for me. I like to have them around, but it doesn’t have to be 100 metres from here.” A man (25) who lives in Varsseveld and has his family in neighbouring village Westendorp said about the distance to his parents: “It is nice, I get along well with my parents, but it would also be okay for me if I had to drive like half an hour to see them.” and a woman (25, Varsseveld) who also
lives in a neighbouring village of her parent’s told: “My parents are important to me and it is easy to visit them now they live a fifteen minute drive away, but I also made time for them when I lived in Nijmegen. It didn’t change that much, I think.”

Non-returnees
Within the group of non-returnees, the influence of family on their residential location was less present. Most of them only need to travel about an hour to get to their parents and all of them are happy with the travel time for now. For the six people who live in or around their student city, the distance to their parents did not influence their decision to stay there. For one of them (man, 24, Nijmegen) this was partly influenced by his siblings: “My two sisters both live in Nijmegen (…) I see them now and then here. And I’m fine with seeing my parents every two or three weeks.” The others who stayed had similar thoughts about the distance to their parents: “I facetime with them and visit them once or twice a month (…) I don’t see it as a disadvantage that I don’t live nearby them.” (Man, 25, Tilburg). One of them had a bit of a specific situation with his siblings, but that did not influence his residential choice: “My sister lives in Belgium, my brother lives in Amsterdam and is going to move to Groningen and my other brother lives in Sweden. So yes, it is important to me but not for them haha. But my parents live in Vorden, one-hour car drive so that is fine”. For two of the respondents who moved to another city after graduating, the influence of family was more or less the same. One woman (25) who studied in Nijmegen and lives in Arnhem explained: “If I want to visit my parents I can, and they also come here often but I am really happy for not living next door.”

The influence of family was for two of the interviewed people slightly different from this story. One woman (28) who lives in Utrecht is okay with the distance for now, but she prefers a different situation: “…it is a 50-minutes drive, not very close.” Different from the others, a man (28) who studied in Breda and now lives in Arnhem was influenced by the distance to his family in his residential location choice: “My parents are divorced and both live in Doetinchen (…) I’m there in half an hour, that is fine”

Hobbies
Returnees
For two of the returned respondents, their sports club at the Achterhoek had an influence in their choice for a place of residence. They explained: “I play soccer in the first team of Etten. I also did that while I lived in Groningen, went back for that every weekend. So yes, I like to live near that now” (man, 25, Aalten) and “I always continued doing volleyball here and I like that I can keep it that way” (Woman, 27, Vorden). Two others told that the sports of their partners influenced their residential location in a certain way: “The soccer club here is important to my husband and that is also influencing my choices of course. That is different for me, I also play soccer at a woman’s team here, but I would also be okay with doing that somewhere else” (woman, 28, Dinxperlo), “… then we started thinking about places in the Achterhoek. We both did not necessary want to live in our home villages (…) my boyfriend’s soccer club was in Varsseveld and his sister was living there, so yeah, we had some kind of bond with the place” (Woman, 25, Varsseveld).

The others did not have a hobby influencing their residential location: “I did gymnastics as a kid, but when I moved to Nijmegen I continued that at a sports club there (…) and now I go to the gym here but I could have done that everywhere, I’m not difficult about that.” (Woman, 29, Silvolde).

Non-returnees
For two of the non-returned respondents, a sports club at their student city had an influence in their choice to stay at this place. They told: “I play volleyball here and I really enjoy that here at this club”
(man, 24, Nijmegen) and “I play volleyball here which is a big part of my social life” (man, 27, Nijmegen).

Two others have their hobby at their place of origin in the Achterhoek. One of them is fine with the distance: “I play soccer here in Doetinchem. I also did that while living in Breda. So yeah, there are my friends and my club.” (Man, 28, Arnhem) and the other one is less happy about this: “I play the saxophone and my ‘dwijlorkest’ is in Lichtenvoorde. I always continued playing with them. I don’t rehearse every week with them now because a one-hour drive here and back is long.” (Man, 29, Nijmegen).

Some of the others have a nice hobby at the place where they live: “I have my sports nearby now, I joined a nice cycle association with people of my age” (woman, 28, Utrecht) but this did not seem to contribute to their residential choices.

5.2. Accessibility and mobility

The maximum distance that someone prefers towards an important place is also influence by the possibilities to get there. Therefore, the accessibility of a place and the personal mobility are factors that can possibly limit (or enlarge) the choice for a residential location.

Situation in the Achterhoek

As mentioned, the possibilities of public transport in the region are limited. There is a train that comes along the larger cores and there are buses, but some smaller places are hard to reach without a car. This has forced some companies to work with lease cars or to move to a place with a train station because otherwise they couldn’t find enough employees anymore. This situation also came up during the interviews. One man (non-returnee, 24, living in Nijmegen) told that he was interested in an internship in the Achterhoek during his study: “I was very interested in an internship at a company in ’S Heerenberg but that would take me about two hours from Nijmegen so I didn’t do it because of that. You must go by train, bus and a local bus and walk 15 minutes. By car it would have been fine, but I didn’t have a car as a student. I think that situation is a shame, especially because there are so many big and important companies in the region.” Two women (one returnee and one non-returnee) had a similar story and both bought a car for their internship in the Achterhoek: “When I started my internship here, buying a car was the first thing I did. It was too far to go by bike and the bus connection was very bad. So yes, even for an internship you need a car in the Achterhoek” (returnee, 28, living in Dinxperlo). The regional cooperation wants to improve this in the future with concepts like shared bikes and cars. There are also plans to improve the highway to decrease the congestion. The current situation makes it difficult to live in the region when you don’t own a car.

Returnees

Most of the interviewed returnees have their earlier described activity- and social space mainly in the Achterhoek. To get at the places they need to be, all but one of them own a car: “You really need a car if you want to live here, because the public transport is a drama except for Doetinchem. In Silvolde, yeah you can go to the train station in Terborg but the train doesn’t go frequently. But by car you can get everywhere, its fine. Except for if you want to go somewhere for a drink, then you must go by bike, or someone needs to stay sober.” (Woman, 29, Silvolde). The level of public transport and highway connections turned out not to be the most important factor in the choice for a place of residence in the Achterhoek. Still, there was some noticeable influence of this topic.

The only one without a car is living in the city centre of Doetinchem and explained: “I live and work here, so I don’t need a car for now” (woman, 25). The others all use their car regularly. Most of them
work in or around the region and go there by car. The highway connection of their place of residence was for two respondents relevant in their choice for a place within the region. They both live in Varsseveld which is very close to an important highway: “I have a car and then Varsseveld is at a good location because you’re in no time on the A18 (...) I wouldn’t like to live at a place that is poorly accessible from the highway” (man, 25). Although not everyone was positive about this connection in other places, this did not influence their choice for this place. The earlier mentioned man (27, Vorden) who works as a pilot for an airline said about that: “The only disadvantage of Vorden and the Achterhoek is that it is so poorly connected to the highways. For me it is okay now because I only must drive two times a week, but this is the maximum for me (...) but on the other hand, the area is nice and quiet now. Maybe that would have been different with a better connection.”

