

# **Migration to less popular rural areas**

The characteristics, motivations and search process of migrants

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Migration to less popular rural areas  
The characteristics, motivations and search process of migrants

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van het doctoraat in de  
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aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen  
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**Rixt Anke Bijker**

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Promotor: Prof. dr. D. Strijker

Copromotor: Dr. T. Haartsen

Beoordelingscommissie: Prof. dr. M. van Ham

Prof. dr. P. McCann

Prof. dr. C.H. Mulder

## Voorwoord

Dit proefschrift betekent de afsluiting van een intensieve, leerzame en leuke periode van onderzoek doen. Hoewel ik erg blij ben nu dit voorwoord te kunnen schrijven, denk ik dat ook voor een promotieonderzoek geldt dat de weg naar het einddoel belangrijker is dan het doel op zich. Die weg was niet altijd gemakkelijk, maar ik ben blij dat ik hem heb afgelegd. Er zijn verschillende mensen die het afleggen van die weg een stuk makkelijker en in ieder geval ook veel leuker hebben gemaakt.

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**Four chapters included in this PhD dissertation are reprinted from the following publications and manuscripts:**

**Chapter 2**

Bijker RA, Haartsen T. 2012. More than counter-urbanisation: Migration to popular and less-popular rural areas in the Netherlands. *Population, Space and Place* 18: 643-657.

**Chapter 3**

Bijker RA, Haartsen T, Strijker D. 2012. Migration to less-popular rural areas in the Netherlands: Exploring the motivations. *Journal of Rural Studies* 28: 490-498.

**Chapter 4 (with some minor adjustments)**

Bijker RA, Haartsen T, Strijker D. Different areas, different people? Migration to popular and less-popular rural areas in the Netherlands. *Population, Space and Place*. DOI: 10.1002/psp.1741. (available online in 'early view').

**Chapter 5**

Bijker RA, Haartsen T, Strijker D. Using a diary approach to explore the residential search process of movers to rural areas.  
*Submitted to an international journal.*

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Motivation

‘The Dutch romanticise the countryside, with pastures full of grazing cattle: every year 160,000 urbanites move to quietness and space’<sup>1</sup>, claims a newspaper headline of an article summarising the findings of a report about the different uses and representations of the Dutch countryside (see Steenbekkers et al., 2008). This article and the report itself illustrate the transformation of the rural from a production to a consumption space by describing the idyllic image held by respondents and discussing developments connected to moving to or living in rural areas, recreation and opportunities for small businesses (see also Markantoni, 2012; Woods, 2005). It appears that one in three of the respondents in the report dreamt of moving to the rural at some point. Migration into rural areas is often referred to as counterurbanisation. Attention to this phenomenon started in the 1970s, leading to a large amount of research (e.g. Beale, 1975; Berry, 1976; Champion, 1989; Boyle and Halfacree, 1998), which eventually resulted in the dominant understanding of counterurbanisation as the movement of middle-class groups from the city in search of new lives in an idyllic rural setting (Halfacree, 2008). After thirty years, research into counterurbanisation seemed to have reached some kind of saturation point. It was felt that everything that could be said had already been said about this phenomenon (Ibid.). However, recently a ‘critical re-appraisal’ of the concept of counterurbanisation has started (see e.g. Grimsrud, 2011; Halfacree, 2001, 2008, 2012; Milbourne, 2007; Smith, 2007; Woods, 2011). This thesis aims to contribute to this critical reconsideration of migration into rural areas.

The reconsideration in literature of the dominant understanding of counterurbanisation is based on empirical results as well as on more theoretical papers. First, it is increasingly being acknowledged that rural areas differ in their

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<sup>1</sup> Nederlanders romantiseren het platteland, vol koeien in de wei, Trouw 21-10-2008.

popularity as places to live. The presence of amenities and accessibility are important factors influencing this popularity (Argent et al., 2007; McGranahan, 2008; Woods, 2005). Further, it is recognised that in addition to the pull of the rural idyll, other motivations play a role, independent of the rural setting, such as the proximity of family and friends or work-related reasons (e.g. Grimsrud, 2011). In addition, other groups move to rural areas along with the often mentioned middle class, such as low-income groups and migrant workers (Foulkes and Newbold, 2008; Hoggart, 2007; Woods, 2011). Milbourne (2007) points to the importance of moves within rural areas over short distances. Halfacree (2012) draws attention to more temporal mobilities in the rural environment. Finally, it appears that the traditional conceptualisation of counterurbanisation, developed in more densely populated countries, applies less to more sparsely populated countries (Grimsrud, 2011).

However, while it is increasingly being acknowledged that rural areas differ in their popularity as places to live in, this notion has not yet translated to the research studying the characteristics and motivations of rural in-migrants. Research into the characteristics and motivations of in-migrants often focuses on those rural areas that are attractive to live in, while migration into less-popular rural areas remains relatively under-researched. This is also true in the Netherlands. Research has investigated the characteristics and preferences of people considering moving to rural areas in general (Heins, 2002, Van Dam et al., 2002) and the features of in-migration flows to rural areas in the Netherlands as a whole (Steenbekkers et al., 2008) and specifically to amenity-rich rural areas (Elbersen, 2001).

By studying in-migration to less-popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands, this thesis wants to add to the development of an empirically based broader understanding of counterurbanisation. This is not just relevant to the scientific debate but it can also provide useful input for policymakers. Like other rural areas in Europe, population decline has begun in the Netherlands, specifically in peripheral parts of the country including the northern Netherlands (Haartsen and Venhorst, 2010). In-migration is one of the factors influencing population decline in addition to births, deaths and out-migration. Therefore, it is important to know more about the characteristics and motivations of the people who move to these

kinds of areas and their search strategies, and especially about the different migration flows to different types of rural areas (Haartsen, 2012). This information is crucial when developing housing policies. It is important for policymakers in rural areas to acknowledge that 'the' rural migrant does not exist. It is vital to recognise that there are different groups of migrants with different motivations, also to create more realistic expectations of the opportunities and benefits that in-migration brings to rural areas.

In the following section, a short overview of the literature discussing the central concepts in this thesis is provided, followed by the research aim, the research questions and an outline of the thesis.

## **1.2 Migration to rural areas**

### ***1.2.1 Popularity of rural areas***

The finding that rural areas differ in their popularity as places to live in is referred to by Woods (2005) as the 'regionally uneven nature of counterurbanisation'. The popularity of rural areas for migration purposes is found to be mainly influenced by their accessibility and the presence of amenities (Argent et al., 2007; Bollman and Briggs, 1992; Johnson and Beale, 1994; McGranahan, 2008). In addition, perceived lifestyle and employment opportunities play a role (Johnson and Beale, 1994).

In the context of accessibility, transport availability plays a key role. For instance, impressive rural repopulation has been found in accessible rural areas in Ireland, along the road and railways, while the population is declining in less accessible rural areas, particularly in the west (Gkartzios and Scott, 2009). Proximity to cities also plays a role in the accessibility of rural areas. In the United States, Canada and Sweden, population growth is concentrated in the rural districts closest to metropolitan and regional urban centres, while the more remote rural regions suffer stagnation or decline (Bollman and Briggs, 1992; Johnson and Beale, 1994; Westlund, 2002).

Amenities in a rural context most often refer to attractive landscape features or climate. Regarding landscape features, this can be very specific landscape elements,

such as the coast (Argent et al., 2007), mountains (Shumway and Otterstrom, 2001) or national parks (Elbersen, 2001). However, landscape has also been found more generally to influence migration. People are most drawn to areas with a mix of forest and open land, bodies of water, topographical variety and relatively little cropland (McGranahan, 2008). These results correspond with the more general findings on landscape preferences that people strongly prefer park or savannah-like landscapes with scattered trees or small stands, open vistas, even and uniform ground texture, and a water source (Ulrich, 1986). These preferences appear to be largely independent of culture, with the exception of people dependent on other landscapes for their livelihood, such as farmers and foresters (Van den Berg et al., 1998; Yu, 1995). Preferences for semi-open landscapes can be explained by the so-called prospect-refuge theory, which argues that, the ability to see (prospect) without being seen (refuge) increases perceived safety, which in turn increases the aesthetic pleasure experienced (Appleton, 1975).

