



REMAIN, RETURN OR STAY AWAY?

Insights in the residential (im)mobility intentions of young tertiary graduates from South-East Friesland considering sense of place and the life course approach



Master Thesis Human Geography – Track: Economic Geography
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*“Do bliuwst my noch sa by, doarpke út myn tiid
Der is sa`n soad ferdwûn mar dochs bliuwst sa swiet
En wat der net lykop mei myn jeugd ferdwynt
Der is altyd dy sin dy`t my oan dy bynt”*

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//// PREFACE

Dear reader,

I am happy and proud to present my master's thesis on the (im)mobility intentions of young tertiary graduates from South-East Friesland with a focus on the life course approach and sense of place.

Writing this section means the end of my second period at university. After obtaining my bachelor and working for a couple of years in IT, I decided in 2021 to pursue this master. I had to get used to lectures and tests again during the first couple of weeks but I am very glad that I made this choice. This master and especially writing the thesis has been a great learning experience and created new opportunities for me.

Writing this master's thesis has truly felt like a proper research project. From the second or third week of the academic year 2021/2022 we started discussing in groups about the subject of the thesis. From then on I changed my subject several times. With the support of the thesis supervisors and fellow classmates, I choose a topic which lies close to myself. Having grown up in South-East Friesland and having 'stayed-away' myself. While seeing friends do the same, remain or return. The personal relation and intrinsic interest in this topic has made writing this thesis a good experience. Due to the chosen setup and approach of the research I have had some difficult moments at which reaching the finish line seemed far away. However, the affinity to the topic helped in these situations and made me regain energy and motivation to continue. Overall, I have really enjoyed writing this thesis, in particular interviewing all the young graduates. Hearing their stories and honest interest in my research made it a joy to do. Without all the participants of the interviews this thesis would not have been possible. Thank you!

During this process many people helped and supported me. As supervisor from the Radboud University Nijmegen, Dr. Martin van der Velde has supported me greatly with his advice and listening ear for various struggles. The thesis was written under the supervision of the Fries Sociaal Planbureau (FSP). I would like to thank the FSP for having me and providing the opportunity to write my thesis under their support. Using the expertise within the organisation was very valuable. Within the FSP, in particular I want to thank Arlette Bickel. Arlette has guided me throughout this process with her experience and has helped me to sharpen my thesis, approach and arguments. I would also like to thank other colleagues with which I discussed my subject.

Finally, I am thankful for the support of friends, family and my girlfriend. Without her unwavering and unconditional support I would not have been able to write this thesis. Hvala ti!

I hope you will enjoy reading this research,

Arjen Bergsma

Leiden

4th of December 2022

//// EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research aims to gather insights into the (im)mobility intentions of highly educated graduates from South-East Friesland. The (im)mobility behaviour of tertiary graduates is a topic which enjoys wide attention in research and public debate. It does so because the presence of graduates is regarded as one of the key components for regional economic growth due to their gained knowledge and experience (Faggian, 2006; Venhorst et al., 2010; Hooijen et al., 2020; Kooiman et al., 2018). These higher educated tend to be more geographically mobile than lower educated (Dicken, 2015; McCann, 2013) which can lead to an outflow of higher educated. Within the context of rural areas, it is important to retain such highly educated as much as possible in order to keep organisations which are already located in the area. But also to potentially attract new organisations as well. However, existing research mainly tends to focus on the mobile group who leave the rural region and to a lesser extent includes the graduates who return and stay (Stockdale et al., 2018). Next to that, existing research mainly touches upon the life phase shortly after graduation and does not consider other life phases (Rérat, 2014a). The topic also regularly makes local headlines and draws local political attention, mainly focusing on the work or career aspect of their (im)mobility behaviour. This research aims to go beyond this focus on work-related factors, as well as going beyond the mobility bias (Schewel, 2019) and the focus on the life phase shortly after graduation.

This research focuses on the (im)mobility intention of tertiary graduates for the coming life phase by focusing on the life course approach and sense of place. Immobility can be defined as “[...] spatial *continuity* in an individual’s centre of gravity over a period of time” (Schewel, 2019, p.328). Mobility can then be seen as spatial *discontinuity* in an individual’s centre of gravity over a period of time. For the context of this research, the centre of gravity is the graduate’s place of residence within or outside of South-East Friesland. The life course approach argues that in different life courses, different factors determine the place where one lives due to varying life events and therewith shifting priorities (Mulder and Hooimeijer, 1999; Hooijen et al., 2020). It argues that a change in one of the following aspects is likely to trigger a re-evaluation of the current place of residence and subsequently lead to an actual relocation elsewhere: Education, labour market, household and housing. The current life phase of the interviewed tertiary graduates is one shortly after graduation and at the start of their career. The coming life phase is likely to involve, for instance, children or marriage. The (im)mobility intention is studied by using the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 2005). The theory of planned behaviour “[...] postulates that a person’s intention to perform (or not to perform) a behaviour is the most important immediate determinant of that action” (Ajzen, 2005, p. 117). The author (2005) argues that the intention towards a certain behaviour consists of three components: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control. In order to understand the (im)mobility intention it is argued necessary to also understand the current (im)mobility choice and sense of place. The sense of place is studied for both the home region, South-East Friesland, and their away-place, their study city or current place of residence outside of the home region. Sense of place is a multi-faceted concept describing the personal attachment one feels for a place or one’s environment. It consists of both attachment to the physical attributes of a place as well as more emotional or personal relation to a community.

South-East Friesland is categorised as an anticipation region by the Dutch Government, a region where the number of inhabitants or households decreases by at least 2.5% till 2040 (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). This can be seen as the phase before a region is labelled as a declining region. The region consists of five municipalities which deal with socio-economic challenges like demographic decline, a level of lower educated which is above the national average and a level of knowledge jobs which is below the national

average (CBS, n.d.-d; Regio Deal Zuidoost Friesland, 2020a; Leeuwarder Courant, 2020). In order to fight this the Dutch Government created a Regio Deal to support the region financially.

A qualitative approach was chosen to study the intention of graduates in an in-depth way. Three current (im)mobility groups, remainers, returners and stay-awayers were interviewed via a semi-structured interview. Furthermore, during the interview the researcher filled in a physical or digital life history calendar to visualize the past events in the trajectories of the four aspects of the life course approach: Education, labour market, household and housing. This overview of the past life events of the participant and their (im)mobility up to now allowed for a good remainder of the interview since participants could easily point out important moments during further discussions. In order to describe the sense of place, participants were asked to bring a photo describing their sense of place with the home region, a method called photo-elicitation. This method allowed participants to show their sense of place in a visual way and therewith broadened opportunities to express this personal relation with a place or region. In total 26 interviews were conducted. The sample of participants has as much as possible been spread considering gender, level of education (higher vocational or university) and municipality. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Interviews were both held in person and also online via Microsoft Teams. When the interview took place in person, it was held at a preferred location of the participant. With the upfront consent of the participant all interviews were recorded. Afterwards, the recordings were transcribed and coded via the program ATLAS.ti.

The findings of this research show that the remainers and returners all intend to stay in the home region for the coming life phase and that there is a smaller group within the stay-awayers who intends to return, the to-be-returners. For the current moment, all stay-awayers have decided to stay away and thus not return. But for the intention, this group is divided into a larger group who intends to stay-away, the *stay-awayers*, and a group who does intend to return, the *to-be returners*. When looking at the (im)mobility intentions through a South-East Frisian favoured perspective, the sense of place is one of the most important aspects in the (im)mobility intention of these graduates. For remainers, returners and to-be-returners in a positive way and for stay-awayers in a negative way.

Remainers, returners and to-be-returners describe the sense of place for their home region as a place where they feel a strong sense of community for. Their familiarity with people in their villages or towns and their social life make them feel most at home in their home region. This sense of home is what the sense of place boils down to for these three groups. More than for instance the attachment to the specific natural environment of the region. This is important for these groups but to a lesser extent. Returners have maintained their sense of place during their study period by returning almost every weekend. Although they left the home region during their study period and lived elsewhere, they did not leave with their heart. They referred to their visits to their parents at the weekend as 'going home'. It was clear to them that they would return after their graduation and this led to them not creating a strong sense of place with their away-place, the study city. With their choice to return they strengthened their sense of place for the home region. They moved back to the place where they felt like 'they have everything'. This notion of 'having everything' also applies to the remainers. After graduating, the quest for a job started from the place where the remainers were living in South-East Friesland and not the other way around; to search for a job in the first place and then find a suitable place to live. In line with the returners, the remainers state that the well-perceived accessibility to larger cities in the North allows them to live in the town where they feel at home and work elsewhere. Next to that, several of the remainers did not have to search for their job as they stayed at their employer after an internship. Therewith they also did not consider leaving. For stay-awayers, the sense of place is different and the majority of stay-awayers feel less at home in South-East Friesland and devote this to aspects like not speaking the local language or moving frequencies in their childhood

which created a sense of rootlessness. Most importantly, the sense of place for the home region is less strong due to their diminished friends base in the home region. Unlike the returners, most stay-aways did not visit the home region that regularly during the study period and this diminished the social life in the home region. In line with the diminished social life, also the sense of place for the home region became less strong for most stay-aways. Most stay-aways were less determined to return and this also allowed them to build up a stronger sense of place with their study city. In their current unpreferred mobility choice, mainly work was the most important factor next to the social life build up in their study city and subsequently the sense of place for their study city. Whilst nothing or little drew them back to South-East Friesland. Also for the to-be-returners, work-related motives prevailed in the unpreferred mobility decision shortly after graduation.

However, unlike the stay-aways who do not intend to return, the current unpreferred mobility decision of the to-be-returners to stay away did not negatively influence their sense of place for the home region. During the first few years after their graduation, they maintained their social life in their hometown by regularly visiting and staying active in associations. They feel most at home here and thus intend to return in the coming life phase which they perceive as more definite. The to-be-returners want to give their children the same, good upbringing as themselves in the green and safe home region. In particular, since this is where their family and friends live as well. The to-be-returners do see challenges in finding a suitable job at the level they have now but are willing to 'give in' by considering other labour sectors since motives related to children and a sense of place prevail more in this life phase. For the remainers and returners, in line with the to-be-returners, their social life in the home region, the strong sense of place and the desire to let their children grow up in this green and safe region are important drivers in their intention to stay. The notion of 'having everything' did not change and is equally strong influencing their intention to stay. Most returners and remainers also believe this to be feasible given the accessibility to broader work opportunities in the North, suitable housing and liveability. Only for single graduates who intend to stay, being unable to afford a house could lead them to move out of the home region and live in one of the neighbouring municipalities.

Whilst to-be-returners maintained their social life and therewith a stronger sense of place, stay-aways don't intend to return because of their diminished sense of home for the home region. They want to keep living close to their work and built up social life. There is nothing for them left in the home region besides their parents and some describe it even as 'taking a step back'. They feel at home when visiting their parents but not to an extent that they intend to live there. Nevertheless, they hold positive associations with children growing up in a village due to their own upbringing and the freedom they experienced. However, this future village might just as well be close to their current place of living or close to the origin of their partner. For the stay-aways, the sense of place for the home region is thus not strong enough to believe that the village in which they want their potential children to grow up, should be in South-East Friesland. Furthermore, the stay-aways do not perceive it possible to move back since they believe there are not sufficient possibilities to find suitable work. The sense of place for the away-place is playing less of a decisive role in their intention for most of the stay-aways once children will be a factor. The believed benefits of a village prevail then. For stay-aways who do not intend to have children, the sense of place with the away-place plays a stronger role in their intention to stay away. They identify with their city and feel most at home here which makes them want to keep living there.

This research highlights the importance of sense of place in the (im)mobility intention of graduates and contributes to the field of graduate (im)mobility. This research shows that, in line with existing research and the narrative in local media, economic or labour market-related motives are an important part of the current choice and their intention to stay away for some graduates. However, this is only a

partial explanation of their intention to stay away. Whilst remainers, returners and to-be-returners describe that their sense of home is one of the most important reasons for their favourable intention for the home region, the stay-awayers share that there is nothing drawing them back and some even don't feel at home anymore in the region they grew up. To-be-returners see more possibilities for future employment due to their positive attitude towards returning. In this more definite life phase, the to-be-returners are sure to find suitable employment with creative solutions like working from home because they want to live and let their children grow up in an area where they feel at home and feel a part of the community. For the stay-awayers this is not applicable, labour market-related motives are thus only a part of the equation.

Despite the focus on South-East Friesland it could be argued the findings of this research apply to other rural areas with comparable characteristics. Notwithstanding that comparable, further studies should be undertaken in different regions in order to test its generalizability for other cases. This research provides new opportunities for further academic research and new possibilities. Further research might study how policies can improve or maintain the sense of place or consider. Future studies could also take a longitudinal approach. In terms of practical use, policy makers should consider how the sense of place can be maintained while graduates live in their away-places. So that such graduates are more willing to return in the future during coming life phases. A worthwhile project to look into in this context is the Zeeuwse Connectie. It aims to be a "community for Zeeuwen; people who grew up in Zeeland and live inside or outside the province, Boomerang-Zeeuwen, Import-Zeeuwen and everybody else who has something with Zeeland and is fond of it" (De Zeeuwse Connectie, n.d., "DE ZEEUWSE CONNECTIE" section).

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//// 1. INTRODUCTION

/// 1.1 Problem statement and societal relevance

The topic of this Master's thesis research concerns the residential (im)mobility intentions of recent graduates of tertiary education from the rural region of South-East Friesland. This region will be referred to as the 'home region' in this research. Tertiary education involves HBO and university level in the Netherlands (CBS, n.d.-a). HBO is similar to the UK colleges of higher education or German Fachhochschulen (Venhorst et al., 2010). The main emphasis lays on understanding the (im)mobility intention of these graduates to stay or not to stay in the home region, or to return or not to return to the home region. The motives which drive these intentions will be reviewed. In order to understand the (im)mobility intentions it is necessary to understand the current choice of residence shortly after graduation and which motives have driven this choice. Furthermore, the role of sense of place on the current residential (im)mobility choice and (im)mobility intention will be researched. To do so, a thorough understanding of the sense of place will be established. Not only will this research focus on the mobile graduates, who kept living away from the home region or returned after graduation, but also the immobile ones who remained living in South-East Friesland. By doing so a complete picture of their motives, backgrounds and intentions is built.

There is a wide consensus that human capital is one of the key elements in regional economic growth (Venhorst et al., 2010; Hooijen et al., 2020; Kooiman et al., 2018). The departure of highly educated thus has a negative impact on the socio-economic status of a region. It makes the region less attractive for companies to locate in the area or for existing companies within the area to find qualified personnel (Platform31, n.d.-a). In other words, the business climate (*vestigingsklimaat*) worsens when young and highly educated leave. This might lead to additional graduates considering leaving the home region as existing research tells us that economic motives are one of the most important reasons to leave for areas with better job opportunities and not return to the home region (Venhorst et al., 2011). Therefore, the understanding of graduate (im)mobility is receiving increased attention from researchers and policymakers. Moreover, the departure of youngsters from rural regions, such as South-East Friesland, reinforces population decline. This leads to negative effects for rural regions, such as a decline in the level or availability of amenities (de Groot & Schonewille, 2012; van de Ven, 2021). Immobility can be defined as "[...] spatial *continuity* in an individual's centre of gravity over a period of time" (Schewel, 2019, p. 328). Mobility can then be seen as spatial *discontinuity* in an individual's centre of gravity over a period of time. For the context of this research, that centre of gravity being the graduate's place of residence within or outside of South-East Friesland

For the purpose of this study, the current residential (im)mobility choice of young and tertiary graduates is split up into three different groups:

- **Remainers** have remained living in the home region of South-East Friesland during their tertiary education and still live there after graduation. This group is *immobile* for their current choice of residence.
- **Returners** have moved away from the home region during their tertiary study period to the study city and have moved back to the home region in the period relatively shortly after graduation. This group performs *preferred mobile* relocation behaviour, from the perspective of South-East Friesland, for their current choice of residence.
- **Stay-awayers** have moved away from their home region to the study city, shortly before starting their study or during their tertiary study period. The stay-awayers have not returned in the period relatively shortly after graduation. This group performs *unpreferred mobile* relocation behaviour, from the perspective of South-East Friesland, for their current choice of residence.

The different (im)mobility behaviour groups are, based on existing literature, expected to have different motives for their current (im)mobility choice. The current (im)mobility choice applies to a specific life phase, the life phase shortly after graduation and at the start of one's career. Since the reasons for choosing a place of residence or preferring to move on differ over the life course (Hooijen et al., 2020) it is of interest to consider a life course approach for this research. The life course approach allows us to study whether the current (im)mobility choice sustains in a future life phase and how the relation with the home region has developed by incorporating sense of place in both phases.

The studied topic regularly makes the headlines of local papers with headlines such as 'Seduce young professionals for a future and live in the country side' (van Selm, 2022) or 'Mayor Crone wants to make Frisians who have left, return for vacancies of highly educated' (Leemhuis, 2017). Provincial parties of the Frisian National Party (FNP), ChristenUnie and VVD state that young Frisians who graduated can not find a job and thus leave the province of Friesland (FNP, 2013; de Vries and Pool, 2021). These articles and political parties seem to suggest that the departure of the young and educated is mainly due to a lack of labour market opportunities and other factors are subordinate. Additionally, the studied phenomenon of the departure of highly educated youngsters enjoys wider national interest since it is observable in several regions in the Netherlands and affects the liveability in towns and areas in varying parts of the country where a group of young and highly educated leave their home region and move to other, mainly more urban regions for different reasons (Kooiman et al., 2018). For instance, this trend is observable in the provinces of Zeeland (Omroep Zeeland, 2021) and Flevoland (Omroep Flevoland, 2015). Moreover, the Fries Sociaal Planbureau (FSP) found that, for the province of Friesland, 'stayers' are mainly youngsters that graduated from secondary vocational education (MBO) and 'leavers' predominantly have a degree in tertiary education (Brander and de Vries, 2018). The departure of highly educated youngsters makes it more difficult for organisations in the home region to find the skilled personnel that it is looking for (Platform31, n.d.-a; Van der Woude, 2021). It can even lead to the relocation of a set of activities for a rural company to a different location as the required skilled personnel is not available in the rural region (Haggeman, 2019; Van der Woude, 2021). Next to that, the structural outflow of highly educated leads to an increased difference between regions, vis-à-vis each other, in the education level of local citizens (Kooiman et al., 2018), which can diminish the attractiveness for organisations to locate in this region (McCann, 2013).

By deep-diving into this topic, this study aims to provide an overview of the driving factors in the residential (im)mobility intentions of graduates of tertiary education, from South-East Friesland. The gathered understanding during this research might serve as useful insights for local policymakers in regard to potential policies that aim to retain, in the case of remainers and returners, and attract, in the case of stay-awayers, young and highly educated people with a biographical link to South-East Friesland to live in this region.

The case of South-East Friesland

The above illustrated societal relevance is acknowledged by the Dutch Government in their declaration of South-East Friesland as an 'anticipation region' in 2015 (Rijksoverheid.nl, n.d.). Anticipation regions are described as regions where the number of inhabitants or households decreases by at least 2.5% till 2040 (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). An anticipation region can be seen as the categorization that a region receives before becoming an actual shrinking region.

The five municipalities which make up South-East Friesland, Wetterskip Fryslan (Water authorities), the province of Friesland and the Dutch Government have teamed up against the socio-economic decline by creating a 'Regio Deal'. The Regio Deal Zuidoost Friesland was founded in the summer of

2020 in cooperation with the Dutch government, which supports the deal financially and through advisory services (Regio Deal Zuidoost Friesland, n.d.-b). Through Regio Deals, the Dutch government aims to strengthen regions in their broad welfare and support regions in their local challenges (Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving, n.d.). For South-East Friesland this involves, amongst others, the demographic decline, emigration of the younger population to other national regions and a share of lower-educated citizens that is above the national average (Regio Deal Zuidoost Friesland, 2020a; Leeuwarder Courant, 2020).

The Fries Sociaal Planbureau (FSP) is involved in the Regio Deal of South-East Friesland by fulfilling a monitoring function on the development of different projects and providing other reports on the socio-economic status of this region. This Master thesis research has been conducted under the supervision of the FSP.

/// 1.2 Scientific relevance

The residential (im)mobility behaviour and intentions of graduates of tertiary education is not a topic that is entirely new in academic research. Therefore, this Master's thesis research will build on existing work as a basis for empirical research concerning graduate (im)mobility for the region of South-East Friesland. As mentioned above, the presence of graduates is regarded as one of the key components for regional economic growth due to their gained knowledge and experience and has been researched by various scholars (Faggian, 2006; Venhorst et al., 2010; Hooijen et al., 2020; Kooiman et al., 2018). However, higher educated tend to be more geographically mobile than lower educated (Dicken, 2015; McCann, 2013) which can lead to an outflow of higher educated. Existing research states that the main motive to leave or not return to the home region after graduating from tertiary education is the pursuit of economic opportunities (Venhorst et al., 2011). The authors explain that the job offer for specific functions is higher in the Randstad which causes graduates to move. Moreover, deciding to leave can also be related to pursuing economic opportunities to earn higher wages compared to the home region. McCann (2013) describes this as the human capital theory which argues that individuals with higher human capital through education, are more willing to move over long distances to find a job that meets their education level and expected wage. Moreover, other motives are involved in their decision to leave or stay away which will be discussed in greater detail in the theoretical framework.

Most of these articles and existing research focus on the mobility of graduates and try to explain the behaviour of graduates to move to other places. Schewel (2019) describes this as a mobility-bias in migration studies that tends to neglect the immobility behaviour of remainers. In line with Schewel (2019), Thomassen (2020) states that “numerous authors have called for more empirical studies on immobility experiences in their own right, seeing this as an underrepresented topic within the broader migration literature” (p. 2). Like the groups who move out of the home region, the group who stays in the home region actively re-evaluates their decision to stay and repeats this throughout the life course. The decision to leave or stay away from the home region is just one of the paths that young graduates can choose. Various scholars (Schewel, 2019; Thomassen, 2020; van Houtum & van der Velde, 2003) argue that in order to get the complete picture of migration motives and patterns it is important to include the immobility motives and patterns as well since the group that does not move is often of considerable size. Stockdale et al. (2018) even describe it as a gap in the literature. This research will contribute to the insights in the behaviour of the immobility target group, the remainers, or the immobility literature in general by including it in the research scope.

Moreover, existing graduate (im)mobility literature mainly focuses on the (im)mobility decision of graduates shortly after graduation. This is arguably an important phase to study since existing literature states that graduates become less migration prone after the first couple of years after graduation (Venhorst et al., 2013). However, existing literature also shows that the preferences of a residential location change throughout the life course due to varying life events and therewith shifting priorities (Mulder and Hooimeijer, 1999; Hooijen et al., 2020). When considering later life phases and events, which the graduates have not yet or only some have reached (see section 3.2), such as having, marriage or cohabitation, the existing literature has mainly studied the (im)mobility intentions in the context of these life phases for predominantly other societal groups than specifically graduates. Existing research which studies the (im)mobility behaviour of graduates in the life phase shortly after graduation and at the beginning of the working career does sometimes devote a short and final question or section to the intentions of graduates for coming life phases but does not make it an actual topic of research. Rérat (2014a) therefore argues that other life phases for graduate mobility should receive further attention: “Still to be explored is the question of whether these results are specific to the life course transition considered in this study, or whether they can to some extent be generalised. Are different trends likely to occur in other spatial contexts, other life course transitions and other levels of education?” (p. 83).

This research dives into this gap by actually focusing on the (im)mobility intentions for the coming life phase of graduates who are currently in the life phase of starting their careers and shortly after graduation. In order to understand these (im)mobility intentions, the current (im)mobility choice needs to be understood and its role in the (im)mobility intention will be studied. In this way, this research contributes a further understanding of graduate (im)mobility by studying a life phase which has only received limited attention in the context of graduates, within feasible levels of a Master's thesis research.

Furthermore, a factor that has gained scientific interest in the last decades is place attachment or sense of place (Lewicka, 2011). Sense of place is a concept from cultural geography and can be defined as a very highly valued phenomenon by individuals, and relates to all cultural, heritage, and landscape characteristics that give people meaning from living in a particular location (Vanclay et al. 2008). The sense of place that one can feel with a place, region, province, area or another scale of analysis is thus very personal and differs between persons (Pedersen, 2018). Concerning graduate (im)mobility the role of sense of place has been studied by authors such as Cicognani (2010) and Rérat (2014b) who find that a greater sense of place can affect the (im)mobility choice after graduation in a positive way.

However, Van der Meer (2019) argues that existing research is mainly done in a quantitative way which allows for greater sample sizes and subsequent benefits. Nevertheless, it also leads to a lesser in-depth study of the sense of place and its role in the current (im)mobility behaviour and intentions. Furthermore, Stedman et al. (2014) argue that visual approaches for studying the meaning or sense of place are underutilized, despite their potential contribution. The authors (2014) argue that such visual approaches offer more than just an interview or a survey, they add an extra dimension. Therefore, the qualitative research method of photo-elicitation has been chosen to study the sense of place next to regular interviews. Finally, the role of sense of place in the current (im)mobility decision is thus not an entirely new topic but the role of sense of place in the (im)mobility intention in the coming life phase was not found in the existing literature. In a comparable contributing way to studying

the general (im)mobility intention of graduates, as described above, studying the role of sense of place in this (im)mobility intention in a coming life phase is contributing to existing literature.

/// 1.3 Research objective and questions

The research objective of this Master's thesis research is to provide empirical insights into the (im)mobility intentions to stay within or return to their home region for graduates of tertiary education who lived in South-East Friesland during their secondary education graduation. In order to understand the longer-term intentions it is important to understand the motives behind the current choice of residence shortly after graduation. Furthermore, the role of sense of place in the current (im)mobility behaviour and (im)mobility intention will be investigated. The findings of this research might provide policymakers with insights on which they could base future policies. The research strives to provide an empirically based image of the (im)mobility behaviour patterns and intentions of young and highly educated people from South-East Friesland.

In order to reach the research objective, the following main research question will be applied:

- ➔ What drives the residential (im)mobility intentions of tertiary graduates from South-East Friesland and which role do the (im)mobility choice shortly after graduation and sense of place play herein?

To answer the main research question, the following sub-questions will be reviewed:

Sense of place

Which sense of place do the different (im)mobility groups hold for their home region and away-place(s) and how does this influence their current (im)mobility behaviour and (im)mobility intentions and why?

Current (im)mobility choice

What are the motives for highly educated young people in their (im)mobility choice to stay away from, return to or remain in the home region of South-East Friesland and how does this influence their (im)mobility intention and why?

(im)mobility intentions

Which intentions do the various (im)mobility groups hold regarding returning to or staying in the home region of South-East Friesland for the coming life phase and why?

The sub-questions aim to provide an in-depth analysis of the main research question.

Explorative vs. confirmatory

This research can, to a large extent, be described as confirmatory since it is building upon existing work in the research field and applying this to a different region. However, this does not mean that the research only seeks confirmation, see section 3.4 for further elaboration on ethics and reliability. Results that would deviate from the existing literature would be just as, or even more, interesting.

/// 1.4 Reading guide

This chapter introduces the topic of this research and presents its relevance and the research questions. The following chapter covers the theoretical framework which concerns a review of existing literature and research on the studied topic. This will result in a conceptual model of the graduate (im)mobility behaviour and intentions. While also including the role of sense of place. The third chapter focuses on the methodology and explains the methodological background, chosen approach for this research and how the data were treated and analysed in order to answer the research questions. The actual findings of this research are presented in chapter four. This provides the input for the fifth

chapter in which the findings are analysed and put into perspective with existing literature. The sub-questions are answered in this chapter and a revised conceptual model is provided. Finally, chapter six provides the conclusion of this research by answering the research question, addressing the limitations and stating avenues for further research and practical use.

//// 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research focuses on the residential (im)mobility intention of young and highly educated tertiary graduates from South-East Friesland who spent their secondary school in this region. This chapter addresses the theoretical framework of this research. The following sections will review first the life course approach to (im)mobility followed by the second section on the theory of planned behaviour on intentions and its relation to actual behaviour. After which an elaboration follows on why a longitudinal approach was not applied in the third section. The fourth section argues that the relation between the current (im)mobility choice, shortly after graduation, and the longer-term intention to stay or return is required to understand the (im)mobility intention. Section five outlines how different motives and sense of place influence the current (im)mobility choice and intention according to existing literature. Finally, the applied conceptual model is presented.

/// 2.1 A life course approach to residential (im)mobility

Life phases or events can lead to a re-evaluation and a potential mismatch between the current place of residence and the changing life situation. Bernard et al. (2014) describe the internal migration intensity and link these to age and key life course transitions. The authors (2014) describe internal migration intensity as the proportion of individuals within an age group who move. For instance, when one enters the labour market and chooses a job at a particular location, a re-evaluation will have to be made whether the current location of residence matches the work location. If the distance or travel time is seen as too far or too long, one might move closer to the job. Subsequently, such re-evaluations will also be made when having the desire to buy a property, deciding to live together or when a child is born (Bernard et al., 2014). Figure 1 shows the typical internal migration intensity in relation to age and also the key life course transitions are indicated (Bernard et al., 2014). When following this approach, we see that especially in the earlier life phases, the migration intensity is relatively higher and declines after entering the labour market around the mid-twenties. As described more in detail in section 3.2 for the Dutch context, these insights help us to determine the relevant age group for the study group of this research.

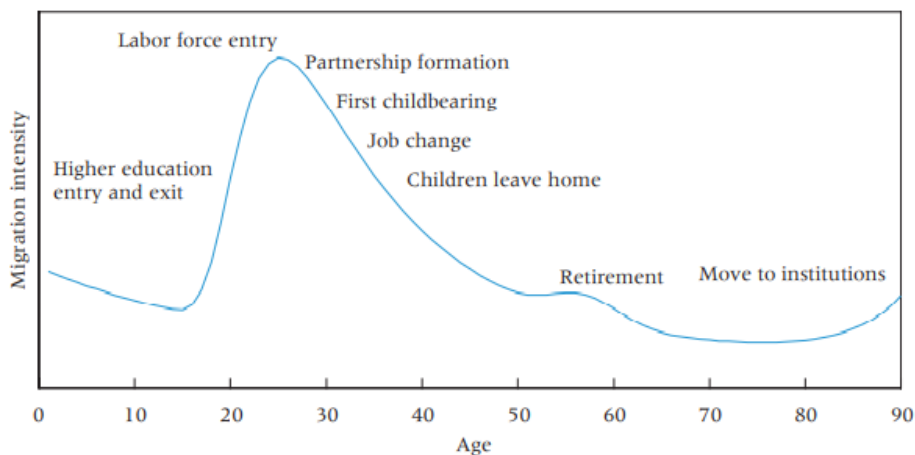


Figure 1 - Typical age profile of migration and key life course transitions - Bernard et al., 2014

Mulder and Hooimeijer (1999) argue that it is possible to decompose human life courses into separate careers or trajectories. The authors (1999) state that people coordinate their careers and give specific careers priority over others during specific periods in their life. Relocation is seen as a behavioural instrument that can be used to enable a specific career. Mulder and Hooimeijer (1999) describe four life course trajectories: Education, labour market, household and housing. The education trajectory can be seen as the start or end of an educational period. The labour market career can be portrayed

as starting a job at a specific location, considering changing jobs or ending it. The household career can be described in terms of leaving the parental home, starting to live together with a partner, the birth of a child or divorce. The housing career can be seen in terms of wanting to live in a specific house or apartment with specific characteristics or facilities, or in a specific neighbourhood or region. This can change over the life course, think of the need for the elderly to live in an apartment without stairs or for younger people to live in a vibrant city or neighbourhood. The different life course trajectories run in parallel but can also stop or finish. For instance, a student lives with flatmates in the study city during her study. After graduation, she starts a job in a different city and moves for this job to live in an apartment for herself without flatmates. The education trajectory thus finishes, the labour market trajectory starts and the household trajectory changes from living with flatmates to living on her own. Changes in these life course careers can lead to a mismatch between the actual and current place of residence and the preferred place of residence, which might lead to a change in the residential location, as described in the example.

Moreover, Mulder and Hooimeijer (1999) argue that resources and restrictions on a micro-level influence the decision to relocate or not. On top of that, the opportunities and constraints on a macro-level influence the relocation decision (Mulder and Hooimeijer, 1999). Micro-level resources and restrictions should be seen on an individual level and involve, amongst others, the financial means one holds to make a long-distance move or the (un)availability of obtained degrees. Macro-level opportunities

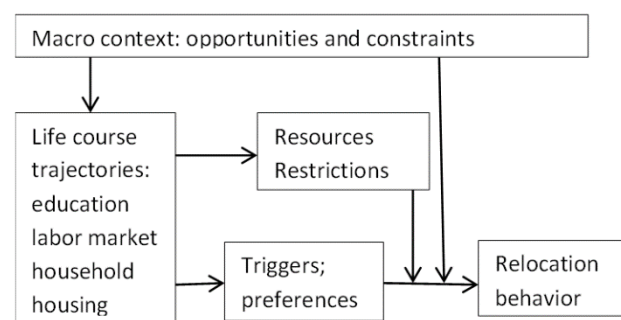


Figure 2 – Framework of the life course perspective to residential relocation - Mulder and Hooimeijer (1999)

and constraints involve, amongst others, an unexpected, interesting job offer in a different part of the country, more demand within a specific work sector in specific regions of a country or the (un)availability of affordable housing in the desired area.

Existing research tells us that graduates are most mobile after graduation and mobility starts to decline in the years after graduation (Venhorst et al., 2013). This is due to the local *anchors* that one holds or builds up in the place of residence such as a job, friends, social networks via sports and other activities, a relationship or owning a house (Venhorst et al., 2013; Thomassen, 2020; Mulder and Hooimeijer, 1999). Longer distance moves from rural to urban areas or the return from urban to rural areas are most likely in the first couple of years after graduation and are particularly likely in the first year after graduation (Venhorst et al., 2013). The dynamics in job changes decrease strongly and become more stable together with moving intensity. When one moves it is mostly over shorter distances. As described more in detail in section 3.2, it is for these reasons that we focus on the group of recent graduates.

If we move back to the model of Mulder and Hooimeijer (1999) and apply their model to recent graduates of tertiary education, we find that the education career ends for these graduates. Presumably, the labour market career starts shortly after graduation and these two changes trigger an evaluation of the current residential location (Venhorst et al., 2013). Micro context resources such as financial means and experience with earlier relocation can support one in relocating over a longer distance. The absence of this might restrict one from moving over a longer distance and staying in the home region. Furthermore, it might be expected that a considerable number of graduates already started living on their own during their study in the study city and that students who lived with their parents will move out in the first couple of years after graduation. In other words, the housing career

is changing or will change due to entering the labour market. A tight and pricy real estate market could be described as a macro-context constraint. Finally, the household trajectory might change when one will live together with a partner. Parenthood will have a less prominent character in the current choice of residence of the selected age group, see section 3.2 for further elaboration on the Dutch context of parenthood. However, this aspect is involved in the last sub-question concerning the (im)mobility intention.

/// 2.2 The theory of planned behaviour and intentions to return or stay

Considering the life course approach, it is of interest to look into (im)mobility intentions of tertiary graduates to potentially return to or stay in the peripheral home region. Namely, because recent graduates are expected to face changes in their life course trajectories within the next ten years (Bernard et al., 2014). This might result in different needs and preferences that the graduate holds for the region or area to live in at this later life stage. Do the (im)mobility intentions differ from the current (im)mobility behaviour? Albeit we know that the intensity of (internal) migration decreases in the following years after graduation (Venhorst et al., 2013) we also saw in section 2.1 that preferences change over the life course.

Ajzen (2005) describes that the theory of planned behaviour ‘[...] postulates that a person’s intention to perform (or not to perform) a behaviour is the most important immediate determinant of that action’ (p. 117). The author (2005) states that “[...] intentions reflect primarily an individual’s willingness to try enacting a given behaviour [...]” (p. 118). Although the definition of an intention provided by Ajzen (2005) explicitly states that it concerns the willingness of an individual towards acting upon a certain behaviour, intention is a multi-layered concept as can be seen in figure 3. According to the theory of planned behaviour, three determinants construct the intention (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2005).

The first is the individual’s *attitude towards the behaviour* which is personal of nature. It concerns the personal or negative evaluation towards certain behaviour. In this research, this certain behaviour is staying or returning to South-East Friesland in the coming life phase. An attitude is formed by an evaluation of an individual of possible consequences of the studied behaviour (Ajzen and Madden, 1986; Ajzen, 1991). This means that an individual makes an assessment of for him or her considerate costs and benefits or advantages and disadvantages of the possible consequences of the studied behaviour. After which the attitude towards the respective behaviour is formed. The judgement of possible consequences due to a certain behaviour are subjective in nature and are called *behavioural beliefs* (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen, 1991). The beliefs that are linked to the behaviour are already valued in a positive or negative way, the *evaluation* (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, “[...] we automatically and simultaneously acquire an attitude toward the behaviour. In this fashion, we learn to favour behaviours we believe have largely desirable consequences and we form unfavourable attitudes toward behaviours we associate with mostly undesirable consequences.” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 191).