None of the respondents daily used public transport. Yet five of them were positively influenced by the presence of a train station in their place of residence: “The presence of a train stations does more than you think, especially for a village. Now in our phase it is maybe less important but, in the future, maybe we have kids then who need to go to college. It is also easier for friends to visit us who don’t have a car. I grew up in Kranenburg, that doesn’t even have a bus connection, I didn’t like that.” (Woman, 27, Vorden), “I am happy that the train station is so close, I go to my soccer training by train. The train runs every half hour, it would be better if it was more, but it is fine” (man, 25, Aalten).

Non-returnees

Influence of the level of public transport and highway connections at a (potential) place of residence differ a lot in every situation. Overall, the interviewed non-returnees attach more importance to the accessibility of their place of residence. Like the returnees, also all but one of the non-returnees own a car. Most of them like to enjoy the opportunities of both the options of a car and a nearby train station. The man (25) with the own company in Tilburg said about that: “the bus - and train station are literally around the corner and there is a parking lot here, so that is perfect for my employees (...) and it is nice to live, I am in no time on the highway. That accessibility is important to me.” The women (25) who lives and works in the city centre of Arnhem also values her situation: “In the village I grew up there was no train station, so you were always dependent to the car or had to cycle very far. Now I live close to the train station and I really appreciate that (...) and I go to work by bike, I think mainly use my car to go to the Achterhoek”. Some others do use their car to commute to their job but also value the availability of the train: “It is nice that you can have a drink somewhere and go back by train. It is also easier if I visit my brother who lives in Amsterdam, especially with that parking fees.” (Man, 27, Nijmegen).

One of them mentioned that only the accessibility by car was important in her situation. She (28, Utrecht) and her boyfriend must drive a lot for work. They mainly chose their current apartment in Utrecht because it was so close to the highways. She also said: “We would really like to live in the Achterhoek if the accessibility was better. But in the situation now, there is too much traffic jam.”

Another person had also a bit of a different situation because he (man, 29, Nijmegen) was very unhappy about the accessibility of his current place of residence: “It is dramatic to drive to the Achterhoek from here because it takes already half an hour to leave the city (...) but yeah, we live on the good side of the city in the direction of Breda where my brother lives and close to the hospital (job) so pros and cons“.
5.3. Awareness space
This part describes the influence of the personal preference people have, independently of activities or social contacts. This is divided in two parts: their preferred physical – and social environment.

Physical environment

Returnees
All the returned interviewees where influenced by the physical environment while choosing the place where they live. All but one of them currently live in a village and they have similar reasons to prefer this environment. They like the space, quietness and greenery while still have neighbours, liveliness of the village and some (basic) facilities around. The man (27, Vorden) who is a pilot told: “I work in the west and have a busy job. I am very happy that I can leave the ‘airplane world’ behind and go to the east and relaxed.” and a woman (29) who lives in Silvolde said: “I prefer to live in the quietness and space, I like to have a garden. Here in the village is enough that you can do. I sometimes spend a weekend in at friends in Amsterdam and I like it there, but I don’t want to live in it (...) we live in a semi-detached house on the outskirts of the village, when you look out the window you can see the cows.”. The woman (25, Varsseveld) who mainly moved because of the job of her boyfriend, would initially prefer to live in the environment of the city. Nevertheless, she is also satisfied with the surroundings the way they are now: “I would never live in a really remote area. I like the city environment the most but now I’m not complaining either. We live near to the centre of Varsseveld. It is a village, but with a station, supermarket, Hema and Gall&Gall. Everything I need to survive haha”.

One woman (25) has a different preference in physical environment, she and her boyfriend like to live a bit more in the crowds: “I wanted to live in the city centre, I also liked that in Nijmegen (...) now I live in the centre of Doetinchem. I like the cosiness, the terraces on Saturdays, but I don’t need to live in a bigger city than this”.

Non-returnees
Most of the non-returnees where also influenced by the physical environment while choosing the place where they live. Half of them live in an apartment in or near a city centre and really like that kind of environment in this phase of their lives: “I like to live like this, in the middle of the city, close to the shops and everything. And I’m also easily out of it, I often go cycling in the Ooijpolder.” (Woman, 25, Nijmegen), “I don’t know what I will say in ten years from now, but currently I like it here. I appreciate that I can go to the cinema, theatre and pubs in a minute” (woman, 25, Arnhem), “I live in a nice and hip area, a former harbour with restaurants, boats, that kind of stuff (...) a lively area, I like to live in something like that” (man, 25, Tilburg).

Two of them preferred a little more space and quietness within or close to the city. A man (27, Nijmegen) said: “I like the combination of busyness and quietness I think, like we have now. A little out of the centre with a garden”. Another woman (25) will be moving to Oosterhout soon, a ‘suburb’ of Nijmegen: “We consciously chose to live in the green and spacious environment there, but still close enough to the centre of Nijmegen”.

For two of the respondents, their current place of residence does not match their personal preference. They have a similar situation and live both with their partner in a rental apartment a bit further from the city centre. One of them (woman, 28) lives in Utrecht and explained: “I prefer to live quieter actually. We live in the city now, but I am not really a city person. It is our plan to buy a house which is more in the outside area but still easily accessible by car. Hard to find, haha”. The other (man, 29) lives in Nijmegen and told: “Actually, I prefer to live quieter and more in the outside, with nature and fresh air. Here we only have a balcony (...) I prefer the environment of a village”
Social environment

Returnees

The social environment was for most returnees not a factor that initially influenced their choice for a place: “We live in a nice neighbourhood, next to older people (…) it didn’t really influence the choice for me, it was more about the place, nice semi-detached house in the centre, that’s convenient.” (Woman, 25, Varsseveld). For one woman (28, Dinxperlo) who recently had a baby, the social environment is a nice addition: “There are more young families in the neighbourhood. That was not the most important to me, I mainly wanted to like the location and I had a good feeling about the house. But it is nice to have good contact with the neighbours and it is nice if you are in the same phase of life”.

Half of the returnees did mention that they experience the overall mentality in villages in the Achterhoek as a positive contribution. One man (25) living in Varsseveld, mentioned this as an important influence in his residential choice: “I really have the feeling that people look after each other, say good morning and know each other. It is a certain culture, I think, I like that.” A woman (27) living in Vorden also told that she really appreciates the atmosphere here, compared to the city she lived in: “They looked odd when I said hi, here that is totally different, everyone waves to each other. Probably not everyone likes that, but I feel good around it.”