### *1.2.2 Characteristics and motivations of in-migrants to rural areas*

As mentioned earlier, rural in-migration in general is often associated with the movement of middle-class families from the city, who are either retired or commute to nearby urban centres for employment (Smith and Phillips, 2001; Stockdale, 2006). When focusing on the limited evidence on migration into less-popular rural areas, a picture emerges that is different from this 'classic' image. With regard to the origin and age of the movers, Stockdale (2006) found that most in-migrants in depopulating, peripheral areas in rural Scotland moved short distances and that there was a mix of moves from cities, from smaller settlements and between similar-sized rural settlements. Most respondents in her study had moved before turning fifty. Furthermore, less-popular areas do not seem to attract the middle class. In Stockdale's study, skilled manual, trade-type occupations dominated, with few being employed in the professional or managerial sectors. Furthermore, impoverished rural areas in the US, characterised by ample availability of cheap rental housing, attract large groups of migrants with low incomes, varying from working poor (Foulkes and Newbold, 2008) to welfare benefits recipients (Fitchen,

1995). Nonetheless, a more diverse group of in-migrants were found moving into fringe areas in Denmark, i.e. areas experiencing population decline and a low level of economic activity (Andersen, 2011). In addition to some groups with quite low incomes that Andersen assumes migrate for lower housing costs, these areas also attract movers with middle or high incomes, partly consisting of couples with children moving to detached houses, something they are probably unable to afford in Denmark's growth areas.

An idea has developed in recent years in housing research that traditional background characteristics (i.e. income, education or age) may no longer be sufficient to explain residential preferences, owing to a trend towards greater differentiation in housing behaviour (see e.g. Heijs et al., 2009, 2011; Jansen, 2011). This has resulted in approaches which explore the motives underlying consumer preferences, in order to improve the understanding of housing preferences and preferences for residential environments (Bettman, 1979; Jansen, 2011; Kersloot and Kauko, 2004; Rokeach, 1973). However, in migration research little attention has been paid to underlying motivational factors such as values. In Chapter 4 of this dissertation we include value orientations in our analysis to characterise movers to different types of rural areas.

The motives for migration to rural areas in general can be subdivided into three groups: residential, household, and work and education motives (Van Dam et al., 2002). The first group, residential motives, refers to the quality of the housing and residential environment. The quality of the residential environment is often regarded as rural areas' most important pull factor (Deller et al., 2001; Gkartzios and Scott, 2009; Halfacree, 1994; Halliday and Coombes, 1995; Walmsley et al., 1998). In addition to the residential environment, housing characteristics can also be an important reason for moving to the countryside, for example for a better or bigger house, or a large garden (Gkartzios and Scott, 2009). The second group of motives, the household motives, refers to moves motivated by life events, such as moving in together, getting married, having children or getting divorced (Van Dam, 2000). The desire to live closer to family also belongs to this category of motives for moving. The third group of motives is related to employment and education. Migration

motivated by a change of job, the desire to live closer to work or to get an education, fits into this category (Van Dam, 2000). A special motive for rural migration is return migration (see e.g. Bolton and Chalkley, 1990; Elbersen, 2001). In addition to return migration to a specific place, more general 'return to the rural' types of in-migration have also been found (Feijten et al., 2008; Gkartzios and Scott, 2009).

Looking at the motivations of movers to less-popular areas, it seems that instead of the quality of the residential environment, other motivations for choosing the destination area are more central in the decision process. Studies have shown the importance of more personal motivations, such as marriage and the proximity of family and friends, employment considerations and housing reasons, in some cases in particular related to the availability of affordable housing (Fitchen, 1995; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008; Grimsrud, 2011; Stockdale, 2006).

However, existing studies have yielded inconsistent results with respect to the importance of the pull of the countryside as a way of life for in-migration to less-popular rural areas. While Stockdale (2006) found quality-of-life considerations to be of little importance, the in-depth interviews conducted by Foulkes and Newbold (2008) reveal that in addition to the attraction of low housing costs, the rural character of a community did play a role in the decision to move there. Moving to these communities represented an opportunity to satisfy the desire to live in a rural setting (Foulkes and Newbold, 2008). The extent to which the typical 'quality-of-life' motivations connected to the counterurbanisation concept also hold true for migrants to less-popular rural areas is thus not clear.

### **1.3 Research aim, research questions and thesis outline**

The objective of this dissertation is to gain more insight into migration to less-popular areas. In particular, the focus is on the characteristics and motivations of the in-migrants. To determine to what extent the outcomes are specific for less-popular areas, a direct comparison with in-migrants to popular areas in the same region is also included in the study. The popularity of rural areas as places to live is defined in this study using the average house price per municipality. This seems to be the



most appropriate indicator in the Dutch context (see also Chapter 2). Within the Netherlands, the North was chosen as a study area, as it can be considered the most rural part of the Netherlands based on address density and the perceptions of the Dutch people (Haartsen et al., 2003).

Three research questions were formulated based on the research objective:

1. What are the characteristics and motivations of movers to less-popular rural areas?
2. To what extent do the characteristics and motivations of movers to less-popular and popular rural areas differ?
3. How do potential movers search for a place to live in rural areas?

These questions are addressed in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5. In **Chapter 2** three types of rural area are distinguished within the northern Netherlands, based on differences in their popularity as places to live in. The popular, less-popular and average rural areas, which are defined based on average house price per municipality, are characterised using the characteristics that in an international context are known to influence the popularity for living of an area: accessibility and the landscape. After that, their migration patterns are compared using data from Statistics Netherlands. Some general migration statistics for the study region are provided. Finally, secondary data from Housing Research of the Netherlands are used to make a first exploratory comparison of the characteristics and motivations of migrants to popular and less-popular areas using a multinomial logistic regression model.

The exploratory comparison in Chapter 2 yielded some differences between movers to less-popular and popular areas. However, the available secondary data used in the analysis appeared to be insufficient to enable an effective comparison. For instance, information on return migration was lacking and motives for moving were mixed with motives for location choice. Therefore, new survey data were collected for the analysis in **Chapter 3**. Of the less-popular municipalities defined in

Chapter 2, four were selected as study areas. Using the data (N = 664) we collected in these municipalities, we investigate the characteristics and motivations of the in-migrants, which answers the first research question. We shed more light on the motivations for moving to less-popular areas by disentangling them into reasons for leaving the previous place of residence, motivations for moving to the rural in general and motivations for moving to the specific less-popular rural area in question (cf. Bolton and Chalkley, 1990). In addition, we take the multidimensionality of motives for moving into account, which makes it easier to reveal the importance of the rural character of the destination (Halfacree, 1994; Halliday and Coombes, 1995). We use logistic regression analysis to combine the movers' characteristics with their motivations. In doing so, we explore which motivations are mentioned by whom.

After specifically focusing on less-popular rural areas, a direct comparison is made in **Chapter 4** between movers to less-popular rural areas and to popular rural areas. To do this, survey data were collected in three municipalities characterised as popular in Chapter 2 (total N = 1717) in a similar way to the less-popular areas in Chapter 3. Compared to the analysis in Chapter 2 using secondary data, the motivations for location choice are now separated from the motives for leaving the previous residence. In this analysis we focus specifically on the motivations for choosing the destination area. We also include return migration and incorporate a more detailed description of the movers' previous residence. In addition, as well as characterising the movers using 'traditional' sociodemographic characteristics, we also use their values. These underlying motivational factors have been used in housing research to improve the understanding of housing preferences (e.g. Coolen and Hoekstra, 2001; Coolen et al., 2002). Values have received little attention so far in migration research. We explore whether they can also aid in distinguishing the movers to different types of rural area. We include the values along with background characteristics and motivations in a logistic regression analysis, which allows us to investigate which of these variables predict a move to a specific type of rural area, while controlling for the effect of other factors.

While Chapters 2, 3 and 4 focus on the migrants who already made a move to the rural, **Chapter 5** concentrates on the process by which potential movers look for places to live in rural areas. Little attention has been paid so far to the residential search process in a rural context. This study distinguishes between local and non-local searchers to determine to what extent their residential search process differs. The study also explores the usefulness of a new method to study the residential search process: a diary approach with both qualitative and quantitative elements. The chapter presents the results of a small-scale study of ten respondents looking for houses in the northern Netherlands. The purpose is to offer additional insights to the quantitative approach used in the other chapters about the process preceding a move. In this chapter no distinction between less-popular and popular areas is made. The objective was to find out how people find places to live in rural areas in general, not to compare the search process in less-popular and popular areas.