The second determinant of intention is the “[...] person’s perception of social pressure to perform or not perform the specific behaviour” (Ajzen, 2005, p. 118). This can be seen as a *social norm* or *subjective norm* to conform to the opinion of others. One’s social surroundings can have a positive, negative or neutral position concerning the desired behaviour of an individual. The beliefs an individual has about the opinion of others on the respective behaviour can be described as *normative beliefs* (Ajzen, 1991). The normative beliefs together with the *motivation to comply* with the opinion of one’s important persons such as parents or friends form the *subjective norm*.

The third element of intention refers to the *perceived behavioural control* which can be described as the perceived ability to perform the behaviour of interest. This may relate to available resources, skills or opportunities to perform the behaviour.

Together these three determinants construct the intention with possibly varying relative importance per determinant for different situations, behaviours or persons (Ajzen, 1991). The perceived behavioural control might in a specific case be more important compared to the subjective norm if one experiences social pressure to comply with a certain behaviour but perceives its skills or ability as inadequate, e.g. the behaviour of pursuing a university study after having completed a lower vocational study which was perceived as hard.

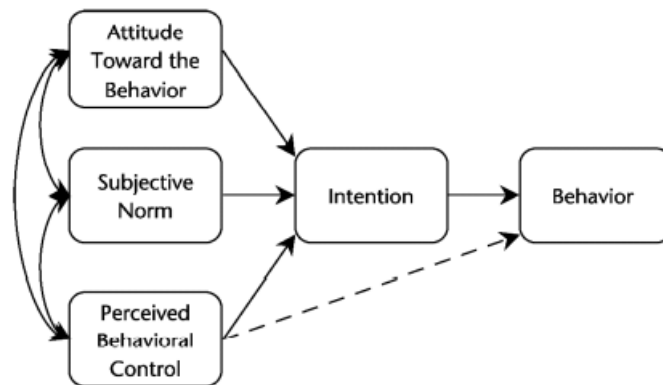


Figure 3 - Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 2005)

It should be noted in figure 3 that two lines depart from *perceived behavioural control*, one to *intention* as described above and the second one directly to *behaviour*. Ajzen (2005) states that “[...] perceived behavioural control can help predict goal attainment independent of behavioural intention to the extent that it reflects actual control with some degree of accuracy” (p. 119). Perceived behavioural control may directly relate to behaviour in a sense of predicting it since perceived behavioural control can be considered a proxy or partial substitute for a measure of actual control (Ajzen, 2005). Ajzen (1991) states that this is possible in two ways. “First, holding intention constant, the effort expended to bring a course of behaviour to a successful conclusion is likely to increase with perceived behavioural control” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 184). The author argues that one who is more confident in his ability to fulfil a certain behaviour is more likely to persevere than one who is doubting his ability to do so. Second, it is possible that the actual control of the behaviour is not or little in line with the perceived behavioural control, under such circumstances the perceived behavioural control may have little accuracy in predicting the actual behaviour. Due to this, the relation between the perceived behavioural control is indicated with a dotted line (Ajzen, 1991).

Given the above-provided outline of the three different components that contribute to the intention of an individual, Ajzen (2005; 1991) thus argues that the intention to perform a certain behaviour of different kinds is often a considerably more accurate predictor of the actual behaviour in general. When taking this further to the context of (im)mobility, Kley (2011), de Groot et al. (2011) and Hooijen et al. (2020) indeed find the intentions of an individual to (im)mobility is a suitable predictor of actual behaviour. De Groot et al. (2011) have compared the actual moving behaviour to the previously stated intention of wanting to move of a representative Dutch sample, above 18 years old and all education levels, via register data. The authors (2011) find that the participants that indicated they wanted to move in the next two years, especially the ones who had a strong intention managed to do so. Moreover, unexpected life events such as receiving an unexpected job offer or ending a romantic relationship affect one’s plans to move or stay. Additionally, resources and restrictions (perceived

behavioural control) such as the level of education and housing market opportunities, or the lack thereof, impact the ability to live up to the intentions (de Groot et al., 2011; Hooijen et al., 2020).

/// 2.3 Not included: connecting past (im)mobility intentions to current actual (im)mobility choice to remain, return or stay-away

Scholars such as Hooijen et al. (2020), Kley and Mulder (2010) and Kley (2017) argue that actual (im)mobility behaviour should be reviewed in relation to the (im)mobility intentions that an individual held several years before the actual behaviour occurred. It would therefore be interesting to include previously stated intentions of (im)mobility to the current (im)mobility choice in this research project and determine whether these intentions were realised. However, Kley (2011; 2017) and Winiarska (2017) argue that studying both intentions and the actual behaviour of residential (im)mobility requires a longitudinal approach, a group of respondents is asked about its intentions at a given moment, e.g. shortly before graduation from university, and several years later again about the actual behaviour. Such a longitudinal approach is unfortunately not feasible within the possibilities and limitations of this research. The same authors argue that reviewing the intentions retrospectively, instead of longitudinally, is not suitable as these past intentions are often distorted by current circumstances and the actual motives for the current (im)mobility choice. In other words, the described intentions that one had in the past are often described in a way that the intentions are in line with the actual behaviour. The intentions which graduates held before graduation for the current life phase relatively shortly after graduation will thus not be included due to the longitudinal approach not being feasible within this research project and the unsuitability of reviewing intentions in a retrospective way.

/// 2.4 Relation current (im)mobility choice shortly after graduation & (im)mobility intention to stay or return

As described above, the long-term intention to stay in the home region of South-East Friesland or return to it is of interest due to differing residential needs and preferences in this life phase and the characteristics of specific peripheral regions. However, between the moment of graduation and the life stage of potential parenthood or marriage, exists the phase of entering the labour market and making a subsequent decision of choosing a place to live. In other words, the current choice of residence shortly after graduation.

It is argued that in order to understand the (im)mobility intentions of the tertiary graduates to stay in or return to the home region of South-East Friesland within the next 10 years, the current choice of residence shortly after graduation must be understood. It is important to understand this (im)mobility choice shortly after graduation as the propensity to move decreases after the first two to three years after graduation (Venhorst et al., 2013) due to the local fixity in terms of, for instance, job or social life that was built up in this period. Additionally, Rérat (2014b) argues that “When the length of time spent outside the region of origin gets longer, the social ties that are kept there may weaken, whereas the opposite happens in the destination region” (p. 126).

Individuals who have been spatially mobile in the past have a higher likelihood of relocating again. This is due to being experienced with the process of moving which leads to a lower *barrier* to move again. Herzog et al. (1985) state that knowledge from earlier mobility is greater for ones who were spatially mobile in the past and that first-time movers need to exercise greater efforts during the search process to make up for the lack of knowledge. DaVanzo and Morrison (1981) thus argue that primary movers face more uncertainty related to moving due to not having had the experience of moving. This leads them to be less migration prone.

/// 2.5 Motives for current (im)mobility choice and (im)mobility intention to stay or return

The following three sections will first discuss the motives, found in the literature, for the current (im)mobility choice shortly after graduation. After this, the background and components of sense of place and its role in graduate (im)mobility are considered in the fourth section. The found motives which affect the (im)mobility in a later life phase are reviewed in the fifth section.

// 2.5.1 Economic motives in the (im)mobility behaviour shortly after graduation

The first concept concerns the economic motives that graduates take into consideration in their choice of residence. This involves the availability of suitable jobs matching their education level and their reservation wage. Graduates of tertiary education have invested in themselves by following higher vocational or academic education. After graduating, they want to leverage this investment (Venhorst et al., 2011). McCann (2013) adds to this that higher-educated individuals want to maximize their expected wages due to the invested time and costs in education. The author (2013) describes how graduates have an expected wage in mind for their new job which they want to ensure, a minimum *reservation wage*. In order to find suiting jobs that meet or surpass the reservation wage, “[...] higher human-capital individuals will tend to search for employment opportunities over a wider geographical area than those with lower human capital to find employment opportunities offering wages at least equal to their higher reservation wage” (McCann, 2013 p. 216). The specific knowledge that graduates have gained during their study might face a low job offer within the peripheral home region. Büchel and Van Ham (2003) describe that spatial flexibility decreases the likelihood of being overeducated for a job. Venhorst & Cörvers (2018) describe how human capital theory predicts that returns on investments in job searching will be higher for people that are more able to search. The authors (2018) argue that individuals with higher human capital have better information processing skills and are better able to acquire information about opportunities. These abilities together with the willingness to move over greater distances in order to find a suitable job, increase the residential mobility of higher educated. Venhorst et al. (2013) state that for recent graduates in the Netherlands job opportunities are the most important factor in the choice of residence.

Next to human capital in its sense of gained skills and experience, also one’s network can play a role in the (im)mobility choice after graduation. Think of a network built up during study internships in the study city or within the peripheral home region due to family links and networks. In line with Bourdieu (1986), this might be seen as social capital in terms of resources or opportunities that are related to being a part of a network or group, in this case of a specific area. Thomassen (2020) finds for instance that a share of the staying graduate group found jobs through the network of parents or via family businesses.

// 2.5.2 Familiar, social and household motives in the residential (im)mobility behaviour shortly after graduation

The second concept addresses the familiar, social and household-related motives in the residential location choice after graduation. This involves the availability, or unavailability, of family and friends in the home region. In other words, familiar and social binding ties with the home region. The presence of social networks and proximity to family are important motives to return to the home region or not leave at all (Thomassen, 2020; Venhorst et al., 2011; Brander and de Vries, 2018). Thomassen (2020) describes how family and friends can act in an advising, influencing and facilitating (e.g. monetary support) role towards graduates, which can cause graduates to stay. Graduates who do not return, might perceive the travel time to family as manageable once in a while and let other motives prevail, compared to the proximity of family, in their choice to not return (Van der Meer (2019). Social connections and a network that one built up in the study city can contribute to the decision of one to

keep living in the study city (Wagenaar, 2014; Van der Meer, 2019). Feijten et al. (2008) describe how the region of origin of the partner can influence the migration behaviour by contributing to the likelihood of remaining in or returning to the home region if the partner is from this region as well or the contrary when the partner is from another region. Van der Meer (2019) describes for the Achterhoek how returners are more likely to have a partner from their respective home regions compared to leavers. In such situations, a graduate could want to move back but is being held back by the preferences of the partner. An individual who would like to move but is held back by the pressure or preferences of the partner can be referred to as a 'tied stayer'. While an individual who would like to stay but is moving elsewhere due to the preferences of the partner can be called a 'tied mover' (Mulder and Malmberg, 2014).

// 2.5.3 Housing and amenity motives in the residential (im)mobility behaviour shortly after graduation

The third concept focuses on housing and living amenity-related motives in favour and against residing in South-East Friesland. This involves the presence or absence of facilities such as a supermarket, theatre, museum, cinema, pub, school, doctor or swimming pool. Furthermore, this involves housing prices which might influence the decision to remain in, return to or stay away from the home region. According to Venhorst et al. (2013), a large share of the Dutch highly educated prefer urban living amenities over rural living amenities which lack certain facilities. In line with this Van der Meer (2019) finds that there is a group of graduates who wants to have accessibility to urban amenities such as a cinema or theatre in this life phase. On the other hand, the relatively lower housing prices in more peripheral areas (like South-East Friesland) compared to urban areas can play a role in the decision regarding the choice of residence (Wagenaar, 2014; Venhorst et al. (2011). Venhorst et al. (2011) study the migration behaviour of Dutch tertiary graduates and find that housing prices have a stronger effect on higher vocational graduates than on university graduates. Additionally, the accessibility of peripheral areas to other more urban areas is often relatively poor when looking at travel time or travel distance (Kennisinstituut voor Mobiliteitsbeleid, 2010; Platform31, n.d.-b). However, "The proper accessibility of other towns or places and a good mobility of citizens are essential for social life, personal wellbeing and economic buoyancy" (Platform31, n.d.-b). In addition, "Good accessibility makes a region attractive to live, work and recreate" (Platform31, n.d.-b). This can both be considered as accessibility within the region and to other regions. This could negatively influence the (im)mobility decision of graduates shortly after graduation. However, despite that the travel distance is longer for inhabitants of peripheral areas when purely considering the distance this does not need to mean that inhabitants also experience it this way. Existing research shows that specific societal groups of rural regions experience accessibility poorer compared to others. Like the elderly compared to families who have access to a car (Kennisinstituut voor Mobiliteitsbeleid, 2018).

// 2.5.4 Sense of place for South-East Friesland and the residential (im)mobility behaviour shortly after graduation

The fourth concept dives into the sense of place that graduates might feel towards the region of South-East Friesland. Sense of place is a multi-faceted concept and it is a part of multiple academic disciplines such as human geography, rural sociology, environmental health, philosophy or urban and regional planning (Vanclay et al., 2008). Hashemnezhad et al. (2013) define sense of place as "[...] a complex concept of emotion and attachment to the human environment which is created from people's adoption and use of places" (p.7). Vanclay et al. (2008) argue, by referring to Relph (2008), that the physical place is of importance in sense of place but that also one's interactions with others in a multi-sensory way contribute to the sense of place: "Sense of place is a synaesthetic faculty that combines sight, hearing, smell, movement, touch, imagination, purpose and anticipation. It is both an individual

and an intersubjective attribute, closely connected to community as well as to personal memory and self" (p. 7). The authors (2008) argue that sense of place refers to the individual and not just to the place: "While the characteristics of a location may affect how people feel, and changing the physical characteristics can beneficially affect or negatively impact upon individual sense of place, the concept properly refers to an individual's connection with the place (location, building, landscape, city, and so on) and to their experience of place" (p.7). Such a sense of place can be felt in multiple places, such as the city where one lives and the city where one works (Vanclay et al., 2008). Pedersen (2018) describes how sense of place with a place or region is an ongoing process and develops throughout life. According to Gandy (2007) children already start to develop a sense of place in their childhood by exploring their surroundings. In addition, Coles (1970, as cited in Jack, 2008) states that children who undergo repeated moves can develop a fragmented identity and feeling of rootlessness. The sense of place towards the rural home region is very personal (Pedersen, 2018). The perceptions of safety that one individual might experience in the community of a village, might be experienced as oppressing by others. While the broad sights over the fields in one's peripheral home area might be regarded as beautiful by some, others might perceive this as monotonous. The three components, place identity, sense of community, belonging or home and sense of natural or physical environment contribute to the sense of place in this research.

Pretty et al. (2003) describe how *place identity* involves how locales are imbued with personal and social meanings and become a part or sign of the identity of oneself. The authors (2003) argue that the question of 'Who am I?' will be answered by 'Where am I?'. Van der Meer (2019) finds that both returners and non-returners identify themselves with their home region but in more and less explicit ways. Thissen et al. (2010) have studied the local attachment of rural youth in the Westhoek, Belgium and the Veenkoloniën in the Netherlands. The authors (2010) found that, besides employment perceptions, attachment and identification with the place were one of the most important factors to influence migration behaviour.

Next to that, a *sense of community or belonging* is associated with the social and environmental characteristics of a place and, to the extent that persons feel part of a supportive and dependable structure (Pretty et al., 2003). Furthermore, Pretty et al. (2003) state that the sense of community is "When one has the sense that he or she belongs to an identified community. [...] In other words, people care for, and are cared for by, those with whom they feel they belong" (p. 275). The sense of community is dropping for students who have moved to their study city and increases for the ones who do not move according to Cicognani et al. (2011). The sense of community is therefore likely to increase with the duration of stay (Cicognani et al., 2011; Prezza et al., 2001). Van der Meer (2019) describes that graduates of tertiary education who return to the Achterhoek feel a greater sense of community compared to non-returners. When one has a stronger sense of community or belonging, one is also inclined to more contribute to it by being active as a volunteer in commissions (Pretty et al., 2007). Rérat (2014b) states that the sense of belonging to a region can be reinforced by the biographical history one's ancestors hold to the specific region and it can even influence the propensity to return. The author refers to Gotman (1999) who distinguishes two types of space in childhood. The reference space relates to the places where one's near ancestors (father, grandmother) lived and were born. The lived space links to the space one grew up self. A concept closely related to the sense of community or belonging is the *sense of home or the feeling of home* (Cross, 2001; van der Graaf, 2009; Duyvendak, 2011). Duyvendak (2011) finds that there is a multiplicity of meanings for a feeling or sense of home. Out of the reviewed literature, he boils the elements of a sense of home down to three important aspects:

<p>I. Familiarity ‘Knowing the place’</p> <p>II. Haven: secure, safe, comfortable, private and exclusive Physical/material safety; mentally safe/predictable Place for retreat, relaxation, intimacy and domesticity</p> <p>III. Heaven: public identity and exclusivity A public place where one can collectively be, express and realize oneself; where one feels publicly free and independent. Home here embodies shared histories; a material and/or symbolic place with one’s own people and activities</p>
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Figure 4 - Elements of sense of home - Duyvendak (2011)

The author (2011) argues the opposite is also possible, knowing strongly where and when one does not feel at home. This makes the notion of the sense of home powerful as people want to feel at home where they live and “[...] will do anything to keep or regain that feeling” p. 41).

Next to the place identity and sense of community, belonging and home, also the *sense of natural and physical environment* contributes to the sense of place (Vanclay et al., 2008). Thissen et al. (2010) illustrate how the attractiveness of the landscape plays an important role in the migration intentions of students. Van der Meer (2018) and Brander and de Vries (2018) describe how graduates who return appreciate the rest and space in a village and the surrounding landscape. They positively value this to the more busyness of other places.

Besides a sense of place for the home region, also a sense of place can be felt towards the student city or towards a different place where the graduate lives. The *away-place* is thus seen as the city where one studied and remains working and living or a city where one moved after studying. Polfliet (2020) finds for students living and studying in Groningen who developed a strong sense of place for the city, that some are inclined to stay and work in Groningen. In addition, Holton (2015) finds how domestic UK students that moved to Portsmouth to study, developed a sense of place for their student town. Palmer et al. (2009) describe how students might find themselves in a sort of ‘in-between-ness’ by having developed a sense of place for the study city while also maintaining a sense of place for the peripheral home region (p. 41). A strong sense of place for the away-place can thus have a negative impact on a residential location choice in favour of the home region. On the other hand, some people do not build up a strong sense of place with their place of residence since they know that it will only be a temporary stay for a short while. Therefore they do not bother too much and do not build up a connection with the neighbourhood, village or city (van der Graaf and Duyvendak, 2009; Polfliet, 2020).

// 2.5.5 Intentions to return to or stay in the home region within the next 10 years

The above-described concepts have, according to the available literature, influenced the current (im)mobility choice of the tertiary graduate, relatively shortly after graduation. Given the different life courses that graduates will face in the upcoming 10 years other motives and drivers are found in the existing literature to determine the (im)mobility intention.

Coulter and Scott (2015) study British moving preferences and actual moving behaviour and state that the motives for moving differ throughout the life course. The authors (2015) find that for both singles and couples, housing and area motives are important reasons for moving desires in their thirties. The authors ascribe this to the desire to move to areas with less noise, that are safe or where in general the quality of life is higher according to one’s preferences. Von Reichert et al. (2014) find that some young parents believe that their children should grow up in a calm and safe area, which some believe

a rural area is. On the contrary, the authors also describe how other parents believe that amenities such as schools are of lower quality in rural areas, hence they do not want their children to follow this education and do not want to return. Moreover, the Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving (2019) describes that particularly individuals above the age of 30 leave urban areas for varying reasons such as increasing housing prices or parenthood. Laarman and van Dam (2018) zoom in on the specific group of young parents and the current real estate market in the Netherlands and argue that young parents tend to be moving out of urban areas due to the lack of affordable housing in cities.

Furthermore, Coulter and Scott (2015) state that in later life stages being in the vicinity of family and friends becomes more important. Von Reichert et al. (2014) find this as well for the rural United States context. Here returners valued the specific and practical relation with parents on the one hand and a more emotional relation on the other hand. This involves inter-generational support such as child-care, the appreciation of regular contact with parents and the emotional satisfaction of proximity. Also, for singles, the authors find that proximity to friends and family is important in the decision to return for, amongst others, their supporting roles. Stockdale et al. (2018) find that these practical and emotional relations to one's parents and family also apply to remainers in later life courses. However, the different life course careers often act in combination, not in isolation (von Reichert et al., 2014). For instance, when a graduate wants to return due to the willingness to buy a more affordable house in the home region, a suitable job needs to be available. The authors (2014) describe that if other trajectories such as parenthood and the wish to raise a child in the peripheral home region prevail, career sacrifices might be made. Moreover, in the five to ten years after graduation the importance of the preferences shifts from work/economic motives to locational/housing motives due to accordingly changes in the composition of the household (Venhorst et al., 2013). It is thus important that a peripheral region is to a certain extent well accessible to other more urban regions so that graduates that have the intention to return due to future life course events, have the option to commute to places that provide jobs in line with the education level of the graduate.

No varying relation was found in existing literature between the sense of place and the (im)mobility choice shortly after graduation compared to the sense of place and the (im)mobility intention for graduates in the coming life phase.

Given the above-described relations, the familiar, social and children motives and housing and amenity-related motives are expected to potentially have a differing or stronger relation for the future (im)mobility intentions towards the home region compared to the current residential (im)mobility choice shortly after graduation.

/// 2.6 Conceptual model

Based on the theoretical framework the following conceptual model can be composed, see figure 5. The conceptual model visualizes the factors or concepts that have been found to influence the current (im)mobility choice and the (im)mobility intention for a coming life phase. Since the independent variables *personal local ties*, *housing and amenity motives*, and *sense of place for the home region & away-place* are related to both the current (im)mobility choice and (im)mobility intention they contain two outgoing arrows. Additionally, there is a relation between the current (im)mobility choice and the (im)mobility intention based on the existing literature. The current (im)mobility choice can be seen as an independent/dependent variable due to the relation with the earlier mentioned concepts on the one hand, while on the other hand, it relates to the ultimate dependent variable of the (im)mobility intention.

Since this research is written within the context of South-East Friesland, the independent/dependent variable and ultimate variable are formulated in a way that it describes the preferred (im)mobility

behaviour and intention from a *South-East Frisian* perspective. To be specific, the current (im)mobility choice to *have remained* or to *have returned* and for the (im)mobility *intention to stay, for the current remainers and returners, and to return for the current stay-aways*. The chosen formulation of the dependent variables allows for the concepts to be indicated as having a positive, positive/negative or negative relation to the dependent variables.

Work-related motives concern the availability of suitable jobs matching the education level and matching the *reservation wage* that tertiary graduates demand. This is generally not in favour of peripheral regions vis-à-vis urban cores (Venhorst et al., 2010). For current stay-aways, work-related motives might become less important in the (im)mobility intention due to a shift to family, social and children-related motives (Venhorst et al., 2013).

Family, social and partner or household motives involve the motives to remain, return or stay away from the home region due to the availability, or unavailability, of family and friends in the home region and their role. Also, the composition of the household can influence the choice of residence, such as a partner from the home region or from a different region (Feijten et al., 2008). For the coming life phase being in parenthood, marriage or informal care of parents is likely to influence the (im)mobility intention (Mulder and Hooimeijer, 1999). An individual might value the social role and supportive role, amongst others, that family and friends fulfil in the home region (Thomassen, 2020), especially in later life phases with potential children (Coulter and Scott, 2015). On the other hand, they might have also built up a social network in the study city which can make the graduate tend to keep living there (Wagenaar, 2014; Van der Meer, 2019), hence both a positive and negative relation.

Housing and amenity motives relate to certain housing opportunities, housing prices, housing characteristics, living amenities and accessibility to other regions or places. Venhorst et al. (2013) find how recent graduates often have a preference for urban amenities such as restaurants or theatres which are less available in rural areas. In later life phases, it is likely that this shifts, keeping children in mind, to a preference for quieter, safer and greener areas (von Reichert et al., 2014; Coulter and Scott, 2015). On top of that, housing prices in rural areas are often lower compared to urban places.

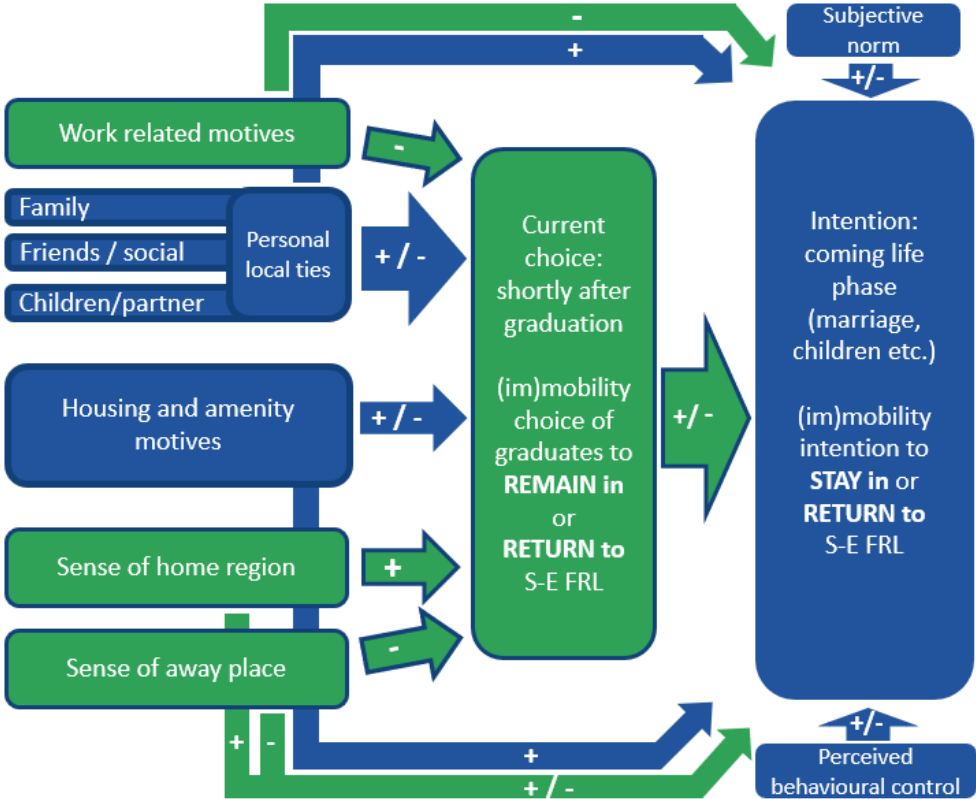


Figure 5 - Conceptual model

Sense of place towards the home region refers to “[...] a complex concept of emotion and attachment to the human environment which is created from people's adoption and use of places” (Hashemnezhad et al., 2013, p. 7). It involves the concepts of place identity, sense of community/belonging/home and sense of the natural or physical environment. This attachment and less tangible relations that people hold towards the home region can play a role in the current (im)mobility choice and intention of graduates. People can feel a sense of place in multiple places (Vanclay et al., 2008). An example of this is the study city, it can thus also contribute to a decision or intention to stay away (Polfliet, 2020; Holton, 2015). No varying relation was found for the sense of place in relation to the coming life phase compared to the current (im)mobility choice.

It is argued that in order to understand the longer-term intention to stay in or return to the peripheral home region, the (im)mobility choice shortly after graduation must be understood as this is the period when graduates are most mobile and likely to move. A few years after graduation, the graduate already starts to enter a phase of stability due to, for instance, the job one holds or one's social network in the place of residence (Venhorst et al., 2013).

Finally, the *subjective norm* and the *perceived behavioural control* to stay or return can both have a positive or negative influence on the (im)mobility intention (Ajzen, 1991)

The familiar, social and children/household motives and housing and amenity motives are expected to potentially have a differing or stronger relation for the (im)mobility intention to stay in or return to the home region compared to the current (im)mobility choice shortly after graduation. To indicate this, these concepts and arrows are blue.

//// 3. METHODOLOGY

After having established the theoretical framework and considering the research objective and questions, this chapter provides an outline and explanation of the methodology of this research. It aims to show the methods and strategies that were used to collect the data and also the way this data was analysed. In order to provide insights into the considerations of the author for the made choices in the methodology of this research, the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen options and alternatives will be provided.

/// 3.1 Research approach

// 3.1.1 Intensive or extensive?

In order to be able to design a research and eventually choose a method to collect the required data it is crucial to start from what one is researching (Mair, 2008). In other words, to start from the main research question: *“What drives the residential (im)mobility intentions of tertiary graduates from South-East Friesland and which role do the (im)mobility choice shortly after graduation and sense of place play herein?”*. Considering the importance of what one wants to research, Sayer (1992, p.243, as cited in Clifford et al., 2010, p. 11) makes a distinction between an ‘intensive’ and an ‘extensive research design’:

Notes	Intensive	Extensive
Research question	How? What? Why? In a certain case or example	How representative is a feature, pattern, or attribute of a population?
Type of explanation	Causes are elucidated through in-depth examination and interpretation	Representative generalizations are produced from repeated studies or large samples
Typical methods of research	Case study. Ethnography. Qualitative analysis	Questionnaires, large-scale surveys. Statistical analysis
Limitations	Relationships discovered will not be ‘representative’ or an average/ generalization	Explanation is a generalization – it is difficult to relate to the individual observation. Generalization is specific to the group/population in question
Philosophy	Method and explanation rely on discovering the connection between events, mechanisms and causal properties	Explanation based upon formal relations of similarity and identification of taxonomic groups

Figure 6 - The essential differences between extensive and intensive research designs – Sayer (1992)

An extensive research design is seen as a ‘large-n’ type of study: “In an extensive research design, the emphasis is on pattern and regularity in data, which is assumed to represent the outcome of some underlying (causal) regularity or process. Usually, large numbers of observations are taken from many case studies to ensure a ‘representative’ dataset [...]” (Clifford et al., 2010, p. 11). While on the other hand an intensive research design can be described as a ‘small-n’ sort of research: “In an intensive research design, emphasis is on describing a single, or a small number of case studies with the maximum amount of detail. [...] In an intensive design, by thoroughly appreciating the operation of one physical or social system, or by immersion in one culture or social group, elements of a more fundamental, causal nature are sought” (Clifford et al., 2010, p. 11). When considering the research question, an intensive research design seems more appropriate given the subjective nature of a

graduate's (im)mobility behaviour and intentions. Given the objective of the study to provide an in-depth background and drivers of the (im)mobility behaviour patterns and intentions of young and highly educated people from South-East Friesland, an intensive research design is chosen.

// 3.1.2 Qualitative or quantitative?

Although an intensive research design can be undertaken in both a qualitative or a quantitative fashion (Clifford et al., 2010), qualitative research is more suitable for an intensive research design (Sayer, 2010). Qualitative research is chosen over quantitative research as the suitable choice due to philosophical and practical underpinnings. Quantitative research is more linked with an extensive research design which aims to study a large study group and make more representative generalizations with limited explanatory power (Sayer, 2010). Whereas qualitative research does not aim to be necessarily representative but more dive into the backgrounds, motives and factors in a certain behaviour, phenomenon or process (Sayer, 2010). The latter is more in line with this research. Next to the philosophical consideration between the two, also the practical or feasibility side influences whether a qualitative or quantitative approach is taken. Although a quantitative study could provide more representative insights into the current (im)mobility choice and intention, the quantitative approach is not used. This was discussed with various peers and others and was judged as a risky approach due to the chance of a low response rate to a survey.

Creswell (2007) describes a list of research approaches that can be applied in qualitative research. The author (2007) describes that there is a long list of potential approaches within qualitative research and drills these down to, according to the author, the most frequently used and fundamental approaches in social and behavioural science: Narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and the case study. Narrative research involves “[...] studying one or two individuals, gathering data through the collection of their stories, reporting individual experiences, and chronologically ordering the meaning of those experiences” (Creswell, 2007, p.54). A phenomenological approach describes “[...] the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p.54). The author (2007) states that this type of research identifies a phenomenon, an object of human experience, and it tries to understand the essence of this experience. Furthermore, in contrast to narrative research, it studies several individuals and looks into what these persons have in common in relation to the studied phenomenon. Phenomenology should be seen as an interpretive approach in which the actions taken are attempted to be interpreted and understood while taking the subjectivities and context of the studied phenomenon into account (H. Ernste, personal communication: lecture, 2021). Furthermore, in order to reconstruct motives, logic and subjective rules of action such an interpretive approach is required (H. Ernste, personal communication: lecture, 2021). The grounded theory approach aims to generate or discover a theory of a process, action or interaction determined by the views of a large number of participants (Creswell, 2007). The author argues that it is a good research approach when there is no existing theory to explain a certain process. Ethnographic research describes and interprets the shared and learned behaviours, patterns of values, beliefs and language of a culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2007). It involves extensive observation of the culture group in which the researcher is often immersed in the daily lives of the study group. Creswell (2007) explains the case study research approach as “[...] the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (p. 73). However, in the same paragraph Creswell (2007) argues that a case study can also be seen as a type of design in qualitative research or as an object of study. Creswell (2007) states that “a case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the case or a comparison of several cases” (p. 74). This is the case for the selected case of this research, see section 6.2 for further elaboration.

The suiting research approach would therefore be a phenomenological approach to the specific case of this research project, young tertiary graduates from South-East Friesland. Since the phenomenon studied, the (im)mobility choice and intention of tertiary graduates, is a subjective one where the choice made by individuals is influenced by different factors, context and subjective motives. It is relevant to study this by including multiple individuals to gain a broader understanding, the narrative approach is therefore not suitable. The ethnographic approach is not an adequate approach as it is largely focused on studying shared and learned patterns of behaviour and values through, predominantly, participant observations. The studied subject of this research is not something that can simply be described as a typical shared or learned behaviour in a cultural group given its complexity. The grounded theory, as already described above, will not be applied since this is not a new research subject and existing theories already exist for it, this research does thus not aim to develop an entirely new grand theory.

// 3.1.3 Methods

Verschuren and Doorewaard (2007) describe the main methods within qualitative research: Interviews, group interview (focus groups), surveys (with open questions), observations and content analysis of textual or online documents. The interview can differ in the way it is structured and to what extent open-ended questions are being asked (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2007). Creswell (2007) describes that within the phenomenologist approach, typically the most suitable method is using interviews as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the studied phenomenon. Besides the traditional qualitative methods described, experimental and new methods are being used within Human Geography. Examples include photo-elicitation (Stedman et al., 2014), walking interviews (Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2014) and life-calendar grids or life-history calendars (Thomassen, 2020).

The photo-elicitation, in contrast to interviews, does not so much focus on the narrative but rather on the visual component of specific topics. This method can be useful when the research focuses on a specific place that is personally related to the target group (Stedman et al., 2014). Photographs could sharpen the participants' memory and can trigger responses that might otherwise not be expressed in classical, verbal interviewing. Stedman et al. (2014) describe how the photograph can be taken by the researcher or by the interviewee. The authors (2014) argue that the interviewee should take or present the pictures as this is enhancing their expression during the interview beyond words and allows them to communicate their view or relation towards certain places. Furthermore, it engages and invests the participants in the research process.

Walking interviews are a mobile form of interviewing, an interview is being conducted on the move (Clark and Emmel, 2010). Especially in the context of sense of place, a walking interview is a suitable method to dive into the experienced sense of place of a participant in a particular place (Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2014). Walking interviews are considered to be a more intimate way to engage with places and the persons involved in these places. A walking interview can offer privileged insights into both place and self (Evans & Jones, 2011).

Life calendar grids or life history calendars are personalized overviews of important changes in the respective life course and trajectories (education, labour market, household composition and housing/location preferences) linked to residential relocations (Thomassen, 2020; Kōu et al., 2015). Such life-history calendars can act purely as quantitative methods when one is, for example, studying the share of migrants moving from region A to region B. It could also be used to support more standard qualitative methods and function as a tool to stimulate the long-term memory of participants on their relocations and motives (Thomassen, 2020). See figure 7 for an example from Kōu et al. (2015).