Non-returnees

The social environment was also for most of the non-returnees not experienced as an influencing factor. The woman (25) who will be moving to Oosterhout soon is an exception on this: “I like to live among people who are in the same situation, same phase as we. It is all based on prejudices, but in some neighbourhoods in Nijmegen I don’t want to live (…) we go to a new neighbourhood with other young people who have a relationship and maybe think about children, like that. They don’t have to be your friends, but it does influence where you want to live. Without having a culture where everyone knows each other. Some of the others also mentioned that it is nice to live among people you like and understand, but it did not directly influence their decisions.

5.4. Opportunities and constraints

Housing

The number of dwellings in the Achterhoek region increased over the last years. The biggest part of these are owner-occupied houses (69.5 percent), some social rental houses (22 percent) and a few private rental houses (8.5 percent). A lot of these houses (44 percent) are built before 1970. The current focus is less on building and more on renovation of the older dwellings because of the predicted decline (Achterhoek, 2017). The number of households is not declining yet, so finding a house in the region can be difficult for first-time buyers. The situation in the more urban places is also difficult for home seekers. Especially buying is hard there and overall more expensive than in the Achterhoek. Yet it is hard to compare those two because it can be very different in each situation.

Returnees

Surprisingly, for most of the returned respondents it was easy to find their current house. Three of them live in a rental home that they all found within a few months. The other five bought their current home. For one of the returnees, the availability of this dwelling influenced where he lives now: “We could rent this apartment of the boss of my girlfriend. It was more of a coincidence, could probably also have been around Etten” (man, 25, Aalten). The others all looked for houses at one
specific place and found their current home at that place. One woman (28, Dinxperlo) mentioned that the price slightly influenced her preference for a location. They considered Doetinchem in the first place, but they finally decided to buy a house in Dinxperlo for several reasons: “The prices here did play a role. I mean, if you compare it to Doetinchem (...) you have more for your budget here”. For the others the availability and prices were less influencing in their choice for a location. Two respondents (who are a couple) did mention that the search for a house in Vorden took some time and that they were lucky with their budget. They (man and woman, both 27) explained: “For a village it is expensive around here and there aren’t enough available houses. Because there are so many older people here, the municipality doesn’t build new houses. The few houses that are available are at least two tons. We could afford it but I know lots of people who want to live here but live somewhere else now, that’s a shame I think”.

Non-returnees

For the non-returnees the search for a house was more difficult in some cases. Like the returnees, most of them were looking at one specific place. For some of them this worked out well: “We found this place in a short time, I think we were lucky with that. Friends of us had to search for a longer time” (man, 29, living in a rental apartment in Nijmegen), “I’m in a good position because I have my company for a while. So, I had the resources to buy a place here” (man, 25, Tilburg). One woman who was looking for a house in Nijmegen had to change her preferred location a bit. Because it was too hard to find a suitable and affordable place in the city, she and her boyfriend adjusted their preference and bought a place in the ‘suburb’ Oosterhout: “If we would have bought this in the city, we would have paid double the price I think”. Three others are still living at places where they lived as a student. Although they are okay there, two of them are looking for something else in the same city. This is without success so far: “I am looking for a rental apartment here for like half a year now” (man, 24, Nijmegen), “We want to buy a house here, but it is really hard with the housing market in Nijmegen, we are looking for more than a year now (...) we don’t want to look at other places outside the city” (man, 27, Nijmegen).

Two of the respondents searched for rental apartments at two places and chose the first suitable option: “I searched in both Arnhem and Nijmegen (...) In Arnhem it is easier to find something. I found this place via a colleague and still really like it” (woman, 25, Arnhem), “We were considering both Doetinchem and Arnhem (...) I think the availability is similar at these places, it was just a coincidence that we found this suitable place in Arnhem” (man, 28, Arnhem).

5.5. Residential location choice: conclusions

For most of the young graduates, their residential location seems to be based on more than one factor. The influencing factors together created the space in which people searched for a place. Most of them were able to find a place that matches all their preferences. Some of them did some concessions because of the availability and prices of dwellings or the distance to family and friends of their partner, but these cases could still find a place within an acceptable distance. For a few, there was a decisive influencing (work related) factor that limited their options. They made a consideration of the same factors but within this predetermined area. Because of that they had to adjust some of their preferences such as the distance to friends and hobbies or a certain physical – or social environment. This way of choosing a residential place was similar for both the interviewed returnees and the non-returnees and corresponds with the theory of spatial preferences (Hooimeijer and Van der Knaap, 1994; Feijten et. al., 2008). The amount of influence of the researched factors differs per group at some points. They will be discussed in the part below.

The influence of work is only present among a part of the non-returnees; some of them could immediately start with a job due to a previous internship. This contributed to their choice to stay in
or around their student city. For the other non-returnees as well as the returnees, the availability of work or career possibilities around was probably a small contribution but no decisive factor. A few of the returnees even chose their place of residence while knowing there were no suitable jobs close. *Friends* are overall a very important influence. This is especially the case for the returnees; most of them live at biking distance from their best friends. For a part of the non-returnees their best friends have the same kind of influence on their choice to stay at their student city. For the other part, it is important to have some kind of social network at their place of residence but there is less of an influence of a main group of friends at a certain place. *Family* is mainly influencing the female returnees, who all live close to most of them. The others are okay with – or even prefer some distance between them and their family. The location of a *hobby* is influencing a part of both groups and is in all these cases related to friends. The *accessibility* of a place was influencing both groups in different ways. Among the returnees, several chose consciously a place within the region with a train station or an acceptable highway connection. Most of the non-returnees saw these possibilities more as obvious preconditions but did value their options. Yet some of them did consciously chose a place because of the mobility options. The *physical environment* was is most of the cases influencing the space within people searched and found their place of residence. The *social environment* had a similar effect but, in most cases, a lower influence. *Available and affordable housing* was is most cases not a big influence on the choice for a certain place. In a few situations where the choice was already limited to two options, an available house was the deciding factor. The group of returnees all found their house quite easy. This was not the case for some of the non-returnees, but the majority did not want to adjust their preference for a place because of that.
6. Attachment to the Achterhoek

In this chapter, the attachment to the place of origin of young graduates from the Achterhoek will be outlined to answer the second sub-question: ‘Do young graduates from the Achterhoek feel attached to their region of origin?’ Place attachment is built by experiences and relationships that are related to the place. If these are positive there is a stimulation of development of place attachment. If these are negative, you can say there is an absence of - or negative attachment to the place (Fried, 2000). Therefore, the experiences and relationships (related to the Achterhoek) of young graduates are discussed here. Besides that, also the expression of place attachment will be discussed. This can be in two ways; emotional and behavioural. The first is about the personal emotion related to the physical area and the second contains the social involvement and behaviour in the specific area (Pretty et. al., 2003). The presence of these is also discussed. The chapter starts with an outline of place attachment in general and zooms in at the three dimensions (place identity, sense of community and place dependence) after that.