Finally, **Chapter 6** summarises and discusses the main findings drawn from the analyses in Chapters 2 to 5. Furthermore, this chapter also considers policy implications and suggestions for further research.

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## 2. More than counter-urbanisation: Migration to popular and less-popular rural areas in the Netherlands<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

Migration into rural areas in Western countries is often explained by the pull of the rural idyll for urban, middle-class migrants. While previous research has shown that this counter-urbanisation model is insufficient to explain rural immigration in sparsely populated countries, this paper shows that also within core regions, more diverse conceptualisations of migration into rural areas are required. This is achieved by distinguishing popular, average and less-popular rural living areas in the northern Netherlands, based on average house prices, and by analyzing the migration flows to these areas. Data from Housing Research of the Netherlands demonstrate that popular rural areas attract more highly-educated people and people moving from urban areas, compared to less-popular and average rural areas. For movers to less-popular areas, being near to family and friends is more important. The characteristics of the movers to popular rural areas fit very well with the counter-urbanisation story. Less-popular rural areas in the Netherlands share personal reasons as an important motivation for in-migration with more remote rural areas in Europe. This indicates that conceptualisations of periphery and remoteness have to be considered within the local, regional and national context. Research into rural population change in both core regions and sparsely populated countries should consider these different contexts to be able to acknowledge the variety in the way amenities and peripherality are perceived by different groups of people.

### 2.1 Introduction

Increasingly, the idea that counter-urbanisation – in the sense of the middle-class, urban dream of escaping to the countryside – can explain all rural population change in Western society rural areas has been challenged (Milbourne, 2007;

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<sup>2</sup> This chapter is reprinted from: Bijker, RA, Haartsen T. 2012. More than counter-urbanisation: Migration to popular and less-popular rural areas in the Netherlands. *Population, Space and Place* 18: 643-657. Copyright © 2012 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Halfacree, 2008). In an attempt to bridge the gap between the 'counter-urbanisation story' and the lack of empirical evidence for this in Norway, Grimsrud (2011) calls for caution in applying conceptualisations of rural in-migration originating in the core regions of Europe and America to more sparsely populated countries. In this paper we want to broaden the discussion by stating that within the core regions of Europe, migration patterns in rural areas can also not sufficiently be explained by the prevailing counter-urbanisation models alone. This connects to what Milbourne (2007) points out to be the spatial complexity of rural population change, which exists not only between, but also within countries.

One of the aspects of this spatial complexity is the finding that rural areas differ in their popularity for rural living (Woods, 2005). Spatial characteristics or amenities such as landscape, location relative to coasts or beaches, and distance from metropolitan centres influence the popularity of rural areas for migration purposes (Argent et al., 2007; Bollman and Briggs, 1992; Hugo and Smailes, 1985; Johnson and Beale, 1994; McGranahan, 2008). In addition, perceived lifestyle and employment opportunities play a role (Johnson and Beale, 1994).

Rural migration is also diverse in terms of migrant characteristics (Andersen, 2009; Guimond and Simard, 2010; Hugo and Bell, 1998; Lindgren, 2003; Mitchell et al., 2004; Philips, 1998; Stockdale, 2006b) and motives. Some migrants are motivated by a desire for a rural lifestyle and residence, while others move to the countryside for pragmatic reasons, such as lower housing costs or work opportunities (Fitchen, 1995; Gkartzios and Scott, 2009; Halfacree, 1994; Kasimis et al., 2003).

While it seems reasonable to assume that the characteristics of rural areas relate to the characteristics and motives of migrants, this relatedness has not been studied often. Argent et al. (2007, p. 218) note that 'perceived rural amenity is clearly an anthropocentric concept, relating to the subjective interpretation of aspects of the physical and cultural environment in terms of their creation of a "pleasant" setting'. It depends on a wide variety of human factors and preferences, including age, fitness and socioeconomic status. Hjort and Malmberg (2006) also relate the diversity of the countryside, 'a number of contrasting countrysides', to the many different meanings and motives moving to rural areas may involve. Studies in more sparsely

populated countries like Sweden and Scotland provide some clues suggesting that different rural areas do indeed attract different types of movers with different motivations and preferences (Hjort and Malmberg, 2006; Stockdale, 2006a). To what extent these findings can be translated to the more densely populated countries in the core regions in Europe is less clear.

This paper investigates whether different types of rural areas also attract specific migrants with specific motivations within core regions. We differentiate rural areas by focusing on differences in their popularity. In our analysis of the characteristics and motivations of people who migrate into these rural areas, we take into account migration flows from both urban and rural areas, and local and long-distance migration flows. We thus try to address Milbourne's (2007:385) appeal for thinking 'more critically about the broad range of movements and mobilities that are being played out in rural spaces'. He states that 'rural researchers have been preoccupied with longer distance movements and with migrations from urban to rural places. While such movements provide an important research subject, particularly if the objective is to identify differences, tensions and conflicts between new and established fractions of the rural population, they do run the risk of marginalising other types of movement' (ibid.).

Our research area is located in the northern Netherlands. In comparison with other European countries, the Netherlands is densely populated and urbanised. According to the OECD standard, there are no predominantly rural areas left in the Netherlands (Terluin et al., 2005). In the Dutch context, however, a considerable part of the country is considered rural by official bodies such as Statistics Netherlands, as well as by the Dutch people (Haartsen, 2002; Haartsen et al., 2003). We focus on the northern part of the country, consisting of the provinces of Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe (see Figure 3), because the North can be considered to be the most rural part of the Netherlands, based both on address density and the perceptions of the Dutch people (Haartsen et al., 2003; Heins, 2002). In addition, the North contains a large variety of rural areas in terms of characteristics such as landscape, presence of natural areas, accessibility, building style of houses and history.

This paper compares migration patterns to different types of rural areas, based on the characteristics and motives of the people migrating there. After some theoretical discussion, the analysis commences by describing migration figures to rural areas in the northern Netherlands in general. We then distinguish popular and less-popular rural living areas. We attempt to characterise them and provide an overview of migration flows to the different types of rural areas. The characteristics and motivations of those migrating are compared. To do so, we have used data from Statistics Netherlands and from Housing Research of the Netherlands. Based on the results from these analyses, we try to prove that looking at differences in rural areas and at differences in the people they attract, can provide a more complete picture of migration patterns in core regions.

## **2.2 Popularity of rural areas**

In the literature it is acknowledged that migration flows to rural areas are spread unevenly. According to Selwood et al. (1995), no across-the-board repopulation of 'the' rural is occurring, but population flows are focused on particular places with scenic or Arcadian ambience. Accordingly, the popularity of rural areas for living depends, at least partly, on the amenity of their local physical, situational and economic environments (Argent et al., 2007).

The local physical environment is often expressed in terms of the different landscape ingredients of areas. Landscape has been found to influence migration. People are most drawn to areas with a mix of forest and open land, water area, topographical variation and relatively little cropland (McGranahan, 2008). These results correspond with the more general findings on landscape preferences, in that people strongly prefer park or savannah-like landscapes with scattered trees or small stands, open vistas, an even and uniform ground texture, and a water source (Ulrich, 1986). These preferences appear to be largely independent of culture, with the exception of people dependent on other landscapes for their livelihood, such as farmers and foresters (Van den Berg et al., 1998; Yu, 1995). Preferences for semi-open landscapes can be explained by the so-called prospect-refuge theory. According to

Appleton (1975), the ability to see (prospect) without being seen (refuge) increases perceived safety, which in turn increases the aesthetic pleasure experienced.

In addition to landscape amenities, situational aspects of rural areas are important for the perceived attractiveness of these rural areas for living. Gkartzios and Scott (2009) state that in Ireland, impressive rural repopulation is found in accessible rural areas, along the road and railways, while the population is declining in less accessible rural areas, particularly in the west. Transport availability is not the only factor determining the accessibility of rural areas, as proximity to cities also plays a role. In the US, Canada and Sweden, population growth is concentrated in the rural districts closest to metropolitan and regional urban centres, while the more remote rural regions suffer stagnation or decline (Bollman and Briggs, 1992; Johnson and Beale, 1994; Westlund, 2002).