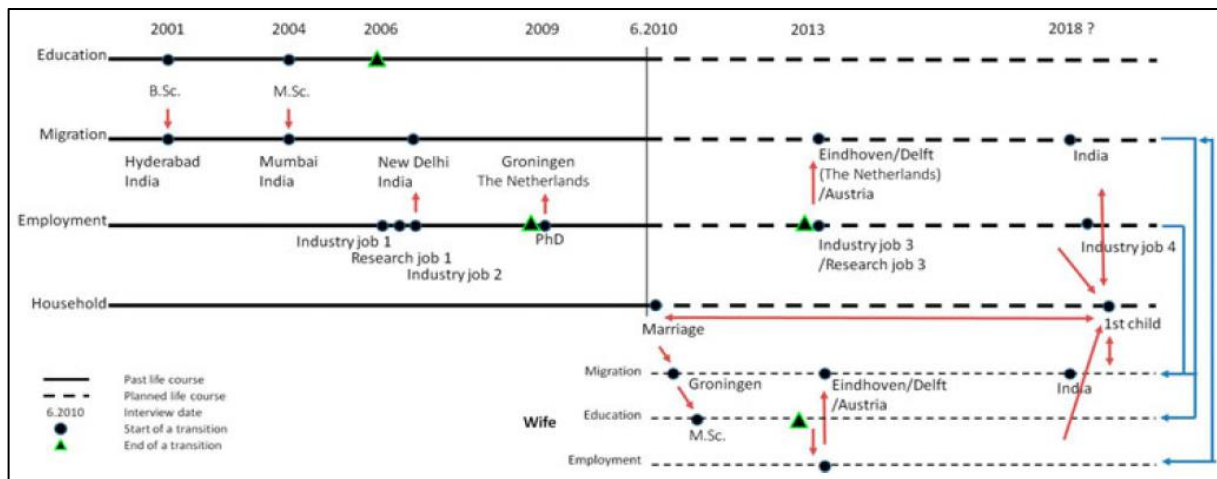


Figure 7 - Example of a life-history calendar - Kōu et al. (2015)

Looking at the sub-questions we can identify per sub-question which type of method is suitable. Sub-question 1 was: *Which sense of place do the different (im)mobility groups hold for their home region and away-place(s), and how does this influence their current (im)mobility behaviour and (im)mobility intentions and why?* This sub-question has been researched via both semi-structured interviews and the photo-elicitation method. The sense of place is a very personal phenomenon for which it is important that participants can elaborate on their sense of place in the region, especially concerning the (im)mobility decision and intention. Although the semi-structured interview allows participants to elaborate on the sense of place they hold towards the home region and the away-place, involving photo-elicitation provides further room for participants to express the sense of place they hold. The participants were asked to bring photographs of their home region which indicate the strong or less strong sense of place they hold. All three (im)mobility groups have been asked to bring at least one picture describing the sense of place for the home region, see figure 8 for an example. As described above, this actively involves the participants in the research and allows them to support their verbal expression of a sense of place with photographs. An additional picture for the returners and stay-aways of the away-place was considered but not pursued in the end. Before the interview, it was not



Figure 8 - Example of photo provided by respondent for 'photo elicitation' for sense of place

always clear to which (im)mobility group respondents belonged. Furthermore, it was unsure whether respondents had moved on to a different city after graduation, such as the Randstad.

Sub-question 2 was: *What are the motives for highly educated young people in their (im)mobility choice to stay away from, return to or remain in the home region of South-East Friesland and how does this influence their (im)mobility intention?* This has been reviewed via semi-structured interviews with the different (im)mobility groups. By using semi-structured interviews with largely open questions, all respondents were, pre-dominantly, asked the same questions and have room to elaborate on the motives for their residential (im)mobility decision, while the option for specific emphasis within an interview was still possible. Furthermore, the life history calendar has been applied for this sub-question to stimulate the memory of the respondent. Filling in the life history calendar was the starting point of the interview so that the participant would graphically see whether a remainder, returner or a stay-awayer profile applies, see figure 7 for an example and further elaboration. The calendar has also been used to refer to during the later stages of the interview. A template was designed for the life history calendar which was filled in with markers and pencils. See Appendix 8.2 for a filled-in calendar.

Sub question 3 was: *Which intentions do the various (im)mobility groups hold regarding returning to or staying in the home region of South-East Friesland for the coming life phase and why?* This has been researched via the semi-structured interviews mentioned above, to gain insights into the (im)mobility intentions. Again, this method was chosen to allow participants of the different (im)mobility groups to elaborate on their (im)mobility intentions and the motives that determine this. Also, the life history calendar was used to visualize the different career trajectories, this stimulated the discussion.

The focus group research method was considered as a substitute for the interviews. However, this has not been chosen due to the enduring insecurities of the Covid-19 pandemic and the governmental policies that depended on that during the research period. Additionally, Creswell (2007) argues that interviews are the most suitable method for a phenomenological approach since it requires an in-depth review and understanding of the phenomenon together with the motives involved, the author argues that the interview allows this best for the researched subject. Furthermore, it was expected to be difficult to arrange focus groups for the remain and return groups as the individuals in these groups are all expected to have full-time careers and live dispersed over the region which makes logistics difficult. Moreover, an observer would have to be present during the session, for whom no identified colleague is available at this moment, and neither is this expected. For the stay-awayer group, participants might be dispersed over the Netherlands or even abroad, which makes the focus group overall not feasible to arrange.

/// 3.2 Data collection and preparation

// 3.2.1 Target group

The target group of this research are graduates of tertiary education who lived in South-East Friesland during their secondary education graduation with a current age of 25 to 30 years old. For the purpose of this study, a graduate of tertiary education is defined as a person who obtained a Bachelor's and/or Master's degree in higher vocational education (HBO) or a university. If one is following a PhD degree during this research, for the purpose of this study, this will be seen as having already graduated from tertiary education with a Master's degree and having started working, as a PhD position is often paid.

The age group of 25 to 30 years old is chosen since, according to Latten et al. (2017), this age group of people that follow higher education, typically transfer from studying to working in the Dutch context.

This is in line with the earlier described findings of Bernard et al. (2014) and other scholars in the theoretical framework. Bernard et al. (2014) indicate a change in the life course of individuals for mainly the education and labour market careers, but potentially also the household career when planning to live together with a partner. Furthermore, the typical migration intensity curve of Bernard et al. (2014) is in line with that of the Netherlands (CBS, n.d.-c; Latten et al., 2017). After graduation from higher vocational education or university, graduates typically enter the labour market (Venhorst, Koster and Van Dijk, 2013) and accordingly they will also have to make a choice in their place of living. Additionally, it might be expected that within the next 5 to 10 years, further changes in the further life course careers will occur for the target group in the Dutch context, such as parenthood (CBS, 2019a; CBS, 2019b) or marriage (CBS, n.d.-b). As discussed in previous chapters, it is therefore of interest to look into the (im)mobility intentions of this age group to return to or stay in the home region of South-East Friesland. The target group was initially divided into four groups: remainers, returners, pre-graduation leavers and post-graduation leavers, see figure 9 for a visual display of these groups.

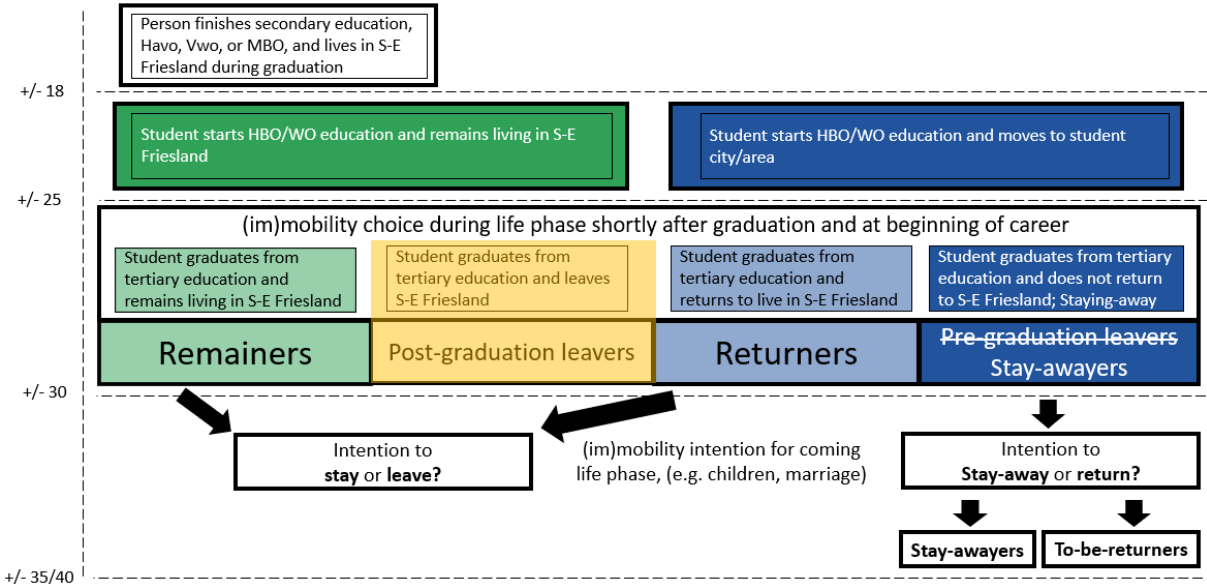


Figure 9 - Overview of different (im)mobility groups – Author’s design

The *remainers* keep living in the home region during their study period and after graduation also choose to keep living in South-East Friesland. This group is *immobile* for their current choice of residence. The *returners* do choose to live in their study city while studying. But they return to South-East Friesland in the following years after graduation. This group performs *preferred mobile relocation behaviour*, from the perspective of South-East Friesland, for their current choice of residence. The *stay-aways* were initially called the *pre-graduation leavers* since they left the home region already before graduation from higher vocational education or university. This group performs *unpreferred mobile relocation behaviour*, from the perspective of South-East Friesland, for their current choice of residence. ‘Pre’ was used to indicate the difference with the *post-graduation leavers*. A group who had theoretically remained in the home region during their study but left the home region in the following years after graduation; they only left *post* their graduation. However, this group was not found during the gathering of respondents and is therefore shaded in orange. Although this group was initially identified to be theoretically a part of the target group, it’s absence does not affect the study. Since it was already expected to be a small and therewith hard to reach group based on literature (DaVanzo and Morrison, 1981; Venhorst et al., 2013). Because the post-graduation leavers were no longer a part

of this research, the distinction between pre- and post-graduation leavers was no longer required. Besides, a critical review of the term *pre-graduation leavers* and the studied current unpreferred mobility choice showed that the usage of 'leavers' was actually incorrect. They have left their home region at the moment of starting a study and their current unpreferred mobility choice is not one of leaving but of staying in their study city or better said: staying-away from the home region when considering this research perspective. The term *stay-awayers* was thus chosen and applied.

The remainers and returners can have two (im)mobility intentions, an immobility intention to stay in the coming life phase and an unpreferred mobility intention to leave. The stay-awayers can have a preferred mobility intention to return and an intention to stay away. A necessary distinction needs to be made between the stay-awayers who intend to return and the ones who do not intend to return, their backgrounds and motive will be described in section 4.4. The stay-awayers who intend to return in the coming life phase will be called *to-be-returners*, since their return is still left to be. The stay-awayers who do not intend to return in the coming life phase remain to be called *stay-awayers* in later sections of chapters four, five and six.

// 3.2.2 South-East Friesland as study region

As argued in chapter 1, South-East Friesland is chosen as the study region due to being labelled as an anticipation region and the subsequent socio-economic struggles. This section dives further into the background of the study region.

The region of South-East Friesland lies in the North of the Netherlands, in the province of Friesland, see figure 10. The region consists of five municipalities: Heerenveen, Ooststellingwerf, Opsterland, Smallingerland and Weststellingwerf (Regio Deal Zuidoost Friesland, n.d.-b). As the name suggests, it lies in the South-eastern part of the province of Friesland, see figures 10 and 11.

South-East Friesland is a rural region (Regio Deal Zuidoost Friesland, n.d.-a). South-East Friesland mainly contains smaller villages. Bickel (2022) uses data from the Province of Friesland (2021) and splits the residential cores of South-East Friesland into four based on the number of inhabitants, see table 1.

The residential cores in the South-East Friesland are thus mainly small villages. A fifth of the inhabitants live in small villages almost a quarter of the inhabitants lives in large villages. The two urban cores, Drachten and Heerenveen, count for almost half of the number of inhabitants. The regional cores are Oosterwolde, Wolvega and Gorredijk, which take up the remaining 16% of inhabitants.

The rural composition of the region is also reflected in the landscape. The land in the region consists of more than three-quarters of land used for agricultural purposes, which is more than in other parts of Friesland or the Netherlands (Regio Deal Zuidoost Friesland, n.d.-a). Despite a large amount of agricultural land, the Regio Deal still describes the landscape of this region as varied and unique. It consists of forests, stream valleys and lakes. The inhabitants of South-East Friesland are proud of their unique landscape (Regio Deal Zuidoost Friesland, 2020a).



Figure 10 - Location of South-East Friesland in the Netherlands - Regioatlas.nl

Statistics Netherlands found that in 2019 the region of South-East Friesland, 13,8% of the available jobs were 'knowledge jobs' for which a tertiary degree is required. This is below the national average of 19% (CBS, n.d.-d).

Type of residential core (number of inhabitants)	Number of cores	Number of inhabitants	% of total inhabitants
Small village - <1500	68	38.265	20,4%
Large village – 1500 - 5000	17	44.060	23,5%
Regional cores – 5000 – 15000	3	30.015	16,0%
Urban cores - >15000	2	74.755	40,0%
	90	187.095	100%

Table 1 - Residential cores in South-East Friesland – Bickel (2022) and Province of Friesland (2021)

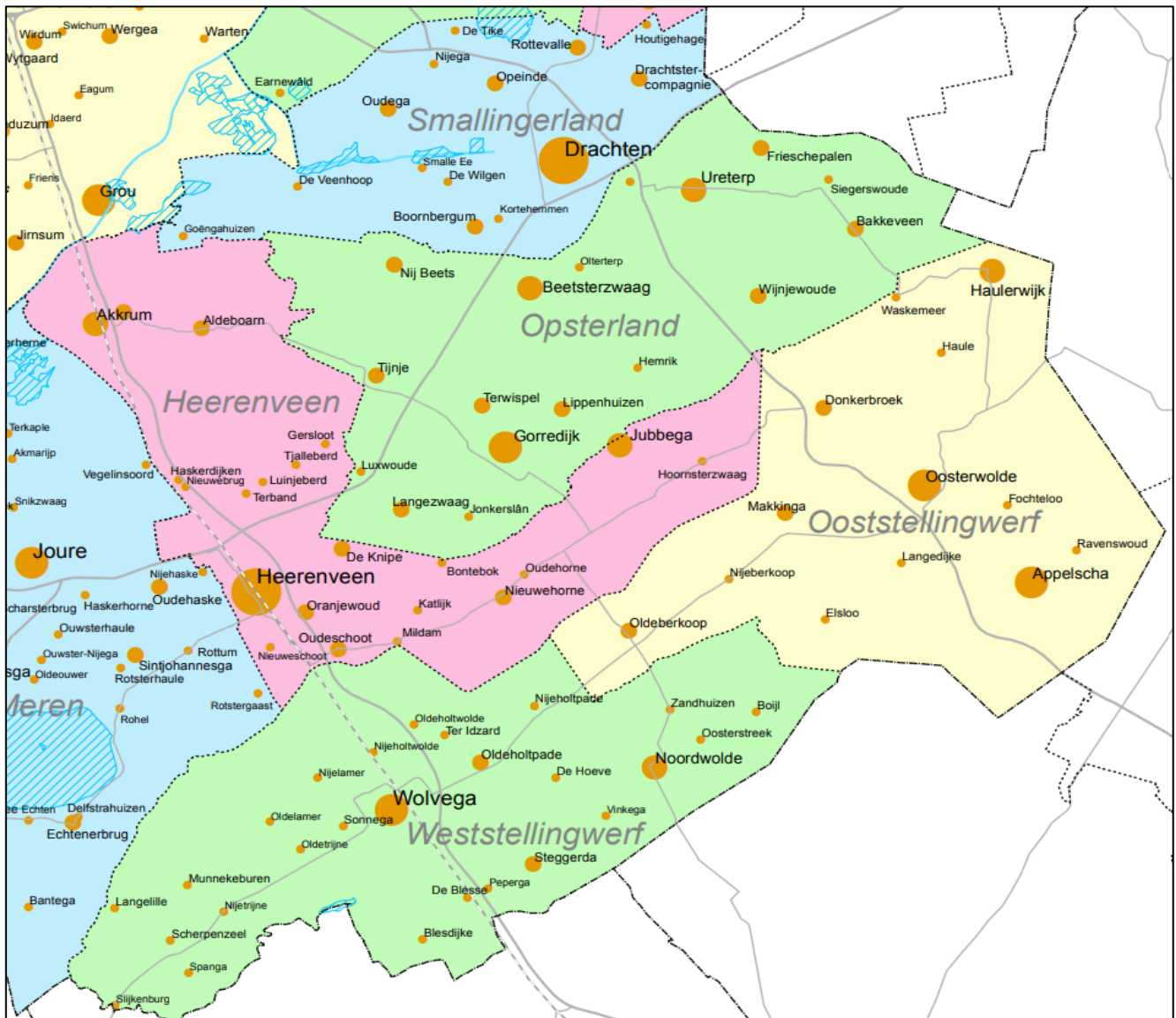


Figure 11 - Detailed map of five municipalities of South-East Friesland - Prov. Fryslân, afd. Beleids- en Geo-Informatie - 2018

Talent in de regio is a cooperation of the university and Hanzehogeschool of Groningen (higher vocational education) and studies the labour market and careers of the three Northern provinces of Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe. One of the studied subjects is the 'stay-rate', the percentage of highly educated individuals who lived in a certain municipality at the age of 16, obtained a degree and still live in the same municipality at the age of 28. This is called the *Talentedmonitor* (Talent in de regio, 2022) and uses the birth cohorts 1984 to 1992, a group of youngsters who reached the age of 16 between 2000 and 2008. The monitor does not differentiate between remainers or returners. Whether one lives continuously in a certain municipality from age 16 till 28 or lives in between in the study city does not make a difference. The 'stay-rate' sees both as staying in the municipality. When considering South-East Friesland, the monitor shows that mainly lower vocational graduates keep living in their municipality at the age of 28 and that higher vocational and university graduates mainly live elsewhere, see figures 12, 13 and 14. For instance, only 17% of university graduates who lived at the age of 16 in Opsterland, still live there at the age of 28. The numbers in the five municipalities of South-East Friesland indicate the percentage of stay-rate for that respective municipality.

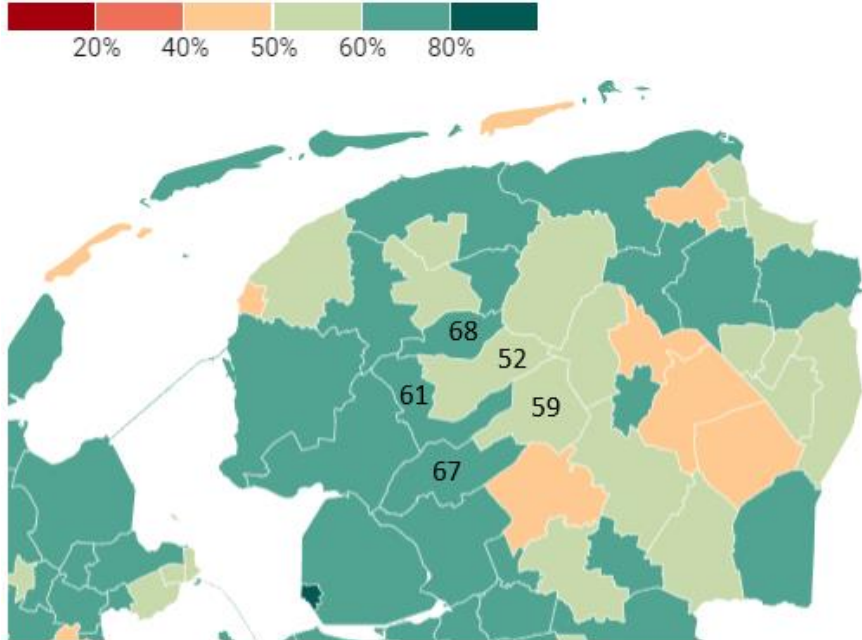


Figure 12 - Stay-rate of lower vocational graduates comparing age 16 and age 28 – Talent in de regio, 2022

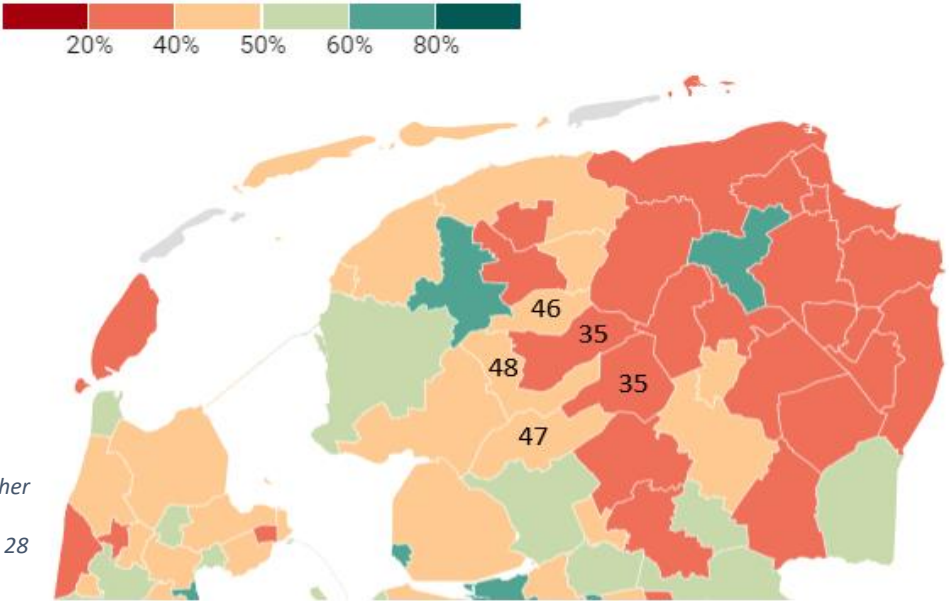


Figure 13 - Stay-rate of higher vocational graduates comparing age 16 and age 28 – Talent in de regio, 2022

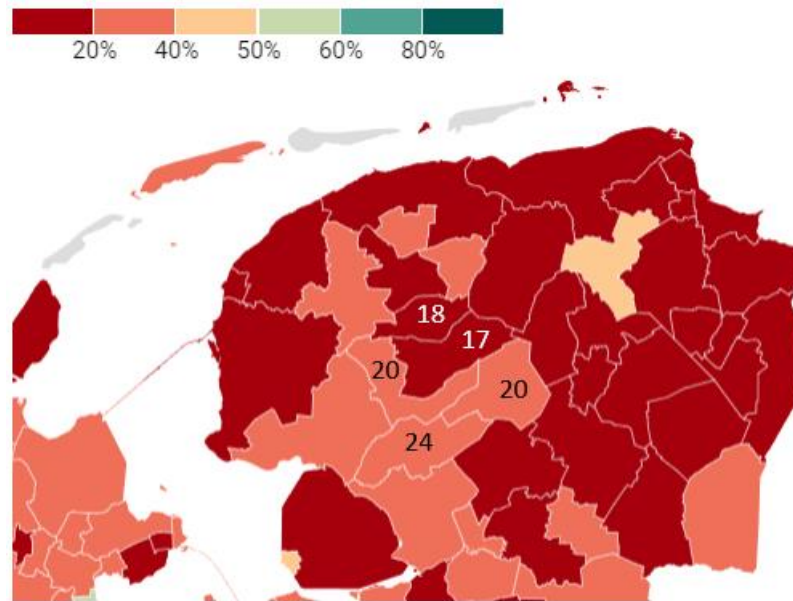


Figure 14 - Stay-rate of university graduates comparing age 16 and age 28 – Talent in de regio, 2022

// 3.2.3 Gathering respondents and sampling strategy

Although the qualitative nature of this research does not necessarily aim to provide representative statements on the (im)mobility behaviour and intentions, it is still important to maintain a spread in the relevant characteristics for the respective research. How a researcher chooses to approach the gathering of the sample of the population can be described as the sampling method or strategy (Mack et al., 2005). It is one of the most common sampling methods: “[...] groups participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question” (Mack et al., 2005, p. 5). Purposeful sample sizes are often determined based on theoretical saturation. When further data collection and analysis no longer provide additional insights, theoretical saturation has been reached.

This type of sampling has been applied in this research. Respondents had to fulfil the following criteria:

- Lived in South-East Friesland at the moment of graduation from secondary school
- Having obtained any degree from higher vocational education or a university (Bachelor or Master)
- Being 25 to 30 years old
- Having started working

Furthermore, the gathered sample of graduates was evaluated against the spread of gender, education level and municipality during the recruitment.

The respondents have been gathered in various ways. This involved using the social network of the author, the network of colleagues in the internship organisation, two LinkedIn posts, contacting local institutions or initiatives in villages and snowball sampling. This involves finding additional participants through the network of already involved participants (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). After discussion with the internship organisation, the recruitment of respondents was started early given the possible difficulty in finding respondents. This was proven a good decision since indeed it was difficult to find respondents while maintaining a desired spread in the above-mentioned characteristics. For instance, respondents from some municipalities were harder to reach given the limited reach of the author in these municipalities. This was overcome by using the internship’s network and active online recruitment.

A total of 26 interviews were conducted with eight remainers, eight returners and ten stay-awayers. For all three groups, it was constantly reviewed whether theoretical saturation was found. This was

the case after the taken interviews. Tables 2, 3 and 4 provide an overview of the respondents per (im)mobility group, including some of their characteristics. The provided names are pseudonyms and further characteristics of the studied sample are provided in figures 15, 16 and 17. This is not provided on a respondent level in order to guarantee the anonymity of the respondents. Figure 17 shows an almost balanced representation of respondents who followed higher vocational education and university. Moreover, all municipalities are represented by at least one remainder, one returner and one stay-awayer. All municipalities of South-East Friesland are thus represented with a slightly larger representation for Opsterland and a lower representation for Westellingwerf, see figure 15. The studied sample consists of two-thirds men and one-third women, see figure 16. Despite the careful selection of respondents, more men responded to the call for participants than women.

Remainer	Name	Gender	Study region
1	Lotte	Woman	North
2	Janine	Woman	North
3	Douwe	Man	North
4	Anouk	Woman	North
5	Gurbe	Man	North
6	Dylan	Man	North
7	Feiko	Man	North
8	John	Man	North

Table 2 - Composition of remainers

Returner	Name	Gender	Study region
1	Anna	Woman	North
2	Pieter	Man	North
3	Jesse	Man	North
4	Lieke	Woman	North
5	Finn	Man	North
6	Sven	Man	North
7	Emma	Woman	North
8	Ruud	Man	North

Table 3 - Composition of returners

Stay-awayer / To-be-returner	Name	Gender	Study region	Area of residence
1	Lucas	Man	North	Randstad
2	Lars	Man	North	North
3	Ireen	Woman	North	North
4	Josefien	Woman	North	Randstad
5	Daan	Man	North	Randstad
6	Nina	Woman	Randstad	Randstad
7	Hidde	Man	North	North
8	Ruben	Man	North	North
9	Dirk	Man	North	North
10	Ilse	Woman	Randstad	Randstad

Table 4 - Composition of stay-awayers

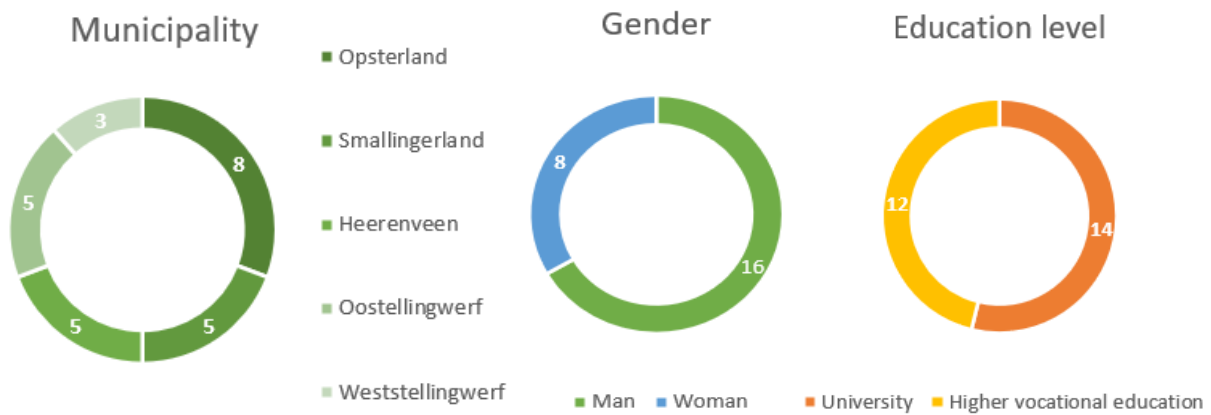


Figure 15 – Municipality of upbringing of participants

Figure 16 – Gender of participants

Figure 17 – Education level of participants

// 3.2.4 Preparing and conducting the interview

A semi-structured interview guide was prepared based on the theoretical framework, research questions and research objective. Due to having three different (im)mobility groups, three slightly different interview guides were created so that they would match with the (im)mobility group. For instance, the interview guide for the remainders does not refer to living in the study city. Next to the interview guide, a template was designed for the life-history calendar. The author had no previous experience with such a life-history calendar. To make sure the purpose and setup of the interview were clear for the respondent, the interview guide and the life-history calendar worked well and the interview did not last too long, two test interviews were conducted. The test-interviews provided valuable insights to improve the interview-guide and make it more clear. Additionally, changes were made to the life-history calendar in order to make it more user-friendly and more comprehensible for the respondent. The interview was eventually structured into four parts based: The life-history calendar, current (im)mobility choice, sense of place, and (im)mobility intention. The questions were as much as possible prepared to be open questions. See appendix 8.1 for the interview guide for the stay-awayers. An example of an anonymized, digitally filled-in life-history calendar can be found in appendix 8.2.

The interviews were all recorded with the up-front consent of the respondent. The duration of the interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. Most interviews lasted approximately one hour. Respondents could choose whether the interview was held online or on-site. The location of the on-site interviews was always appointed by the respondent out of a number of options provided by the author. On-site interviews were held in the office of the internship organization, at the temporary home of the author, at the work of the respondent or at the home of the respondent. In any case, it was made sure that a closed and quiet room was used without the presence of any other persons. This ensures comfort for the respondent as much as possible. The more comfortable the participant, the more likely they reveal the nature of their lived experiences (Longhurst, 2010). Interviews were conducted in Dutch and Frisian, depending on the preference of the participant.

/// 3.3 Data analysis

The conducted interviews have been transcribed in the original language at the earliest possible moment. The transcription was done in an *intelligent verbatim* manner. Different from *verbatim*, *intelligent verbatim* still transcribes every single word of the interview but without pauses or 'uhs'. To improve readability, broken sentences can be corrected and long paragraphs cut up in a more neat manner (Scribbr, 2022).

The created transcripts were then used as input for the coding phase. Coding can be described as “the assigning of interpretive tags to text (or other material) based on categories or themes that are relevant to the research” (Cope, 2010, p. 463). The coding of the data was done in the software programme ATLAS.ti. The coding follows a certain pattern, as we will see, but is also an iterative process that requires recoding, rereading and rethinking. New insights from later interviews can lead to rereading earlier interviews and applying new codes. The transcripts were coded via open, axial and selective coding. These three phases of coding are related to grounded theory as a research approach. A grounded theory approach is a strategy that aims to define new theories for new and scarcely researched fields, where existing theories are not that much used (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2007). However, the studied subject of this research is not an entirely unresearched field. A grounded theory will thus not be applicable to this research but the coding phases are nevertheless suitable. The phases shift from quite broad and general concepts in the open coding phase to the development of a central or core category in selective coding. The different phases will be explained in greater detail in the following sub-sections.

The photographs provided by the participants were coded by using the description of the respondent and what the image displayed. Similar codes have been used for the textual analysis of the sense of place, there was no separate coding technique used.

The life history calendars served to support the interview and stimulate the participant's long-term memory. The calendars have therefore not been analyzed but serve mainly as a supporting tool and to help the researcher in reflecting on one's life course when coding the interviews. Next to that, since filling in the life-history calendar has been recorded, relevant statements are transcribed and thus included in the analysis of the spoken interview.

// 3.3.1 Open coding

Open coding is the first phase of coding that was applied. This can be seen as unrestricted coding of the gathered data. Straus (1987, as cited in Cope, 2010, pp. 445-446) describes this phase: “This open coding is done by scrutinizing the fieldnote, interview, or other document very closely: line by line or even word by word. The aim is to produce concepts that seem to fit the data” (p. 28). Open coding breaks the data down in a way that conceptual implications can follow in later stages.

As described above, this coding phase was iterative in a way that the open coding of later interviews brought forward relevant codes that might also be applicable to earlier coded interviews. These earlier interviews were thus reviewed again and to some extent recoded. In order to prevent comparable codes or overlap in codes, the created list of open codes was critically reviewed after all interviews were coded. Open codes with different wording but a similar meaning were merged and rephrased. Furthermore, codes with a small number of appearances were critically assessed and if necessary were covered with another comparable code or removed.

// 3.3.2 Axial coding

In the second phase of coding, the open codes are grouped under broader more general codes along an ‘axis’, so to say (Straus, 1987, as cited in Cope, 2010, p. 446). Axial coding allows the researcher to focus on a particular category of interest by combining and grouping open codes. The *code groups* that were created are: *Life history calendar*, *current (im)mobility choice*, *sense of place for home region*, *sense of place for away-place*, *(im)mobility intention to stay, return or not to return*. This study focuses on three different behavioural groups which require analysis of these three groups separately. A *code sub-group* was therefore added in order to be able to break down the different codes of the three (im)mobility behaviour groups and for the different intentions. See appendix 8.3 for an overview of the codes.

// 3.3.3 Selective coding

The final stage of the data analysis connects all codes together around a central theme or category and develops the common thread of the research. This phase can be described as: "The final step, then is selective coding, in which the researcher takes the model and develops propositions (or hypotheses) that interrelate the categories in the model or assembles a story that describes the interrelationships of categories in the model" (Cresswell, 2007, p.65). This phase was performed by reviewing the created codes and categories once more in a way of creating relationships and networks. The *network* function allows the researcher to make a graphic representation of the relevant codes. By re-reading the connected quotes, the importance of the various codes to a category group was identified and indicated by a relationship or colour coding. An example of a network can be found in appendix 8.4.

/// 3.4 Ethics, reliability and validity

Ethics and confidentiality

This research has been conducted as part of the researcher's Master program and does not relate to any other interests. Participants were informed about the content of the research before their participation. Furthermore, it was explicitly asked whether the interview was allowed to be recorded. All participants gave their permission for this and also filled this in on the informed consent form. The participants have been asked to fill in and sign the informed consent form in which they confirm their understanding of the research, are aware of their involvement in it and confirm that the conducted interview will be used for this research. Next to that, the participants could also indicate if the photos relating to the sense of place were allowed to be published and/or analysed. Most participants agreed to this. A small group did not give their permission for this since the photo contained other persons. The participants will be provided with a copy of the report and interview in case they indicated this on the informed consent form.

The anonymity has been safeguarded as their names are not disclosed and are pseudonymized. Their statements have been dealt with in a confidential manner and references to specific details that could be related to the specific participant will be rephrased in such a way that the statement is still clear but can not be referred to the participant. For instance '*I identify with Gorrdeijk, I feel like a Gordykster*' (Gorredijk is a town in South-East Friesland) would be changed to '*I identify with my hometown, if feel like a *****er*'. After the transcription of the interviews, the recordings were deleted. The transcripts have been stored on a secured server to which only the author had access.

The life history calendar will be shredded and disposed of in specific confidential containers at the campus or the thesis internship organisation after the completion of the report. In this way, no one else besides the author will have access to these calendars. As the life history calendar contains very personal information about the participant, it is important to stress that the life history calendar will not be published and will not be shared in any way. Its purpose is to support the recollection of the participant's memory on the studied topic during the interview and to provide an overview of the life course up to the moment of the interview.

Validity and reliability

The internal validity, whether the observations of the research cover what was intended to be observed, could be impacted by a selective selection of participants for the interviews. It is therefore important to pay attention to a feasible spread in the characteristics of the participants. So, for example, the majority of participants are not only from a specific municipality. Additionally, by using the theoretical framework and research questions as the foundation for the interview guide it has been ensured to research what was actually intended to research. This critical comparison together with the thorough research plan realized the internal validity of this research.

The external validity, whether the made observations could also be applied to other cases, has been attempted to increase by selecting the case of an anticipation region. If other, particularly Dutch, anticipation regions share considerable characteristics as the studied region, we might argue that observations may typify the motives for (im)mobility behaviour there as well.

The reliability, whether a different researcher would find the same observations or findings from the participants, is strengthened by applying a semi-structured interview method. This implies that all participants will be asked the same questions. However, this also means that during interviews it is likely that certain aspects might receive additional attention due to their relevance for the participant. Replication of such an interview would thus expectedly be slightly different from the first one, this is inherent to the applied method. Furthermore, the circumstances of another interview will, most likely, be different and thus influence the answers of the participant. Due to this, it is important to allow the participant to have a choice in the interview location so that the participant feels safe in the interview setting.

Position of the researcher

This research is building on existing research within this field and the nature of the research is to a large extent confirmatory. It implies that before empirical data has been gathered, expectations can be formulated for potential relations based on previous cases and research. Schumm (2021) describes the tendency of scholars to have a subjective bias during their research in the testing of hypotheses as *confirmation bias*. It was therefore regarded as important to ensure that this bias would not apply to this research by ensuring that the chosen approach and target group did not lead to a favourable outcome of the expectations. It was attempted to ensure that the participants were to a reasonably achievable level representative, as described above. Furthermore, Schumm (2021) argues that during the research process, the researcher should take a critical approach towards the decisions being taken and conclusions derived to prevent any of these from leading to a confirmation of the hypotheses.

In qualitative research, most data results from interactions between the researcher and participants. This applies to interviews as well. The researcher self is thus an important research instrument. The characteristics and position of the researcher may influence the research. Valentine (2005) describes this as: “When you are thinking about who you want to interview it is important to reflect on who you are and how your own identity will shape the interactions that you have with others. This is what academics describe as recognising your *positionality* and being *reflexive*” (p. 113).