6.1. General presence of place attachment

Experiences and relationships
Returnees
Experiences of growing up
The group of returnees are all very positive about the way they grew up in the region. They all lived the first part of their childhood in a village or on a farm in the countryside and experienced that as a very nice environment. They told about that: “It was really nice to grow up in a village. A lot of children, you know everyone, ring every doorbell and play outside together” (woman, 25, partly grew up in Hummelo), “Little traffic, so we could play on the streets, a lot of playground. Your parents don’t have to worry so you have a lot of freedom” (man, 27, grew up in Vorden), “It felt really safe, you could just cycle ten kilometres on your own and nothing happened” (woman, 25, grew up in Dinxperlo), “We lived next to a forest. So, building huts, off with my go-kart, that kind of stuff” (woman, 27, grew up in Kranenburg) and “I grew up on a farm, my father keeps sheep. I had a nice time there, playing soccer in the meadow” (man, 25, grew up in Etten).

All of them also have nice memories about their time in high school. One woman (25) moved from Hummelo to Doetinchem at that moment: “I was fine with that because that meant that I wouldn’t have to cycle so far to highschool”. The others lived in smaller places so most of them had to cycle half an hour or more to get to their school. None of them had a bad memory of that: “I had to bike eleven kilometres. You didn’t know anything else, everyone did it, and so you biked with a group. It was also fun with your friends” (woman, 27, grew up in Kranenburg). Some of them did mention that it could be frustrating that the places are scattered: “I didn’t have parents who could drive me everywhere all the time and in high school I had friends living 10 kilometres away, so you have to cycle a lot. I sometimes found that difficult.” (Woman, 25, grew up in Dinxperlo) and “As a teenager in the Achterhoek, you have to cover a lot of distance. Go to school every day, friends at villages in the other direction, but yeah, that’s the way it is. I was used to it and it is part of the region I think” (woman, 28, grew up in Breedenbroek). They were all very positive about the leisure activities during their teenage time. Their experiences about going out in the region are quite similar: “We all went to the ’Radstake’. You had the disco busses so that was well organized, we had the options. The busses are gone now but used it a lot at that time” (man, 27, grew up in Vorden) and “Yeah, we went to the
‘Radstake’ or the ‘Arena’ and there was also a lot organized in the village” (woman, 29, grew up in Silvolde).

Relations related to the place
All the returned respondents have a partner they live with. They all met during their teenage years at school, a party or a festival. All but one of the partners are from the Achterhoek region and most of them are from the same or a neighbouring place of origin. This generally strengthens the bond with the area. The one who is not from the region grew up in Twente, a region in the Netherlands that is not very far from the Achterhoek.

All the interviewed returnees still have friends from the Achterhoek they know since their youth. Most of them consider them as their main group of friends. In some of the cases, they all live in the region: “All my friends from school live here. Some of them also left to study, some didn’t go at all” (woman, 25, grew up and lives in Doetinchem), “My group of friends is from soccer and school, since we were very young. Most of them still live in or around Etten” (man, 25). For others, some of their friends are living somewhere else but they are still very often at their parents in their place of origin: “Some live in the city but they are often at their parents place (...) the Achterhoek is our home base” (man, 25, grew up in Westendorp), “I know my best friends from high school. Some live here, some in Arnhem. I predict that they’ll come back too eventually, haha” (woman, 29, grew up in Silvolde). The earlier mentioned woman (25, grew up in Dinxperlo) who mainly returned because of the job of her boyfriend, had a somewhat different situation. She does not have such a group of friends in the Achterhoek like the others: “My friends from school, hmm, I see some occasionally. Most of them left. I have one good friend who also lives here, so I see her often. I also have some friends from my side job at the supermarket who I see often”

Most interviewed returnees have almost all their family in the region. All of them have their parents here, for four of them both are originally from the Achterhoek and three of them had one parent originally from the region. In these cases, this means that with a few exceptions also all siblings, aunts, uncles and other family members are living in here. One of the returnees (the earlier mentioned man who is a pilot, 27, who grew up and lives in Vorden) differs from that story because both his parents are from outside the region and moved here at some point. Two of his siblings left the region, one of them is also living in their place of origin.

Non-returnees
Experiences of growing up
Like most returnees, most interviewed non-returnees grew up in a village or farm on the countryside. Just like the others, they have experienced that as very positive. Two woman who grew up on a detached farm told: “So much freedom and space, we experienced the greatest adventures. Finding tadpoles, building huts, once I almost drove the tractor into the ditch with my cousin” (woman, 25, grew up in Meddo) and “I loved that I could always play outside and had that much freedom. I was in athletics and we always ran through the woods during trainings” (woman, 28, grew up in Ulft). Two respondents who lived in a village said: “I experienced Gendringen as nice and safe. I could walk to primary school, the neighbourhood children picked me up every day to go together” (woman, 25, grew up in Geerlingen) and “I really liked it. Lots of friends, lots of space, playing on the streets... Maybe the facilities were a bit further, but we had a swimming pool, soccer club, quiet a lot of things to do in the village” (man, 27, grew up in Vorden).

All but one of them had, like the returnees, a nice time in high school. Yet, one woman (25, grew up in Meddo) did experience some difficult moments there: “It was sometimes hard to be a ‘farm girl’ from Meddo on a high school in Winterswijk. It felt more ‘high class’ there and in the beginning, I felt
like I needed to prove something (...) but when I got older, I found my friends and it was fine”. Like the returnees, most of them have memories of the long distances between places. Two of them experienced this as a negative point. One explained why this felt like a disadvantage to her: “School was nine kilometres away and some friends even lived further away. In the evening you always need to be brought or picked up by your parents (...) you’re less independent, you like to go to the places yourself” (woman, 25, grew up in Breedenbroek). The other sometimes had difficulties with the limited opportunities: “If you meet a nice girl and you want to take her to the movies, you don’t want that your parents need to pick you up hahaha! But also, if you want to do something with your friends, I sometimes missed that when I got older” (man, 24, grew up in Lichtenvoorde). The others did not have difficulties with that or were okay with it: “We had everything I needed here, we could go out, nice city centre, shops...” (man, 28, grew up in Doetinchem), “Only high school was far away but I bought a nice scooter for that (...) Going out was also far but at that time we could take the train for free to the ‘Radstake’ and there were buses to bring you back. I had a nice time there” (man, 27, grew up in Vorden).

Relations related to the place
None of the respondents who did not return have a partner from the Achterhoek to strengthen their attachment to the place. This is very different from the group who did return. Six of them have a partner from a different place and four of them do not have a partner now.