With reference to the economic environment, Johnson and Beale (1994) found that rural areas that are centres of recreation grow quickest. This characteristic also comes to the fore in the amenity index for Australian rural areas developed by Argent et al. (2007), which is based on a broad range of biophysical, climatic, historic, geographic and economic amenity indicators. They found that immigration rates correlate with beach distance, irrigation water resources and employment in recreational and related services. Argent et al. (2007) see employment in recreational and related services as a measure of the attractiveness of a rural area to live in, with areas with significant natural and artificial recreational attractions scoring high. They also point out that many in-migrants develop a familiarity with a future abode through recreational visits. There is thus a connection between an area's attracting short-term visits and longer-term moves.

The abovementioned features seem to be connected with the popularity of rural areas as places to live in several countries. Later in this article we will use them to describe the popular and less-popular rural areas we distinguish in the northern Netherlands.

### **2.3 Different people, different motives?**

Research into rural migration is dominated by the concept of counter-urbanisation (Champion, 1989; Boyle and Halfacree, 1998), which is often associated with the movement of middle-class families from cities towards 'what is perceived to be an idyllic rural setting' (Halfacree, 2008:479). The rural idyll refers to a very positive image of the countryside comprising many aspects of rural lifestyle, community and landscape (Ilbery, 1998). Research into rural population change has focused on whether the 'rural idyll' exists and its importance to rural in-migration decisions (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009; Hjort and Malmberg, 2006; Van Dam et al., 2002). People's positive images of the rural and its attractiveness may also be related to a specific part of a country, for example the area where a person either grew up, purchased a second home, holidayed, or a specific landscape described in art, film or literature (Hjort and Malmberg, 2006; Selwood et al., 1996).

However, other studies found the characteristics of people moving to the countryside to be far more diverse than the classical counter-urbanisation model suggests: for example, Halfacree (2008) notes that counter-urbanisers are not only middle class, but also working class. Moreover, rural migration is also more complicated than just movements over longer distance in the urban-to-rural direction (Milbourne, 2007). In their case studies in rural Ireland, Gkartzios and Scott (2009) found a mixture of residential movements, including long-distance moves from bigger, similar or even smaller settlements, but also a significant number of local residential movements within the same area.

With regard to the motivations of movers to rural areas, rural idyllic motives related to the social and physical characteristics of the rural destination do not explain all rural moves either. Migrants can have other motives, related to housing characteristics, lower housing costs, work-related reasons and living close to family and friends (Fitchen, 1995; Gkartzios and Scott, 2009; Grimsrud, 2011; Halfacree, 1994; Halliday and Coombes, 1995; Kasimis et al., 2003; Marshall et al., 2004; Steenbekkers et al., 2008; Walmsley et al., 1998).

## 2.4 Different areas, different people?

In an international context some research has been done directly comparing the features of rural areas and the characteristics and motives of people migrating to different types of rural areas. Referring to the local physical environment, the first of the three characteristics that influence the popularity of rural areas we discussed earlier, Elbersen (2001) found that rural areas located close to protected natural areas attract more early-retirees, footloose and middle-class households, and households moving from urban areas, compared to other rural areas in the Netherlands. In addition, Amcoff (2000, as cited in Hjort and Malmberg, 2006) observes that Swedish rural locations most associated with the rural idyll, tend to attract people with university-level education. Apparently, for areas with a rural idyllic landscape, the stereotypical counter-urbanisation model does apply. To what extent this is true for less idyllic rural areas, which are also present within core regions, is not clear.

The second characteristic refers to the situational aspects of rural areas. In their study of characteristics of rural migrants in Sweden, Hjort and Malmberg (2006) investigated to what extent rural areas located further from urban centres attract different migrants than areas located closer by. They found that people aged 19–40, high-income earners, people with university-level education and singles were more likely to move to the peri-urban countryside, while people older than 61 were more likely to end up in the remote countryside. Stockdale (2006a), who examines migration to peripheral and depopulating areas of rural Scotland, adds that most migrants moved over short distances, often from elsewhere in the study region. In-migration also consisted of urban-to-rural movements as well as rural-to-rural movements. Contrary to much of the counter-urbanisation literature on the repopulation of rural areas (Boyle and Halfacree, 1998, Stockdale et al., 2000), quality-of-life considerations hardly played a role in the Scottish periphery. Based on this, Stockdale concludes that the motivations for in-migration to depopulating and repopulating areas apparently differ markedly. In the depopulating peripheral areas, personal reasons – relating to marriage and divorce, for example – are the most important, followed by employment considerations. Grimsrud (2011) found a

similar pattern in Norway, where movers to remotely located rural areas are often motivated by family ties to the area and job-related reasons. Movers to the urban fringe, which she defines as rural areas at commuting distance from a big city, better fit the counter-urbanisation narrative, with housing and social and physical amenities appearing as important motivations. Since we intend to determine whether spatial complexity of rural population change also occurs in rural areas in core regions, we think it is important to compare our results with what we know about migration patterns to both urban fringe areas and remote rural areas in more sparsely populated countries in Europe.

The third characteristic influencing the popularity of rural areas is the economic environment. Shumway and Otterstrom (2001) compare migration flows to rural areas with service-based economies and high levels of natural amenities in the U.S., to areas with 'old' economic structures, such as farming or mining. They find that in-migrants to counties with service-based economies have the highest incomes when compared to migrants to the other areas.

## **2.5 Facts and figures of rural migration in the northern Netherlands**

Before we start our analysis of popular and less-popular rural areas, and the similarities and differences regarding in-migrants and their motives, we will provide an overview of the population and migration figures for the northern Netherlands in general, and for the rural parts of the North more specifically. In total, around 1,700,000 people live in the region, or about 10% of the total Dutch population. The northern Netherlands consists of three provinces and 68 municipalities. Based on Statistics Netherlands's national standard for urbanisation, the so-called address density, 58 of these municipalities are rural, i.e. municipalities with an average of less than 1,000 addresses per square kilometre. Sixty-five percent of the northern population lives in these rural municipalities.

As Figure 1 shows, the northern net migration is slightly negative. In the period 2003–2007, a five-year annual average of 22,326 people leave the North for elsewhere in the Netherlands, while 21,913 people arrive. Of these in-migrants from



elsewhere in the Netherlands, 54% find a place to live in the countryside. Around a third of the in-migrants to rural municipalities originate from other Dutch rural areas. Sixty-eight percent (7,967 people) can be considered counter-urbanists, moving from an urban municipality elsewhere to a rural municipality in the North. This is more than the overall Dutch average: according to Steenbekkers et al. (2008), in 2006, 57% of the people who moved to Dutch rural areas came from an urban area.

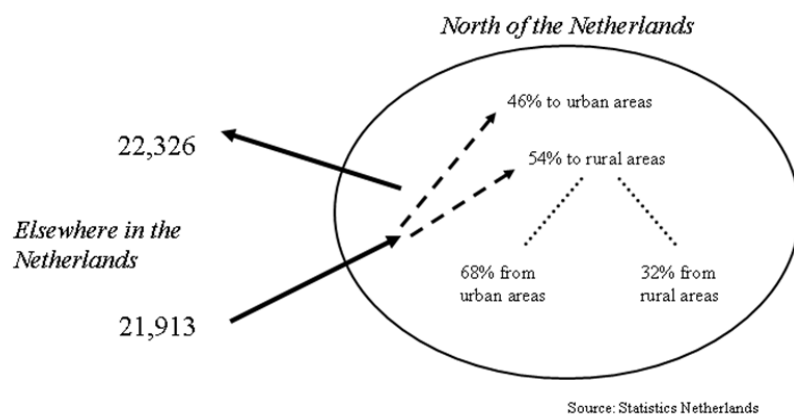
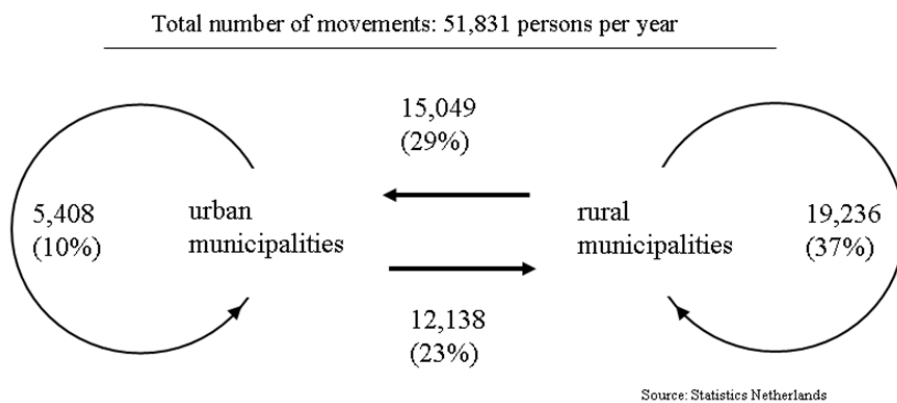