In this study, the researcher is part of the target group. This is often described as being an ‘insider’ (Polfliet, 2020). Having a common background can have a positive effect on the research (Valentine, 2005). It could facilitate the development of a rapport and contribute to a rich and detailed interview due to the mutual trust and understanding of specific details, locations or events. However, being part of the study group can also have negative effects. The researcher could assume or *pre-understand* information based on his own experiences and not ask for underlying reasons or motivations. The researcher could also ask guiding questions based on his own experiences. Due to this, it is important to be aware of the position of the researcher within the process and to maintain a critical stance towards the position of the researcher so that this does not negatively affect the research.

//// 4. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of this research and provides the building blocks for answering the main and sub-research questions in further chapters. First, a brief profile will be provided of the different groups based on the statements made during the Life history calendar section of the interviews. In this section, the relevant differences in the background of the different (im)mobility groups are discussed. The second section concerns the sense of place that graduates hold for their home region and their away-place(s). It focuses on describing the sense of place that the graduates hold and finding out how and why this has developed for the different (im)mobility groups. Naturally, sense of place also plays a role in the current (im)mobility choice and the (im)mobility intention. This will be addressed in the third and fourth sections. Third, the current (im)mobility choice, at the moment of interviewing, together with underlying motives and considerations will be outlined. According to the life course approach, this is the life phase relatively shortly after graduation and at the start of one's working career. The fourth section addresses the (im)mobility intention of the different (im)mobility behaviour groups for the coming life phase in the next 10 years.

/// 4.1 Life history calendar and background different (im)mobility profiles

The first part of the interview sketches the (residential) moving history of the graduates during their youth, study period and early working life. What mainly stands out is that not entirely surprisingly, the background and family characteristics are very similar for the three groups until their study period starts.

Namely, their *parents predominantly also grew up* in South-East Friesland. Although, the family of two out of ten stay-awayers stems from the Randstad. The same applies to the *moving frequency* during childhood. For all groups, moving during childhood is mostly not applicable and if applicable it is within the town of growing up or within the home region. But for the stay-awayers group, a third of the respondents moved more than twice and two out of ten moved from the Western part of the Netherlands to South-East Friesland at school-going age. For all groups applies that their *siblings grew up* in South-East Friesland.

While living in the study city, the returner group *visited their parental home* (ouderlijk huis) almost every week during their study period. For a smaller part of the returners, the frequency dropped during later phases of the study. The stay-awayer group is characterised as well by a group who visited their parental home almost every week. However, for almost half of stay-awayers who visited regularly in the beginning this decreased to once in a while, for some every couple of weeks and for others months, during later phases of the study. One stay-awayer only visited once or twice a year. Furthermore, the *flatmates* of the returning group were predominantly from the home region of the returner and often friends from the hometown or high school. The flatmates of the stay-awayer group are more in a balance between coming from the home region and not coming from the home region.

The *close family of graduates* from all three groups predominantly still lives in the home region. Also, the *siblings* of the remainder and returner groups predominantly still live in the home region and also in other parts of Friesland or Groningen and Drenthe. For the stay-awayer group applies that their siblings mostly live in the Randstad area or other parts of the three Northern provinces but not so much anymore in the home region. *Important persons such as friends live* for the remainder and returner group mainly in the home region or in other parts of Friesland and the other two Northern provinces. For the stay-awayer group, important friends or others live in the Randstad, study city of Groningen or Leeuwarden and home region. This is thus mixed but for a third of the stay-awayers applies that their home region was not mentioned as the place of residence of important others.

The *location of the current and previous jobs*, from graduation to the current job, are balanced for the remain and return group in the home region, other parts of Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe or work on project assignments which is regularly in these three Northern provinces but also in other parts of the country. Altogether, the focus lies on the home region and broader North for their jobs. For the stay-away group, the location of the job for the majority lies in the Randstad or in their study city Groningen or Leeuwarden. The *internships by the HBO graduates* were mainly done within the home region for the remaining group, in a balance between the home region and study city for the returning group and for the leaving groups all internships, if applicable, were done in the study city or in the vicinity of the study city.

For five out of eight graduates of the remain group and six out of eight from the return group apply that they have a *partner*. This partner predominantly comes from the home region and if not from other parts of Friesland. For the stay-away group this applies less, seven out of ten graduates have a partner and only three of them are coming from the home region or other parts of Friesland.

/// 4.2 Sense of place

This section covers the sense of place that the three residential (im)mobility groups hold for their home region and their away-place(s). This section will not dive into the role of sense of place in the current choice to remain, return or stay away and neither will it for the (im)mobility intentions of the graduates. How sense of place for the home region and away-places have influenced the current (im)mobility choice and (im)mobility intention can be found in sections 4.3 and 4.4.

It should be mentioned that the region South-East Friesland is mainly one which exists 'on paper'. The first couple of participants were asked about their sense of place with South-East Friesland. This confused them since they feel connected with the village and surrounding places where they grow up and maybe live, with Friesland as such or the North. However, within Friesland purely these five municipalities together are not strong region enough for participants to relate to. 'Home region' should thus be read as the relevant part within South-East Friesland for every individual graduate.

// 4.2.1 Place identity

Half of the remainers and returners identify with the village or town where they live. This applies to a few stay-awayers as well but for the majority, a place identity with the place they grew up is not present. This place identity with their village or town derives from a sense of community. Because they feel a part of the local community this also makes them identify with the specific village or town:

*Remainer Douwe: [...] yes, now I live in a neighbouring village but I really feel like a ***aar, yes.*

Returners and some stay-awayers have maintained this during their study period by frequently visiting, being active in local sports associations and thus maintaining their social life. This maintained their sense of community as will be described further in section 4.3.

However, most stay-awayers do not feel this sense of community because they have returned less and less during their study period. This makes that they also do not identify with their home town and region, there is little for them left to identify with:

Stay-awayer Lucas: What is so recognisable to the village where I grew up, to which I should identify myself? That is not there. No, it could have been any other village

Graduates who do not necessarily identify with their village or town of origin, often do identify themselves as 'Northerner', 'Frisian', 'Country-side person' or 'Stellingwerper'. Respondents describe how this comes from speaking Frisian or Stellingwarfs and certain values or norms. This does not only

apply to the graduates who choose to keep living in South-East Friesland or to return, but also to most of the graduates who still stay away:

*Returner **Sven**: If I look at Friesland for instance, then I do feel, identify myself with that. So, modest, applauding with their hands in their pockets is what they say about Frisians sometimes.*

*Stay-awayer **Hidde**: I do feel myself often more Frisian than Dutch. Also still while I'm living in my study city now.*

When considering the region of South-East Friesland and place identity, it should be noted that none of the respondents identified with this region consisting of five municipalities. Additionally, a small group of stay-awayer did not identify with any of the before mentioned places or regions and relates this to their moving frequency in their childhood. They do identify with their away-place or with feeling Dutch.

// 4.2.2 Sense of natural/physical environment

Remainers and returners

A part of the graduates value the natural characteristics of the region and describe how this contributes to their sense of place for their home region. For some of the returners and remainers, it provides them with the necessary space to get calm after working days or other activities. These graduates are regularly visiting specific natural sites in the region. Remainer John described his appreciation for the natural environment in his home region by picking a personal photo (Figure 18) of the moorland in Bakkeveen which he describes as calm and spacious: *“And that is also what I really need maybe, next to the hectic and busyness that I have in me.”*



Figure 18 - Chosen picture of remainder John describing his sense of place

For others, it involves more the open landscape in general than a specific forest, peatland or meadow. This open landscape gives them the oft-mentioned feelings of freedom, spaciousness and calmness.

These values were also regularly compared to the situation in the city. This involves both the natural environment as well as an association with hastiness in cities and calmness in the home region:

*Remainer **Dylan**: Well and the freedom that you have [here] hé, not the hasted life like you have in a city where you see only beton. No, I'm rather in the nature.*

For a smaller part of remainers and returners, the natural and physical environment does not really play a strong role in their sense of place with the home region. They are more indifferent about it. Being asked about it, they explain that they do appreciate it in a latent way but that it does not have a big influence on the sense of place that they have for their home region or home town.

Stay-awayers

The sense of the natural environment lies mainly in their comparison between the natural environment they grew up in and their current places of residence; cities. They value the spaciousness, calmness and freedom in the landscape in the home region, which they have to a lesser extent in the cities they currently live in. When visiting the home region they appreciate this and describe memories of how they used to visit specific places regularly in their childhood or the view over the fields during their bike rides to school or work:

*Stay-awayer **Hidde**: Yes and it is mainly also the road towards there [seasonal job], you just had the surrounding environment with all the fields. That spaciousness and emptiness, that was just illustrative of the environment. That is something, when I am back in Fryslân, when I visit my parents, I appreciate seeing that. That is not really here [study city], here you just see buildings.*



Figure 19 - Chosen picture of Stay-awayer Daan describing his sense of place

Despite appreciating the characteristics of the natural environment in South-East Friesland, some graduates also describe how they appreciate these natural surroundings in other places as well. The fact that they appreciate the natural surroundings in their home region is related to still having family ties there or friends living there. The graduates describe that the natural surroundings that they have

grown up in, are something they long for every now and then. It requires them to escape from the city. However, such an environment can also be found in other parts of Friesland or the Netherlands:

Stay-awayer Daan: Yes, although, it is not so much the connection I have with this specific calm nature spot. It is more... You see if my parents would live in a different place and there would be a nice and calm nature area then you can find there what you are looking for, relaxation and so on.

// 4.2.3 Sense of community, belonging and home

When being asked about their sense of place for the home region, graduates often referred to their family and friends in explaining what attaches them to their place of living. Being near to family and friends will be discussed in sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 in relation to the current choice of residence and in section 4.4.2 for the intention. This section dives deeper into explaining the role of kin, friends and other persons in the sense of place with the home region.

Remainers and returners

Generally, the remainers and returners feel like there is a strong sense of community in their home region and feel a part of this. Especially for graduates who lived in, smaller, villages, this is present. For remainers in some larger towns, this is more present at the neighbourhood level. Next to feeling the presence of the sense of community, the group of remainers also has a positive feeling about this and values it. The majority of the remainers also contributes to this by volunteering at sports clubs, festivals or working as municipality councillor:

Remainer Lotte: I think it is very special how the people from the village have such a connection with the festival that is being organised here every year. To do things for each other, to do things together, one big group, with everybody 'de schouders eronder'. Getting out the utmost of it, to say it like that.

For returner Sven, the sense of community was actually the most important trait of a village and to a large extent constitutes his sense of place: *"Yes this shows for me, and I just heard you say [interviewer] 'what is it, what makes the connection with the place you are living in?'. For me, that is really the association life. And the involvement that such an association brings along, so that's why I choose this picture".*



Figure 20 - Chosen picture of Returner Sven describing his sense of place

The remainers and returners describe how they have a feeling of belonging here due to the people who are close to them, norms and values and speaking Frisian or dialect. Albeit all returners and remainers have a sense of belonging to their village or broader region, some also state that this feeling is not only reserved for their home region but applies or might apply also to other places. In other words; they feel like they belong in their home region but not exclusively there.

The final social component of sense of place is the sense of home. This is actually the component of sense of place to which everything boils down to for the remainers and returners. All the remainers and returners simply have a sense of feeling at home. They feel comfortable with the region or their town of growing up. To a large extent, this has to do with their social life taking place in the home region. The social life of the remainers was focused on the home region before, during and after their studies and makes them feel most at home there. While returners maintained their social life at home during their studies by frequently returning and staying active in various activities in their hometowns:

*Returner **Lieke**: Well, it is of course a familiar environment, where you have also always grown up and where I have now returned, so, that is at all familiar for me, of course. [...] I should not exaggerate it, but the Frisian language has something familiar*

However, it involves more than just the social life of the graduates. It involves also a feeling of familiarity with one's surroundings, appreciation of the natural environment, the sense of community, speaking the local language or dialect and believing that the contrary of feeling at home applies in other places. This makes that the remainder feels at home in their home region and therefore most fittingly describes the sense of place that graduates hold for their home region. Moreover, as for the sense of belonging this is not only reserved for their home region but it does definitely apply most to it:

*Remainer **Janine**: But also, you know everything here, name a street and I know it. Neighbourhoods you know, I know all schools here, I know all shops here. I know my way around. That is also a part of feeling at home, I think.*



Figure 21 - Chosen picture of Remainer Gurbe describing his sense of place

Remainer Gurbe chose a personal picture to describe his sense of place and his sense of feeling at home which contains feelings of spaciousness and the importance of his local social life: *“The village feeling, that is hard to express in a picture. But all the people, as I said, the people around me, the social part and still the space in the small space. I attach a lot of value to that.”*

The chosen picture of remainer Gurbe, figure 21, shows the friends of Gurbe and his grandfather shooting *carbide* as a new year’s celebration on their own land in his village. For Gurbe this picture shows that even within a village he still has the opportunity and space to enjoy his hobbies with his friends without bothering neighbours or others.

Stay-awayers

The majority of the graduates who kept living away acknowledge the existing sense of community in their hometowns. Some think back in a nostalgic way to it and compare being recognised in town to the rather anonymous life in the cities they live in now. For some of the stay-awayers, this sense of being a part of that community diminished throughout the years of being away. They feel less a part of this. For others, the sense of community was less present at an earlier stage already in their experience. This thus contributes less to their sense of place with the home region, such as for stay-awayer Lucas: *‘Well, it is institutionalised in a festival that is being organised here. But besides that, I have not experienced it as a very close village, no.’*

Compared to the graduates who remained and returned, the graduates who have stayed away from South-East Friesland feel a less strong sense of belonging to the region where they grew up. Half of these graduates distinctively say that they do not feel like they belong there and ascribe this to childhood experiences, fewer social connections, not speaking Frisian and moving frequencies.

Stay-awayer Ruben: I think a bit less [having a sense of belonging in South-East Friesland]. I do feel at home there but I see myself as broader than that region, so to say. So for me as a person, I think that I suit better at other places in that aspect. Just a bit more diverse, where people are a bit more outgoing. And the people who are staying there [South-East Friesland], they are a bit more in that culture.... There are people who leave and who stay. There is a bit of a stayers culture. That’s less for me

For the graduates who do indicate that they have a sense of belonging with their home region, the majority indicate that this is not only reserved for the home region. They for instance feel like they belong in the home region but only on their terms, for instance only if they can live in a house in the open, outside of the village with a lot of space around it. If not, they also feel a strong enough sense of belonging in their current place of residence. For others, they feel like they belong to a broader region such as the North. Their sense of belonging to the North is strong due to family ties and contributes to their wish to return. In this context, South-East Friesland might be considered for practical reasons rather than for their sense of belonging.

In line with their sense of belonging to the home region, also the sense of home is less present compared to the remainers and returners. The stay-awayers feel at home when visiting the region but most of them would not feel at home living there. As for the sense of belonging, this derives from comparable reasons such as a diminished friends base in the home region, not speaking Frisian or the moving frequency. Stay-awayers shared that there is little left for them in South-East Friesland. Their social life diminished during their study period due to unregular visiting and building up friends in their study city. Some stay-awayers share how they are unsure whether people in their villages will still see them as Frisian or whether maybe they feel *‘too good for Fryslân’* in an arrogant way (Hidde). What remains for some of the stay-awayers are their parents. For some of the graduates the association with their parents when considering the sense of home with their home region is so strong that they picked

a photo of their parents' house or a picture of their family at their parents' house to explain the sense of place with their home region. Their family is basically what still ties them to this region:

Stay-awayer Ilse: Yes, it is my family who lives there which really creates the connection that I have with it (home region). It is the place where my parents live, where I grew up. [...] There are fantastic, many nice things that you can do. Lots of nice nature, but for me, Friesland is my parents.

Nevertheless, there are also graduates who stayed away from their home region but still feel very much at home. They have the same sort of sense of familiarity as the remainers and returners, mainly due to regularly visiting their parents and friends and are still regularly involved in local activities.

// 4.2.4 Sense of place for the away-place (study city) and second away-place (second city)

In general, both returners and stay-awayers both have a positive association and sense of place with their away-place. The difference between these two groups is that most returners moved to their away-place with the notion of enjoying the study period and eventually moving back to their home region. This does not apply to the stay-awayers, the determination to return to the home region was less present compared to the returners. This has resulted in some staying to live in their study city. However other stay-awayers had a comparable determination like the returners. They did not want to return but already knew that they wanted to move on to the Randstad. They have thus built up a sense of place with two places.

Graduates who have returned to South-East Friesland generally speak positively about their study city and still like to visit it. When being asked to describe their sense of place for their study city they describe memories of experiences during their study life with their friends and the commotion with all sorts of events in the city. Their relation with the city now is that they still think back to it with great memories but they have moved on to a different life phase and so have many of their friends as well. A similar situation applies to stay-awayers who moved on to a different city after their graduation. They still feel a sense of home for their study city but because they, and many friends of their social network, moved away, their sense of place of the study city has changed. The social component in the sense of place has thus decreased.

Before moving to their study city, the returners all felt like they had to experience student life. However, some of the returners describe how they were regularly at 'home' during the weekend, meaning at their parents' place. For these graduates, the city has felt like a place where they were staying for a while and this is also how they identified themselves with this city. Their sense of place with their study city is thus mainly related to their life phase as described by returner Emma: "No, I have also never felt a Groninger or something like that. I never had that. More just like a student in Groningen.". The same can be said for stay-awayers who moved on to a different city after graduation.

Graduates who stayed in their study city have more of a sustained sense of home for their current place of residence. They have built up a social network during their student life and also maintained this after having graduated. This influences their sense of home:

Stay-awayer Ruben: You are active and meet many people, then you just get a super strong connection [with the city]. So, that all, actually, is due to the social identity that rises, that creates that you have more with the environment, so to say. I have just a very nice and strong feeling of coming home when I come here.

Moreover, the graduates feel very familiar with their surroundings and know the city well due to the time they have spent there. When in the city, they recognize and greet people they know. This sense of being familiar with places in the city and knowing one's way around can also be heard in the

graduate's description of their city having a 'village-like feeling' with the familiarity in the city, recognizing people in the streets or at specific places like a restaurant.

While nature in South-East Friesland contributes to a sense of place, the physical environment in their study city, such as landmarks create a sense of place with their study cities:

*Stay-awayer **Hidde**: When I look at the surroundings, I find it really beautiful that when I bike to my work, I see the Martini tower. And other nice old buildings and old architecture, I find that really beautiful and it also feels like home now. [...] I feel a little bit like a Stadjer. I don't speak Gronings but that is quite common in the city, so it's not strange. But I do feel like a Groninger yes.*

For their second away-place the mystique that they attached to it played a strong role in the period before and after moving there. The graduates felt a desire for novelties. The Randstad had a sort of feeling that they had to experience what was out there and not just for the labour market there:

*Stay-awayer **Josefien**: We are both from the North, there it is really great. But now is the right time to live in the Randstad, when you are young and have no children.*

After having moved there, the graduates have built-up varying relations with their place of residence. Some already lived there for a couple of years before the Covid-19 pandemic and build up a social network in their second away-place which contributes to this feeling. For other graduates who moved shortly before or during the pandemic to their second away-place, building up this attachment was difficult due to the few possibilities to interact. Identifying with their second away-place is therefore not so much present yet. Nevertheless, they do feel a growing sense of home now that the pandemic is having less of a grip on their lives. The short period of residence in their second away-place made it difficult to discuss this subject for some interviews.

/// 4.3 Current residential (im)mobility choice

This section will dive into the current residential (im)mobility choice of the graduates in the life phase shortly after graduation and at the start of their working careers. It will delve into the drivers, considerations, factors and constraints of the choice to remain, return or stay away. The factors described in the conceptual model will be followed to maintain a comprehensive order in the sequence of treating these factors.

// 4.3.1 Work

Work is an important aspect of the life phase shortly after graduation since it concerns a first 'real' job, as some respondents described it. However, the role of work in the residential (im)mobility behaviour is varying between the different (im)mobility groups. For almost all remainers and returners, work or labour market opportunities were not a primary reason for their choice to stay in or return to the home region. While for stay-awayers on the other hand, the most heard motive to stay away shortly after graduation was work-related. Mainly the availability of a job in the study city or labour market opportunities in the Randstad area after having studied in the North.

Other factors, which will be discussed in later sections, lead the remainers to want to stay in the home region or home town and from there the search for a job starts. Several remainers and returners share that within their field of work the career opportunities were greater in the Randstad area. Nevertheless, they have chosen to stay within the home region due to other preferences. Remainer Dylan shared how he had no desire to work in the city or in the West. Asked why not, he replied:

*Remainer **Dylan**: I think that is because my whole life I have grown up in this region. And then.... yes, you are a real country-side person. I can go to the city for a day trip, but after that day I quickly want to go back to the calm North.*

All of the returners have studied in the North, meaning Leeuwarden or Groningen and also lived there. At the moment of moving back, the majority of the graduates already held a job in their study city or on a project basis. In line with the remainers, other to-be-described motives have made the returners decide to return. The well-valued accessibility to larger cities and often their jobs allowed the returners to move back and maintain their job:

*Returner **Jesse**: We did not want to end up in the middle of nowhere. So somewhere with some amenities like a bakery [...] and preferably also a good connection to Groningen. Because in terms of employment opportunities in the North, this is the most interesting city for us.*

Although the remainers and returners do not mention work as an important motive for their immobility and preferred mobility choice, they do mention accessibility as an important enabler and are willing to drive for their job. Accessibility in this case refers to the accessibility by car which remainers and returners deem necessary in their rural home region. Next to that, also an increased acceptance of working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic contributes to the broadened search area for their job. Since they need to be less frequent at the office or at a client, the returners and remainers also consider jobs further away because they can work from home and need to travel less:

*Remainer **Feiko**: The head office is in the province of Utrecht. But because of the corona crisis, working from home has gotten very normal. So I can just log into my laptop from home.*

Worth mentioning is the role of the internship for higher vocational students in their career choice, especially amongst remainers. Remainers did their internships within the home region, at a commutable distance or at a project post within the North. Five out of the seven graduates who remained living in their home region did an internship and stayed working at their internship company afterwards. Although two of them have moved on to other companies, they did not even have to consider looking for a job further away from their home region:

*Remainer **Gurbe**: “[...] I had good contacts at the company where I did my third-year internship, which is now my boss, he called me and asked if we could have coffee sometime because he knew that I was almost finished with my school. So, actually, before I graduated, I already knew where I would work afterwards. I did not have to search for a job. So that was actually not a reason to leave.*

For stay-awayers, work is one of the most important motives in their current unpreferred mobility choice to stay away. Some stay-awayers were keeping a move to the Randstad in their mind for a longer period already in order to pursue their dream job. For these stay-awayers such jobs can not be found in the North and not at all in the home region:

*Stay-awayer **Daan**: Yeah, the most important is that my work is here. And, I think that is the main reason why I have moved here [...]. I was looking for work in a large firm. Head offices of firms are predominantly in the Randstad, within the financial sector more in Amsterdam. Ministries, that is not really a head office of a firm but they are in The Hague. Then you are just gonna look here.*

One graduate shared that she would have liked to find a job in the home region but found it difficult to find interesting companies and vacancies: *“I have very little sight at what the middle and small enterprises are doing here in Friesland”* (Ireen). But even if work can be found in the North, some stay-awayers do not want to commute and prefer to keep living close to their work. A commute that remainers and returners accept is not something with which these stay-awayers go along with. The benefits of living in the home region are not large enough as we will see in the next sections.

Two of the stay-awayers considered returning to the home region after their graduation but were withheld due to the perception of unavailability of adequate jobs and another via a job offer that followed after an internship:

Stay-awayer Dirk: I did consider that for sure [to return]. And if it would have gone differently with my job, then I would have sought a job in Friesland. But well, here they know me, you build up a network and you keep sticking around.

// 4.3.2 Friends & social hobbies

The social life of graduates is influencing the (im)mobility choice of graduates in varying ways. The social life of the different (im)mobility groups has moved in different directions during their study period. The remainers and returners have sustained their group of friends and social life in the home region. For the remainers, this never changed but the returners have also built up friends in their study city. The returners maintained their social life in the home region by regularly returning at the weekends and staying active in the sports associations. For both remainers and returners the fact that their main group of friends lives in the same area was one of the reasons mainly stated to choose this region after graduation:

Remainer Lotte: “[...] and I have a very large social life here. We [graduate and partner] attach a lot of value to that. So that is why we have decided to keep living here

Returner Finn: But I knew anyway that I wanted to return and that was due to that everything I had built up, is in that region. Well yeah, just the friends and everything you have. Just, the football club, the social environment

These graduates also describe how they are all involved in several hobbies such as sports or working on motorbikes, often with their friends. These hobbies could be performed elsewhere, but the social component in these hobbies seems more important for these graduates than the hobby itself:

Remainer Douwe: It is really, the sport, volunteering and all that comes with it and my friends. Those are the three points that have made me decide to really want to stay here.

Friends that the returners had built up in their study city did not play a large role in the choice to return since those friends were often also moving away. On the other hand, youth friends who studied in other cities also started to return to the home region for some respondents which contributed to their choice to return as well. The social component in the study city thus diminished while the social aspect in the home region stayed the same or even grew with the return of some friends.

This is different for the stay-awayers. Most of the stay-awayers indicate that the closeness with their friends from their home region has become less due to living away and visiting less frequently. For some, only a couple of friends are left which they occasionally meet:

Stay-awayer Lucas: Some people have their work there [South-East Friesland], family and a really close group of friends. I don't have any of that. I still have a few friends, although the closeness of this friendship is naturally diminishing when you move. So for me, those were not reasons to return.

Friends in the home region have thus not contributed to a desire to return or have made this for some even less likely. The social life of stay-awayers has shifted more towards the study city during their study. This results in a close group of friends based in the study group for some stay-awayers who did not have this notion of needing to return or move on to a different city per sé. These stay-awayers value their social life in their away-place and this has influenced their decision to stay there:

Stay-awayer Ilse: I can remember that I was sometimes searching [for jobs] in the area of my parents. Then something [vacancy] would appear of which I thought, hé! quite interesting. But it is in Friesland and so far away from my friends and everybody that I know so well now.

For stay-awayers who moved on from their Northern study city to the Randstad, friends did not play a role since they had not lived there before. A small group of stay-awayers still has an active social life in the home region. This is mainly due to frequent returns during the study period and staying active in their sporting activities in the associations.

// 4.3.3 Family

For the returners family is one of the most important considerations in their preferred mobility choice shortly after graduation. It is mentioned by all but one of the eight interviewed respondents as a reason to return to the home region. For the remainers, family is also an important factor in their choice to stay in the home region but not as prominently mentioned, half of the remainers mention it, compared to the returners. This might be explained by the fact that the remainder group never left the home region to live elsewhere. This also implies that they have not lived away from their families. While some remainers are actively thinking about being close to their family as described above, others seem to take this more as a given and do not actively think about it. An unexpected matter within the family circle reminds them of the value of being close to family members:

Remainer Gurbe: That is more into private spheres than, you see, sometimes matters occur of which you think, it is nice to be close by now. Then you think about it once more, do you always want to be far away?

Returners seem to think more consciously about it, they have actually lived away from their family but value their family ties. They knew that they wanted to return there eventually. This varies from living closer to parents and siblings in order to be able to drop by every now and then to really living in the same village and visiting more frequently. Since many returners had a partner from the home region or other parts of Friesland at the moment of returning, the role of family is reinforced with the partner's family involved as well.

While some of the flat- or study mates of the returners moved to the Randstad after living in Groningen or Leeuwarden, some returners explicitly mentioned that they already decided during their study that they did not want to pursue that because of, amongst others, family:

Returner Finn: But eventually with everything that you have, some have the ambition to go to the Randstad. That is great because there are a lot more chances and if you really want to take those, that is great, but you leave a lot behind. And leaving that behind, I did not want to do that

Asked what entailed 'leaving that behind', he explained: "My family, friends and football".

For stay-awayers motives like work clearly prevailed. Family as a driver is less prominent. In comparison to returners, they did want to move to the Randstad or stay in their study city. The stay-awayers did not see this as leaving behind since they are still able to visit regularly. The ability to visit their family did influence their choice of residence in a way that some stay-awayers preferred places with good accessibility to the North:

Stay-awayer Daan: [...] what applies to Utrecht is that the North, where my parents still live, is just relatively well accessible. You can go under two hours to Groningen and the village I grew up in is also, well, manageable if you go to Meppel and continue by car. If you would live a bit further away, Rotterdam or The Hague. That is just again a bit further

For Daan and other stay-awayers thus applies that they do not feel the need to live in the same or next village as their family. However, despite other motives prevailing and leading to their choice to live in the Randstad, they do want to be able to visit family easily. This makes them opt for a city which is better accessible to South-East Friesland like Utrecht or Amsterdam instead of Rotterdam.

Stay-awayers who still live in the North mention that their travel time is manageable or do not mention it at all. This might be due to the relatively little travel time which makes them still feel like living quite nearby

// 4.3.4 Partner

The way graduates have let their (im)mobility choice be influenced by their partners is mainly in a reinforcing way since their partner had the same preference. Only one remainder had a partner at the moment shortly after graduation, this remainder shared how her partner was working in the home region and had a social life there as well, just like herself. For remainers, the role of partners was thus limited but for returners, this was more present. Six out of eight returners had a partner from the home region or other parts of Friesland shortly after graduation. The majority of these partners were still living in the home region while the graduate was living in the study city. Returners shared that their partners wanted to return as well or were planning to stay if they had never left the home region. This reinforced their choice to return. For one returner the partner had a decisive role in the choice to return to South-East Friesland:

Returner Jesse: Well, for my girlfriend mainly, she has been raised Frisian. She wanted to go back to an area where Frisian is being spoken. For me, that is of lesser importance. I could have just as well found a house in Drenthe, so to speak

In line with the returners, most partners of the stay-awayers had the same preference as the stay-awayer which was for their study city or to move on to the Randstad. Again, this reinforced their choice to stay away. For one stay-awayer the partner had a different preference than herself. She considered returning to the home region in the years after she had started working but, amongst others, the preferences of her partner hindered this:

Stay-awayer Nina: [...] it was not a feasible option with my relationship and where my dreams lay at that moment [in terms of work].

// 4.3.5 Housing (market) and amenities

The housing market is mainly mentioned by the returners as an important motive in their preferred mobility choice to return. Remainers and stay-awayers mention this less prominently. Some remainers share that they believe that the housing prices in other parts of the country are a lot higher, this could be an unconscious reason not to move or not consider to. Motives related to housing are only mentioned by a few stay-awayers by sharing that they prefer to stay in their current city because they hold a well-priced apartment:

Stay-awayer Lars: There have been two reasons [to stay in the study city], the affordability [of the current apartment]. This was a really affordable option. And location towards public transport

Although other motives seem to be more important for returners, the local housing market in South-East Friesland is mentioned by half of the respondents as a factor that contributed to their choice to return. This motive is most prominent within this group. This might be due to the fact that this group has been paying rent and is aware of such costs compared to the remainers. The local housing market was compared to the housing market in their study city and the Randstad. It is described as more affordable in South-East Friesland:

*Returner **Ruud**: Financially, it [houses] is also cheaper here compared to Leeuwarden and you have the connections to find a house*

Returners described how their network provided housing opportunities which influenced their return to the home region in such a way that it fast-forwarded the decision. The offer from relatives or friends to rent or buy a house at favourable rates made some returners choose to return at an earlier moment than expected. Moreover, some returners describe how they were explicitly looking for a house with more space or other characteristics compared to their house or apartment in their study city:

*Returner **Sven**: But at a certain moment you want to have your own spot, we did not have a garden. You do miss that at some point so you want your own place.*

When considering amenities, this is mainly an important factor for the stay-awayers and less for the remainers and returners. Remainers and returners mention it scarcely as an actual motive in their immobility and preferred mobility choice. More like a facilitating factor of supportive function in their choice to remain or return. The amenities at a local level are seen as sufficient and special amenities can be found in larger towns or cities. These are valued as well-accessible as we saw earlier in section 4.3.1 about *Work*. However, a car is required since public transport is not living up to the standards of the remainers and returners in all areas of South-East Friesland.

For stay-awayers, amenities are not merely a facilitating factor but an important driver in their unpreferred mobility choice to stay away. They attach a lot of value to urban amenities. This involves the broad offer of shops nearby and the opening hours of restaurants. But also the cultural offer in terms of, for example, arts, theatres or cinemas:

*Stay-awayer **Lucas**: So, I could have stayed in Groningen, where the cultural offer is oké. But, compared to my current place of residence, quite poor. So that was also drawing me here actually, that here there is more to do in musea and concerts. Yes, you are more close to everything*

// 4.3.6 Sense of place – South-East Friesland (Home region) & Away-place (Study city and second city)

This section describes the role of sense of place which graduates hold for the region of growing up in their current (im)mobility choice to remain, return or stay away. Section 4.2 focused more on describing and discovering the actual sense of place that graduates hold for the region of growing up and their away-place(s).

Although the sense of place of their home region comprises multiple aspects, see section 4.2, the most important aspect that has influenced the (im)mobility choice of the graduates is the social component of having friends and family in their town or village of growing up. This creates a feeling of familiarity and a sense of belonging for the remainers and returners. For the stay-awayers, the social component is less present or gone which creates a less strong sense of place with the South-East Friesland. Albeit having discussed the role of friends and family in previous sections it is relevant to also look at it from a sense of place perspective. Namely, the local presence of their family and social network gives them a comfortable feeling and a sense of home:

*Returner **Ruud**: Yes, I feel connected to the area. You know the area, you know the places, you know the people, you know the stories*

*Returner **Anna**: Well, I think that because I am feeling more at home here is the most important reason [to return].*

Remainers and returners describe their sense of place as a build-up of positive experiences which makes them feel connected to this area. These graduates have maintained their sense of place during their study period by maintaining their social relationships. We saw in section 4.2 that this is what returners described as home, which to a large extent stems from the social surroundings in the home area. These returners described that the sense of place with the home region was an important reason to return since it is the place where they feel most at home at this phase in life. Both remainers and returners compare their sense of place for the home region to cities. It seems to help them in expressing their sense of place for the home region and how it has influenced their choice to remain in or return to the home region:

*Remainer **Dylan**: As Northerner and as community you have of course all sorts of people who, well, think and act in the same way. I think that a prime example is the guys from the football club, they are all sort of the same people. In the way they talk and act, down to earth. Yes, then you feel identified with a region. I think that, so to say, you would put these guys in a different club in Amsterdam, it would immediately be a mismatch*

On top of the other components of sense of place, the natural environment is mentioned by a smaller group of remainers and returners in their immobility and preferred mobility choice. Primarily the sense of home, belonging or community seems to have influenced their choice to remain and return. To a lesser degree, the natural environment also contributes to their choice. Remainers and returners feel connected with the landscape of the region and find it varying. The 'spaciousness' and 'calmness' that these graduates find in specific natural sites or landscape contributes to their choice:

*Returner **Jesse**: We wanted to get out of the city and go to a village [...]. Yes, that wish really emerged from that wish for more rest and space.*

While the sense of place for the home region played a prominent role in the immobility and preferred mobility choice of the remainers and returners, for stay-awayers this was hardly the case. Although the various stay-awayers hold a sense of place for the home region, either stronger or less strong, it has hardly or not played a role for most graduates. Other motives and factors were simply more important. Being asked which role the sense of place with the home region played in their choice to stay away after graduation, stay-awayers shared that they did not feel so much connected with their home region due to a diminished friends base. The sense of place did thus not create a reason for the stay-awayers to return to the home region. Nevertheless, some stay-awayers still have a relatively strong sense of place for their home region. But in this life phase it does not make stay-awayers want to return given other priorities:

*Stay-awayer **Hidde**: Actually not. I think that when I am for example 50 and I work somewhere entirely else then I would maybe buy an old farm with some land. But now it is just more important for me to quickly get to work and that sense of place with the home region was really subordinate.*

For the stay-awayers who still live in Leeuwarden, the place identity with Friesland is more applicable than with South-East Friesland of the town of upbringing. They do not see a difference between living in their home region or in their study city since they still live in Friesland. The sense of place for Friesland has contributed to them staying in the province but factors like urban amenities make them prefer to live in the city and not necessarily want to return to South-East Friesland. Particularly not because they do not feel a stronger sense of place with their home region.

On top of that, they have started to develop also a sense of place with their away-place, with their study city. The role of the sense of place in their preferred and unpreferred mobility choice is very different for returners and stay-awayers. For returners, it has influenced the decision to return in such

a way that it enhanced the desire to wish to return to the home region. Returners state that their experiences while going out in Leeuwarden or Groningen and other nostalgic memories of their student life are mainly contributing to their sense of place for these places. However, friends moved away and their relationship with the city changed. The returners kept describing their town of upbringing or the broader region as home and knew they would return eventually. This created a notion of feeling like a 'Groninger student' as we saw in section 4.2. The sense of place with the away-place was thus very much connected to the lifestyle and period of being a student. Since this changed, most returners also felt like their connection with the city changed and it was time to move.