The relations with friends they have in the Achterhoek have more similarities with the group of returnees. Especially the men still have (with one exception) a group of friends there that they regularly see: “Most of my friends live in Doetinchem. I still have the same group of friends, I know some of them since primary school” (man, 28, grew up in Doetinchem). Not all of them are living there, but they are somehow still related to the Achterhoek. The other four do not have such a group of friends but do have some friends of their school or hobby in the Achterhoek they still see: “I still have the really good friends from there. Some of them moved, some of them stayed (...) yes, when I go to my parents, I meet them too” (woman, 25, grew up in Gendringen), “I still have some friends from school or athletics there. Although I’m busy I try to make time for them” (man, 25, grew up in Ulft). One woman did not have that kind of relations anymore: “Most of them left. I don’t often see or speak the ones who stayed” (28, grew up in Ulft).

Most interviewed non-returnees have, like the returnees, almost all their family in the region. All of them have their parents here, for six of them both are originally from the Achterhoek and two of them had one parent originally from the region. Most of them have, with a few exceptions, also all siblings, aunts, uncles and other family members living in here. One woman of whom her mother is originally from the region, has no other family there. With her, there are also two others that only have their parents living in the Achterhoek. Both their parents are not originally from the region and moved there at some point. One of them explained: “I moved to Vorden when I was two years old. My siblings were twelve, fourteen and sixteen at that time so they didn’t really grow up here (...) they don’t have that much with the Achterhoek as I do”.

Emotional – and behavioural expression
Returnees
The answer to the question whether the returnees felt connected to the Achterhoek was unanimously yes. All of them said that they feel attached to the region. They mainly explained that feeling as being at home there. A woman told: “It is the place where I feel at home, for one hundred percent. It is nice there and I feel like I can be myself there” (29, Silvolde) and another woman told: “I
think it is the no nonsense people and the sense of togetherness. I really missed that when I lived in the city.” (28, Dinxperlo).

This ‘general’ attachment is also reflected in their behaviour in the region. While living somewhere else, the returned respondents generally spent their weekends in the Achterhoek. Nowadays, all of them are participating in local activities. Some are a member of a sports – or music club or give training there, others are active in other local organizations. An example of this is a man (25) who lives in Varsseveld now and is active in an association in his home village Westendorp: “I’m in the board of the foundation ‘Kulturhus’. That is an initiative that maybe only would work in the Achterhoek (...) we manage an accommodation that helps to keep up the liveability of this small and aging village.” Two other respondents told that they participated in the organization of an event: “I’m in the organization of a summer camp for children in the area. I’m still doing that, also did it while I lived in Nijmegen” (woman, 25, Varsseveld) and “I was in the board that organized the annual fair of Breedenbroek for several years. I quit when I started working full time (...) my husband is a member of the board of the music association here in Dinxperlo” (woman, 28, Dinxperlo).

All respondents have annual events in the region they go to. All but one of the respondents are originally from a village and living in one too. At these places, the fairs are very popular: “You have the fairs; every village has its own. It is a party of four days and the whole village is there. I go to the ones in Etten and Aalten” (man, 25, Aalten). Besides this, there are also lots of other events and festivals in the region. The most well-known in the rest of the Netherlands is the festival ‘Zwarte Cross’. Most returnees told they had several events the go to every year: “The fair is one big reunion here and kingsday too” (man, 27, Vorden), “I go to the fair in Ulft with my boyfriend and the one in Silvolde with my family. And carnival and some other festivals, there is a lot to do around here” (woman, 29, Silvolde). The woman (25) from Doetinchem has less with it: “I don’t go to the fairs and stuff in the villages. Sometimes Zwarte Cross but not every year” (woman, 25, Doetinchem).

Non-returnees

Although they do not live there anymore, the complete group of non-returnees told that they felt connected to the Achterhoek too. As reasons they mainly mentioned the environment: “I feel attached to the Achterhoek, especially Ulft and Silvolde. When I drive there it feels familiar and, in my opinion, it is also a beautiful place” (woman, 28, Utrecht), “Yes, I feel attached. I always like to go there and relax. When you get out of the car at my parent’s place and hear nothing, really nice” (man, 27, Nijmegen) and the mentality of the people: “It is also the mentality there, that ‘nuchtere’, no nonsense, I like to be around that” (woman, 25, Arnhem).

Over-all the ‘general’ attachment of the interviewed non-returnees is less present in their behaviour in the region. This is a predictable difference, because they do not live there. Nevertheless, there is still attachment noticeable in the behaviour of most of them. Like the returnees, all of them were weekly visiting the Achterhoek. For most of them, this slightly changed into visiting once or twice a month now. As a teenager, most of the non-returnees were also member of a club in the Achterhoek. Some left that behind when they moved to the city, others kept doing that after they moved. One man (27) told that he travelled from Nijmegen to Kranenburg for five years because of his soccer – and volleyball club: “You know it is a nice club and you know people there, so it is worth the traveling time (...) now I don’t go back for that anymore”. Yet, three of the non-returnees are still participating in the region. One man (29, Nijmegen) has his music club and the associated activities: “I play the saxophone and my ‘dwijlorkest’ is in Lichtenvoorde (...) I go to the fair every year because we are playing there. That is quiet a happening, four days of party” and another (29, Nijmegen) is also participating in the village fair “During the fair there is a parade in Vragender. We participate every year and build a car with our group of friends”. The third is almost every day in the Achterhoek.
because he works in Doetinchem. Besides that, he is also playing soccer in his hometown: “I play soccer here; I also did that while living in Breda (...) the club always keeps me here; it is my attachment with the Achterhoek” (man, 27, Doetinchem).

All the respondents who did not return also have events in the region they go to. Yet, the intensity varies per person. Four of them visits events only occasionally: “I don’t go to the fair of my village every year anymore. This year I happened to go to the fair of another village with friends, I only do that when I’m already there” (woman, 25, Arnhem). The other six were bounded to these local events on a level that seems equivalent to the returnees: “I never miss a village festival. I like to go there, I think it is the charm of the village, that when you grew up there you know and talk to a lot of people (...) the summerparty, kingsday and some smaller festivals” (man, 27, Nijmegen).

6.2. Place identity

Emotional – and behavioural expression

Returnees

Most of the interviewed returnees identify themselves as ‘Achterhoekers’ and told that they are proud to tell where they are from. They explained it like this respondent did: “I’m a real ‘Achterhoeker’. I like the region and always tell people I live in the most beautiful part of the Netherlands” (woman, 29, Silvolde). One of them had a remark on this identification: “I identify myself as an ‘Achterhoeker’ (...) not with the stereotype of a boorish farmer on a tractor who drinks beer” (man, 25, Aalten). Also the woman who returned because of the job of her boyfriend had a remark on this: “I’m proud that I’m from the Achterhoek (...) but yeah, that people I went to primary school with who never left, I don’t identify with them (...) I never thought that I would return, it kind of happened to me and I am fine with it but also thinking ‘oh my god, I don’t want to be part of that group’ ”. Nevertheless, all but one of the returnees see themselves as ‘Achterhoekers’. The woman (25) from Doetinchem was the only exception on this: “I think I could live everywhere with enough facilities and friends and family around (...) it is not that I really feel connected that way I think.”