Figure 1. Yearly migration from and to the North, from elsewhere in the Netherlands (5 year average, 2003-2007)

In addition to migration from other parts of the Netherlands, migration flows into rural northern areas also consist of internal migration. Figure 2 shows that the five-year annual average of migration between northern Netherlands municipalities is 51,831. Sixty-one percent of these migrants move into a rural municipality, of which almost two-thirds (19,236) originate from another rural municipality and around a third from urban areas in the North. However, a significant proportion (29%; 15,049) of the migrants move from the countryside to urban municipalities.

This overview of the migration flows towards and within the northern Netherlands supports the view of Milbourne (2007), that rural population dynamics consist of a broad range of movements and mobilities. In addition to urban-rural

migration, there is a considerable migration flow between rural areas within the northern Netherlands, which is even larger than the urban-rural migration. This range of movements raises the question of whether variation also exists within these rural areas in terms of migration numbers and the characteristics and motives of the migrants.



*Figure 2. Yearly internal migration in the North of the Netherlands, between municipalities (5 year average, 2003-2007)*

## 2.6 Defining popular and less-popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands

We distinguish popular and less-popular rural areas based on average house prices. House prices are an indication of what people are willing to pay for houses and their environments (Luttik, 2000; Visser and Van Dam, 2006), thus reflecting the value buyers attach to houses and their surroundings. Therefore we consider the average house prices in an area as an indicator of the popularity of an area for living. This average house price incorporates the residential environment as well as housing characteristics such as size and quality.

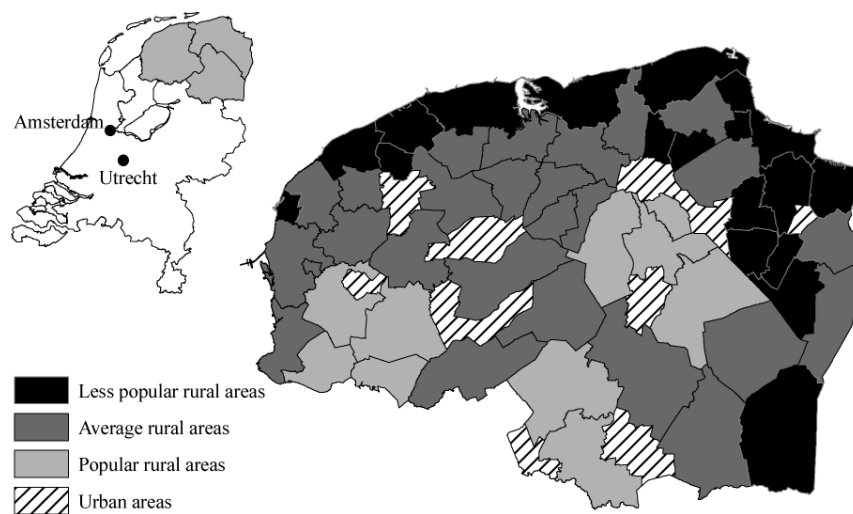
The use of house prices instead of in-migration numbers, which are often used in studies of rural areas' popularity (Argent et al., 2007; McGranahan, 2008), is more appropriate for the Dutch context. In his research into Dutch cities' attractiveness based on differences in house prices, Marlet (2009) shows that no relationship exists

between cities' attractiveness and population growth in the Netherlands. It appears that population growth can mainly be explained by government development policy. New housing is developed in a limited number of areas, while in others, building houses is very much restricted, especially in rural areas, both in open country and in villages (Van Dam et al., 2002). These restrictions prevent the Dutch housing market from reacting quickly to changes in demand for new houses, causing a very low elasticity of supply. This leads to price increases instead of population growth when there is increasing demand (Marlet, 2009). Therefore, the popularity of areas can be investigated using differences in house prices. Glaeser and Shapiro (2003) show that the relationship between amenities such as a temperate climate and growth has also weakened in the United States, something they explain by the anti-growth movement in California limiting new housing supply. McGranahan (2008) also observes that in a US context, housing-supply constraints such as land-use regulations could be mitigating the relationship between landscape preferences and migration in rural areas.

The average housing prices per municipality for the rural municipalities in the northern Netherlands varied from EUR 142,600 to EUR 340,000 in 2008. We performed a cluster analysis of the average housing prices per municipality for the rural municipalities in the northern Netherlands. The outcome consisted of four clusters, one containing only one case (with the highest average price). We combined this one-case cluster with the cluster with the second-highest price average. This resulted in the following three clusters:

1. **less-popular rural areas** (n=18), lowest housing prices (cluster average price EUR 174,828)
2. **average rural areas** (n=26), average housing prices (cluster average price EUR 212,731)
3. **popular rural areas** (n=10), highest housing prices (cluster average price EUR 273,170).

Figure 3 shows that the less-popular areas are located along the northern and eastern borders of the northern Netherlands. More than half of these less-popular rural municipalities border the Wadden Sea, an intertidal zone with mud flats and wetlands. The coastline consists of a typical Dutch dike separating the mud flats from agricultural land, perhaps explaining why the northern Netherlands' coastline is less popular than the Australian coast, with its sandy beaches and cliffs (Costello, 2007).



*Figure 3. Three types of rural areas in the North of the Netherlands*

To characterise the three types of areas and to describe the similarities and differences we calculated their mean scores for several characteristics. We used those characteristics which in an international context have been shown to differ between popular and less-popular rural areas: landscape, accessibility and employment in recreation-related sectors (e.g. Argent et al., 2007; Johnson and Beale, 1994; McGranahan, 2008). We also chose a number of sociocultural characteristics, socioeconomic characteristics and characteristics related to future population development. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean scores for different characteristics, per type of rural area (one-way analysis of variance)

		Less-popular rural areas (n=18)	Average rural areas (n=26)	Popular rural areas (n=10)	Total <sup>2</sup>
<i>Landscape characteristics</i>					
Share in land use (2003)	Agriculture	82%	85%	78%	82%
	Nature	6%	6%	13%	7%*
	Recreation	1%	1%	2%	1%*
	Water	0.21%	0.68%	0.14%	0.13%
	Urban area	7%	5%	5%	5%
Dominant type of soil (% of municipalities in cluster)	Marine clay	67%	42%	10%	44%*
	Former peat	22%	31%	30%	28%
	Sand	11%	27%	60%	28%*
Type of agriculture (% of total agricultural area, 2005)	Arable farming	49%	20%	10%	27%*
	Horticulture	1%	0%	0%	0%
	Grazing livestock	40%	74%	84%	64%*
	Non-grazing livestock	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Combinations	9%	5%	5%	6%*
<i>Accessibility<sup>1</sup></i>					
Travel distance to nearest urban centre in the northern Netherlands (in minutes)		22	24	24	24
Travel distance to nearest urban centre in the central Netherlands (in minutes)		109	93	84	97*
<i>Employment in recreation related services</i>					
Proportion employment in hotel and catering industry (2006)		3%	5%	6%	4%*
<i>Sociocultural characteristics</i>					
<i>Dimensions of Dutch regional culture 1997-2003 (after Brons, 2005;2006)</i>	Post-materialism	0.094	-0.365	-0.281	-0.210*
	Protestant conservatism	0.099	0.085	-0.110	0.0538
	Classic individualism	0.170	0.449	0.707	0.411*
	Egalitarian anti-conservatism	1.435	1.165	1.244	1.270
	Dissatisfaction	-0.512	-0.914	-0.998	-0.795
<i>Socioeconomic characteristic</i>					
Average income per household per municipality (in euros, 2006)		19,206	20,150	22,040	20,185*
<i>Future population development</i>					
Expected population development (2007-2025)		-9.321	-4.957	-4.336	-6.297
Expected household development (2007-2025)		-4.142	4.782	6.682	2.159*

Source: Statistics Netherlands, except accessibility

<sup>1</sup> Measured from the town hall of the specific rural municipality to the city hall in the nearest provincial capital city or the nearest of the two cities in the centre of the country, as predicted by a website on travel routes.