Feeling at home and comfortable due to knowing places is the most important aspect of sense of place that has influenced the choice to keep living in the study city for the stay-awayers. In a way, this comes from the social network that they have built up but also familiarity with public places which makes the graduate get the feeling of a city 'like a sort of village' (Stay-awayer Nina). Unlike the returners, the stay-awayers did not have the determined intention already during their study to return. This seems to have developed a different relationship with their away-place. Some stay-awayers started to really see it as their home. For the stay-awayers who moved on from their study city such a sense of home did not really develop. The sense of place for their study city did not play a big role since stay-awayers were already keeping into account for a longer period to move to the Randstad or other motives prevailed to move on:

Stay-awayer Daan: No, it did not [play a role]. And that is also because you move a lot. And yeah, for me at least applies, work is leading in that and the rest follows and maybe when you have a family that changes

Concerning the places they were moving to, the second away-place, the sense of place for these places was at the moment of moving or deciding to move not existent since these graduates had not lived there before. What does stand out is that the graduates who moved from the North to the Randstad felt a sort of desire for novelties which they expected to find there:

Stay-awayer Lucas: There [study city] was not so much to find for me anymore. I did have the choice to work there as well. I was hired for both positions, but eventually chose my current place of residence in the Randstad because I was searching for novelties

// 4.3.7 Consideration to live elsewhere & consideration to return

Most remainers and stay-awayers did not consider either living outside of the home region or consider to return to the home region. A larger group of returners considered living elsewhere but this was not very determined and a smaller group did strongly consider to keep living in their study city or moving on to the Randstad but did not pursue this in the end due to either housing market-related reasons or family situations:

Returner Emma: Yes, I always thought like in Utrecht or Amsterdam, there are thé jobs where I can earn a lot of money. But I have to say, I did an internship in the area of Amsterdam and during that time a family member got really sick [...] and I was not always there. Those are things that have bothered me a lot. And I do think that that plays a role in a way that I am thinking that I do not need to go there anymore

A smaller group of the returners did not at all consider living anywhere else due to believing that everything they had in their life was there. This is the same reason most remainers stated for not considering living anywhere else. They simply believe that everything in their life is located or happening in their home region:

Remainer Dylan: So yeah, you have everything, your friends, sports, work and your family

Next to feeling like everything they have in their life is in the home region, the graduates also do not have the feeling that living somewhere else could add something to their lives.

In line with the remainers and returners, the majority of the stay-awayers did not consider at all returning to their home region. The main motives in favour of their current place of residence have mainly led to not considering this. When asking whether the graduates had considered returning, most answers were describing the trait connected to their chosen place of residence, e.g. labour market opportunities or urban amenities, and then described the lack of it in the home region:

Stay-awayer Josefien: And that the work is also not there. The work that we do, is not in the North of the country

Nevertheless, two of the graduates from this group considered during the period after graduation to return to the home region due to their social contacts there and their experienced sense of place. Partner- and work-related motives hindered these graduates from actually returning.

/// 4.4 Intention to stay in or return to South-East Friesland

The residential (im)mobility intentions of the different graduate groups will be described and explained in this section. We thus change the perspective from the current (im)mobility choice in section 4.3 to the (im)mobility intention in this section. First, the actual intention of the different groups will be stated. After this, the theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen (1991) will be used to delve deeper into this intention. This theory studies the intention of people for a certain behaviour since this is ‘the most important immediate determinant of that action’ (Ajzen, 2005, p. 117). The behaviour of interest in this research is whether graduates **stay in the home region** for current remainers and returners and **return to the home region in the coming life phase** for current stay-awayers. The intention towards this behaviour is a multi-layered concept and consists of the attitude towards the behaviour, the subjective norm and the perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2005). Please refer to section 2.2 for further background on the theory of planned behaviour.

// 4.4.1 Residential (im)mobility intention

As described earlier, the graduates will enter a different life phase in the next ten years in which life events such as cohabitation, marriage, buying a house, having children and caring for parents can play a role in their residential (im)mobility intention.

Remainers

All remainers have the intention to keep living in the home region. This will be referred to as an *immobility intention*. The different factors that contribute to this intention will be described in the next section.

Returners

As for the remainers, also the returners predominantly have the intention to keep living in the home region for the next 10 years. Also, their intention will be referred to as *immobility intention*. Only one returner may leave the home region again but on the other hand, he also feels that nothing is pushing him out of the home region. In other words, his intention is less firm and can go either way. Where differing from the motives and backgrounds of the returners who do intend to stay, will be mentioned in the next section.

Stay-awayers and to-be-returners

The stay-awayers are more diverse in their residential (im)mobility intentions. Half of the ten participants do, at this moment, definitely not intend to return to South-East Friesland. Two of the

respondents do foresee a possibility of returning to South-East Friesland at some point in the next ten years but also consider other areas or their current place of residence. Their intention is less firm when considering returning to their home region, they share that it can go either way but lean more towards staying away. Both more firm and less firm intention to stay away will be referred to as *unpreferred mobility intention*.

Nevertheless, three of the participants do intend to return during this life phase. This will be referred to as *preferred mobility intention*. In order to distinguish the stay-awayers who do intend to return from the ones who don't intend to return, the stay-awayers who intend to return will be referred to as *to-be-returners* since their return is still left to be. The stay-awayers who do not intend to return in the coming life phase and the ones with a less firm intention remain to be called *stay-awayers*.

// 4.4.2 Attitude towards behaviour

The same categories that were used to analyse the current (im)mobility choice will also be used to describe the intention and the attitude towards the behaviour of interest. Except for the category of the partner, this will be discussed in the *subjective norm section*. Additionally, potential children are an important consideration in the (im)mobility intention for the next life phase. This factor will thus also be discussed in this section under the header 'Children'. All graduates were first asked what their (im)mobility intention is for the upcoming life phase and why. If this intention was not in favour of the home region it was eventually asked why the graduates did not have the intention to return (only stay-awayers had intentions not in favour of the home region).

Work

The positive attitude towards the behaviour of staying in the home region which contributes to the intention to do so is mainly coming from other factors than work for the remainers and returners. When mentioned it was actually more referred to as a facilitating factor for the intention and thus more related to the perceived behavioural control. What is worth mentioning is that a small group of remainers and returners would consider deviating from their quite determined intention to stay in the home region for a potential unique job opportunity in a different part of the country.

Stay-awayers without a positive attitude towards the behaviour of returning to the home region in the coming life phase share that the lack of labour market opportunities in the home region contributes to a large extent to this. They describe how the labour market opportunities are better in their away-place, in the broader Randstad area compared to South-East Friesland or at a commutable distance. They keep valuing this also in the coming life phase. Also for the group of stay-awayers who have a less firm intention, work is an important component in their intention and makes these graduates lean more towards their away-places since they can find fewer opportunities in South-East Friesland or in the North. Like stay-awayer Daan: "*Mainly due to work, as in that I can find that here [the Randstad]*"

The stay-awayers who do intend to return, the *to-be returners*, hold a more positive attitude towards this behaviour. Work is not such an important factor that contributes to this positive attitude compared to other factors in the coming sections. Work plays an important role but more in a way comparable to the remainers and returners; a facilitating way. This will be discussed in section 4.4 on perceived behavioural control.

Family

The presence of close family members is important for the remainers and returners. It is often mentioned as a contributing factor to their intention to keep living in their home region. Although parents are getting older, remainers and returners do not yet expect to need to take care of them and this was actually not contributing to their intention to keep living in the region. It concerns more being close to their family members and being able to quickly drop by in case necessary which contributes

to their positive attitude towards staying in the home region in the coming life phase. On top of that the returners mention more prominently the support that their family can provide them in raising children:

Returner Emma: I know that my mother really wants to be a grandmother and I don't want to take that away from her. And I also think that I will really need them a lot, I have no idea how it is to have children. But I expect it not to be the easiest thing to do and very time-consuming.

For the stay-awayers who do not intend to return, the proximity to family is of less importance. These graduates choose to stay in their away-places for other reasons but do find it important that they can relatively easily reach their family. Being near family is thus neither enhancing nor diminishing the more negative attitude towards the behaviour of returning to the home region. This was also described in their current unpreferred mobility choice and does not change in their intention in a different life phase.

The stay-awayers who have a less firm intention describe that their family is actually the most important factor that distinguishes their home region from other regions where they can also find the traits related to rural regions for upbringing children, housing opportunities or a greener environment. The presence and nearness of their family is what distinguishes their home region from other regions. Mainly the support in raising children and having the grandparents live close to their children is important in this sense and keeps the attitude towards the behaviour more neutral.

When looking at the to-be-returners who do intend to return in the coming life phase, the family is more of an important driver. Family is mentioned more prominently as contributing to their positive attitude towards the behaviour of returning in the coming life phase. They want to be closer to their family in this life phase since they see that their family grows older and because of the social aspect which they value. However, for a part of the to-be-returners this seems to be more active due to personal experiences compared to more latent for other stay-awayers who still visit their family more regularly:

To-be-returner Josefien: [...] I worked here a while back for five years and I did think then, five years ago I was a lot younger. My grandparents are now really old. I have seen that. They were in the hospital for the last couple of years. That is all just really far away and I do find that a shame

Friends and social hobbies

The social life of all (im)mobility groups plays an important role in their attitude towards the behaviour and therewith in their (im)mobility intention for the coming life phase. However, since the social life of graduates is located at different places, the social life also influences their attitude towards staying or returning in different ways. The social life of remainers and returners mainly evolves in their home region. Whilst the social life for most of the stay-awayers is now based in their away-place. We already found out that a part of the stay-awayers has quite a diminished friend base in their home region. It is actually this group of stay-awayers who holds a negative attitude towards the behaviour of returning.

For remainers and returners, the importance of their social life between their current immobility and preferred mobility choice and their immobility intention does not differ. After all, it was one of the most important reasons to return for returners and for remainers their friends base is strongly locally rooted since they never left elsewhere. The returners and remainers describe that if their current social life with their friends and hobbies will stay the way it is now, it will make them stay in the home region:

Remainer Lotte: Because now we are experiencing it as nice here and there are quite a lot of friends who also want to stay here. You know, if we will keep having a good time here, if that connection in ten years is still that strong, then we will not leave.

The feeling of 'having everything' in the home region was mentioned as a reason for the current preferred mobility choice to return but also for the intention to stay. Partially 'having everything' relates to their social life in the home region for these returners. This also applies to the one returner who has a less firm intention to stay. A large group of his youth friends lives in his place of residence, this is something that he expects not to change and makes him lean toward staying:

*Returner **Sven**: Imagine, because I think that the largest part did HBO or university, that all of them went to Groningen, then I would not have returned I think. And that still applies now, if nobody of our group of friends from back in the days would live here, that would make a difference for me I think.*

Most stay-awayers have a diminished friends base in the home region and built up a more active social life in their away-place during their studies and the years working afterwards. Stay-awayers describe how the group of friends in their away-place is not something they would easily leave behind as this is something they cherish. They know that in a new place they would have to build that up again:

*Stay-awayer **Ilse**: But I am not going above Amersfoort, to be honest. [...] Well, because I feel like, I think that my life is not going to be there, but you don't know, it is more like that.*

Next to that, the stay-awayers with a less firm intention are now starting to build up a social life in their second away-places and appreciate this. While on the other hand, their social life in the home region is not so strong anymore. This contributes to them tending to stay in the away-place, they value what they are building up now. They don't want to move away from it easily and also don't have directly a social life in the home region pulling them back.

The to-be-returners, who do intend to return, do not have to build up their social life again and have therefore a more positive attitude towards the behaviour. They maintained their social life in the home region. Their friends and hobbies play an important role in their intention to return in the coming life phase. All to-be-returners have a very or relatively active social life in the home region which contributes to their positive attitude towards the behaviour. This mainly involves friends who kept living in the home region but also youth friends who also live away and consider returning:

*To-be-returner **Josefien**: We have friends who are also considering going back to Friesland. And if we live there with 3, 4, 5 friends or befriended couples then that is really nice.*

Children

The consideration of having children differed among the graduates as some are already in a relationship for a longer period and others are single. Potentially having children influences the intention of the remainers and returners to stay in a positive way. They think back to their own childhood in a positive way and want to give such a childhood to their own children. Remainers and returners describe how they have felt freedom in their villages while playing outside. They would also be comfortable with letting their children go around in the village compared to other places such as cities. Cities are described by some of the remainers and returners as unsuitable places for children to grow up. They believe that there are not enough opportunities to play outside in the green and value that they could let their potential kids bike through the village alone, something they believe is less safe in the city. Although most remainers and returners are not yet in a position to decide whether they will actually have children, they see many favourable conditions in their current place of residence that would facilitate that decision. Conditions such as having family nearby to support them, having the right amenities nearby and a green and safe space to grow up in which is comparable to their own childhood contribute to their positive attitude towards the behaviour. Some of the returners have already considered this in the back of their head when buying their house in South-East Friesland:

Returner Jesse: And well, we have consciously chosen a village with some amenities. In case there will be potential children, for some small shopping or dropping off the kids to school you do not have to take the car to a different village but that it is just all nearby.

Also for the one returner who has a less firm immobility intention, potential children would make him opt for a village due to more freedom of movement for children in a village. Depending on the preferences of a potential future partner, children could be a driver to stay in the home region:

Returner Sven: And with children, I think that a village like my hometown is a nice environment to grow up in. So it could indeed be a very good reason to actually stay. At least, when I look at my own childhood, I think like, I could not have had it elsewhere much better. It is very subjective of course. But, that is the way I feel about it. So, that could definitely be a reason to actually stay.

In line with the remainers and returners, the to-be-returners state that having children plays a comparable positive role in their attitude towards the behaviour of returning. The to-be-returners share that it is an important factor in eventually returning to the home region. In line with remainers and returners, the to-be-returners want to provide their future children with a good youth in the way they had themselves. They believe their home region can provide this and compare it to the away-place they live in now:

To-be-returner Dirk: Well, because here, you never have full control over that, but the chance of friends with a bad influence is larger here. That does not necessarily need to be so, [...]. But you know in my hometown I don't feel like that. There you have the three R's, rest, stability [regelmatigheid] and purity [reinheid]. And here you don't. Poeh, no, I would not want to raise my children here. No, nicely in a village. That is good for them.

For the stay-awayers who do not intend to return and who have a less firm intention, two out of seven are not planning to have children. For these two stay-awayers having children does thus not have an effect on the attitude towards the behaviour. The stay-awayers who do consider having children, prefer to live in a village or residential neighbourhood in that life phase. The stay-awayers value aspects of living in a village from their own childhood such as some social control and spaciousness of living. However, for them, this is not in South-East Friesland. A future place of living with traits of a village is preferably close to their current away-place or could also be close to the region of origin of their partner. This is mainly due to other factors such as proximity to work, a built-up social life elsewhere and little connection left with the home region. The support of family in raising children is more valued by the stay-awayers with a less firm intention. It is what sets them to some extent apart from the stay-awayers with no intention to return. Parents and siblings could then support them in the upbringing of their children. However, this is not a decisive enough factor for the stay-awayers with a less firm intention that they hold a positive attitude towards the behaviour.

Housing (market) and amenities

Housing and amenity motives were not prominently mentioned as the most important factors in the attitude towards the behaviour. The factor of housing and amenities were mainly mentioned in relation to potential children by all (im)mobility groups, except for the stay-awayers who do not plan to have children. For them being near urban amenities remains an important driver in their intention to stay in their away-place and thus to a more negative attitude towards the behaviour of returning.

All returners already own a home and believe that their current house has enough space for potential children. Half of the remainers do not own a house yet and some of these remainers describe how the lower housing prices in their home region make the trigger to move to a city, which was already low, even less likely. The to-be-returners mention the amenities in relation to potentially having children.

They deem this sufficient for potentially having children, all the desired facilities are available which contributes to their positive attitude towards the behaviour.

In line with the remainers, returners and to-be-returners, the stay-awayers who do not intend to return but do consider having children share that the future village they would live in requires the necessary amenities in order to bring up a child. Most of these stay-awayers also believe that such amenities are available in villages in the home region but due to other factors, they do not have a positive attitude towards returning.

Furthermore, the level of amenities and housing market were discussed more explicitly in relation to the questions concerning *Perceived behavioural control* during the interview and will thus also be covered in that section (4.4.4).

Sense of place – South-East Friesland & Away-place

Section 4.2 described how particularly the remainers, returners and a small group of current stay-awayers, the to-be-returners, have a strong sense of place for their home region. The experienced sense of place of remainers and returners contributes to their intention to stay for the future life phase in a comparable, positive way as in their current immobility and preferred mobility choice to remain living in the home region. Remainers and returners describe that they do not expect this to change and that mainly their social surroundings contribute to this sense of place in the future. Their group of close friends and family mainly drives the sense of place that they feel with their home region in relation to their positive attitude towards the behaviour of staying. This will keep making them feel at home. For a smaller part of the remainers and returners, the role of sense of place becomes actually more important now in their intention compared to their current immobility and preferred mobility choice. They appreciate what they have in their hometown and would think twice when they would have to give that up:

Remainer Anouk: And now that a few years have passed, you have really built something up here. Then I really based my choice on work and now I would do that less. Work is still a factor that plays a role but if I could have a really nice job somewhere now, I don't think immediately I am going to do it. Because for such there is too much here now.

For the to-be-returners, the sense of place for their home region is stronger compared to stay-awayers and also plays a more prominent role in their residential (im)mobility intention. They still have an active social life in their home region and are still involved in clubs or associations in their home town, as described in section 4.2. Whilst in the current unpreferred mobility choice, work or the desire for novelties prevailed compared to the sense of place for the home region. For the preferred mobility intention, the sense of place becomes more important. The to-be-returners see their next place of residence as more long-term, as a more definite one. Given this, they find it important to live somewhere where they feel most connected to:

To-be-returner Dirk: Because you see, I know others with which I have gone to elementary school and they do not have that sense of place with my hometown. They never went to a sports club or something like that. But I do have that very strongly. So, that definitely is a factor in my intention. I think it is very humanlike that you are settling yourself somewhere where you feel at home.

Except for the to-be-returners, most current stay-awayers have a less strong sense of place with the home region. This relates to their attitude towards the behaviour in a sometimes opposite way as the other (im)mobility groups. The diminished or absence of a sense of place does not create a notion of needing to move 'home'. The stay-awayers do not feel a strong sense of community compared to to-be-returners and don't want to live in the home region, therefore. For some, their only connection to

the region is their parents at this moment. Moreover, it is not a given that their parents will keep living in the home region which might make the main component which ties them to the region be removed as well:

Stay-awayer Ireen: The main consideration would not be the actual town I grew up in but purely my parents who still live there. So, if my parents move somewhere else, I don't feel like moving back to my hometown anymore.

For other stay-awayers, the spaciousness, calmness and freedom in their home region is an important component in their sense of place with the home region which might one day make them reconsider their place of living. However, the graduates explain that these traits are not only reserved for South-East Friesland but can also be found elsewhere in the province or the North. It is therefore not a given that they would move back to their home region if they want to live in a more rural area.

The sense of place with the away-place does not play a role in their attitude towards the behaviour of the returners. The returners have generally enjoyed their stay in their study cities during their student life but the sense of place that they feel for their study city mainly relates to this period. Given the current and future life phase of the graduates, the sense of place of their study city does not influence their intention. For the single returner with a less firm intention applies that if he would want to move, his away-place is one of the first considerations due to his sense of place with this city:

Returner Sven: I don't really have an intention. But if I would want to go somewhere else, my away-place is one of the first places I search for in Funda.

For the stay-awayers who do not intend to return, the sense of place with the current away-place is especially important for the graduates who do not intend to have children. Their built-up sense makes them intend to stay in that particular city and not intend to return or rather not want to move to a different city:

Stay-awayer Hidde: I think that it plays a stronger role [sense of place with away-place] than with the region I grew up in. Maybe it is a sort of recency-effect, that I have been here the last seven years and that this is now more important for me. [...] for example, next year I am going a few months abroad for a sort of research internship and also when I was abroad before, I really missed the city.

For the other stay-awayers who intend to have children the built-up sense of place with their current away-place is influencing their short-term intention to stay in their away-place. They appreciate the social network they have built up after Covid-19 and feel more and more at home. They, therefore, do not want to move on short term elsewhere. When potential children would enter the scene, the importance of the sense of place with the current away-place starts to become less important since we saw that a village or more spacious place of living is being preferred by these graduates in this life phase. Albeit the social component of sense of place and preferring to be near to this remains.

Considering the to-be-returners, the sense of place with their away-place is positive but something they would easily give up when returning to their home region. It is thus not influencing their decision that much or in a way that it does not make them doubt their intention:

To-be-returner Nina: Yes, I don't know, it is a bit like, the Utrechtse is nice, but it is not like you can always find me in the inner city or so. And yeah, I don't know, it is just like, I have had a very nice time here now, but I could also just easily let it go.

// 4.4.3 Subjective norm

The subjective norm in the model of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) concerns the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the respective behaviour. The groups which were mainly mentioned by participants to exert pressure on their intention are partners, close family like parents or siblings and friends.

The opinion or pressure exerted by the partner is the most important party influencing the intention of the graduates. Eleven out of sixteen remainers and returners have a partner. All but one of them have a partner from their home region or from a different part of Friesland. These graduates describe how their partners have the same intention or sometimes even a stronger intention to stay in the home region for the next ten years. However, one returner intends to stay in the region but also daydreams about living and working abroad. She describes how her partner sees this potential option:

Returner Emma: I do think that the part of going abroad appeals a bit less to him. And that it is more important for me than for him.

For the remainers and returners who do not have a partner, their potential partner could be a factor that makes them consider leaving their home region:

Returner Ruud: So, maybe I find a girlfriend on the other side of the country and I decide to move there.

For the to-be-returners, the knife cuts both ways. For one to-be-returner the partner has also grown up in the home region and is even more enthusiastic about returning compared to the interviewed graduate. For another to-be-returner, the partner comes from a different part of the country and this is one of the main factors that hold her back from living up to her intention of returning.

The stay-awayers describe how their partners do not want to live in a rural area and want to keep living in specifically their study city or any city in general. Although these graduates themselves do not intend to return, the strong opinion of their partners against living in a rural area like South-East Friesland is making a potential consideration to return even less likely. Such as the ex-partner of stay-awayer Ilse:

The last couple of years, I have heard many times 'Do we have to go again to Friesland? It can melt or freeze. But we prefer dead Frisians'. In that way you automatically create a sort of distance with the region

The literal quote of the partner of Ilse was: 'Het kan dooien en het kan vriezen maar het liefst heb ik dooie Friezen'. In Dutch, this sentence rhymes and can be used as a joke or provocation. However, in the case of the partner of Ilse, it also shows a sort of distance towards the region or a mocking tone about Frisians.

Parents and siblings were often mentioned to be happy that the remainers and returners are living close to them in the home region and this remains in the coming life phase. This is not a topic being discussed regularly since clearly remainers and returners do not intend to live elsewhere. The intention does not deviate from the family's preference and it seems that therefore it is not being discussed. Nevertheless, remainers and returners share that their family would support them if they wanted to live elsewhere and not discourage them by pressuring them to stay. Some of the graduates describe how they feel a bit stronger appreciation by their close family that they are living close to them due to personal circumstances:

Returner Lieke: And the parents of my boyfriend appreciate it perhaps a little more because both his siblings have a partner from abroad. So, then you have a bit of a different situation, of course. So, they are quite happy that we are still living relatively close, so to say.

The opinion of the family is taken into consideration by the remainers and returners. But their own motives in their intention to stay or potentially move out of the home region strongly outweigh the opinion of close family members. They find it their own decision and let this not or hardly be influenced by family.

The stay-awayers who do not intend to return share that their parents are mainly not exerting pressure to return to the intentions of their child. They understand their choice and are fine with it. If they do interfere it has little influence on the intentions of the graduate. In line with the remainers and returners, the stay-awayers see it as their own choice and not something to be influenced by their parents. For the to-be-returners, close family is actually more actively encouraging them to return by frequently mentioning it or by suggesting and offering how one to-be-returner could temporarily move back to live with his parents:

Stay-awayer Dirk: Well, my parents are already like ‘Why don’t you come back to live at home?’. You know, from a financial perspective.

When asking the remainers and returners what opinion important people in their lives had about their intention to stay, the opinions of friends were not so often mentioned. One remainder describes it as follows:

Remainer Feiko: There is only one person and that is my mum who actively encourages me to stay here in the region but besides that not really. I think that others, like a good mate of mine, would also not speak about it so easily, but maybe he does think the same.

Moreover, study friends of returners have sometimes not made the choice to return but to stay in the study city or move on to other cities. These friends do not always understand the current choice and intention of the returners. However, the returners seem not to be influenced by their opinions too much: *But when I see them pay 1500 euros of rent, I think like, ‘what are you doing to yourself?’ (Emma)*

Friends were not so much mentioned as a group who is vocal about the intention to not return by the stay-awayers. This might be due to their relatively small friend base left in the home region. For the to-be-returners, the opinions of friends were actually mentioned as positively contributing to their intention to return. Questions from friends in the home region about why one is not living in the home region are a confirmation that they are a part of the community. Especially if friends say that they ‘do belong here’ (Nina). It contributes to the sense of place and the intention to return.

// 4.4.4 Perceived behavioural control

The perceived behavioural control towards the behaviour of interest, intention to stay in or return to the home region, has been discussed with the respondents by focusing on the perceived behavioural control of finding a suitable house, a suitable job given the local labour market situation and the future liveability of South-East Friesland.

Suitable housing

The graduates who have the intention of staying or returning to the home region in the coming life phase are in general positive about their perceived behavioural control to find suitable housing. Especially the graduates who already have a house are more positive about this. This concerns all the returners and half of the remainers. For the shorter term, the graduates who already own a house in South-East Friesland are satisfied and still see good options to move to a different house in the future in case they would, for instance, require more space. Remainers and also to-be-returners who are single without an owned residence do foresee difficulties due to the current housing market in general, not only in South-East Friesland. However, one way or another, these graduates do expect to find

suitable housing. For instance, by the support of a potential partner or by local initiatives to revive the local housing market. For the time being, buying a house alone is a challenge for graduates who are on their own. One to-be-returner describes his alternative options:

To-be-returner Dirk: Yes, I could rent something, not in the town I grew up in, I think. Then it would be Drachten, I think. But I do feel like, I have already moved a couple of times and if I am going to move again, then it is going to be a bought residence. [...] Or shortly move back to the nest, to mum and dad. Safe a lot and buy a house like that, I also don't know otherwise.

Despite the perceived control to eventually find a place of residence, graduates share quite some critiques about the role of local governments in the current housing situation in South-East Friesland. Some share that the housing market in South-East Friesland might even make them or other youngsters consider living in neighbouring municipalities outside of the home region:

Remainer John: Norg is for instance really a nice village. If I can not find anything in my village, then I would want to live there. The nature, the freedom is also there and the social part is as well. And in these villages here that is sometimes difficult, that they do not invest more in that. To try to keep the youth here. Because they want to be here, but there are no free building lots. Yes, there is now one project but it takes many years to get there houses already. While the youth wants to, the municipality thinks it is a small village and we will invest in Gorredijk, a bit of a bigger place. They forget in that sense the smaller villages sometimes.

As for the remainers and returners, also the stay-awayers and the to-be-returners feel the difficulty of the housing market now and in the coming period. Regardless of whether this is in their away-place or in the home region. However, generally, they perceive their ability to find a suitable home in South-East Friesland better compared to their current away-place or the area they would like to live in, such as the Randstad. The stay-awayers and to-be returners share that they earn enough to be able to afford a residence in the home region and some also share that there are enough new houses coming available:

To-be-returner Josefien: There we can of course buy more for the money that we have. [...] Yes, a lot of new building projects [nieuwbouw] as well. I think that is fine.

Work

The remainers and returners did not actively mention work as a motive for their intention to stay. Nevertheless, when explicitly being asked about their perceived chances in the labour market in South-East Friesland or at a commutable distance for the next 10 years, the remainers and returners are positive about this. Especially given the broader commutable context of the North. Purely South-East Friesland is expected to provide a limited offer for the graduates and their future careers. In a comparable way, as we saw for their current immobility and preferred mobility choice, the broader Northern labour market allows the remainers and returners to live in their home region and find a suitable job in the larger cities of the North. Some returners shared that despite perhaps not having as interesting opportunities as in the Randstad, they believe that there are sufficient opportunities for them for the upcoming period in the broader North:

Returner Jesse: I am working in the construction and real estate sector. There is a lot of demand for work there. So, for sure under the current economic circumstances, I do not foresee any problems if I would want to find another job. It is not at a level like the Randstad but there is more than sufficient work. But that is not in the village I live now, but there is a lot of work just within half an hour's drive.

Next to the positive perception of future employment chances, the possibility to work from home is positively contributing to their perception to find a suitable job in the coming life phase. The remainers

and returners feel like this broadens their employment possibilities for the future. Additionally, one returner described how she is currently still very ambitious and willing to travel further for her job but could imagine that this might change in the coming life phase. The local labour market is then locally less appealing but other factors, like children, make her accept this.

The stay-awayers perceive the future employment opportunities in South-East Friesland as unsatisfactory. They believe that in this area there are no or hardly any suitable jobs for them in the coming life phase. Whilst some of the other stay-awayers do believe that there could be interesting positions in larger cities in the North, the potential commute is something that does not attract them:

*Stay-awayer **Daan**: I think that the employment chances for what I am looking for, that is just really limited. So, young, highly educated in the financial sector, that is just very limitedly available there.*

This is different for the to-be-returners, they see more options to live in the home region and work in the broader North. Or to live in the home region and work several days a week in the Randstad and the other days from home. However, at this very moment, they do not see the right jobs available in their home region or in the North. Although they already would prefer to move back, their current job in their away-place is something they value a lot. Currently, they are not willing to give that up since they believe a comparable job is not yet available in the North. However, in the coming life phase when other motives like children also come to play a role this is likely to change. To-be-returners shared that, for instance, they would consider comparable work in a different sector in order to be able to live in the home region. In that case, work might become less important in future residential considerations, which enhances their perceived control in finding a suitable job:

*To-be-returner **Josefien**: And maybe, at one point, I would like a bit more quiet work and then I could see myself at a governmental institution. [...] At a large municipality or at the province or at an energy company. A large governmental institution, that seems nice to me. But not now, I find that just less varying and for my partner applies the same.*

Liveability

Liveability mainly focuses on the level of amenities in the home region but also on the viability of associations, and broader willingness to volunteer or organise activities if the graduates perceive this as a part of the liveability in their home region.

The remainers and returners who have currently chosen to remain in their home region foresee that the liveability in terms of amenities will stay at an acceptable level for the places they are living in. The remainers and returners do compare it to other smaller villages and share that they would not want to live in such a village without any amenities. This would require them to travel by car for every amenity which is something they do not want. This is not something that the graduates foresee happening in their current places of residence but they do expect that shops and more commercial amenities might deteriorate. However, not beyond a critical level. In other words, a school or supermarket is expected to remain by these graduates. The remainers and returners believe that one way or another, the sobering of some amenities up to a certain level will not make the region that unattractive for them to not live there anymore:

*Remainer **Gurbe**: And I think that in the coming years it will come less. There are just not enough people and it will be scaled down. It is as logical as it can be. But it does have consequences for the village core and liveability. [...] No, as I said, it will manage itself, it will solve itself. There is always a way to make it work.*

If such a lower critical level of amenities were not to remain, this might make some graduates consider larger towns with more amenities. While expecting a basic level of amenities to remain in their villages,

some specific amenities are not present in the villages of most respondents. However, these amenities, such as a construction shop, can be found at the larger cores in the region and this is expected to remain. Together with the willingness to travel, the remainers do not see this as problematic.

A small number of mainly returners are worried about the liveability in villages in terms of the continuity of sports clubs or associations. They see clubs and associations in surrounding villages disappear and perceive this as something which threatens the liveability of villages in South-East Friesland:

*Returner **Sven**: If you look at liveability, then I do worry about one thing. That is sport. Mainly the development that you see now in the number of members at associations. You see that it is really running back at, for instance, Sunday football. So, I do worry about that because I feel that that is such an important part of the liveability in such a village.*

The stay-awayers perceive the liveability in terms of the level of amenities in the villages as decreasing and more focusing on the larger places in the home region. However, this is still seen as sufficient by most of the stay-awayers in case they would want to return. Only a few stay-awayers mention that even if they would want to return, the level of amenities is something that holds them back from doing so.

Such a judgement of the amenities does not account for the to-be-returners. They perceive the liveability in terms of amenities in a comparable way as the returners and remainers for the coming life stage, a critical level will remain. Their intended places of living in the home region are places with currently a basic level of amenities, which the graduates believe will remain. This is perceived as more than sufficient to support their needs in the coming life stage:

*To-be-returner **Dirk**: I think that the two schools, so a Christian one and a public one, will remain but that eventually, it will become one school. Yes, because the classes are getting smaller. So, I think that in the end, that will happen but that there is still an elementary school. Yes and otherwise to Drachten, which is also nearby. A supermarket, which is doing quite well I think, that will also stay.*

//// 5. ANALYSIS

Chapter four aimed to summarize the data of the interviews and to let the respondents 'speak', so to say. This chapter presents an overview of the interpretation of the data by using the theoretical framework. This inductive approach helps to compare the expectations of existing research and literature with the insights gained in this research and presents the outcome. The sequence of the sub-questions will be leading. Concludingly, an updated or revised conceptual model is presented.

/// 5.1 Sense of place

This section focuses on the sense of place of the graduates for the home region and away-places. It dives into how this sense of place is constituted and its background. It aims to answer the first sub-question: *"Which sense of place do the different (im)mobility groups hold for their home region and away-place(s) and how does this influence their current (im)mobility behaviour and (im)mobility intentions, and why?"*

The last part of the second sub-question focusing on the role of sense of place in the current (im)mobility behaviour and intentions is discussed in 5.2 and 5.3 and thus not discussed here.

Remainers... identify with being Frisian, their village or Northerner, value the natural environment but above all feel at home in their home region

The theoretical framework has shown that the sense of place starts to develop already during childhood (Gandy, 2007) and that ancestral ties to the region of upbringing are likely to strengthen the sense of place that graduates feel for their home region (Rérat, 2014b; Gotman, 1999). The findings of this research show this as well, for all but one of the remainers the parents come from the region of upbringing which creates a greater connection with this region. Furthermore, the remainers have not or only moved once or twice within their home region during their childhood, and the development of the sense of place has thus not been interrupted.

The remainers are mixed between identifying with their village of upbringing and broader identification with Northerner, Frisian, and country-side people. Pretty et al. (2003) state that place identity is being developed by acts of locating oneself within environmental contexts during both daily routines and more exceptional circumstances. The authors describe how one's residential community through its experiences and associations can become a symbolic extension of the respective person. The findings of this research show comparable findings, in such a way that graduates who identify with their village are feeling a part of this community. This mainly applies to, smaller, villages in which the graduates are also contributing to the village by volunteering or being involved in other activities. The sense of community and place identity seem thus related. Moreover, other remainers identify with feeling Frisian, a Stellingwerper or country-side person due to speaking Frisian or dialect, norms and values. This is in line with Brander and de Vries (2018) and Van der Meer (2019) who find that speaking the local language and values such as *down-to-earthness* contribute to the place identity of rural graduates.

As discussed above, the sense of community is strong for the remainers. Most of them are living in villages all their lives and feel a part of this community. They positively value social control and compare this to cities, for which they believe this is less. The remainers also contribute to the community by volunteering, by being involved in local politics or in other ways. The findings show that the remainers find this important as they believe that such contributions keep the region liveable. When considering the theoretical framework, the findings of this research are in line with Pretty et al. (2003) who find that the sense of community is stronger for people who feel a certain sense of belonging to a place and "[...] people care for, and are cared for by, those with whom they feel they

belong” (p. 275). This sense of belonging is then also present for all remainers when considering their home region due to mainly the people they surround themselves with, although some remainers share that they could also find this feeling elsewhere. The most important aspect of the sense of place for the remainers is their sense of home, they simply feel most at home in their home region due to their social network, friends and family. However, it is not only the social component which creates this but also the familiarity with places, the natural environment with feelings of calmness and freedom or speaking the local language.

Part of the sense of place is the natural environment (Vanclay et al., 2008). Brander and de Vries (2018) and Thissen et al. (2010) describe how the natural surroundings are contributing to the sense of place of the home region of graduates. The findings of this research find mixed results in that aspect. In a sense that for some graduates who, for instance, have been growing up close to a forest or on a farm it is indeed important and contributes to the sense of place, while for others it is of less importance. These graduates value the spaciousness and calmness of the landscape and nature but in a more passive way.

Returners... maintained their social life during the study period and therefore still feel a strong sense of belonging and home

The returners have a very similar story for their sense of place of the home region as the remainers. When considering the ancestral ties that can contribute to a sense of place (Rérat, 2014b; Gotman, 1999), we also find for the returners that almost all parents are from the home region and only a few parents come from other parts of Friesland. When considering the negative effect of high moving frequencies on the development of the sense of place (Jack, 2008; Coles, 1970), only two graduates have moved in their childhood but still within their home region. This has, as one graduate explained it, contributed to a build-up of positive experiences for these graduates.

As a difference from the remainers, the returners did decide to move to their study city during their study. Although they did move there, the returners still visited their parental home and friends every weekend. Only for two returners, this became less frequent in the later stages of the study. This has allowed the graduates to maintain their social life in their home region.