A behavioural expression of this place identity can be found in the regional language. Except for the woman from Doetinchem, all the returnees can understand the dialect a little bit. This because they heard their parents or others speak it to each other, but they do not really speak it themselves. Two of them do know this regional language a little bit better and sometimes use it: “With my parents, not with my boyfriend. Sometimes at companies where I am for work (...) it is easier to cooperate I think, when they know that you are from here” (woman, 29, Silvolde). The other one only uses it in situations during her job as occupational therapist: “I sometimes have older clients in the region, they don’t understand you in your ‘flawless Dutch’” (woman, 27, Vorden). She also explained why most parents speak dialect but did not pass it to their children: “When we were young, they had the idea that you should only speak Dutch. For good education, a good job later, that kind of stuff”.

Another behavioural expression that came up during the interviews was the use of the regional flag. Some of the returnees mentioned this while talking about their identity and regional pride. One man (25) who recently moved to Varsseveld told: “I’ll definitely hang out the Achterhoek flag at my new place and I only drink Grolsch (a brand of beer originally from the region)” Two women did not have a flag yet, but both mentioned that they liked the idea: “I think it is nice, sort of being proud of the region” (woman, 29, Silvolde). Two other people were less enthusiastic about it: “A nice idea, but a bit overdone in my opinion” (woman, 27, Vorden), “I’m proud to live here but you shouldn’t make it too crazy” (man, 27, Vorden). Meanwhile, the man of this last quote does put effort in culture and heritage: “I’m currently trying to get a licence to run the mill, grinding grain. I do that because I’m
interested in that (...) but also because I think it is important to keep these old monuments used. Otherwise they would eventually disappear.”

Non returnees
The place identity of the group of non-returnees is also present. All of them identify themselves as ‘Achterhoekers’ and told that they are proud to tell where they are from: “Yes, I’m an ‘Achterhoeker’, I’m from there, my family is from there” (man, 29, Vragender). One of them explained that she (25, Oosterhout) sometimes uses it during her job as pedagogue: “I always tell that I am from the Achterhoek. I also feel that some clients are more comfortable with me if I present myself as an ‘Achterhoeker’ instead of someone from the city. I use it well, haha”. Like the returnees, in this group there was also one person mentioning his discontent with the image of the region: “I do identify myself as ‘Achterhoeker’ (...) in the Randstad it has that sound of a shrinking region, the image that there are only farmers here who drink beer”. One woman (25, Arnhem) mentioned the different identity one can have in a different place: “In the Achterhoek I really don’t feel ‘Achterhoeker’. When I am here, I feel it more. I also mention where I’m from or make a joke about it when I meet people.

The knowledge – and use of regional language is in this group probably a little less present. Yet there are two man who told they could understand and speak the regional dialect and sometimes speak it with family or friends from the Achterhoek. Among the others, most of them only understand it. This mainly depends on the roots of their parents: “I can fully understand it, but I never speak it. It is funny because my mother is from Dinxperlo and I can hear the difference with people from Gendringen. My parents talk dialect to each other but Dutch to us. Pretty weird.” (woman, 25, Nijmegen). Yet, one of them with both parents from outside the Achterhoek, had learn to understand it on the soccer – and volleyball club. There are three of the non-returnees who does not speak or understand the dialect.

One of the respondents told that he is a big fan of the soccer club in the region called the Graafschap. He goes every two weeks to a game: “and I am a fan of the Graafschap, I go to all their home games with my friends”. Other behavioural expressions of the Achterhoek identity or pride did not come up during the interviews with the ones who did not return.

6.3. Sense of community

Experiences and expressions
The experience of a sense of community differ per village or city. Especially in the smaller places it was very present, in the bigger places a bit less and in the city of Doetinchem it was only noticed at places like the soccer-club.

Returnees
The woman (25) who lives in Doetinchem is glad about the less present sense of community there: “I like that I don’t know everybody when I walk through the centre”. The woman who grew up and lives in Silvolde also experiences not that much influence of this sense of community. She is happy with that: “Some people know me because my family is from here but there are also a lot who don’t. I think Silvolde is a bit too big for that (...) it is also easier to fit in here when you’re from the outside”.

The woman that recently moved to Varsseveld experienced this a little more: “Yeah, it is a real village. When you go to the supermarket, the cashier starts a personal conversation about your new house and you think: ‘how do you know where I live?!’” She is okay with it and is also willing to participate in the community activities and traditions: “we still have to do ’buurt maken’, which
means you invite the neighbours and show them your new place (...) and we have an annual neighbourhood party. I think it is funny, like typical ‘Achterhoeks’.

The other five also experienced a sense of community while growing up and at their current place of residence. They all were positive about this and described it like this woman (27, Vorden): “I like it that the people here are interested in each other and help where needed, it doesn’t feel intrusive”. The man (25) who is active in the foundations of the small village Westendorp, is also attracted to the sense of community here. He told about the difference he experienced in the city: “When I lived in Nijmegen, I had an older neighbour who once had an accident. I brought her a fruit basket, something that would be normal in the Achterhoek. She liked it, but was also very surprised, three years later she still talked about it haha.” A woman (29) living in Dinxperlo also mentioned the safe feeling she got because people know each other here. She recently had a baby and is happy about the near future: “the girl next door is three years old and can play outside alone (...) I feel good around that”. She had one remark on the habits of the neighbourhood community: “Yet there are some traditions here that I’m less happy with. Like that the neighbourhood goes outside on the first of January around ten in the morning. That’s too much social pressure and too early haha, so we don’t do that”

Non-returnees
A man (28, Arnhem) who grew up in Doetinchem told: “I think Doetinchem is too big for that noabership people talk about” and another man (29, Nijmegen) had a similar description about his place of origin Lichtenvoorde. All the others did experience the presence of a community while growing up. Although none of them really had negative experiences with that, five of the returnees mentioned they were happy to live more anonymous now. A woman (25, Nijmegen) who grew up in Gendringen said: “It didn’t really bother me but there is a lot of social control, everyone knows you. I like it here more” and a woman (25, Arnhem) who grew up in Breedenbroek explained: “There is, but you easily grow out of it when you are gone for a couple of years. I think that I would need to make an effort to fit in if I would move back. I also get the social aspect of it, but I appreciate that I don’t have that now.” The woman (25, Oosterhout) who grew up on a farm in Meddo has variable feelings about the community there: “You had that kind of people in the village who talked a lot, were in the board and stuff and knew everything about everyone. We lived a bit outside the village and my parents were not that active there, so it didn’t really bother me (...) nowadays when I visit the fair it sometimes bother me that people talk about each other like ‘wow she looks good’ or ‘she has become fat’. But the community at the soccer-club was very friendly, a positive experience.”