<sup>2</sup> \* p<0.05.

We used three variables to compare the landscape of the three types of rural areas. The first is land use. Table 1 shows that popular rural areas have a significantly larger share of the nature and recreation land-use categories. This corresponds with Elbersen's findings (2001) that the vicinity of natural areas attracts new residents. The second and third – 'dominant type of soil' and 'type of agriculture' – are measures of the type of landscape of the specific rural areas. In the northern Netherlands, two dominant landscape types exist. The first is the open, young marine clay and former peat landscape, where arable farming and large-scale dairy farming prevails. The second is the semi-open sand landscape, where small-scale mixed and dairy farming is dominant (Haartsen and Strijker, 2010). Less-popular areas are characterised by a large share of marine clay soils and a large share of arable farming. Popular rural areas are dominated by sand landscapes and grazing livestock farming. This is consistent with the findings of Ulrich (1986) and McGranahan (2008), showing that people prefer areas with a mix of forest and open land and relatively little cropland.

The second characteristic is related to accessibility, measured as the distance to the nearest provincial capital city (including Zwolle, the capital of the neighbouring province Overijssel), and to the nearest city in the central part of the Netherlands (Amsterdam or Utrecht, see Figure 3), measured in travel time in minutes by car. Mean travel distances to the nearest city in the central Netherlands vary significantly for the three types of rural areas. Popular rural areas are located closer to the centre of the country.

Following Argent et al. (2007), we compare the proportion of employment in the hotel and catering industry per municipality for the three types of area. This is the best available proxy variable for measuring employment in recreation and related services. The proportion differs significantly; the share is highest in popular rural areas and lowest in the less-popular areas.

Although it is hard to operationalise social features of rural areas (Argent et al., 2007), we tried to determine whether the three types of rural areas differ for five specific dimensions of regional culture. Brons (2005; 2006) defined these dimensions when he developed a dataset based on quantitative measurements of the culture of

Dutch municipalities. The dimensions of regional culture were developed from various indicators using factor analysis. Less-popular rural areas appear to have a regional culture that contains significantly more post-materialism. This dimension is related to anti-conservatism, feminist values and self-expressive individualism. It consists, for example, of the number of one-person households, progressive parties voters and the number of children with unmarried parents. However, high scores on these variables can also be interpreted less positively. A large number of one-person households and children born outside of marriage could also indicate some degree of social problems there. The regional culture of popular rural areas can be characterised by significantly more classical individualism, i.e. personal freedom, materialism and egoism. Its indicators are the percentage of votes for liberal parties, and the postponement of marriage and having children.

The socioeconomic characteristics are measured in terms of the average income per household per municipality in 2006. In less-popular rural areas, households have a significantly lower average income than those in average and popular rural areas. Popular areas have households with the highest average income.

Finally, we believe that figures on the expected growth of both the population and the number of households in 2025 (compared to 2007) are relevant to characterise the popularity of the different types of rural areas. In the Netherlands, between 2010 and 2040, low and negative growth are expected for a large number of municipalities. These areas are mostly located on the periphery, including the north. Rural areas are expected to experience population decline more seriously and earlier than urban areas (Haartsen and Venhorst, 2010). The expected growth in the number of households is also relevant in housing policy, since the Netherlands has been experiencing a trend of decreasing household size, which implies that even where there is population decline, the number of households can increase. As Table 1 shows, the expected population decline does not significantly differ for the different types of rural areas, although less-popular areas do have a higher expected population decline than average and popular rural areas. However, less-popular areas are expected to experience a decline in the number of households, while the number of households is expected to increase in average and popular areas.

Therefore, regarding population and household developments, less-popular areas can be considered as areas of decline.

To summarise, we found that less-popular rural areas are located along the northern and eastern borders of the North of the Netherlands. They can be characterised as having a relatively open, marine clay landscape with a large share of large-scale arable farmland and relatively less natural and recreational areas. They are relatively distant from the centre of the Netherlands, and have a relatively low share of hotel and catering industry employment. The people who inhabit these areas have a lower average income than those in the average and popular rural areas, and the regional culture is more dominated by 'post-materialism'. The variables that indicate this cultural dimension could also hint at some degree of social difficulties. Population and household decline are expected in the less-popular areas.

Popular rural areas can be characterised as having a more semi-open landscape with predominantly grazing livestock farming and a relatively large share of natural areas. These areas' inhabitants have a relatively high average income and the areas have a relatively high share of hotel and catering industry employment. Classical individualism is a dimension of regional culture that prevails in these areas. Popular rural areas have an expected household growth and are the least distant from the centre of the Netherlands. The average rural areas score between the other rural areas for most characteristics.

## **2.7 Differences in migration patterns to popular and less-popular rural areas**

Having defined and characterised less-popular, average and popular rural areas in the North of the Netherlands, we will now focus on the migration flows to and from these areas. The data we use were obtained from Statistics Netherlands.



*Table 2. Mean net migration rate and in-migrants, per type of rural area (one-way analysis of variance)*

	Less-popular rural areas (n=18)	Average rural areas (n=26)	Popular rural areas (n=10)	Total
Five-year average annual net migration rate 2003-2007	-3.7	-2.3	-1.5	-2.6
Five-year average annual in- migrants per 1,000 inhabitants 2003-2007	40	41	42	41

Source: Statistics Netherlands

As Table 2 shows, all three types of rural areas show a negative net migration for the period 2003–2007, and the size of the net migration rate does not differ significantly between the three types of areas as well. This means that more people leave the area than move to it, even in popular areas. The average number of in-migrants per 1,000 inhabitants does not differ significantly for the three types of areas in the same period. Popular rural areas do not attract significantly more migrants than less-popular rural areas either.

Although the three types of rural areas show no differences in overall migration figures, it could well be that they do attract different groups of migrants. We analysed this for the origin and the age of migrants (see Table 3). Popular rural areas attract a higher share of movers from outside the northern Netherlands than the less-popular and average rural areas. Popular areas also attract the highest share of movers from urban areas, less-popular areas receive relatively the least urban-to-rural migrants. The age distribution shows that movers to less-popular and average areas are in general younger than movers to popular areas.

*Table 3. Characteristics of in-migrants for three types of rural areas in the North of the Netherlands.*

	To			
	Less-popular rural areas (n=18)	Average rural areas (n=26)	Popular rural areas (n=10)	Total
Moved from:				
North of the Netherlands	74%	73%	70%	73%
Elsewhere in the Netherlands	26%	27%	30%	27%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Moved from:				
Urban areas	42%	46%	55%	47%
Rural areas	58%	54%	45%	53%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Age group:				
0-20	26%	24%	23%	24%
20-30	27%	27%	23%	26%
30-40	18%	19%	21%	19%
40-50	12%	12%	12%	12%
50-65	10%	11%	13%	11%
65+	7%	7%	8%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Statistics Netherlands

When we focus on migration within the North we can also analyse the migration flows between the different types of rural areas and urban areas. Table 4 shows that less-popular areas receive the largest share of people migrating from other less-popular areas, while they receive relatively fewer migrants from popular areas. Less-popular rural areas attract the lowest percentage of urban in-migrants, whereas popular rural areas receive the highest share of urban in-migrants. More than 50% of the migrants to these rural areas come from an urban municipality. Popular areas welcome relatively few people migrating from less-popular and average areas.

It seems that a considerable migration flow exists between urban areas and popular rural areas, while the migration flow between less-popular and average rural areas, and popular rural areas is very limited. This corresponds with Hjort and Malmberg's finding (2006) that population trends in the Swedish countryside are highly dependent on migration to and from the cities, while the exchange between the peri-urban and remote countryside is very limited.