Considering the place identity, the findings for the returners are quite similar to the remainers. The returners are mixed between identifying with their village and with broader areas such as Friesland or the North. Identification with the village stems from the sense of community in a comparable way to the returners. For instance, strong involvement in the local football association or nature association in a smaller town creates this place identity with the village. This is in line with Pretty et al. (2003), the authors state that place identity is being developed by acts of locating oneself within environmental contexts during both daily routines and more exceptional circumstances. The authors describe how one’s residential community through its experiences and associations can become a symbolic extension of the respective person. Again, the sense of community is related to the place identity.

Moreover, other returners who do not per sé identify with their village do identify with, in particular, feeling Frisian. The findings relate this to speaking Frisian, in line with Brander and de Vries (2018).

Comparable to the remainers, the sense of community is strong for returners, they feel a part of the area or place where they live. The community is actively being contributed to by some of the returners, mainly by the ones who live in villages. They do so because the graduates believe that contributing to the community is important to make it sustain, which is in line with the theoretical framework and the findings of Pretty et al. (2007). The findings show that the returners feel a sense of belonging with their

home region due to their personal local ties and the sense of familiarity with the people and places around them. However, as a difference from the remainers, the returners express more strongly that this sense of belonging does not only apply to the home region. They could also live in other parts of Friesland or the North. Mainly their social life is a strong determinant which makes them feel most at home in their home region. This is to some extent in accordance with Feijten et al. (2008), who find that people who have grown up in the countryside and want to return, do not necessarily have a specific village in mind when they want to do so. Their social network and family are what makes them feel most at home in their home region. In line with the remainers, the sense of home does not only relate to being close to family and friends but in a broader way to being able to be oneself, as one returner described it. It also entails norms and values, speaking the local language and being familiar with the surroundings.

Also, the natural environment is having a comparable role in the sense of place of the returners, when compared to the remainers. For both groups, the findings show that the graduates have mixed views about the natural environment and its role in their sense of place for the home region. For most returners, other aspects of the sense of place, such as the sense of community prevail. Notwithstanding that the natural environment contributes to the sense of place due to the graduates appreciating the landscape and describing it as not hasted and spacious. Brander and de Vries (2018) find comparable descriptions for the whole of Friesland.

The sense of place for the away-place is mainly related to student life for the returners. The students were fond of experiencing this and speak about it with enthusiasm. The sense of place mainly consists of their nostalgic memories of going out in the city and their vibrant student life with friends. Next to that, the graduates still feel at home there when visiting and feel familiar due to the years spent there. However, most returners have moved to their study cities with a strong sustained social life and sense of place in their home region. According to Palmer et al. (2009), students can develop an 'in-between-ness', the sense of place for the study city and home region are both strong and the graduate is in between (p. 41). This does not apply to the returners, most have considered themselves as students temporarily living in their study city. Especially when study friends started to move along, the sense of place for the returners diminished further. The findings of this research are more in line with Polfliet (2020). Who finds that a part of the non-local students of Groningen holds a strong sense of place for other regions, such as their home region, and know that they will move on or return when they are no longer a student. This influences their relationship with the city.

Stay-awayers... still identify with Frisian or Northerner, have less of a sense of belonging/home due to a diminished social life in the home region and find rural traits also in other regions

While the graduates of the remainers and returners have a rather uniform description of the sense of place within their immobility and preferred mobility group, the stay-awayers have more varying feelings of the sense of place for their home region. Personal experiences and their (un)remaining social life in the home region are the main contributors to this difference.

According to Gotman (1999, as cited in Rérat, 2014b) the reference space can be seen as the places where one's near ancestors have grown up. If this is in line with the lived space, the places where a person grew up self, this can reinforce the sense of place with a particular place or area. Of the ten stay-awayers, two have ancestral ties in other parts of the country in the West and South and two have ancestral ties in other Northern provinces of Groningen and Drenthe. The parents of other graduates are from the home region or other parts of Friesland. The findings show that especially for the graduates whose parents come from the West or South, the development of place identity and a sense

of belonging or home was less present. They kept feeling like 'those westerners' seeking calmness in the North. Moreover, Coles (1970, as cited in Jack, 2008) finds that children who go through repeated moves develop a sense of rootlessness and a fragmented identity. This is in line with the findings of this research when considering the graduates who have moved repeatedly. Especially the combination of ancestral ties in other parts of the country and the repeated moves have contributed to the less strong sense of place for these graduates.

However, there are also graduates who do have ancestral ties to the home region and who have not moved repeatedly during their childhood with a less strong sense of place. For instance, when considering the place identity, the stay-awayers identify less with their village compared to the remainers or returners. This is due to the aforementioned reasons for some of the graduates but also due to a declined social life in their home region. Despite regularly visiting the home region at the beginning of the study, most stay-awayers started visiting less frequently in the later years of the study and only a few graduates still visited every week. These graduates still maintained an active position in (sports)association life in the home region and in their social life. In line with the returners, these graduates perceived this as 'going home' throughout their study period. For other graduates, the social life in their study cities grew and their life also at the weekends started to be centred there. These graduates have shaped their identity in the study city. This diminished the social life in their home region or village, led to less involvement in associations and thus also creates less of a place identity for their specific villages. What does remain for some of those graduates is the broader identity of being Frisian or a countryside person. This is related to speaking Frisian and the norms and values which graduates associate with the countryside, this is broader than just the village they grew up in and still has positive associations. Cicognani et al. (2011) find that the change in place identity and the change in sense of community often go together, the longer students live away, the more their place identity and sense of community lessen. The authors (2011) find that place identity is grounded in actual experiences and the cultivation of social relationships in the living context. Moreover, the theoretical framework showed how the sense of community increases with the length of stay (Cicognani et al., 2011; Prezza et al., 2001). In accordance, Cicognani et al. (2011) find how the support and emotional connection with peers, which is a part of the sense of community according to the authors, drops for the students who have moved and increases for students who don't move. The findings of this research show comparable outcomes, the decreased social connection lead to a decreased place identity and sense of community or belonging. Nevertheless, there are a couple of stay-awayers who are still active in associations, have an active friends base and also contribute to the community. It are also these graduates who feel the strongest sense of home with their home region, which also plays a role in their intention as we will see in section 5.3. The other stay-awayers do not have this home feeling and one of the only remaining connections to their home region is their parents.

The natural environment in their home region is something that the stay-awayers mainly compare to their current place of residence. Feelings of spaciousness, calmness and freedom are mentioned, next to memories of their childhood. In their current place of residence, they find fewer green spaces. This is something they require and regularly visit to escape the city. However, the stay-awayers also share that such a natural environment can be found in other parts of the country. Feijten et al. (2008) describe how some graduates who grew up in the countryside want to return to the countryside but are indifferent about the exact village. In a comparable way, the stay-awayers perceive the natural environment in their sense of place for the home region.

In line with the returners, there is a group of stay-awayers who knew that they were not going to live in their study city for a long period. They already decided to move on to other parts of the country afterwards and this has limited the development of a sense of place in a comparable way for

the returners. They mainly mention their study time when describing their sense of place and have not moved beyond the stage of being a student in this city. This is in line with the findings of Polfliet (2020) concerning the limited development of a sense of place when a graduate knows the period of living there is limited. For other graduates without this fixity of moving further, their study city started to become their home and their social life was also sustained after graduating. The graduates have a sort of familiar feeling with their city, refer to landmarks in their away-place and some even identify with this city now. For one graduate this creates the sort of 'in-between-ness' that Palmer et al. (2009) describe (p. 41). Now that this stay-awayer has lived for such a long period in the study city and works there now, the respondent starts to feel a part of the city and creates a sense of belonging. However, on the other hand, the respondent's Frisian identity is also still strong. He is concerned that friends and people from Friesland will think he is feeling too good to be Frisian. Other graduates surpass this level and simply feel that their city is their home and do not feel any competition from their home region due to the decreased sense of place for their home region. When considering the theoretical framework, we can relate this to the findings of Cicognani et al. (2011) who state that when considering the sense of belonging, a place should mainly be seen as the context in which social and culture are being developed and maintained. "[...] it is to those social relationships, not just the place qua place, to which people are attached" (Cicognani et al., 2011, p. 34). Which lies for these graduates firmly in the city where they studied and now work. For graduates who moved on to a second away-place, it was difficult to discuss their sense of place since most graduates only lived there for a short while. Mainly the mystique up front was mentioned.

/// 5.2 Current residential (im)mobility choice shortly after graduation

This section focuses on the current (im)mobility choice of the graduates and its background to answer the second sub-question: *"What are the motives for highly educated young people in their (im)mobility choice to stay away from, return to or remain in the home region of South-East Friesland and how does this influence their (im)mobility intention and why?"* Also, the role of sense of place in the current (im)mobility choice will be discussed in this section since it was found to be one of the motives for the (im)mobility choice. So, the bold and underlined part of the second sub-question will also be answered in this section: *"Which sense of place do the different (im)mobility groups hold for their home region and away-place(s) **and how does this influence their current (im)mobility behaviour** and (im)mobility intentions, and why?"*

Remainers... value the people around them, feel connected and feel like they 'have everything' at home
The graduates who have for this life phase decided to stay in their home region shared that the presence of their friends and family is the most important factor in their immobility choice. Whilst partner or household-related motives were less important in this life stage for their choice of residence. This is mainly due to the graduates not being in a relationship shortly after graduation and also not yet thinking about potential children. The theoretical framework showed how the social life and family of graduates can contribute to the decision to stay in the home region through the findings of Thomassen (2020) or Venhorst et al. (2011). This is in line with the findings of the interviews, six out of the eight respondents mention the presence of family and seven out of eight respondents state their friend group in their home region as important motives in their decision to stay in the home region. Next to that, the majority of graduates are active in sports clubs or other social hobbies in which their friends are also a component.

This social part is also a large component in the sense of place that remainers feel for their home region. Next to a perceived place identity by feeling Frisian or Northerner due to the language and values, the appreciation of the natural landscape in a more latent way, especially the sense of feeling at home and a non-exclusive feeling of sense of belonging to the region and it's people is an important

motive to stay in the home region. When considering the theoretical framework, this is in line with the findings of Thissen et al. (2010) that attachment and identification with a place are one of the most important factors to influence the choice of residence after graduation. The sense of place that the remainers feel with their home region is then best captured in the feeling of the graduates that they 'have everything' in the home region, which is also explicitly stated by some of the graduates, and see no reason to even consider leaving. On the contrary, the image that remainers have of cities is often negative and they explicitly state not being able to imagine living there.

However, the graduates also need to find a job after their graduation. A change in the aspect of 'work' of the life course approach is likely to trigger a re-evaluation of the place of residence (Bernard et al., 2014; Mulder and Hooimeijer, 1999). For the majority of remainers, the search for a job started from the place where they were living in South-East Friesland and not the other way around, to search for a job in the first place and then find a suitable place to live. Given this, the graduates are not limiting the area where they want to work to South-East Friesland but consider the broader North, where they are able to find suitable positions. The well-valued accessibility by car is what enables the graduates to also work in Zwolle, Groningen or Leeuwarden. This is more in line with the findings of Brander and de Vries (2018) who find that other factors make the remainder want to stay in their region of growing up and from there on search for a job, compared to the human capital theory. The human capital theory namely states that the highly educated are willing to move for greater wages (Venhorst et al., 2010). Furthermore, the role of internships in finding a job for the graduates who stayed in the home region is of interest since five of the seven graduates who did an internship during their study also started their first job there. The role of internships is not explicitly present in the theoretical framework or found in the existing literature. Although Venhorst et al. (2010) mention that higher vocational (HBO) students are more prone to stay in the region due to a more local labour market focus than university students.

Returners... were fond to experience student life but move back 'home' during the beginning of the working life phase

The theoretical framework has shown how the presence of a social network and being close to family can be a strong driver to return to the home region for graduates (Thomassen, 2020; Venhorst et al., 2011). The findings of this research do show for the returned graduates how their social life and family in their home region were important motives in favour of their decision to return to the home region. All returners have studied in the cities of Leeuwarden or Groningen and due to the limited geographical distance have also been able to visit their hometowns regularly, weekly for most of the returners. This has maintained their social life in the home region with friends, sports clubs or other associations.

In comparison to the remainers, the partners of returners have more contributed to the decision to return since six of the eight returners had a partner at the moment of returning. Out of which all but one come from the home region and only one from a different part of Friesland. The theoretical framework describes in line with the findings how the origin of the partner, from the respective region of study or not, can positively or negatively influence the (im)mobility decision (Feijten et al., 2008). The partner, who mainly still lived in the home region, also has family, friends and potentially a perceived sense of place with the home region which strengthens the chances to return for the graduate in such a way that they meet with their partner.

As mentioned above, the returners regularly visited their parental home during the weekends and described this as 'going home'. This feeling or sense of home is also what has contributed to their decision to return. This feeling of familiarity or feeling at home in the home region, in this particular life phase of the start of their working life, was often compared to the study city for which the sense of place was mainly related to specifically the study period of the graduates. As for the sense of place

with the home region, also in the sense of place with the away-place, the friends and social life of the graduates are important. When these friends started to leave the study city, a strong component in their connection with the city diminished and contributed to their decision to return. Palmer et al. (2009) describe how a developed sense of place with both the study city and home region can develop a feeling of 'in-between-ness' (p. 41). The findings do not show this, the sense of place of the away-place is really linked to the specific study period and the sense of place for the home region still had the upper hand during the study period. Furthermore, returners are appreciating and some are explicitly searching for 'calmness' and 'spaciousness' in this life phase, which they associate with the landscape in South-East Friesland.

Most graduates already had a job at the moment of returning and kept this after moving back to the home region. In line with the remainers, work was not the most important motive for them to return. However, the accessibility to cities with more working opportunities enables them to live in South-East Friesland but work elsewhere. The findings show that the well-valued accessibility via car to work from South-East Friesland has contributed to the decision to return since it allows returners to pursue an interesting career while living in their preferred home region. This well-perceived accessibility by the returners is interesting given the theoretical framework. The existing theory described how peripheral areas are often, by purely looking at travel distance, judged as poorly accessible to more urban areas (Kennisinstituut voor Mobiliteitsbeleid, 2010; Platform31, n.d.-b). However, in line with further research specific societal groups do not necessarily experience this as problematic. In this context Platform31 (n.d.-b) referred to car owners in peripheral areas which matches the returners of this research who also indicated that as long as they have a car, the accessibility is good for them. Most returners believe that in other parts of the country they could earn more but due to the discussed reasons above decided to return to their home region and not move on. This is in line with the findings of Brander and de Vries (2018) and less relatable to the human capital theory (Venhorst et al., 2010).

The theoretical framework describes how young graduates prefer urban living amenities over rural living amenities (Venhorst et al., 2013) and how lower housing prices in more peripheral areas compared to urban areas can play a role in the decision regarding the choice of residence (Wagenaar, 2014; Venhorst et al., 2011). Though other motives are the primary drivers for the graduates to decide to return, the favourable housing market in South-East Friesland compared to their study cities or the Randstad does make a contribution to their decision to return. The higher housing prices in their away-places take any remaining consideration to live there away. Next to that, the amenities in the home region are seen as sufficient at a local level and accessible if more special amenities, like a cinema, are required.

Stay-awayers... prioritise work and feel less connected to their home region

According to Venhorst et al. (2013), job opportunities are the most important factor in the choice of residence of recent graduates. The graduates have invested in their education and skills and want to leverage this investment and ensure they find a job that can match their skills and subsequent *reservation wage* (Venhorst et al., 2011; McCann, 2013). A reservation wage is an expected minimum wage which graduates have in mind for their new job which they want to ensure. This is in line with the findings of this research, next to other motives, work or job opportunities are one of the most important motives to stay away. The stay-awayers stay in their study city or move on to a second away-place in the Randstad in pursuit of an interesting job. They do not believe that they can find this in South-East Friesland or the North for the ones who moved on to the Randstad and have not even considered searching.

Although work is one of the most important drivers for these graduates in their residential unpreferred mobility choice, other factors are contributing as well. Earlier we saw that the findings of Venhorst et

al. (2013) regarding the preference for urban amenities by young graduates did not so much apply to remainers and returners. For stay-awayers, this is important in this life phase and strongly contributes to their choice to stay away and not to consider returning to their home region.

Close family of all stay-awayers was still living in the home region when the graduates were entering the labour market but this did not play a very prominent role in their choice to stay away. Although some graduates chose deliberately for a better accessible city to the North, in the Randstad. The graduates let other motives come out ahead and find the travel time manageable in a comparable fashion as Van der Meer (2019) described in the theoretical framework.

With seven out of ten stay-awayers having a partner and only three out of the seven coming from South-East Friesland or other parts of Friesland, a difference is observable with the returners. While the partners of the returners preferred to live in the home region, the partners of the stay-awayers had a preference for a move to the Randstad or staying in the away-place due to the urban amenities, just as the stay-awayer self. Actually, the preferences of partners from the home region or not from the home region, are comparable to those of the stay-awayers. Only for one graduate who actually considered returning, the preferences of the partner hindered this. The findings of this research are then only for this stay-awayer in line with the findings of Feijten et al. (2008) who found that a partner from a different region can negatively influence the likelihood to return and a partner from the same region in a positive way. For other stay-awayers, the findings of Feijten et al. (2008) might also apply in this life stage but it is hard to determine this since they stated that they did not want to return themselves, regardless of their partner. Whether the likelihood of returning would have been greater without a partner from the study city remains difficult to be said.

A social network in the away-place is likely to be built up during the years of study and can thus contribute to the social life of the graduate. The built-up social life in the away-place can then contribute to the decision to stay in the away-place (Van der Meer, 2019; Wagenaar, 2014). This only applies to the graduates who stay in their study city and do not move on to, for instance, the Randstad. Next to work-related motives, also social life is an important driver in their choice to stay in the study city. Furthermore, most stay-awayers have developed a relatively small or less close friends base in their home region which differs from the remainers and returners and does not make them consider returning.

Thissen et al. (2010) describe that attachment to a place, next to employment opportunities, is one of the most important drivers in the residential (im)mobility choice). As can be read in section 4.2, this attachment or sense of place for the stay-awayers is less strong for most. In accordance, the sense of place with the home region did not play a strong role in the decision to stay away. Most stay-awayers did not even consider returning since other motives were simply more important, even for the stay-awayers who do feel a stronger sense of place. While most returners did not consider moving elsewhere due to, amongst others, the feeling of home and identification. The absence of or a less strong sense of place has not made most of the stay-awayers consider returning. On the other hand, the sense of place for the away-place did grow throughout their study years. The graduates who have kept working in their study city have especially developed a sense of familiarity and home. While some remainers and returners would not give up what they have in their home region, some of the stay-awayers who live in their study city do not want to give up what they have there, including the familiarity, norms and values and identification. These findings are in line with the theoretical framework and findings of Polfliet (2020) and Holton (2015) who find that the sense of place which graduates build up for their study city can make them stay there after graduation.

/// 5.3 Residential (im)mobility intention for the upcoming life phase

This section focuses on the (im)mobility intention of the graduates and the background to answer the third sub-question: “Which intentions do the various (im)mobility groups hold regarding returning to or staying in the home region of South-East Friesland within the next 10 years and why?”. Next to this, also the relation between the sense of place and the (im)mobility intention will be discussed in this section since it affects the (im)mobility intention in the coming life phase, which is strongly related to the above sub-question of this section. So, the bold and underlined part of the second sub-question will also be answered in this section: “Which sense of place do the different (im)mobility groups hold for their home region and away-place(s) **and how does this influence their current (im)mobility behaviour and (im)mobility intentions, and why?**”

Remainers... intend to stay due to their local rootedness, want to give potential children the same good youth as themselves and also perceive their intention as feasible despite housing worries

All graduates, whether single or not, intend to stay in their home region for the coming 10 years. In comparison to the moment shortly after graduation and at the start of working life, the remainers have now also started to build up a career in the North while living in their home region. The remainers have become more rooted in their home region. The *attitude towards the behaviour* of staying is positive due to their friends and family also being in the region, wanting to let potential children grow up in the region and the sense of place mainly manifested by the feeling of home in the region.

In line with the current decision to stay, the remainers value the proximity to family and being able to visit on regular occasions. Although parents are getting older, taking care of parents in the future was not prominently mentioned as a reason that contributed to their positive attitude towards the behaviour of staying. Neither was the support of parents in raising children mentioned explicitly in relation to the intention to stay. Stockdale et al. (2018) do find that such supportive roles are of importance in the choice of residence in later life phases and contribute to the choice of residence in later life phases. Next to that, the authors find that the proximity and emotional role of being close are important in the choice of residence, which is in line with the finding of this research.

Something that could change the intention of some of the remainers is a unique job opportunity. If such an opportunity would pop up, the remainers would consider it and potentially decide to temporarily move there. However, the remainers are not actively searching for such job opportunities in other parts of the country because they value what they have at home. An important part of this concerns their social life in the home region. In a similar way to the current choice to stay, the social life of the graduates mainly takes place in the home region. Remainers do not expect this to change and in this life phase, the presence of friends can be seen as slightly more important compared to the life stage shortly after graduation since remainers describe that they would find it difficult to build this up in other places. Such findings are in accordance with the theoretical framework (Coulter and Scott, 2015; DaVanzo and Morrison, 1981) who find that being in the vicinity of family and friends becomes more important in later life stages due to the familiarity and perceived difficulty of building this up elsewhere. Which is in turn related to having no or little earlier moving experiences (DaVanzo and Morrison, 1981).

An important driver in the positive attitude towards staying is the upbringing of potential children. Remainers who are already in a relationship for a longer period are more actively thinking about having children compared to singles. Nevertheless, both express that they would like their children to grow up in the same area as where they have grown up. This comes from the positive experience of growing up in this region. Remainers describe it as free and without many restraints. Von Reichert et al. (2014)

find that indeed associations with autonomy and pursuing activities independently by children are contributing to the preference for children to grow up in the same or similar area as the graduates.

The theoretical framework did not provide any findings that showed a difference between the role of a sense of place in the immobility choice shortly after graduation and in the later life course. This is generally in line with the findings of this research, in which remainers shared that the role of sense of place they feel for their home region in the current choice to stay is comparable to their intention. This could be explained by the fact that the connection with their home region is comparable to several years ago when the remainers started working and decided to stay. They still have the same group of friends, are still involved in the local association life and still live close to their family. Their sense of place, mainly manifested through the sense of home, is thus comparable and plays a comparable important role in their intention to stay.

When considering the *subjective norm* for the immobility intention, the role of the partner and potential partner is of specific interest. Namely due to the fact that single remainers share that a potential future partner could change their intention to stay. A partner from a different part of the country could make other areas also an option for these remainers. This is in line with the theoretical framework and the findings of Hooijen et al. (2020) and de Groot et al. (2011) who find that unexpected life events such as a unique job opportunity or cohabitation with a partner can change an earlier stated intention. Most remainers who are in a relationship, have a partner from the home region or another part of Friesland. These partners have the same intention as the respondents which strengthens the intention to stay. Parents do appreciate the graduates living close by but do not pressure them. Friends were mentioned to a lesser extent as a group who have an opinion about the immobility intentions of the graduates. The remainers shared that they do take the opinion of parents and friends along but that it does only to a limited extent influence their intention.

The *perceived behavioural control* towards staying is valued as positive. The remainers believe that in terms of housing, work and liveability, they will be able to keep living in their home region. Out of these three, the remainers deem housing as most threatening to their intention to stay. Five out of the eight remainers already own a house. Despite believing that one way or another they will be able to buy a suitable first house or move to a bigger place, some remainers express their worries about the chances on the housing market and would even consider living outside of the region if needed. They share how friends have already moved to other places although preferring to stay in the village they grew up in. Regardless of their worries and concerns, the remainers who are worried about future housing do believe that by saving or together with a partner they will be able to find a suitable house for the upcoming life phase.

Work for the next ten years is seen as a controllable factor in the intention to stay in the home region. Given the willingness to travel in the broader North, the remainers believe that there are options to grow within their current employer or other companies in the North. Remainers share that this does depend on the status of the economy but generally, they believe that there are growth opportunities in the North. Furthermore, the available work-from-home options decrease the need for travel and broaden their employment options even further.

Considering liveability in terms of amenities, the viability of associations and broader willingness to volunteer or organise activities, remainers do believe that in smaller villages the offer of amenities and associations might further deteriorate. Nevertheless, most believe that the basic level will remain (one school and/or one supermarket) and not cause them to move to a bigger place. This is also due to the fact that the respondents were used to this themselves in their childhood and believe that this is manageable. For a minority, this might be a consideration to move to a larger place in the region.

The *perceived behavioural control* for the respective behaviour of staying in the home region for the coming ten years is thus seen as feasible by the remainers. The theoretical framework describes how graduates with a strong *attitude towards the behaviour* of their preferred (im)mobility intention also are likely to have a positive feeling about their *perceived behavioural control* (De Groot et al., 2011; Hooijen et al., 2020). The authors (2020) argue that not only the realisation of the (im)mobility intentions but also the formation of the (im)mobility intention is dependent on the *perceived behavioural control*. In accordance, the findings of this research also show a combination of a positive *attitude towards the behaviour* and a positive *perceived behavioural control*.

Returners... intend to stay due to a feeling of 'having everything here', valuing the region positively to raise children and believing that this intention is achievable

Seven out of the eight returners intend to stay in the home region for the coming 10 years. Especially for the six returners with a partner, this intention is strong. For single returners, a potential future partner might change this intention. Some of the returners have already taken the upcoming life phase into consideration when returning. They share for instance that a spacious enough house for potential children was taken into consideration when moving back. The returners have a positive attitude towards staying due to the proximity of family and friends, the green, free and spacious area in which children could grow up and the family to support this upbringing. The sense of place does not play a very different role in their immobility intention to stay compared to their current preferred mobility choice to return. The returners feel at home in their home region, which was an important reason to return and also to stay in the upcoming life phase. The *attitude towards the behaviour* of staying is thus positive.

Comparable to the remainers, the returners value the proximity of family and parents in the upcoming life course. They value the possibility of easily swinging by and also the potential future support in upbringing children. This does not only involve the parents or family of the respondent self but also of the partner who comes from the same region or other parts of Friesland, for the six returners who have a partner. The findings show how the returners appreciate this and expect to make use of the support of their families. Furthermore, the social component of family and being able to visit them is described as a driver for the intention to stay. According to von Reichert et al. (2014), both the practical relationship, on the one hand, with parents and the more emotional relationship, on the other hand, influence the choice of returners in their preferred mobility choice in this life phase.

The social life of the returners in the home region was one of the most important reasons to return and is also one of the most important drivers for the positive attitude towards staying in the coming life phase. The feeling of 'having everything' applies to a large extent to the social life in the home region and returners expect this social life to keep mainly taking place in their home region. In line with the remainers, some graduates shared that a unique job opportunity could change their minds about their future place of residence. However, they are also not searching actively for this opportunity and the presence and appreciation of friends and family contribute to this. These findings are in line with Coulter and Scott (2015) who find that being close to family and friends becomes more important in later life stages.

In a comparable way to the remainers, the returners share that having potential children and believing that the region of South-East Friesland is a suitable area for bringing them up, contributes to the intention to stay in the area. Some returners have already considered future children when moving back from their study city, which illustrates the importance for some of the returners. The returners describe how they want their children to be able to enjoy a level of freedom and autonomy comparable to what the returners enjoyed themselves. They value having family nearby and also judge the level of amenities as sufficient for the upbringing of children. These findings concur with the findings of Coulter

and Scott (2015) and von Reichert et al. (2014) who find that some parents judge a rural area as a more safe and free area for children to grow up. On the contrary, the findings of this research differ from some of the findings of von Reichert et al. (2014) which show that graduates who used to live away during and after study can judge the quality of schools in rural areas as less good. Some graduates mentioned that there are fewer schools in South-East Friesland but still sufficient for the education of potential children.

The sense of place for the home region is playing a comparable important role in the immobility intention as in the current preferred mobility choice. The returners describe how this does not have a stronger or less strong influence on their current choice to have returned and their intention to stay. The perceived place identity, sense of community or belonging, sense of natural environment and in particular the sense of home with the home region was one of the main reasons for the returners to return and also for intending to stay. They feel at home in this region and want to pass this on to their children. This is in line with the theoretical framework which did not indicate any differing relation between the sense of place with the preferred mobility choice shortly after graduation or in the later life phase with life events such as having children, buying a house or marriage. Furthermore, the sense of place for the study city does not influence the immobility intention of the returners due to the association with their previous life phase of being a student. Only for the returner with a less firm intention, the sense of place for the study city would make him consider his study city if he feels the need to move and does not yet have children. However, due to the aforementioned reasons as children and needing a suitable place for them to grow up, he would actually lean more towards his hometown or a village due to those life events.

For the *subjective norm*, the role of the partner is most interesting since comparable to the remainers, the single returners share that a potential partner could change their intention to stay. The findings of this research are in line with the findings of Hooijen et al. (2020) and de Groot et al. (2011) who find that unexpected life events such as a unique job opportunity or cohabitation with a partner can change an earlier-stated intention. The returners who are in a relationship, have a partner from the home region or another part of Friesland. The immobility intention of their partner is the same or even stronger. This influences the immobility intention in such a way that both partners are on the same page and not a lot of discussion is required for the immobility intention. This is comparable to the current preferred mobility choice and the findings of Feijten et al. (2008) concerning the positive influence of a partner from the same region in this decision. One graduate described how she would like to pursue a temporary career abroad given the opportunities within her current company but how her partner would be less inclined to move. This graduate described how this might hold her back. This returner can be described as a 'tied stayer' according to Mulder and Malmberg (2014). The authors (2014) describe a tied stayer as "[...] someone who would migrate if it were not for a partner who prevents the move" (p. 2195). The returners share that the exerted pressure by family and friends is limited and mainly involves the appreciation of living close to their children by parents. Returners share that they do consider the preferences of family or friends in the back of their minds but that in the end their own will prevails and determines their immobility intention and behaviour.

The *perceived behavioural control* towards the behaviour of staying is overall seen as positive by the returners. They value the chances to find a suitable house, job and liveability for the upcoming 10 years as positive. All returners currently own a house or it is still being developed. As mentioned earlier, some returners already anticipated potential future children when choosing their current house and share that their house is sustainable for this. Other graduates who would still like to move to a larger house or to a more preferred neighbourhood, believe that this is feasible in time. Some more savings and the local housing market which they judge as relatively affordable, makes them

believe that finding a suitable place is doable. A small number of graduates judge the future housing prospects as grimmer but this is more due to the general housing situation in the Netherlands.

When considering work, the graduates have a comparable view as to their current preferred mobility choice to return. Within the region of South-East Friesland, the options are limited but the broader North provides sufficient opportunities for the coming period. The accessibility is herein thus of importance since this enables the returners to broaden their search area. The returners share that with their willingness to travel or commute, sufficient opportunities can be found in the broader North.

The liveability of the region is regarded as sufficient for the coming life phase. The returners do believe that level of amenities will drop but not beyond a critical level, which is comparable to the remainers. The returners believe that sufficient local demand remains in their villages to sustain a minimum level of amenities. Some returners who currently live in bigger places like Drachten or Heerenveen would also be willing to live in villages since they believe that children can have a more free upbringing in a village. With a more free upbringing, the returners mean that they would have to be less controlling of their children when playing. In a village, there is believed to be more social control and less danger in terms of traffic for instance. However with a condition of minimal amenities and within a bikeable distance of, for instance, a high school. A small number of returners worry about liveability in terms of the viability of associations within the villages which fulfil an important community role. If this disappears they feel that an important part of what makes a village liveable disappears and might lead them to consider living elsewhere.

In line with the remainers, we find that the returners have a positive *attitude towards the behaviour* of staying in South-East Friesland and also a positive *perceived behavioural control* for that behaviour. This confirms the findings of De Groot et al. (2011) and Hooijen et al. (2020) from the theoretical framework concerning the likelihood of having a positive position for both the *attitude towards the behaviour* and *perceived behavioural control* in combination.

Stay-awayers and to-be-returners... have mixed mobility intentions due to (un)availability of work in the North, varying sense of place with the home region and developed sense of place in away-place

Half of the stay-awayers do not intend to return, a group of two stay-awayers has a less firm intention and three do intend to return in the coming life phase. The stay-awayers, based on the current unpreferred mobility choice, who do intend to return will be referred to as the *to-be-returners* in this section. Important differences between the stay-awayers and to-be-returners relate to the existing or non-existing social life of graduates in their home region, built-up social life in their away-places, a maintained sense of place with their home region and the developed sense of place with their away-places. Overall, graduates who want to have children in the coming life phase intend to live in a village. However, only the to-be-returners hold a strong sense of place for their home region and thus want this village to be in the home region. The *attitude towards the behaviour* of returning is thus mixed.

Work remains an important factor in the mobility intention of stay-awayers. Stay-awayers who do not intend to return and with a less firm intention share that they want to keep living near their current places of residence to be close to their work or other future opportunities. They share that the work they do is mainly concentrated in the Randstad or in the two Northern cities of Leeuwarden and Groningen. The stay-awayers who live in the two Northern provinces share that they would not want to commute and thus prefer to live closer to their work. The labour market in other parts of the country and living close to it is thus an important driver in the negative attitude towards returning to the home region. This creates the preference for living in the away-place or near the away-place in the coming life phase for these graduates.

On the other hand, the to-be-returners do have a more positive attitude towards returning due to, amongst others, their active social life in the home region. For the stay-awayers, an active social life is less applicable in the home region. This is another important reason why stay-awayers hold a more negative attitude towards returning. According to Coulter and Scott (2015) being in the vicinity of family and friends becomes more important in later life phases. This only applies to some extent for the group of stay-awayers since they have a diminished friends base in their home region but still find it important that the travel time to their family is not too long and thus prefer to live in, for instance, Utrecht than in Amsterdam. However, they do not necessarily need to live in the same village or region and let work-related motives prevail. Next to that, these stay-awayers have also built up a friends base in their away-place which is important for them and to which they want to live close in the coming life phase.

For the to-be-returners, being close to family and friends is an important motive to intend to return in the coming life phase. They have not built up such a friend base in their away-places as other stay-awayers due to the maintained focus on the home region. During their student life and their working life, they stayed active in associations for instance. For the current life phase shortly after graduation, they have chosen their work ambitions. But in the coming life phase, they value the presence of family due to personal experiences and friends more. This is becoming more important for their preferred mobility intention in the coming life phase which is in line with the findings of Coulter and Scott (2015) and von Reichert et al. (2014). For the stay-awayers with a less firm intention, the main aspect of interest in the home region is their family. This is what sets the home region apart from other rural regions when considering the benefits of rural regions in bringing up children. However, this is not so strong for them to intend to live in the home region since they perceive the travel time as manageable. Furthermore, their friend base in the home region diminished which does not draw them towards the home region as it does for the to-be-returners.

Potentially having children is an important event in the coming life phase which can trigger a relocation. Eight out of ten stay-awayers and to-be-returners consider having children and all would want to let their children grow up in a village or more rural area. They value the believed traits of a village such as the autonomy children have and social control by neighbours. They relate this to their own youth and compare this to the negative aspects of children growing up in a city. However, the stay-awayers who do not intend to return and with a less firm intention believe they can find these traits also in other villages closer to their work in the Randstad or in the area where their partner grew up. For the to-be-returners this is different, they only consider their home region due to the presence of family which can support the upbringing, friends and the strong sense of place which is to be discussed. These findings match with the findings of the theoretical framework (Feijten et al., 2008) which shows that rural graduates do have a preference for returning to a rural place at some point in their lives but that this does not necessarily need to be the place of growing up due to diminishing ties to this place. Furthermore, the intention to live in a village for the upbringing of children matches with the findings of von Reichert et al. (2014) and the Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving (2019) who show that young parents move out of the city to provide for their children a calm and safe area, which they believe a rural area is.

Urban amenities and the lack of amenities in places in South-East Friesland are important motives for a negative attitude towards returning and a desire to keep living in the away-place for the stay-awayers who do not intend to have children. In a similar fashion as in their current unpreferred mobility choice, they value the offer of amenities in their cities for the upcoming life phase and are not yet seeking the rest of a rural area. Other stay-awayers with a child wish share that the village they would move to requires the minimum level of amenities for raising a child. The to-be-returners believe that the

amenities in the home region are sufficient for raising a child and do not require the urban amenities that the stay-awayers without a desire to have children do require. This shift is thus related to the specific life event of having children and is in line with the shift described by Venhorst et al. (2013) who find that living preferences move from work/economic motives to housing/locational motives due to changes in the household composition.