Three others have a more positive feeling about living in the community of their place of origin. A man (27, Nijmegen) who grew up in Vorden likes the sense of community there and said: “It is hospitable when you know some people and integrate in the village. When you move there at mid-thirties it’s probably a bit hard (...) my parents told me about two people who celebrated kingsday together. One of them was a farmer and the other helped milking the other day. So, people help each other so they can all go to the party for example”. A man (29, Nijmegen) who grew up in the small village Vragender was very positive about people their involvement in the community too: “People in Vragender are very committed to the liveability in the village. They go for example to the municipality to suggest plans to build new houses”.

6.4. Place dependence
The dimension of place dependence is a bit different from the others. It is about the more functional or instrumental use of or bond with a place which is in this case the Achterhoek. One can be dependent on the available (social or physical) resources at this place to reach his or her ‘living goals’ (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). This is less relevant for the interviewed young graduates. None of
them has a situation in which they make their living in a way that is bounded to a place in the Achterhoek. There is one exception on this. For one of the returnees (woman, 25, Varsseveld), there can be said that her partner has a functional bond because of his company: “My boyfriend has his own company which rents out merry-go-rounds for festivals and stuff. These are stored in a hall in Gaanderen so he can’t live to far from that because otherwise he first must drive there and after that to the place where they need to be. That would take too long to be in time. He would like to live in Nijmegen, but it is not possible now. We knew that if we wanted to live together, it must be around Gaanderen”.

6.5. Place attachment to the place of origin: conclusions

Place attachment can be developed by experiences and relationships that are related to the place. The presences or absence of this building blocks will be discussed here. Growing up in the quiet, green and safe environment of the Achterhoek was for all the returnees a very positive and similar experience. In these memories are no differences between the group of returnees and non-returnees. The differences can be found in the relations related to the place. All but one of the returnees have a partner from the Achterhoek. Most of them did not return because of the wishes of their partner but are influenced by the partner’s place related relations and behaviour. This generally strengthens their own attachment to the region. Among the non-returnees there is no one with a partner from the Achterhoek. For this group, this strengthening is not present. Friendship relations are also more present among the returnees. Almost all of them have a big group of friends from the Achterhoek that goes way back. Yet, most of the male non-returnees have a similar group of friends from the Achterhoek; the female non-returnees have less of these friendship relations. Family relations are present in both groups. There are a little more returnees with all their family members in the region, but this is not a big difference with the non-returnees.

The presence of place attachment can be expressed in two ways: emotional and behavioural. The answer to the question whether the returnees felt connected to the Achterhoek was an unanimously yes. This was overall a very similar feeling among all the graduates. The differences between the groups was on this expression only visible in their behaviour. All the returnees are participating in local activities and most of them visit local events. Although most of the non-returnees did continued activities in the region after moving, most of them quitted this eventually. Yet a few of them are currently continuing this. The local events are also a bit less popular among the non-returnees, but the majority is bounded to these local events on a level that seems equivalent to the returnees.

Besides the general presence of place attachment, the dimensions of place identity, sense of community and place dependence can also be indicators. The first dimension is on the emotional and behavioural side clearly present among the graduates. In both groups most of the people are identifying themselves as ‘Achterhoeker’ and clearly proud of their roots. Often mentioned reasons were their positive feeling about the landscape, mentality of the people and the feeling of home. Yet in both groups there were also some remarks on certain stereotypes about the region. The experience of the dimension sense of community is different per village or city. Especially in the smaller places it was very present, in the bigger places this was less. The emotion about this was for the returnees neutral or positive. For the non-returnees only a few of them are positive. The others were not negative but for now glad that they did not live in a similar kind of community feeling. The dimension of place dependence turned out to be less relevant among this group of people.
7. Conclusions and discussion

7.1. Conclusions

After the previous results and analysis, it is time to return to the main question of this research:

“What role does the presence or absence of attachment to the place of origin play in the decision of young graduates from the Achterhoek on whether or not they return to the home region?”

The attachment to the Achterhoek does certainly have an influence in people their preferences for a residential location. The analysis on activity - and social space shows the importance of friends and family (and to a lesser extent hobbies) in people their spatial preferences. Within the group of returnees, these factors are for the biggest part determined by Achterhoek related experiences, relations and behavioural expression. They for example know their best friends from high school and sport clubs and have their family in the region. The place attachment related influences on these factors is over all lower among the group of non-returnees. Over-all, the returnees also find the closeness of these factors more important than the non-returnees while choosing a place of residence. The awareness space is also influenced by place attachment. This can especially be related to the experiences of growing up, emotional expression, the level of identification with the physical – and social environment and sense of community. Although the experience and identification is also very positive and present among the group of non-returnees, this did not overrule other factors as for example a physical preference for the city as it did for the returnees. Yet there is also a part of the spatial preference that cannot be influenced by place attachment to the place of origin. These more practical influences are for these young graduates mostly related to work, availability of affordable housing and options for mobility.

As mentioned in the conclusion of chapter 5 that analysed the residential location choice, in most of the cases people based their location on several influencing factors. In these situations, the ‘level’ of attachment seems to be reflected in their choice on whether or not to return. The returnees had especially in terms of relations, behaviour and sense of community a more present attachment to the region then the non-returnees. In terms of experiences, emotions and identification this was more or less the same in both groups.

Nevertheless, like Huu Phe and Wakely (2000) argued, not all preferences are reflected in the outcome of this residential location choice. The situations in which people had one or two decisive factors limiting their options, the effect of place attachment is similar on the preferences, but very different on the outcome. The ‘level’ of place attachment matches in these cases not with the decision on whether or not to return. This was because the other (more practical) influences turned out to be decisive. In two cases there was a lot attachment to the region but work and mobility related factors withheld them from returning. In one case it was the other way around; work related influences resulted in returning to the Achterhoek.

This assumed influence of place attachment corresponds with the outcome of the quantitative research that has been done before. Like the research of Pretty et. al. (2003) in a rural area in Australia that stated that an individual or shared sense of community and identification with the place contributes to the intention to stay in the area. The results of Thissen et. al. (2010) in Belgium and the northeast of the Netherlands and Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006) in Iceland also had agreeing conclusions about the migration intentions of rural youth. They both found that employment perceptions and identification with the place of origin are the most important factors of influence in the migration intentions. Because of the qualitative approach, the outcome of this
research can add to the previous ones with a more specific understanding of the migration choices of young people from rural areas. A part of this group (the higher educated graduates) and the reasons behind their residential choices can be understood better.

7.2. Recommendations

Further research
Following the results of this research, it would be useful to look closer at some parts in a more quantitative research. Especially the influencing factors on the residential location choice of young graduates in this region could be substantiated with the results from a higher number of respondents. Besides that, it would also be relevant to take a closer look to the influence of partners in the choice on whether young graduates return to the Achterhoek.