*Table 4. Migration within the North of the Netherlands towards the different types of rural areas.*

From:	To			
	Less-popular rural areas (n=18)	Average rural areas (n=26)	Popular rural areas (n=10)	Total
Less-popular rural areas	28%	21%	10%	21%
Average rural areas	34%	31%	21%	30%
Popular rural areas	6%	10%	17%	10%
Urban municipalities	32%	39%	51%	39%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Statistics Netherlands

## **2.8 Characteristics and motivations of in-migrants: less-popular, average and popular rural areas compared**

The Statistics Netherlands data permitted an overview of migration numbers and the origin and age composition of migrants to rural areas in the northern Netherlands. To complement the above analysis with a comparison of the characteristics and motivations of migrants to the different types of rural areas, we analysed data from Housing Research of the Netherlands (WoON 2009), which investigates housing preferences and circumstances in the Netherlands every three years. The total sample consists of 78,000 respondents. For our analysis, we selected respondents living in rural municipalities in the northern Netherlands from the national sample. Rural municipalities are again defined by an address density of less

than 1,000 addresses per square kilometre. From this group of rural respondents, we selected people who had moved to their current address from another municipality in the previous two years. This definition of migrants was chosen because the questions related to the decision to move in the questionnaire of WoON 2009 are only answered by this group of respondents.

A multinomial logistic regression model is used to analyse how various personal and household characteristics and reasons for moving influence the type of rural area people move to. The dependent variable in this model consists of the categories 'moved to less-popular', 'moved to average' and 'moved to popular' rural areas (reference category).

Following Hjort and Malmberg (2006), the personal and household characteristics we selected as independent variables are being part of a couple, having children, age, income and education. In addition, we also selected having moved from an urban area and having moved from within the northern Netherlands. Because the analysis of migration patterns presented earlier showed that popular rural areas attract more movers from urban areas and from outside the North, we want to investigate whether this effect remains when other characteristics are controlled for.

We also selected reasons for moving as independent variables, following Stockdale (2006a), who showed that the motivations for in-migration to peripheral, depopulating rural areas differ from those for in-migration to repopulating areas. Unfortunately, the WoON questionnaire is designed in such a way that if people have moved to their current address for personal reasons (marriage, living together, divorce, leaving the parental home), they are not asked whether they also had other motivations, work for example. Respondents who did not move for personal reasons could choose more than one motive from the questionnaire. This may have resulted in an underestimation of some of the reasons for moving in the data.

*Table 5. Multinomial logistic regression analysis of having moved to less-popular, average or popular rural areas.*

Dependent variable:	Less-popular rural areas		Average rural areas	
Independent variables:	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Couple (couple=1, single=0)	0.543	0.616	0.076	0.530
Children (yes=1, no=0)	0.467	0.496	0.134	0.446
Age	-0.028	0.018	-0.007	0.015
Income	-0.017	0.017	0.000	0.012
Higher education (yes=1, no=0)	-1.235**	0.497	-0.868**	0.427
Moved from urban area (urban=1, rural=0)	-1.541***	0.472	-1.480***	0.412
Moved from North of the Netherlands (yes=1, no=0)	-0.859	0.584	-0.533	0.527
Moved for personal reasons (yes=1, no=0)	0.006	0.564	-0.735	0.539
Moved for work reasons (yes=1, no=0)	0.936	0.940	0.628	0.895
Moved because of previous dwelling (yes=1, no=0)	-0.678	0.942	-0.614	0.801
Moved because of previous residential environment (yes=1, no=0)	-0.198	0.747	-0.453	0.633
Moved to live closer to family and friends (yes=1, no=0)	1.695*	0.884	0.089	0.930
Constant	2.434	1.216	1.709	1.088
<hr/>				
N	170			
-2 log likelihood	315.086			
$\chi^2$	49.770***			

\*  $p < 0,10$ ; \*\*  $p < 0,05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0,01$

Source: WoON 2009

The analysis (see Table 5) shows that more highly-educated people and people moving from urban areas more often move to popular rural areas compared to less-popular and average rural areas. The other background characteristics do not influence the probability of ending up in one of the three types of areas, while income in particular could be expected to be a determining factor, given that the areas are defined based on house prices. This outcome does seem to fit with the 'classical' counter-urbanisation picture of middle-class people moving from the city to rural areas (Halfacree, 2008; Stockdale, 2006a). Apparently, popular rural areas are more likely to attract these groups than less-popular rural areas and average rural areas.

However, because of the expected relationship between education and income we also conducted the analysis without including higher education as an independent variable. Then the results show that a lower income leads to an increased probability to move to less-popular areas compared to popular areas, but the coefficient is only just significant ( $B = -0.032$ ,  $p = 0.097$ ). Apparently, the effect of income is partly included in the effect of higher education. Yet, the effect of income is small. It is not the important explanatory factor you would expect when comparing areas with different levels of housing prices.

People who moved to their current address to live closer to family and friends more often move to less-popular areas compared to popular areas. This corresponds with the findings of Stockdale (2006a) and Grimsrud (2011) that personal motivations, such as a first home and marriage or family ties, were important motives for migrating into peripheral, depopulating rural areas. Therefore, based on motives, migrants who move to less-popular rural areas in the Netherlands seem to resemble migrants moving to peripheral rural areas.

The importance of the motive to live closer to family and friends could also indicate that part of the migration flow into less-popular areas consists of return migration. Niedomysl and Amcoff (2010) show, in the context of internal return migration in Sweden, that social relationships are an important motivation for return. More specifically, proximity to family and friends is often mentioned by return migrants as a motive. Unfortunately, this idea cannot be tested using the WoON 2009 data. Except for the former place of residence, other former places of residence of the respondents and their place of birth are unknown.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

In the introduction to this paper we stated that migration patterns in rural areas within core regions of Europe cannot be explained sufficiently by the prevailing counter-urbanisation models alone. We have tried to empirically underline this statement by analyzing migration flows, characteristics and motives of people moving to less-popular, average and popular rural areas for living in the northern

Netherlands. Migration statistics show that migration numbers in the different types of rural areas are largely comparable, though on the basis of house prices it can be concluded that less-popular areas are in general perceived as less attractive to live in. This shows that amenities do not have the same meaning to all migrants and less-popular areas also offer something that attracts people.

Considering migration statistics, it appears that less-popular areas attract a larger share of movers from within the northern Netherlands, a larger influx from rural areas and generally a younger group of movers. The analysis of survey data showed that people who moved to their current address motivated by a desire to live closer to family and friends have a higher probability of moving to less-popular areas. Popular areas attract a larger share of movers from outside the northern Netherlands, a larger share from urban areas and in general a slightly older group of migrants. Multivariate analysis showed that more highly-educated people and people moving from urban areas more often move to popular rural areas compared to less-popular and average rural areas.

The reason why popular areas attract more highly-educated people could be their proximity to the central part of the Netherlands. This provides easier access to a more diverse labour market and the networks related to it.

An explanation of why popular rural areas receive more migrants from urban areas can be found in the attractiveness of the semi-open landscape and the presence of nature in these areas. This can be related to representations or images of rural areas that people have. Previous research has shown that in representations of urban residents, visual aspects relating to landscape and other environmental characteristics are more dominant (Steenbekkers et al., 2008; Haartsen, 2002), while sociocultural values relating to the countryside way of life are more dominant in representations of rural residents. The quality of the landscape is probably of lesser importance to rural residents compared to the other characteristics of rural areas.

In addition to representations of 'the rural' in general, representations of specific rural areas could also be important in explaining migration decisions. Such representations could partly be based on the areas' accessibility. From a regional perspective, all rural areas in the northern Netherlands have similar access to the

northern cities. However, from the national perspective, the less-popular areas are more peripherally located. This fact, combined with a landscape that in general is perceived as less attractive, could lead to less positive representations of less-popular areas. From earlier research, we know that representations are constructed in direct and indirect contact with an area, and that familiarity with an area creates more positive representations (Haartsen, 2002). The importance of the proximity of family and friends for migrants to less-popular rural areas indicates familiarity with the area, and this could have resulted in more positive representations of the area.