The previous chapters have described how the respective sense of place which stay-awayers hold for their home region differs. The sense of place for the home region of to-be-returners is mainly constituted by the family, social connections and involvement in local associations in their home region, this gives them a sense of community and a sense of home. It are the to-be-returners, within the entire group of stay-awayers for the current unpreferred mobility decision, who still hold a strong sense of place for their home region and also hold a positive attitude towards returning. The presence of family and friends, the strong sense of home and the upcoming life event of having children works together in their intention to return. While the sense of place for the home region did not play a very prominent role in their current unpreferred mobility choice, in the upcoming life phase it feels more like settling down, as one to-be-returner described. This feels more definite and thus is the sense of place more important for the to-be-returners. Next to that, the sense of place with their away-place has a limited influence on the preferred mobility intention to return. These to-be-returners appreciate their place of residence and enjoy living there but have only built up a limited group of friends and could easily leave the place behind. The to-be-returners have kept in the back of their head that they want to return eventually and this mindset can be drawn back to the returners who had a comparable approach for their stay in their study city and therefore only build up a limited sense of place (Polfliet, 2020). In other words, they have not built up the actual 'in-between-ness' of sense of place between their home region and their away-place (Palmer, 2009, p. 41). The contrary is applicable for the stay-awayers who do not intend to return, as described in section 4.4. These stay-awayers describe that their sense of place for the home region is a lot less strong due to a diminished friends base, less involvement in the local community or not speaking the local language. The role of sense of place for the home region in their unpreferred mobility intention is very comparable to its role in the current unpreferred mobility choice to stay away; limited or none. Some stay-awayers describe that moving back to their home region would feel like 'taking a step back' and that the only connection with the region is their parents. As described above, in the coming life phase most stay-awayers would like to live in a village due to positive associations with this for children. They have a sort of sense of place for the rural, for a village but this does not need to be in the home region, the sense of place is therefore not strong enough. Furthermore, the sense of place for the away-place mainly influences the stay-awayers who do not intend to return and who do not intend to have children. They have developed a strong sense of home for their cities and even identify with the city. Whilst for the other stay-awayers who do intend to have children but do not intend to return, the role of sense of place with their away-place is less important. Other benefits of a village, in the end, prevail in the upcoming life phase over the built-up connection with the away-place.

The *subjective norm* again differs for the graduates with different intentions. The partners of stay-awayers who do not intend to return or with less firm intentions, have the same intentions as the stay-awayers and do not exert pressure to live specifically in their away-place or elsewhere since this is in line with the stay-awayers' intention. For the to-be-returners, one partner grew up in South-East Friesland as well and has the same intention, one partner is from a different part of the country with not such a firm intention to live in South-East Friesland and one to-be-returner is single for which a potential partner could change his intention. These findings are in line with the findings of the theoretical framework which show that a partner from the same area creates a larger likelihood to return, the contrary for a partner from a different area and that unexpected life events such as a

relationship with a partner from a different region can influence the preferred mobility intention (Feijten et al., 2008; De Groot et al., 2011). Opinions or pressure from parents occurs in a mildly suggestive tone as parents would like to see their children live more nearby. However, the stay-awayers do not let their intention get influenced by this. For the to-be-returners parents are more actively encouraging them to return which they do take along into their consideration but other factors are strong enough to outweigh this pressure or opinion and manifest their intention anyway. Furthermore, the findings show that actually only for the to-be-returners the opinion of friends was mentioned. The opinion of their friends contributes in a positive way to the preferred mobility intention. The other stay-awayers did not mention it.

The *perceived behavioural control* is mainly related to work in the case of the stay-awayers and to-be-returners. The stay-awayers who do not intend to return see the opportunities as insufficient and inadequate. The stay-awayers with a less firm intention believe there are options to find a suitable job at a commutable distance but not within South-East Friesland self or the graduates share that they are not aware of it. For the to-be-returners, work is the largest constraining factor. They are fond of their work in their away-place and do not yet see comparable options in South-East Friesland or the North. In order to find a solution for this, they describe how the developments of working from home have made it easier to work one or two days a week from home and maintain their job in the Randstad. Furthermore, the to-be-returners are more willing to give in and move to a slightly different sector due to the above-described motives which prevail in the coming life phase. However, this is not yet the case since children are still a few years away. Such career sacrifices are comparable to the findings of von Reichert et al. (2014) who describe how such sacrifices are made by the highly educated in order to meet family needs.

The perceived control in securing a suitable house in the home region is seen as positive by the stay-awayers and to-be-returners. They often have a partner and a well-paying job which makes them believe that they would be able to buy a suitable house in South-East Friesland in the coming ten years. However, as with the remainers and returners, there are also single stay-awayers and single to-be-returners who forecast this as less positive. However, with the help of a potential partner or savings, they believe it will be manageable, one day. Nevertheless, one to-be-returner considers moving back with his parents to save money. This is a concept described as 'boomeranging', a child moves out of the parental home but needs to return back at one point due to various reasons (Arundel and Lennartz, 2017, p. 277).

The stay-awayers and to-be-returners perceive the development of the liveability in South-East Friesland in a comparable way as the remainers and returners, namely that amenities are under pressure but a basic level of amenities will remain such as schools or a supermarket. This is regarded as sufficient in the coming life phase for the to-be-returners.

After having discussed two groups who were positive about the *attitude towards the behaviour* of staying or returning to South-East Friesland in the coming life phase, only a small group of the current stay-awayers hold a positive attitude towards this behaviour. Along with that, the stay-awayers who do not intend to return do also perceive the behavioural control in terms of mainly work as less positive. While the to-be-returners deem these still as challenging but believe a suitable job in the North or creative solution with a job in the Randstad can be found in the coming life phase. This is comparable to the remainers and returners who also regarded both the *attitude towards the behaviour* and the *perceived behavioural control* as positive. The findings for the to-be-returners thus confirm the findings of De Groot et al. (2011) and Hooijen et al. (2020) concerning the likelihood of regarding both these aspects as positive.

/// 5.4 Revised conceptual model

Having reviewed all sub-questions, the conceptual model can now be reviewed with the findings and analysis and where necessary revised. This will be done by combining the current immobility and preferred mobility groups of the remainers and returners due to the similarities in the findings for their current behaviour and immobility intentions. For the stay-awayers, this will be split into the stay-awayers who do not intend to return and the to-be-returners who do intend to return.

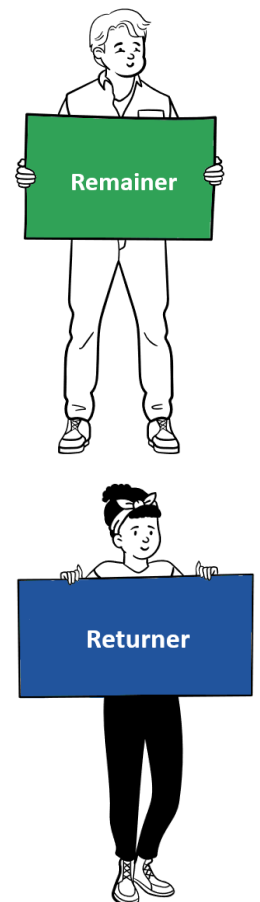
Blue arrows (light blue and dark blue) indicate the relation between factors and the dependent variable of their (im)mobility intention for the coming life phase. Green arrows (light green and dark green) indicate the relation between factors and the current (im)mobility choice. Whether a relation has a light or dark colour indicates the less strong (light) or stronger (dark) relation to the current (im)mobility choice and (im)mobility intention.

The initial conceptual model was set up as a single model for all current (im)mobility behaviours and intentions. With all the insights gathered from this research, it is believed to be the right thing to give due credit to the different (im)mobility groups to create an 'own' revised conceptual model and to also create visual clarity in their different motives and rationales. Please refer to chapter 2 for a detailed explanation of the initial conceptual model.

Remainers and returners

The remainers and returners both decided on immobility and preferred mobility, decisions in favour of their home region in the life phase shortly after their graduation and at the beginning of their working career. Furthermore, they also both intend to stay in their home region in the coming life phase.

Their current immobility and preferred mobility choice to stay or return is mainly driven by the presence of friends, families and social hobbies in their home region. Moreover, the partners from the same region contribute to their local ties and their current residential choice in favour of the home region. This creates a feeling of 'having everything at home and this feeling goes beyond the presence of friends and family but also feeling a part of a community and strongly feeling at home there. The place identity and sense of natural/physical environment contribute to the sense of place but its strongest determinant is the sense of home. The sense of place with the home region is strong for the remainers and returners and does not make them want to consider living elsewhere. Work is important in this life phase but not to the extent that graduates would want to move elsewhere for a job. The Northern labour market widened the options of remainers and returners due to the well-perceived accessibility of the home region by car. Housing and living amenities were neither mentioned as the main motives to stay or return to the home region. More as a supporting factor which was deemed sufficient at a local level and the accessibility allows for travelling to other places for special amenities. In the case of the returners, the sense of place for their study city did not play a strong role in their decision to return. Returning was already kept into account for a long period and therefore they did not build up a strong sense of place with their study city, mainly one that is related to them being a student. Children did not yet play a role in the current immobility and preferred mobility choice.



By remaining or returning, the remainers and returners have maintained or even reinforced their friendships and social life. Additionally, their sense of place for their home region has also been reinforced due to still having a close group of friends and being involved in local association life. By staying active in the local associations and being a part of their group of friends they still feel a strong sense of community and sense of home. The current immobility and preferred mobility choice to

remain or return thus has a positive effect on the factors of 'Friends/social' and 'Sense of home region'. This is visualized by the one arrow departing from and one arrow arriving at 'Friends / social' and 'Sense of home region'. One arrow departs from these factors to the dependent variable 'Current immobility and preferred mobility choice', this indicates how these factors are important motives for the remainers and returners in their current immobility and preferred mobility choice. The other arrow departs from the 'Current immobility and preferred mobility choice' and arrives at 'Friends / social' and 'Sense of home region', therewith indicating that the current immobility and preferred mobility choice reinforced these factors which are important for their immobility intention. The reciprocal relation between the factors 'Friends / social' and 'Sense of home region' and the dependent variable 'Current immobility and preferred mobility choice' replaces the initial direct relation between the (im)mobility choice and the (im)mobility intention in the initial conceptual model in section 2.6.

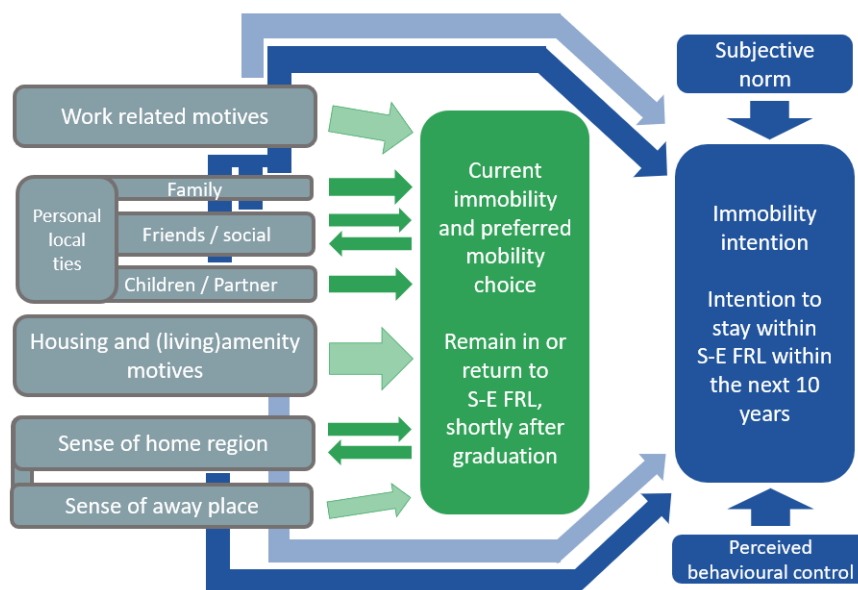


Figure 22 - Revised conceptual model for remainers and returners

The maintained friendships and strong sense of place with the home region are also important drivers in their immobility intention to stay in the home region for the coming ten years, in the coming life phase. In this life phase mainly the event of children was mentioned as another important reason to intend to stay. Remainers and returners want to give their children a comparable childhood as themselves and believe that their home region is the right place for this due to perceived freedom, nature and support of family. The sense of place for the away-place does not play a role in the immobility intention and does thus not have an arrow leading to the dependent variable of the 'Immobility intention'.

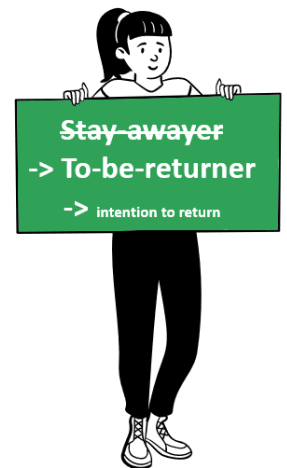
For the subjective norm, mainly the partners of remainers and returners were mentioned. They have the same intention which contributes to their intention to stay. Singles share that potential future partners could change their intention to stay due to the preferences of this potential partner.

In the context of the perceived behavioural control, remainers and returners believe their intention to be feasible when considering the future labour market, chances of finding suitable housing and liveability. The most worrying but not blocking factor in this sense is finding suitable housing.

To-be-returners: current stay-awayers who do intend to return

The stay-awayers have two different streams within their current unpreferred mobility group, the ones with a maintained sense of place and group of friends for the home region and the ones with a diminished sense of place for the home region. It is this first group that intends to return in the coming life phase, the to-be-returners.

In the current unpreferred mobility choice work-related motives have been the most important determinant in their choice to stay away. Despite living in their study city or moving on to the Randstad, the to-be-returners maintained their social life in their home region through regular visits and are also still involved in local associations. This also maintained the sense of home for them in their home region. The social life and sense of home were thus important but they did not play an important role in their current choice to stay-away. The current choice to stay-away does in its turn thus not particularly affect their social life or sense of home for the home region. Hence the light-shaded reciprocal relation between these factors and the dependent variable 'Current unpreferred mobility choice'. Furthermore, due to the strongly maintained sense of place in the home region and knowing that they wanted to return eventually, the to-be-returners did not create a strong sense of place with their away-place. This is indicated by the light-shaded reciprocal relation. As for the remainers and returners, these reciprocal relation replaces the direct relation between the current (im)mobility choice and the (im)mobility intention from the initial conceptual model. For the current unpreferred mobility choice other motives prevailed like work, urban amenities and partners who also valued the importance of work in this life stage. Building up a career was thus most important in this life stage.



The maintained social life and sense of place in the home region become more important for the preferred mobility intention of the to-be-returners. The to-be-returners believe that this decision will be more definite, especially with regard to children, and therefore want to settle down at a place to which they feel more connected and where they feel more at home. This creates a positive attitude towards returning. They have continued to feel a part of the community in their home region and identify themselves with their village, Friesland or the North. Given the upcoming life phase, they want to be closer to family and friends which they start to value over working motives. The working-related motives are still important at this moment but are likely to become less decisive in the coming life phase, hence the light shade of the relation. In line with the remainers and returners, to-be-returners want to give their children a comparable childhood as themselves in a region they feel connected with. The sense of place with the away-place does not play a role in the intention since these respondents knew they would want to move back to the home region eventually.

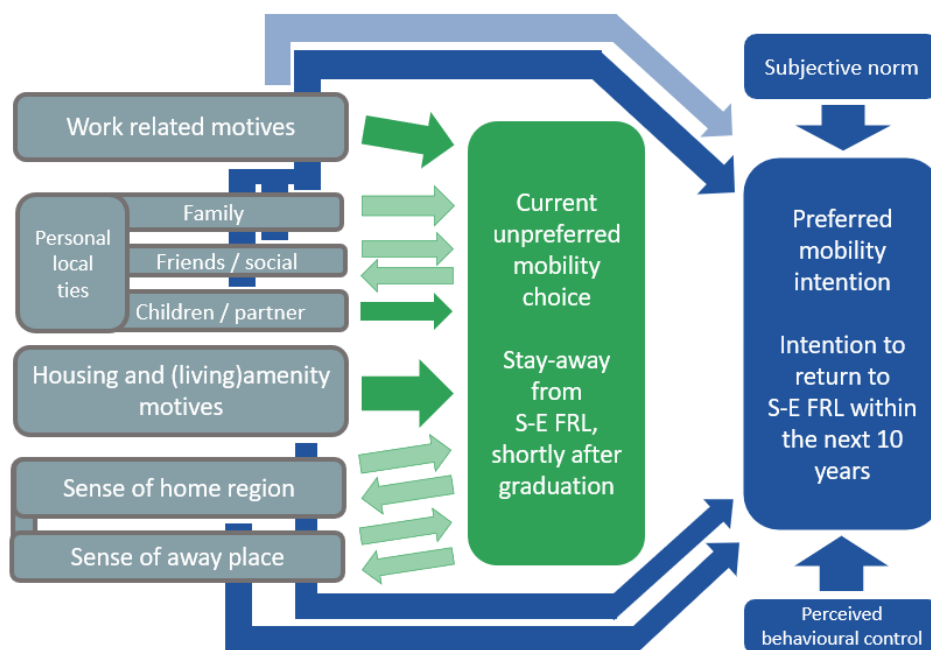


Figure 23 - Revised conceptual model for to-be-returners

For the subjective norm, the opinion of friends is supportive in their intention to return. Their partners have a varying influence due to their origin from the home region or elsewhere and subsequent preferences. Or being single with a role of a potential partner as discussed above.

The perceived control or feasibility of this intention is generally seen as positive. The liveability in terms of amenities is believed to remain sufficient and to-be-returners think that a suitable house is well-affordable for them. The only constraining factor for the to-be-returners to return now is work. They do not see the right jobs available in the North at this moment and therefore do not take the step to move back yet. However, this importance of their job is likely to shift to other motives and makes these stay-awayers 'give in' and consider other sectors. Additionally, working from home is contributing to the perceived behavioural control of finding a suitable job in the coming life phase.

Stay-awayers who do not intend to return

As discussed above, the stay-awayers who don't intend to return can be typified by a diminished sense of place with the home region and an absent or less close social life compared to the to-be-returners.

The most important motive in their current unpreferred mobility choice is work-related. These stay-awayers believe that suitable work can only be found in other places in the country and want to live at a commutable distance from their job. Their partners had the same position on the importance of their careers. Children did not yet play a role in the current unpreferred mobility choice. Furthermore, a part of these stay-awayers has built up a social life in their away-place during their study which they value and want to maintain. Additionally, the ability to use urban amenities is important to these graduates in the life phase shortly after graduation and makes them choose to stay away in their study city or move on to another city for work in the Randstad. On the other hand, the social life in the home region of these stay-awayers has diminished due to less frequent visits during their study life. This has an effect on the sense of place for the home region. Whilst the to-be-returners are still active in associations and feel a part of their community, this becomes less the case for the stay-awayers who do not intend to return. For some, the sense of place with their away-place has developed due to not having that fixity or notion of

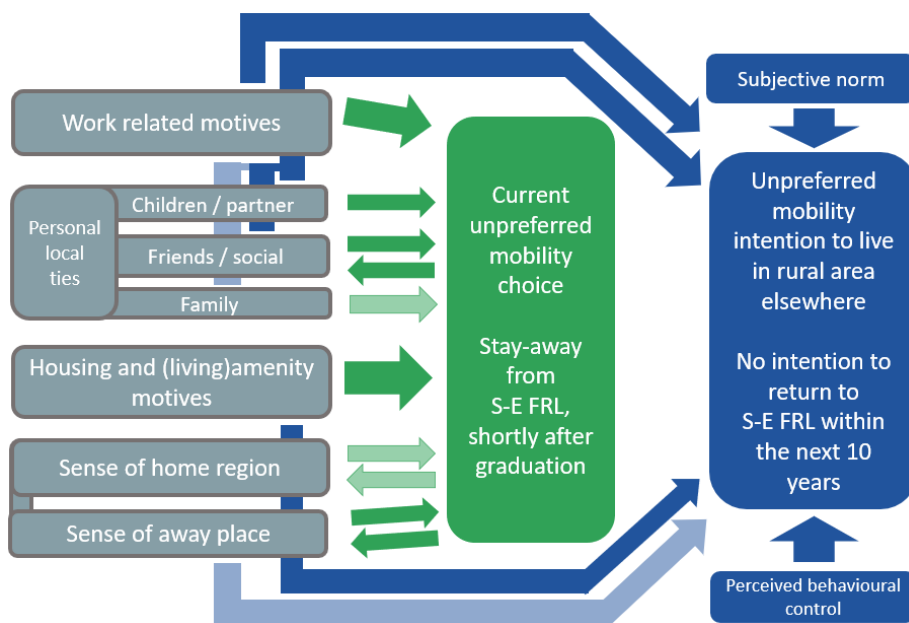


Figure 24 - Revised conceptual model for stay-awayers (who do not intend to return)

returning to the home region one day. The absence of this notion enables them to identify with their city and creates a sort of familiar feeling comparable to the described sense of place of remainers and returners for their home region. This familiarity and sense of place with the away-place is an important factor in their choice to stay away.

The current unpreferred mobility choice of these stay-awayers leads to a further diminished social life in their home region and therewith also less sense of community in the home region, hence the two reciprocal relation for the factors 'Friends / social' and 'Sense of home region' and the dependent variable 'Current unpreferred mobility choice'. The current unpreferred mobility choice to stay away thus further diminishes the sense of place with the away-place, an important factor for the negative attitude towards the behaviour of returning in the coming life phase. They start to feel less connected to their home region due to their extended stay away from there. Whilst to-be-returners still regularly return and remain active in associations during the beginning of their working life, this is not applicable for the stay-awayers who do not intend to return. On the other hand, stay-awayers became even more rooted in their away-place and their social life shifted further to their away-place. This made them feel more and more at home in their away-place due to the many experiences and connections there. Their sense of place with the away-place thus strengthened due to their choice to stay away. The current unpreferred mobility choice to stay away thus reinforces the sense of place with the away-place. Hence the reciprocal relation between the 'sense of away place and the 'current unpreferred mobility choice' which indicates this. The sense of place in the away-place becomes stronger and for several stay-awayers becomes the place where they feel most at home and most a part of. An important component in the unpreferred mobility intention. The reciprocal relations described in this paragraph replace the direct relation between the current (im)mobility choice and the (im)mobility intention stated in the conceptual model in section 2.6.

This leads to the unpreferred mobility intention, herein the sense of place for the away-place is still important but when children would enter the scene, stay-awayers let living amenities and spaciousness prevail over the sense of place with their away-place. They still want to live in the vicinity of their away-place since they expect their social life still to be centred here. Their built-up social life is thus actually an important driver in the location of their unpreferred mobility intention. The graduates who want to have children want them to grow up in a village since they see positive sides in this from their own youth. However, the sense of place for their home region is not strong and this village can thus also be in other parts of the country that fulfil such rural traits. There is nothing that draws them to their home region besides their parents. This is not something stay-awayers want to return for. Also not in the case of children, the travel distance is manageable.

Furthermore, these graduates intend to keep working in the Randstad and do not foresee a suitable job available in the North or do not want to commute. This influences their perceived behavioural control in a negative way.

Finally, considering the subjective norm, partners have the same intention to not want to live in the home region and wish to live in the away-place or in its vicinity. This strengthens the intention of these stay-awayers not to return.

//// 6. CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

The final chapter of this thesis concludes this research by answering the research question. The discussion section reviews the limitations of this research, presents worthwhile avenues for further research and provides practical recommendations. Finally, a reflection on the whole research process is given.

/// 6.1 Conclusion

This research aims to answer the following main research question: *“What drives the residential (im)mobility intentions of tertiary graduates from South-East Friesland and which role do the (im)mobility shortly after graduation and sense of place play herein?”*. This research is performed by interviewing 26 graduates of tertiary education who completed their high school in the five municipalities of South-East Friesland. These graduates consisted of the three (im)mobility groups of remainers, returners and stay-awayers. The interviews have provided a deeper understanding of the (im)mobility choice shortly after graduation, the sense of place with the home region and away-place, their (im)mobility intentions and how these aspects interact. The conclusion in answering the main research question is provided in this section.

*Sense of place for home region strongly influences current (im)mobility choice & at its turn the current choice to **remain, return or stay away** strengthens or weakens the sense of place for home region*

The sense of place for the home region is stronger for remainers, returners and a small part of stay-awayers (the to-be-returners). Graduates who remain or return feel more a part of the community and feel a greater sense of home for their home region. This largely stems from the maintained social life during their study time and involvement in local associations or other community-related activities. The perceived sense of place or the feeling of ‘having everything here’ is thus also one of the main reasons for the remainers and returners to make their current immobility and preferred mobility choice. Due to remaining or returning, the respondents describe that this sense of place has thus also been maintained. The internship enabled the choice of most remainers to stay in the home region since this was conducted in the home region and graduates could stay working here after graduation. There was thus no necessity to consider searching for a job elsewhere and subsequently live there.

On the other hand, the stay-awayers did not decide to return shortly after graduation. This is mainly due to labour market-related motives. But also due to a diminished group of friends in the home region and therewith a less strong sense of place for the home region. While at the same a feeling of ‘in-between-ness’ (Palmer et al., 2009) in their away-places contributed to the choice to stay away from the home region for some stay-awayers. Given that the sense of place for the home region already diminished during their study time by returning to a lesser extent compared to returners, the choice to stay away made stay-awayers lose even further connection with remaining friends or associations in the village, as we will see in the next section. For to-be-returners this does not apply, their current unpreferred mobility choice to stay away does not affect the sense of place so much due to the maintained involvement in the community through associations and regular visiting. In the current unpreferred mobility choice to stay away, the to-be-returners let labour market opportunities prevail.

Furthermore, most of the stay-awayers describe how they have their group of friends in their away-places after having studied there and now also work there. They have developed or are still developing, in the case of second away-places, a sense of familiarity with their away-places. The local ties and a sense of place for their away-places contributed to their current unpreferred mobility choice to stay away. In its turn, the current unpreferred mobility choice to stay away has created even further local ties and a sense of place for their away-places which makes them intend to stay in their away-places or nearby. They do not want to give up what they have built up there and feel connected. The findings

of this fieldwork are in accordance with the findings of Venhorst et al. (2013) who state that after the first two to three years after graduation the propensity to move drops due to having built up local ties like a job or a social life.

Sense of place for home region gains importance in intention to return for to-be-returners due to a more definite life phase while stay-awayers value traits of a village in this life phase but lack of sense of place does not make them opt for the home region.

The sense of place differs thus for the different (im)mobility groups due to amongst others their (im)mobility choice shortly after graduation and an active or diminished friends base in the home region. This influences the intention of the stay-awayers in such a way that of the eight stay-awayers, out of ten, who consider having children, all would like to live in a more rural environment compared to the cities they currently live in. However, only three state that this needs to be in South-East Friesland. These three to-be-returners still have an active friends base in their home region and are involved in sports- or other associations. They still feel a strong sense of home and feel part of the community due to this. Given the upcoming life phase, which feels more definite, they want to settle down at a place where they feel more familiar and at a place or region with which they identify themselves more compared to their current place of residence. What sets these to-be-returners apart from the stay-awayers who also want to live in a more rural area in the coming life phase? This is the maintained connection with the region by visiting, having friends and being involved in the community of the village. While the other stay-awayers mainly have only their parents left in their home region and memories of their childhood, the to-be-returners also have friends and a broader sense of home to fall back upon when returning. Furthermore, they also did not build up a strong sense of place with their away-places due to knowing that they would only live there for a temporary while which is in line with the findings of Polfliet (2020). The to-be-returners deem their intention also as feasible although they still see some hurdles for their job in the coming life phase and are unsure whether a comparable job can be found at a commutable distance. However, the sense of place for their home region prevails and some even consider switching to a different sector in order to be able to move to their home region, which is in accordance with von Reichert et al. (2014).

For the five stay-awayers who do intend to move to a village given the perceived advantages for children, the sense of place with their home region is less strong and the respective village does thus not have to be in South-East Friesland. The graduates appreciate the natural amenities in the home region and also the characteristics of living in a village such as some social control or freedom for children to grow up. However, they do not feel the same sort of sense of home or sense of community for their home region anymore. The same applies to the graduates who do not intend to have children and do not intend to return. Their friend base in the home region diminished due to less frequent visits during their study time and at the beginning of their working life. Neither are they involved in associations anymore. The absence or diminished sense of place for their home region is thus resulting in not having any desire to return to the home region. Nevertheless, some of these stay-awayers share that they do feel at home when visiting their parents but would not feel like that when living there due to childhood experiences, a diminished friends base or not speaking Frisian. They feel at home in the rural village setting but not particularly in their home region anymore. Therefore, they would like to live in a village with comparable characteristics and natural amenities as in their home region but in a different part of the country or a different part of the North. This is due to better accessibility to work, being close to friends or indifference concerning the natural amenities. This is in line with the findings of Feijten et al. (2008) who find that highly educated who grow up in the countryside and want to return eventually, do not necessarily need to return to their home region due to the desire to live in a rural area more generally instead of the specific village. The sense of place for the away-place in the intention to stay away is mainly of importance for the graduates who do not intend to have children.

They have developed a strong sense of place, even identify with their away-places and would not want to give this up easily.

The remainers and returners share that the role of sense of place in their current choice to stay or return is equally important in their intention to stay. This is where they feel most at home due to having a friends base and being involved in the local community which has continued during their study period and the beginning of their working life. It is not the mere presence of the friends base but also the feeling of contributing to the local liveability and being a part of this that makes the remainers and returners want to stay in the home region. Especially in a coming life phase in which life events such as the birth of children might happen. The sense of place with the away-place does not play a role in the intention to stay for returners. They associate or link this mainly to their life phase of being a student and not with their current and future life phase.

Other drivers

The combination of having potential children, being close to family and friends and the perceived sense of place is what makes the remainers and returners intend to stay in their home region. They see this as a very suitable region due to their own childhood and want to provide this for their children as well. The support of family in bringing up these children is also contributing to the intention of remainers and returners to stay. Moreover, it should be mentioned that ten out of sixteen of the remainers or returners have a partner which is from South-East Friesland or other parts of Friesland. The graduates share that this strengthens their intention. One remainder has a partner from a different part of the country and the remaining five graduates are single. A potential partner can shake up the intention to stay for these single graduates as they share that for a partner they might be willing to live elsewhere. Furthermore, the only worrying aspect for a small group of the remainers and returners to fulfil their intention is finding a suitable house. They believe that the Northern labour market provides enough interesting job opportunities due to the well-valued accessibility to larger cities and also the liveability in terms of amenities and viability of associations is generally seen as sufficient. Where needed the well-valued accessibility allows them to access amenities which are not available in their villages but are available in larger cores. But the chances of finding a suitable house is for a minority of the remainers and returners perceived as less promising and might lead them to choose a different municipality or live, unintended, in a larger place.

For stay-awayers who do not intend to return, work remains an important driver in their intention. They share that their work is mainly located in the Randstad or in the cities of Leeuwarden or Groningen but do not want to commute to their work. For the stay-awayers who do not intend to have children, urban amenities remain important. This contributes to their intention of staying in their away-place.

To-be-returners also mention more affordable housing as an additional interesting aspect of moving to their home region but this is not the main driver in their intention to return. Finding suitable housing is thus something they perceive as manageable in the coming life phase. The same applies to the liveability in the region, the stay-awayers expect this to remain sufficient for their needs and raising a child. When considering this aspect they share that it helps that they were used to this themselves in their own childhood. However, the ability to find a suitable job is something that holds these graduates still back. They describe their jobs and projects in the Randstad as exciting and are not ready to give this up yet as they believe that such jobs are not available in the North. However, over time the above-described importance of their sense of place and the desire to let their children grow up in a perceived green, safe and free space can change their stance on jobs.

Main takeaways

All things considered, the findings of this research are largely in line with the findings of existing research described in the theoretical framework. The factors described in the theoretical framework did to a large extent influence the current (im)mobility choice and (im)mobility intention in the way expected. However, there are also takeaways from this research which were not directly found in the existing literature. The most important finding is the important role of sense of place in the current (im)mobility choice and the (im)mobility intention. Although labour market motives are important, as often discussed in local and regional media, in the mobility choice to stay away, a less strong sense of place makes stay-awayers feel less at home in the home region and a build-up connection with the away-place even feel more at home in their study city. The stay-awayers are then split up when considering the mobility intention in to-be-returners and stay-awayers. For to-be-returners the sense of place is still strong and more important in this definite phase. For stay-awayers, the lack of career opportunities in the home region or the North is not contributing to their intention to stay away but it is only a part of the story. Due to their current choice to stay away, their sense of place has diminished even further and is not drawing them back. By now they have built up an important part of their life elsewhere. A preference for a village to let children grow up in the coming life phase is preferably located close to their social life which is no longer in South-East Friesland. The stay-awayers feel less part of the community in their home region and are more indifferent to the village where they will raise their children. As long as they are close to their social life built up in their away-places, a village that the stay-awayers value as suitable for raising their children suffices. For remainers and returners, the sense of place is already prominent in their choice to remain and return shortly after graduation and does not lose prominence for their intention to stay. They want to live in the place where they feel most at home.

Another interesting takeaway is the strong relation for the remainers between their internship and their first job which did not make them even consider living elsewhere. Nevertheless, this research has its limitations which will be discussed first after which recommendations for further research and practical recommendations follow.

/// 6.2 Discussion

Limitations

The qualitative nature of this research has allowed the researcher to study the behaviour of three different (im)mobility groups within a limited period of time and to dive into their (im)mobility intentions in an in-depth way (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2007). Qualitative research is a suitable research approach when the studied subject involves to a large extent behavioural attitudes or a lived experience which quantitative research can not provide (Creswell, 2007). However, choosing this research approach also has its limitations as discussed in the methodology chapter.

Qualitative research is often criticized for its subjectivity. Bryman (2012) describes it as “By these criticisms they usually mean that qualitative findings rely too much on the researcher’s often unsystematic views about what is significant and important, and also upon the close personal relationships that the researcher frequently strikes up with the people studied” (p. 405). The chosen research method relies on an interaction between two individuals and was chosen for its suitability as described in section 3.1. However, it is possible that I have unintendedly influenced these interviews by non-verbal communication or in a verbal way by my insider position. Since I am part of the target group I have been through the same choices and considerations as most of the respondents. This position has benefits, such as knowledge of the region, but can also lead to the researcher highlighting specific topics due to his own experiences. To prevent such an interview bias as much as possible a clear interview guide was used which contained mainly open questions. This interview guide was based

on the theoretical framework. It was thoroughly reviewed with others in order for it to contain all relevant topics and those being asked in an appropriate way. The interview guide also ensured the internal validity of this research, whether what was intended to be reviewed was also actually researched. Namely the (im)mobility intention of graduates considering sense of place and the life course approach.

In line with subjectivity, it is important for qualitative researchers to be transparent about the way the research was designed, conducted and analysed. In order for the reader to understand the choices and decisions of the author, the research approach, execution and analysis have been entirely outlined in chapter three. Nevertheless, it remains difficult and not possible to present the full details of this research given the level of detail.

Another important aspect of qualitative research refers to generalisability and repeatability. Within geography, every case has a different context and it is thus not with certainty to be said that this research is entirely generalizable to other cases. However, the theoretical framework and analysis showed that existing research on highly educated graduates from rural areas has comparable findings with this research on the current (im)mobility choice and the way sense of place is constituted. Given this, it is imaginable that the findings of this research can, with care, be applied to other peripheral regions with comparable characteristics. In order to say this with more certainty, further research would have to be conducted. Nevertheless, I am aware of the fact that it remains hard to replicate this research given that the researcher is an important research instrument in this qualitative research. Despite this nature of qualitative research, the careful choice and explanation of the case and the clear description of the way the research was designed, executed and analysed allow for other researchers to repeat this research.