Practical use
As described, young graduates in their twenties are an interesting group for the Achterhoek. Because of multiple reasons (e.g. the absence of higher education, limited options for commuting, the attraction of the city) a lot of people leave the region after they finished high school. Some of them go back to the area of origin after graduating, others stay or move somewhere else. At the same time, the region has a lot of companies that are demanding highly educated people. Therefore, it is necessary that a significant part of the group returns to the region. In order to understand their behaviour, it is important that there is knowledge about the reasons behind their residential choices. To use this knowledge for policy one needs to look at which part of this reasons can, and which part can’t probably be influenced by this.

The factors caused by place attachment are hard to influence by governmental policy. They do facilitate a part of the development of this feeling in terms of experiences of growing up and resulting relations. Yet it is personal if this turns out strong enough to stimulate a preference to return to the Achterhoek or not. Convincing the people without this ‘stronger’ attachment to return to the region will be very hard. It would be better to focus on the more practical part of the influences related to availability of affordable housing, work and options for mobility. Especially the options for an interesting job and the car connection to the highways turned out to be a problem for a part of the non-returnees.

While looking closer to these more practical influences, it could also be useful to focus on the moment of leaving in the first place and the moment when people start with an internship. Some people mentioned that they initially left because of the long travelling time to higher education by public transport. There was also mentioned by people that they would have liked to do an internship in the Achterhoek but were discouraged by the traveling time. Students generally don’t have a car yet, so they are dependent of public transport. If this is facilitated more, people increase their opportunities for work here and stay more connected to the region.

Although these recommendations are written specifically for the Achterhoek, they can also be helpful for regions with a similar situation. A lot of rural and less connected regions are dealing with the same problems. As shown in the results of earlier research on similar topics in for example Iceland, Belgium and Australia (Pretty et. al. 2003; Thissen et. al., 2010; Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006) these regions can be compared with each other at this part.
7.3. Reflection

After this conclusions and recommendations, it is important to mention the limitations of this research. Because of the low number of respondents, the outcome can’t be assumed as representative for the Achterhoek or similar regions in- or outside the Netherlands. Yet it did give a broader insight in the situation to add to the previous quantitative research. This contribution would have been stronger with a more representative and diverse group of respondents. It did work out to reach a selected group of higher educated graduates from the Achterhoek in the age of 24 to 29 years old with about half returnees and half non-returnees. Yet, the aim was also to gather a group that represented all the personal characteristics that could possibly influence their residential decision according to the literature (e.g. gender, partner, parents etc.). This has only partly succeeded. This was mainly because it was hard to reach suitable respondents without using ‘snowballing’ (finding respondents through other respondents) which influenced the representability.
8. Literature


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9. Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Fijn dat je mee wil werken aan mijn onderzoek. Mijn naam is Marleen van der Meer, ik ben masterstudent aan de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen en momenteel bezig met mijn afstudeerstage bij Achterhoek Ambassadeurs. Hiervoor doe ik een onderzoek naar afgestudeerden uit deze regio en de redenen waarom zij na het afstuderen wel - of juist niet - zijn teruggekeerd naar de Achterhoek. Ik doe dit door middel van kwalitatieve interviews met mensen tussen de 24 en 29 jaar oud die zijn opgegroeid in de Achterhoek, vanwege een HBO of WO studie zijn verhuisd en inmiddels zijn afgestudeerd. Dit interview zal tussen de 30 en 60 minuten duren en bestaat uit vijf delen. Het eerste deel zijn korte algemene vragen, het tweede deel gaat over je achtergrond, het derde deel bevat vragen over de keuze voor je huidige woonlocatie, het vierde deel gaat over je verbondenheid met de achterhoek en het laatste deel zijn vragen over je toekomstplannen. Vind je het goed als ik dit interview opneem met mijn telefoon? Deze opname wordt alleen door mij gebruikt en niet openbaar gemaakt. Verder wordt dit interview anoniem in mijn scriptie verwerkt. Als je interesse hebt in de resultaten dan stuur ik je na afloop van dit onderzoek graag een samenvatting.

Algemeen
- Naam
- Leeftijd
- Huidige woonplaats
- Woonsituatie
- Relatiestatus
- Geboorteplaats
- Studiestad
- Wanneer afgestudeerd?
- Returnees: wanneer terug verhuisd?

Achtergrond
Je bent dus opgegroeid in ...., kun je daar iets over vertellen (wat voor huis, waar op school etc.)?

Komen je ouders hier ook vandaan?

Evt.: Komt je partner hier ook vandaan?

Verhuizing voor studie:
- Leeftijd
- Stad
- Opleiding
- Redenen verhuizing

Hoe was de studietijd?
- Waar heb je gewoond?
- Hoe vond je het om in deze stad te wonen?
Wat ben je na de studie gaan doen?

**Woonlocatiekeuze**

**Waarom woon je hier?**

- Algemeen/ hoofdreden
- Fysieke afstandsvereisten of voorkeuren, wat is de locatie van je ... en vind je het belangrijk om hier dichtbij te wonen:
  - Werk
  - Sport/hobby
  - Faciliteiten
  - Vrienden
  - Familie
- Mobiliteit
  - Heb je een auto? Bereikbaarheid auto? Belangrijk?
  - Bereikbaarheid OV? Belangrijk?
- Persoonlijke/ mentale voorkeur:
  - Fysieke omgeving (bijv. rust & ruimte of drukte en levendigheid)
  - Sociale omgeving (thuis voelen, ‘gelijk gestemden’)
- Praktisch
  - Makkelijk om (betaalbaar) een woning te vinden?
  - Werk (makkelijk te vinden in de buurt voor jou?)

**Verbondenheid**

**Experiences/relationships:**

- Hoe was het om in de Achterhoek op te groeien?
  - Als kind
  - Als tiener
- Vrienden uit die tijd? Wonen die er nog?
- Wonen er (veel) familieleden?
- Ken je er (nog) veel mensen?

**Behavioral/ emotional expression:**

- Non-returnees: kom je nog vaak terug? Waarom?
- Kwam je als student nog vaak terug?
- Verbonden aan activiteiten in de regio?
- (Jaarlijkse) events?
- Wat is nu je gevoel bij de regio? Voel je je verbonden of niet?

**Identity**

- Identificer je je met de regio/ je dorp of stad van herkomst?
- Voel je je thuis onder de Achterhoekers/ dorpsgenoten?
- (Spreek je dialect?)

**Community**

- Is er een sterk gevoel van ‘community’ in jouw dorp/stad? Hoe uit zich dat? Hoe voel je je daarbij?
Dependence

- Non returnees: denk je na over terugkeer?

Afsluiting

Wat zie jij als de belangrijkste reden dat je wel/niet bent teruggekeerd naar de Achterhoek?

Wat zijn je toekomstplannen wat betreft je woonlocatie?