Recommendations for further research

Given the importance of the sense of place in the (im)mobility intention of the graduates it would be interesting for further research to review how the sense of place can be influenced by governmental bodies. Since we know that sense of place is a very personal feeling with a place, region, street or city, it might be difficult to influence this by policies or so. However, it does not necessarily need to involve policies that enhance the sense of place, it can also look into ways on how the existing sense of place can be maintained and not deteriorated. For instance, a pilot focusing on facilitating studying members of sports clubs to still go for their practice exercise during weekdays by letting them carpool or subsidize a shared car. The subject of sense of place deserves further attention due to its importance in the (im)mobility behaviour of graduates and their later (im)mobility intentions. This research has studied the (im)mobility intention by looking at its relation with the current/previous (im)mobility behaviour and by studying the role of sense of place and other drivers. In other words, the temperature is taken at one specific moment. Future research could extend the scope of this research and study the (im)mobility behaviour and intentions in a longitudinal way. As described earlier in this thesis, conducting a longitudinal approach in this thesis was not feasible given the time constraints. However, such an approach would provide useful insights into the intentions at various moments and the actual behaviour a couple of years later. Hooijen et al. (2020) study the intentions of students before graduation and their (im)mobility behaviour after graduation. However, no longitudinal study was found that studies both the (im)mobility intentions for the coming life phase of potential children, marriage or buying a house of graduates during their early working career and their actual behaviour several years later. Moreover, the longitudinal approach of Hooijen et al. (2020) by studying the intentions while being still a student and the behaviour for the early working career could be combined with the above-described additional longitudinal study of intentions during the early working career for the 'settling down phase' and its actual behaviour:

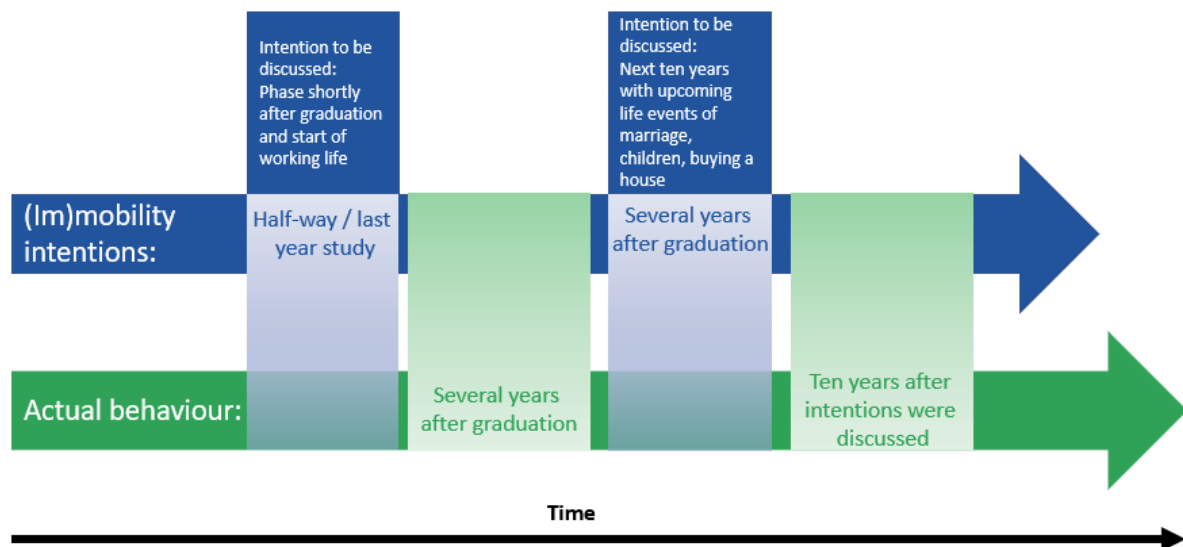


Figure 25 - Potential longitudinal avenue for further research

Furthermore, studying the sense of place for the home region could be discussed via the research method of a walking interview. Since places and the experience of persons or their connection with them are very personal, it is important to use research methods which can do right to their sense of place. This research has attempted to do so by using photo elicitation as a research method. However, a method which allows for even further detail and attention to studying the sense of place is walking interviews. This enables the multi-sensory experience of places to a great extent and allows respondents to show the researcher their connection with that place (Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2014).

A final avenue for further research might be to detail the group of mobile students in the year in which they have left their parental home. Now, regardless of the moment when they left their parental home, when a student moved to live in their study city they were categorised as returners or stay-awayer, depending on their mobility choice after graduation. Most returners and stay-awayers already moved to their study city before the start of their study but also a considerable number only moved after the first or second year. Does this have an effect on the sense of place and the choice to stay away or return?

Practical use

This research was written under the supervision of and in cooperation with the Fries Sociaal Planbureau (FSP). The research of the FSP is mainly meant for their target audience of public administrators, local representatives of municipalities and the province, civil society organisations, companies and initiators of socially relevant projects in a broad sense (FSP, n.d.). These parties can make use of the main takeaways into consideration for future policies and projects. For instance, the findings show the importance of sense of place in both the current (im)mobility choice and (im)mobility intention. Policymakers should consider how this sense of place can be maintained while graduates live in their away-places in order to maintain the sense of place so that such graduates are more willing to return in the future. A worthwhile project to look into in this context is the *Zeeuwse Connectie*. This is an initiative of various entrepreneurs from the province of Zeeland in cooperation with the province of Zeeland. It aims to be a “community for *Zeeuwen*; people who grew up in Zeeland and live inside or outside the provinces, Boomerang-Zeeuwen, Import-Zeeuwen and everybody else who has something with Zeeland and is fond of it. [...] In this way, we maintain and strengthen our connection with Zeeland” (De Zeeuwse Connectie, n.d., “DE ZEEUWSE CONNECTIE” section). Although this research studied a region of five municipalities and the *Zeeuwse connectie* focuses on a whole province, the

findings of this research could be generalised to the whole province of Friesland, as discussed in the section 'Limitations'.

Moreover, some respondents of this research indicated that suitable vacancies were not necessarily that visible. Whether the visibility of vacancies or internships suffices goes beyond the scope of this research but also this could be an interesting takeaway for practical use. In this context, the *Zeeuwse connectie* is again interesting to consider due to having an entire vacancy bank for both private and public vacancies and internships.

Finally, this research underpins the housing problem of especially single youngsters. Especially when considering villages, this group of graduates is struggling to find a suitable house and considers living in a different municipality due to the unavailability of suitable housing in their village. Naturally, this is more of a nationwide problem than purely a local situation and also does not only apply to highly educated young people. Notwithstanding it underpins its importance.

/// 6.3 Reflection

This section presents a personal reflection on the research process. All things considered, I am happy with the end product of this Master's thesis research and the process of creating and writing it. It has been a long process due to chosen focus of this research and the choice to include multiple (im)mobility groups. The preparation of the actual research received the necessary attention by developing research questions, a theoretical framework and a methodology. This was then all revised again after discussions with one of my supervisors or fellow students. Despite the unfortunate feeling when rewriting a chapter, this was not for nothing. The preparations paid off in later phases. Another difficult point was finding respondents. Starting early with recruitment helped to overcome this and in the end, there was even a 'waitlist' of respondents. The interviews were definitely the most exciting part of the research. Most respondents were very interested in the subject and like to talk about the subject. This gave me a lot of energy for the further phases. In the later phases, I have to say that I was sometimes maybe too detailed which resulted in some concept chapters getting too long or the transcribing taking more time than anticipated. This is valuable critique from my supervisors, something that I acknowledge and take along for the future. Being a bit more concrete and focus on the main message is an important takeaway for myself.

Overlooking the whole process, this Master's thesis research was intriguing and allowed me to focus on a subject I am interested in. In a reflection on the whole process, I believe that I improved my research skills in this exhaustive and complex project. Although the process required some effort and time, I knew that in the end, it was going to result in a, to my opinion, intriguing message on a challenge for rural regions. This made it a fun and fulfilling exercise from which I have learned a lot!

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//// 8. APPENDIX

/// 8.1 Interview guide

Only the interview guide of the stay-awayers has been included. The separate interview guides for the returners and remainers are very similar and mainly differ on a few questions in the way the question was phrased for the specific (im)mobility context.

Introductie richting interview respondententen aangaande het onderzoeksonderwerp, inhoud en opzet van het interview en privacy/vertrouwelijkheid.

Fijn dat je mee wil werken aan mijn onderzoek.

Mijn naam is Arjen Bergsma, ik ben masterstudent Economic Geography aan de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen en momenteel bezig met mijn afstudeerstage bij het Fries Sociaal Planbureau.

Hiervoor doe ik een onderzoek naar hoog opgeleide jongeren uit de regio Zuidoost Friesland en de motieven waarom zij na het afstuderen **vertrekken** (en niet terugkeren), **terugkeren** of **blijven wonen** in de regio Zuidoost Friesland.

Het uiteindelijke doel is om met name inzicht te krijgen in de lange-termijn intenties van deze hoogopgeleide jongeren om te blijven of terug te keren en waarom.

Om deze lange termijns intentie te begrijpen is het ook van belang om de huidige keuze kort na het afstuderen te begrijpen en de binding met de regio goed te begrijpen.

Belangrijk want, Zuidoost FRL wordt gezien als ‘anticipatiegebied’ door de Nederlandse overheid, dit betekent dat de regio nog niet gezien wordt als ‘krimpegebied’ maar dat het wel deze kant op beweegt door vergrijzing, ontgroening en ook het wegtrekken van jongeren.

Dit interview zal ongeveer een uur duren.

Ik zal het interview opnemen met mijn telefoon of laptop zodat ik me op jou en de vragen kan richten, ga je hiermee akkoord?

Verder is het belangrijk om te benadrukken dat jouw medewerking geheel vrijwillig is. Geef vooral ook aan als je even wilt pauzeren, een vraag hebt of naar het toilet moet oid. Ook is het niet antwoord geven op een vraag, geen enkel probleem. Ik zal deze opname vertrouwelijk behandelen, dit betekend dat de opname alleen door mij gebruikt zal worden en niet openbaar gemaakt wordt. Het interview zal enkel voor mijn master scriptie gebruikt worden en dient geen andere doelen. Zodra het interview getranscribeerd is zal de opname verwijderd worden. Verder wordt dit interview anoniem of onder een pseudoniem in mijn scriptie verwerkt. Ik zal genoemde plaatsnamen en namen aanpassen naar ‘mijn dorp’ of ‘mijn broer/zus/vriend’ of iets dergelijks, indien de quote gebruikt wordt. Als je interesse hebt in de resultaten dan stuur ik je na afloop van dit onderzoek graag een Nederlandse samenvatting toe.

Heb je het *geinformeerde medewerking* document doorgelezen en zou je dit willen invullen?

Het interview bestaat uit vier delen:

- In het eerste deel zullen we een tijdelijk invullen aan de hand van een aantal korte algemene vragen. Hier bespreken we je achtergrond en context te schetsen over de levensloop en ook jegens de regio
 - o Life-history calendar – Levensfasebenadering – 4 aspecten
 - Verhuizingen hangen vaak samen met veranderingen in de verschillende prioriteiten in iemand levensfase. Hierin gaat het om aspecten als Educatie, Werk, Huishouden/Samenwonen en Woon voorkeuren
 - Met de life history calendar zullen we een beeld schetsen in de veranderingen in deze vier trajecten voor jou welke kunnen helpen bij

het bespreken van de verschillende motieven voor de gemaakte woonkeuzes

- Het tweede deel focust op de keuze en motieven voor je huidige woonlocatie, kort na het afstuderen en gaat hier dieper op in.
- Het derde deel gaat over je binding met de regio Zuidoost Friesland of je dorp/plaats. Hierbij zullen we ook de door jou meegenomen foto's gebruiken
- Het laatste deel betreft vragen over je intenties qua woonlocatie, hierbij nadrukkelijk kijkend naar een toekomstige levensfase

STAY-AWAYER / PRE-GRADUATE LEAVER

Voordat we beginnen, wil ik nog vragen of je **een foto** mee hebt genomen / kunnen mailen die je binding met de regio waar je bent opgegroeid illustreert.

Heb je op dit moment wellicht vragen over het doel, aanpak of opzet van het onderzoek?

Dan start ik nu de opname!

1. Algemene 'levensloop' informatie via life history calendar

Jaar + Leeftijd invullen

We kunnen beginnen met de life history calendar in te vullen om zo te bepalen welke verhuisgroep op jou van toepassing is en de aanloop naar je huidige woonlocatie-keuze kort na het afstuderen te bespreken.

- Hou oud ben je?
 - o **Vul huidige leeftijd in life history calendar in**

Woonplaats jeugd/middelbare school periode + plek/type + verhuizingen

- Waar ben je opgegroeid?
 - o Heb je hiervoor nog ergens anders gewoond?
- Kun je dit dorp/stad omschrijven?
- Ging je hier ook naar de basisschool?
- Ben je tijdens je basisschool periode verhuisd of altijd op dezelfde plek blijven wonen?
 - o Mogelijk naar ander nabij dorp/plaats of binnen de plaats
- Komen je ouders/familie hier ook vandaan of uit de buurt?
- Heb je mogelijk nog broertjes en/of zusjes?
 - o Zijn zij ook opgegroeid in de regio?
- Waar ging je naar de middelbare school?
- Ben je ook tijdens de middelbare school periode op dezelfde plek blijven wonen?
- ➔ Tijdens deze periode ben je dus eigenlijk **vrij veel / een paar keer / weinig / niet verhuisd**
 - o **Vul life history calendar in**

Studie en woonplaats

- Welke studie ben je na de middelbare school gaan volgen?

- Waar heb je deze studie gevolgd?
- Ben je toen ook op kamers gegaan in deze stad?
 - o Waarom wel/niet?
 - o Waar kwamen je huisgenoten vandaan?
- **Ging je tijdens deze periode op kamers nog wel eens terug naar het ouderlijk huis?**
 - o **Iedere week / een keer per maand / paar keer per jaar / amper**
 - o **Waarom wel/niet?**
- Wanneer ben je uiteindelijk afgestudeerd?
 - o CHECK / was dit de bachelor en daarna nog een master?
 - Dan doorvragen

Werk en woonplaats

- Wanneer begon je met je eerste 'echte' baan? Die je niet als bijbaantje beschouwde
 - o In welke gemeente of plek deed/doe je dit werk?
 - o Wat voor werk was dit, in welke functie?
- Ben je na het afstuderen verhuisd? Waarheen?
 - o Ook verhuizen binnen dorp/stad/omgeving is van belang
- Is dit werk nu ook nog steeds van toepassing? Heb je tussen eerste baan na afstuderen en nu nog een andere functies gehad?
 - o Mogelijke zelfde soort baan bij andere werkgever op andere plaats?
- Wat waren je woonsamenstellingen tijdens deze verhuizingen? Wat is je huidige 'woonsamenstelling'?
 - o Inwonend bij ouders, alleen en uitwonend, samenwonend met partner, samenwonend met vrienden, op kamers
 - In geval van partner – Waar komt je partner vandaan?
- We hebben nu de 'levens-fase' trajecten 'school' / 'arbeid' en 'huishouden' besproken. Hebben woon/locatievoorkeuren nog een rol gespeeld in een van je verhuizingen? Denk aan de wens om een huis te kopen, rustiger te wonen, specifieke voorzieningen in de nabijheid te hebben of in een bepaalde buurt wonen. Dit is niet per se noodzakelijkerwijs van toepassing.

Zonet bespraken we al dat je ouders/familie wel/niet afkomstig zijn uit de regio.

- Woont je familie nog steeds in de regio?

Verder zijn er mogelijk nog andere personen, buiten je gezin of eventuele partner, die een belangrijke rol spelen in je leven.

- Welke mensen spelen verder een belangrijke rol in je leven?
 - o Waar wonen zij?

Ik denk dat we nu vast hebben kunnen stellen dat op jou een....

- Stay-awayer / Wegblijver
- Terugkeerder
- Blijver

...profiel van toepassing is. Daarnaast zijn we ingegaan op jouw persoonlijke achtergrond en context met de regio Zuidoost Friesland, dit komt zometeen verder terug als we ingaan om je woonkeuzes en intenties.

2. Woonlocatiekeuze en motief

Ik denk dat we inmiddels een behoorlijk beeld hebben geschetst van je achtergrond, belangrijke personen, plekken en gebeurtenissen. Mogelijk hebben een aantal van deze factoren bijgedragen in de motieven en keuzes om te verhuizen of te blijven in de stad waar je gestudeerd hebt. Ik zou nu graag in willen zoomen op je huidige woonkeuze om na het afstuderen te kiezen voor plaats **XXX** en daarbij niet terug te keren naar Zuidoost Friesland.

Wat was/is voor jou het belangrijkste motief om voor je huidige woonplaats te kiezen?(kort na het afstuderen?)

- PROBE: Doorgaan hierop

Zonet gaf je aan dat XXXX voor jou een belangrijke reden/motief/factor is geweest in je huidige woonlocatiekeuze.

- Zijn er mogelijk nog andere motieven of factoren die hierin een rol hebben gespeeld?
- PROBE: Doorgaan hierop

Uiteindelijk heb je er dus voor gekozen om in <PLAATS X> te blijven / verder te verhuizen naar <PLAATS X>. Aangezien dit onderzoek vanuit een Zuidoost Friese bril de woonkeuzes bekijkt, ben ik benieuwd of je wellicht nog overwogen hebt om terug te verhuizen naar Zuidoost Friesland?

- Zou je dat toe kunnen lichten?
- Hebben er ook nog andere overwegingen een rol gespeelt hierin?

➔ *Eventueel doorvragen op werk indien genoemd door de respondent, en zoektocht in Zuidoost Friesland*

- *Hoe is zoektocht naar werk in Zuidoost FRL ervaren*
- *Indien niet gezocht binnen Zuidoost FRL, waarom niet?*

3. Sense of place

'Sense of place' is de tot op zekere hoogte mentale ontastbare binding die je met een plek of regio voelt op persoonlijk vlak. Het kan bijvoorbeeld zijn dat je je hier echt thuis voelt door eerdere specifieke ervaringen. Je voelt je een 'Heerenveener', Feenster / 'Sweachster' etc. Of denk aan het gevoel dat je voelt als je nu over de weide velden uitkijkt, mogelijk doet dit je denken aan specifieke fijne herinneringen als lange fietstochten naar school of vrienden. Denk ook aan specifieke plekken als bossen, andere natuur of een bepaald verenigingsgebouw of kerkgebouw. Of de ervaren gemeenschapszin waardoor je je wellicht verbonden voelt met een plek. De sense of place kan dus voor sommigen sterker zijn, en voor anderen die een mindere binding voelen met de regio kan deze minder sterk voelen. We zullen eerst je foto bespreken en daarna stel ik nog een paar andere vragen over de sense of place / binding met de regio / je dorp.

Laten we dan nu naar jou foto gaan. Graag zou ik je willen vragen om, voor de opname, te omschrijven wat we op deze foto zien en hoe deze foto voor jou de 'sense of place', jouw binding met de regio of een bepaalde plek illustreert.

- ➔ Bespreek foto's
- Wat zien we? Waar is deze plek?

- Wat betekent deze plek voor jou?
- Wat doe je op deze plek?
- Ga je hier vaak naartoe?
- Roept deze plek een bepaald gevoel op?
 - Waarom?

Identity (uitleggen!)

- Identificeer je je met de regio waar je bent opgegroeid?
 - Waar identificeer je dan precies mee?
 - Friesland, de regio Zuidoost Friesland, je dorp of plaats van herkomst of iets anders?
 - Kun je dit toelichten?
 - (Spreek je Fries?)

Community/Belonging/Home (uitleggen!)

- Voel je je thuis onder je 'voormalig' dorps/regio genoten? Heb je het gevoel dat je 'erbij' hoort in de regio / het dorp of stad van herkomst?
 - PROBE: kun je daar wat verder over uitwiden
- Naast thuis voelen kun je ook het gevoel hebben ergens thuis te horen.
 - Heb je het gevoel dat je thuis hoort in de plaats/regio waar je bent opgegroeid?
- Hoe ervaar je de gemeenschapszin in jouw dorp/regio/plaats?
 - Verenigingsleven?
 - Draag je hier zelf aan bij?

Nature (indien al besproken bij foto laten zitten) (uitleggen!)

- Hoe waardeer je de natuur in Zuidoost Friesland / jouw regio?
 - Hoe beïnvloedt dit je binding of sense of place met de regio?

Nu dat we de sense of place met de regio Zuidoost Friesland / je dorp / de regio waar je bent opgegroeid hebben besproken aan de hand van je foto en de andere aspecten....

- **Hoe heeft deze 'sense of place' voor Zuidoost Friesland / je dorp jouw huidige locatie woonkeuze beïnvloed?**
- Waarom?
- Is je binding met de regio door de jaren heen veranderd?

Het is mogelijk om een 'sense of place' / binding met meerdere plaatsen te voelen. Zo woon ik nu zelf al een tijdje in XXX en heb ik in Groningen gestudeerd. Met deze twee plaatsen heb ik nu ook een zekere binding. Zulke plaatsen noem ik de 'away-place'

Wat voor binding voel je met je huidige woonplaats of de regio waar je woont?

- Kun je dit toelichten?
- Hoe uit zich dit voor jou?
 - Identificeren? Thuis voelen?
 - Specifieke plekken?
 - Waarom?

Wat voor binding voel je met de plaats waar je gestudeerd hebt?

- Kun je dit toelichten?
- Hoe uit zich dit voor jou?
 - Identificeren? Thuis voelen?
 - Specifieke plekken?
 - Waarom?

Nu dat we de sense of place met de de away-place 'NAAM VAN PLAATS' hebben besproken aan de hand de verschillende aspecten....

- **Welke rol heeft deze 'sense of place' voor de *away-place* gespeeld in jouw huidige locatie woonkeuze?**
- Waarom?

4. Toekomstige intenties

Als we nu de koppeling terug maken naar de life course approach benadering is het mogelijk dat in de komende 10 jaar bepaalde nieuwe levensfasen zich aan zullen dienen, denk bijvoorbeeld aan het **kopen van een huis, gezinsuitbreiding, opgroeiende kinderen of mantelzorg van ouders**. Hierbij is het denkbaar dat je andere woonwensen en locatiewensen hebt dan in de huidige situatie.

Deze toekomstige levensfasen in beschouwing nemende, welke intentie heb je dan qua locatie om te wonen binnen de komende 10 jaar?

- ➔ Wat is de belangrijkste reden voor jou om voor deze locatie te kiezen?
- ➔ Je hebt dus **wel/niet** de intentie om terug te keren naar Zuidoost Friesland binnen nu en tien jaar. Zou je dit verder toe kunnen lichten? Wat is het belangrijkste motief hierin? Waarom vindt je dit belangrijk?

Hoe denken de voor jou belangrijke personen in je leven over deze intentie? Moedigen zij dit aan of ontmoedigen ze dit?

Hoe beïnvloedt hun mening jouw intentie?

In geval van partners

- Hoe kijkt je partner hier naar?

Wat zou jou persoonlijke voorkeur zijn?

INDIEN NEGATIEVE INTENTIE – Wat zou er voor jou moeten veranderen in de regio Zuidoost Friesland om je intentie te doen veranderen?

INDIEN (GEMATIGDE) POSITIEVE INTENTIE - Hoe ervaar je überhaupt de (potentiële) mogelijkheid om terug te keren naar de regio? Heb je bijvoorbeeld het idee dat er voor jou banen beschikbaar zijn in de regio Zuidoost Friesland? Woningen? Leefbaarheid op het vlak van voorzieningen?

- Hoe beïnvloedt deze perceptie qua kansen of praktische mogelijkheden je intentie?
- Zou een verbeterde perceptie qua kans of mogelijkheden om terug te keren, je intentie veranderen?

Welke rol speelt de eerder besproken 'sense of place' jegens de regio Zuidoost Friesland in deze toekomstige intentie?

- Indien anders dan bij huidige woonkeuze, hoe komt het dat de sense of place een andere rol speelt in toekomstige intentie dan in huidige woonkeuze?

En hoe beïnvloedt de sense of place voor de away-place <SPECIEK PLAATSEN NOEMEN> je intentie?

In hoeverre beïnvloeden je vastigheden in je huidige woonplaats zoals werk, woning en sociaal netwerk, je toekomstige woon-intentie.

- Waarom?

5. Overig en afsluiting

We hebben heel veel besproken, zijn er nog dingen waar je aan denkt, die we niet hebben besproken vandaag maar wel relevant zijn of die invloed hebben gehad op je huidige keuze om in plaats X te wonen en niet terug te keren naar Zuidoost Friesland? En voor je toekomstige intentie om wel/niet terug te keren, hebben we daar nog iets niet besproken?

AFRONDEN:

Zullen we een paar dingen samenvatten?

Kun je me een voorbeeld geven van?

Klopt het dat?

Wil je me nog iets meer vertellen over ... ?

Wat je met me deelt is belangrijk, kun je er meer over vertellen?

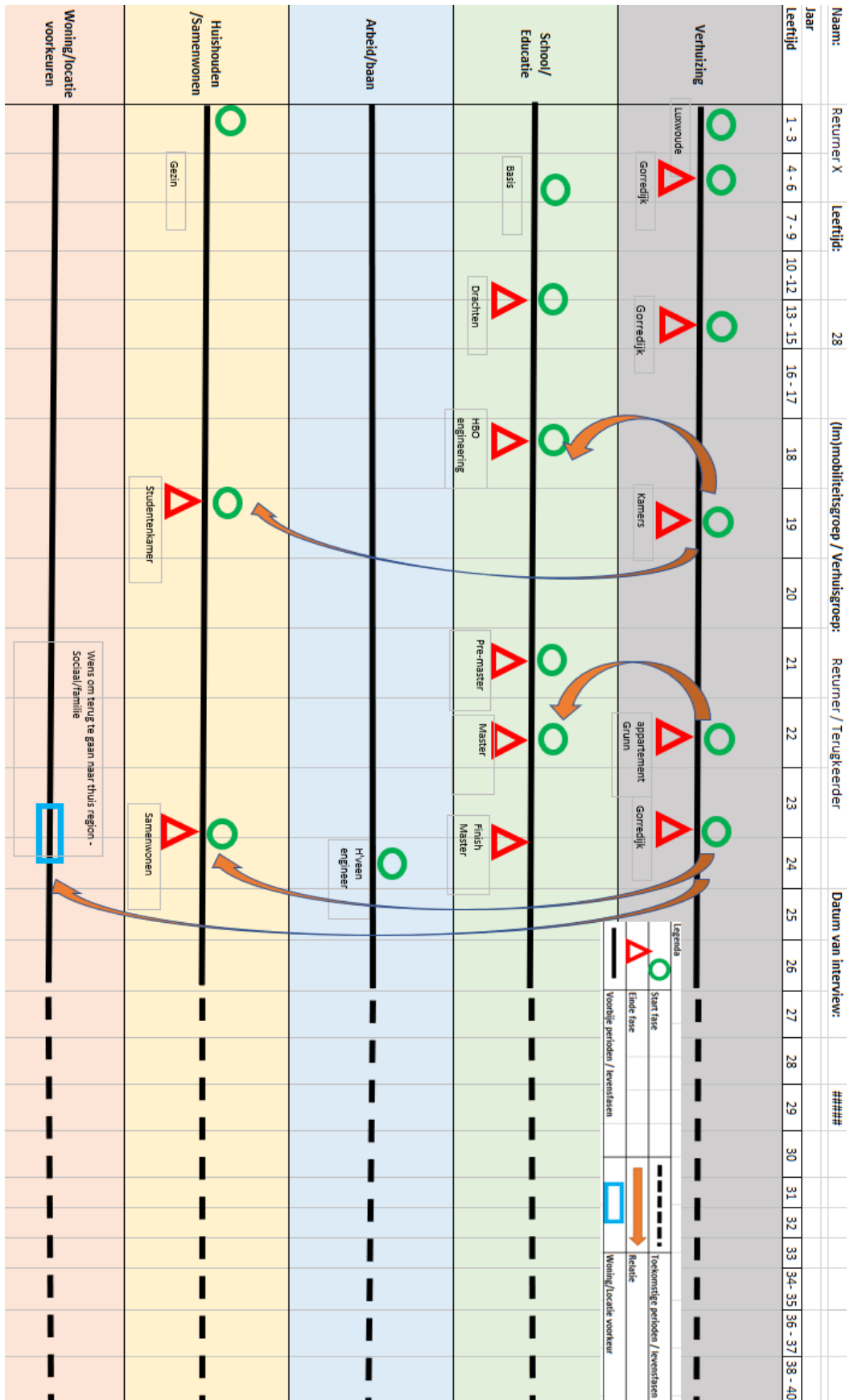
Ik zal je interview nu eerst transcriberen, vervolgens coderen en analyseren. Daarna zal dit interview samen met andere interviews met andere hoogopgeleide jongeren uit de regio gebruikt worden voor de scriptie om de verhuispatronen en intenties te schetsen met de bijbehorende motieven.

Bedanken voor de tijd die is vrij gemaakt om dit interview af te nemen/geven van bedankje.

FIN.

/// 8.2 Filled in life history calendar

Digital version of a life history calendar. The details for this returner have been anonymized.



/// 8.3 Overview of codes

Code Group	Code sub-group	Code
Life history calendar	Current place of residence family	Family now living in GRO - DRE / North
		Family still living in home region
	Current place of residence siblings	Sibling living in GRO - DRE / North
		Sibling living in home region
		Sibling living in Randstad
	Flatmates	Origin of flatmates - From region (youth friends)
		Origin of flatmates - No flatmates
		Origin of flatmates - Not from region
	Location internship	Internship at later employer
		Internship in study city/outside home region
		Internship in home region
	Location Job	Job in FRL
		Job in GRO-DRE
		Job in Randstad
		Job in home region
	Moving childhood	From Randstad/abroad to home region
		Moving childhood - From GRO-DRE to home region
		Moving frequency childhood - More than twice
		Moving frequency childhood - Not
		Moving frequency childhood - Once/twice
	Origin family	Family - From GRO - DRE / North
		Family - From other parts FRL
		Family - From Randstad
		Family - From home region
		Family - From elsewhere in NL
	Partner	No partner
		Origin partner - FRL
		Origin partner - GRO-DRE
		Origin partner - Home region
		Origin partner - Rest NL
	Place of residence important persons	In FRL - GRO - DRE
		In home region
		Living elsewhere in NL
	Siblings growing up in region	
	Visiting parental house	(Almost) Every week
		Few times a year / hardly
		Regularly in begin and later less frequent

Code Group	Code sub-group	Code
Current (im)mobility choice	Current choice to remain	Absence of ties to other places
		Accessability
		Consideration to live in student city, eventually not

		Family related
		Friends/social related
		Partner related
		Housing market related
		Job related
		Head office somewhere else - Projects in North
		Remote options / work from home
		Search for job in region / Visibility career & internship chances
		Suiting job within (larger) home region
		Need to own a car
		No drivers/need and consideration to live elsewhere - Current choice
		Quality of living - Feeling of having all desired available in home region
		S-Place - Country side
		S-Place - Home region
		S-Place - Town/village
		Safe/known environment
	Current choice to return	Considered to live elsewhere
		Not considered to live elsewhere
		Motive to return - Absence of/decreased ties to Away place
		Motive to return - Amenities
		Motive to return - Covid related
		Motive to return - Housing related: Motive to return - Housing market
		Motive to return - Housing related: Motive to return - Need for spacious living
		Motive to return - Housing related: Motive to return - Opportunity via network on housing
		Motive to return - Accesibility to work
		Motive to return - Internship
		Motive to return - Labour market opportunity
		Motive to return - Family related
		Motive to return - Friends/social related
		Motive to return - Hobby
		Motive to return - Partner related
		Motive to return - Save money
		Quality of living - All desired available in home region - No driver to live somewhere else
		Search for job in region / Visibility career & internship chances - Returner
		S. of place - Calmness
		S. of place - Nature
		S. of place - Safe/known environment - Sense of home
		S. of place - Away place
		S. of place - Home region
		S. of place - Hometown
	Choice to stay away	Consideration in choice of second away place - Accesibility to (more) distant living family/friends
		Considered to return - Current choice
		Motive not to return - Accesibility public transport
		Motive not to return - Feeling of taking a step back
		Motive not to return - Household/Spouse related

		Motive not to return - Lack of labour market opportunities
		Motive not to return - Youth experiences
		Motive to stay away - In favour of away places: Accesibility to work
		Motive to stay away - In favour of away places: Desire for novelties
		Motive to stay away - In favour of away places: Household/Spouse related
		Motive to stay away - In favour of away places: Labour market opportunity
		Motive to stay away - In favour of away places: Second move - Kept into account for longer period
		Motive to stay away - In favour of away places: Sense of place - Away place
		Motive to stay away - In favour of away places: Sense of place - Home region
		Motive to stay away - In favour of away places: Sense of place - Second away place
		Motive to stay away - In favour of away places: Social network in Away place
		Motive to stay away - In favour of away places: Urban amenities
		Motive to stay in Away place - Affordable existing apartment
		No consideration to return - Current choice
		Search for job in region / Visibility career & internship chances

Code Group	Code sub-group	Code	
Sense of place - Home region	Feelings	Calmness	
		Freedom	
		Nostalgia	
		Opposing city: Not hasted	
		Opposing city: Values/culture	
		Spaciousness	
		Pride of own residence	
		Village atmosphere	
		Natural/physical environment	(farming) Animals
	Nature		
	Nature opposing other areas		
	Variety in landscape		
	Water		
	Place identity		Country side
			Farming
		Frisian	
		FRL - Values and norms	
		Home region (Not particularly South-East Friesland)	
	Local village/place		
No / little with village/town/region of growing up			
Northerner			
Not speaking Frisian			
Pride			
Speaking Frisian			

		Speaking Stellingwarfs
		Stellingwerper
	Sense of belonging	Home region
		Not only reserved for home region
		Place of growing up - Not/hardly
		Opposed to other region
		Place of growing up
	Sense of community	Feeling about sense of community
		Participation in sense of community
		Presence of sense of community
		Anonymity in city - Negative
	Sense of home	Diminishing due to living away
		Values
		Hometown
		House of parents
		Known/familiarity feeling
		Region of growing up
		Moving frequency
		Only binding factor family
		Social
		Social - Reunion
		Opposing city
	Picture - Description of sense of place with home region	
	Picture - Description of sense of place with town of growing up	

Code Group	Code sub-group	Code
Sense of place - Away place	Community	Away place - Feeling about sense of community
		Away place - Presence of sense of community
	Identity	Away place - Identity
		Second away place - Identity
		Away place - Identity - FRL
		Away place - Identity - Groningse student
	Social	Away place - Sense of place - Social
		Second away place - Social
	Family	
		Sense of belonging
	Sense of home	Away place - Feeling of sense of home
		Away place - Sense of place - Known/familiarity feeling
		Second away place - Feeling of sense of home
		Away place - Absence of sense of home
	Moving frequency	
	Natural/physical environment	
	Nostalgia	
	Away place - Student life	

	Away place - Village atmosphere	
	Second away place - Novelties	
	Second move - Kept into account for longer period	
	Freedom	
	Nostalgia	
	Social	
	Student life	
	Village atmosphere	
	Commotion	

Code Group	Code sub-group	Code
(im)mobility intention to stay	Attitude towards behaviour	Accessibility to other places and larger cores
		Being used to driving/commuting/distances
		Children/Family expansion
		Personal positive experience of growing up
		Family expansion related - Opposite city
		Absence of sense of place with current residence
		Safe/known environment
		Sense of place with region of growing up
		Sense of place with village
		Family related
		Friends/social related
		Housing (market) related
		Job related
		Amenities
	Perceived behavioural control	Role of perceived chances on work, housing and liveability
		Perception chances of starting own business in home region
		Perception future housing market in home region
		Perception future liveability of home region
		Perception future liveability of home region - Consideration to live in larger cores
		Perception future liveability of home region - Sobering in villages
		Perception future liveability of home region - Travelling to central cores
		Perception labour market home region - Willing to change sector / less ambitious
		Perception labour market home region and commutable distance
		Perception labour market home region
	Subjective norm	Role of important family/friends
		Role/intention of partner
		Role/intention of potential partner
Consideration to live elsewhere	Consideration to live elsewhere	

		No consideration to live elsewhere
	Current fixities and intention	
	Factors that could change intention	Chance of people moving out of region due to housing shortage
		Job opportunity in other part of country
		Opinion municipality and housing
		Others moved away from place due to unavailability
		Strong decline in basic level of amenities
	Opinion Lelylijn	
	Quality of living - All desired available in home region - No driver to leave for intention	
	Westerners moving to home region	
(im)mobility intention to return	Attitude towards behaviour	Accesibility
		Covid related
		Family enterprise
		Family expansion related
		Family related
		Friends/Social related
		Housing (market) related
		More spacious living
		Personal positive experience of growing up
		Sense of place - Away place
		Sense of place - Home region
	Consideration to live elsewhere	
	Perceived behavioural control	Being used to driving/commuting/distances
		Deterring factor of current work
		Role of perceived chances in work, housing and liveability
		Thoughts on remote work
		Perception future housing market in home region
		Perception future liveability of home region
		Perception future liveability of home region - Consideration to live in larger cores
		Perception future liveability of home region - Sobering in villages
		Perception labour market home region
		Perception labour market home region - Willing to be less ambitious
		Perception labour market North
	Subjective norm	Role of important family/friends
		Role/intention of partner
		Role/intention of potential partner
	Current fixities and intention	
	Opinion Lelylijn	
No (im)mobility intention to return	Attitude towards behaviour - Intention not to return	Accesibility public transport (in home region)
		Decreasing ties to home region

		Feeling of taking a step back
		Housing market
		Sense of place - Home region
		Lack of amenities (in home region)
		Rural characteristics also in other region
	Attitude towards behaviour - Intention to live in village	Family expansion related
		Personal positive youth experience
		Social control
	Attitude towards behaviour - Intention to stay away	Accesibility to family/friends
		Accesibility via public transport
		Desire for novelties
		Housing (market) related
		Labour market motive
		No intentions for kids
		Sense of place Away place
		Sense of place second away place
		Social network in current away place
		Urban amenities
	Perceived behavioural control	Thoughts on remote work
		Perception chances of starting own business in home region
		Perception labour market home region
		Perception labour market North
		Perception future liveability of home region
		Perception future liveability of home region - Central cores
		Perception future liveability of home region - Consideration to live in larger cores
		Perception future liveability of home region - Sobering in villages
		Perceived behavioural control - Housing
	Role of perceived chances in work, housing and liveability	
	Subjective norm	Role of important family/friends
		Role/intention of partner
		Role/intention of potential partner
	Current fixities and intention	
	Factor that could Stay-awayer make return	Improve accesibility
		Improve employment chances
		Lifestyle of Away place in home region
		More affordable housing offer
		More attractive city centers / amenities

/// 8.4 Example of network

Network - Current (im)mobility choice to remain

Blue indicating core category group.

Pink, fundamental drivers of (im)mobility choice to remain

Green indicating most important factors creating the feeling of 'having everything in home region'.

Yellow is still contributing to the (im)mobility choice but to a lesser extent.

Orange are least important in this feeling and (im)mobility choice.