To conclude, our study has shown that within core regions in Europe, the classical counter-urbanisation model does not explain all rural population change. The characteristics of the movers to popular rural areas do fit very well within the counter-urbanisation story, while less-popular rural areas share personal reasons as an important motive for in-migration with more remote rural areas in Europe. Apparently, rural areas in core regions in Western Europe do vary in terms of amenities and perceived remoteness. Our study indicates that representations of what rural is, and concepts of periphery and remoteness have to be viewed within the local, regional and national context. Research into rural population change in both core regions and sparsely populated countries should consider these different contexts, to be able to acknowledge the variety of ways amenities and peripherality are perceived by different people.

For further research, we believe we can identify some other potentially relevant aspects and questions. Firstly, we do not yet know enough about the motives of migrants. The database we used mixes motives for moving with motives for location choice, while the reasons for leaving somewhere can very well differ from the motives for choosing a certain destination (see also Bolton and Chalkley, 1990). It would also be interesting to know the birth place and residential history of migrants, to investigate whether return migration and familiarity with rural areas and rural living plays a role in migration to less-popular areas. Finally, knowledge of the representations people have of 'the rural' in general and different rural areas more specifically, could help us to understand migration movements towards different types of areas.



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### 3. Migration to less-popular rural areas in the Netherlands: Exploring the motivations<sup>3</sup>

#### Abstract

Migration into rural areas is often explained in terms of the rural idyll, the attraction of the countryside with its less hurried way of life in a quiet, spacious and green environment. However, this migration phenomenon has mostly been researched in attractive, amenity-rich, popular rural areas. This paper investigates the characteristics and motivations of migrants to less-popular rural areas using survey data (N=664) for four municipalities in the North of the Netherlands. Our study shows a young group of in-migrants with relatively low incomes, but also a large proportion of working people and a considerable number of highly educated movers. Separating the motivations for choosing to live in *a rural area in general* from the motivations for choosing *this specific rural area* reveals that while the pull of the rural idyll is an important motivation for moving to a rural area in general, the reasons for choosing the specific rural area are a mixture of housing characteristics, the physical qualities of the environment, personal reasons and the low house prices in the area. Combining the motivations with the characteristics of the movers reveals the diversity within the movers group. Our analysis shows a group of movers motivated to live close to family and friends, consisting of return migrants, singles, the youngest and oldest age groups and also the lowest income group. The physical qualities of the environment attract a group of highly educated movers, people with high incomes and people aged between 35 and 64. The motivation of housing characteristics, referring in most cases to the availability of a specific house, is mentioned by a wide range of movers, but in particular by people moving from urban areas.

#### 3.1 Introduction

Residential use has become an emerging function of the post-productivist or consumption countryside. Processes of suburbanisation and counterurbanisation have brought new inhabitants to the rural. These migration flows to, often attractive,

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rural areas are predominantly viewed as movements of middle-class people from urban areas in search of a rural lifestyle (Milbourne, 2007). However, it has increasingly been acknowledged that the spatial context 'needs to be conceptualised as contingent' in migration research (Findlay, 2005: p. 429). Simultaneously, migration has become more diverse and complex due to developments in, for instance, mobility and IT (Smith and King, 2012). Rural scholars recently started questioning the 'classical' view of counterurbanisation as the only conceptualisation of rural migration, as it does not acknowledge that rural areas can differ in their popularity for living, that rural areas can also attract other types of migrants with different motives, and that mobilities have become much more diversified (e.g. Bijker and Haartsen, in press; Grimsrud, 2011; Halfacree, 2008, 2012; Milbourne, 2007; Woods, 2011). Empirical evidence is needed 'for shedding light on the different scales, rates and outcomes of diverse processes of migration' (Smith and King, 2012: p. 127) and for looking beneath the 'meta-narratives of rural population change' (Milbourne, 2007: p. 382).

This paper aims to contribute to the debate on new migration theories by providing new empirically founded insights into migration flows to the relatively under-researched less-popular rural areas. The limited existing studies of migration to less-popular rural areas indicate that such areas also attract movers other than the middle-class urbanites associated with the 'counterurbanisation story', ranging from low-income groups (Fitchen, 1995; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008) to a more mixed group of movers (Andersen, 2011). However, the extent to which the typical 'quality-of-life' motivations connected to the counterurbanisation concept also hold true for these migrants is not clear (Foulkes and Newbold, 2008; Stockdale, 2006). It is also not known which motives apply to which type of migrants, and whether they differ for short or long distance migrants.

In this paper we focus on less-popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands. They are specifically contextualised in a densely populated and urbanised country. We are aware of the fact that the definition of less-popular areas may differ for different (national) contexts in terms of population density, physical characteristics and distance to urban areas. Nonetheless, our research area shares characteristics



with less-popular rural areas in other studies, such as a relatively peripheral location and relatively low house prices (see e.g. Andersen, 2011; Fitchen, 1995; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008; Stockdale, 2006). Moreover, based on previous research, we concluded that representations of what is rural and notions of peripherality have to be viewed within their specific national context (Bijker and Haartsen, in press).

In this study we investigate the characteristics and motives of migrants to less-popular rural areas in the Netherlands. We want to shed more light on the motivations for moving to less-popular areas by disentangling them into reasons for leaving the previous place of residence, motivations for moving to the rural in general and motivations for moving to the specific less-popular rural area. Previous research in a repopulating rural area has shown the usefulness of this approach (Bolton and Chalkley, 1990). In addition, we take into account the multidimensionality of motives for moving, which makes it easier to reveal the importance of the rural character of the destination (Halfacree, 1994; Halliday and Coombes, 1995). By combining the movers' characteristics with their motivations, we explore which motivations are mentioned by whom.

We start by providing a literature overview of the characteristics and motives of rural migrants. The methodology section describes our research area and the survey design. The sections on the empirical results present the people who move to less-popular rural areas in the Netherlands, why they move and which groups of movers mention which motivations. In the discussion section, we try to relate our empirical findings to the wider debate on rural migration.

### **3.2 Migration into rural areas: who?**

Rural in-migration in general is often associated with the movement of middle-class families from the city who are either retired or commute to nearby urban centres for employment (Smith and Phillips, 2001; Stockdale, 2006). In the Netherlands migration to rural areas complies to a large extent with this 'counterurbanisation story'. Around half of the movers to rural areas moved from urban areas, middle

and high-income groups are overrepresented, and around 40% of the movers are highly educated (Steenbekkers et al., 2006; Steenbekkers et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, in an international context, several authors have made clear that migration to rural areas in general is more diverse than this classic image of counterurbanisation. Firstly, in addition to urban-to-rural migration, there is rural-to-rural migration (Gkartzios and Scott, 2009), and instead of consisting only of longer distance movements, short distance relocations form a considerable share of rural in-migration (Walford, 2007). Secondly, it is not just the middle class moving to the rural. Halfacree (2008) and Hoggart (2007) note the presence of quite a number of working class counterurbanisers in rural England. Thirdly, not all urban-to-rural migrants continue to work in cities. Findlay et al. (2000) challenge this – in their words ‘one of the long-held myths’ – by showing in their study that almost half of all migrant heads of household in rural Scotland worked locally. Additionally, a substantial share was not in active employment, leaving just a small group of long-distance commuters. Fourthly, there is a popular idea that it is mainly older age groups who migrate to the countryside (Steenbekkers et al., 2006; Van Dam et al., 2002). However, when examining the actual movers to rural areas in the Netherlands, it appears that the younger age groups are in the majority, with only 16% being 65 or older. When they move, older people are relatively more likely to move to rural areas, but they only represent a small proportion of the overall flow of movers to rural areas (Steenbekkers et al., 2008).

When focusing on less-popular rural areas, we see a picture that is even more different from the ‘classic’ image described above. With regard to the origin and age of the movers, Stockdale (2006) found that most in-migrants in depopulating, peripheral areas in rural Scotland moved short distances, and that there was a mix of moves from cities, from smaller settlements and between similar sized rural settlements. In her study most respondents (75%) had moved before their fiftieth birthdays. This corresponds with the findings in a previous study in the northern Netherlands based on migration statistics and limited secondary data, which found that less-popular areas attract more migrants from within the northern Netherlands, from rural areas and also a younger group of movers (Bijker and Haartsen, in press).

Furthermore, less-popular areas do not seem to attract the middle class. In Stockdale's study, skilled manual, trade-type occupations dominated, with few being employed in the professional or managerial sectors. In the previously mentioned study in the northern Netherlands, less-popular rural areas attracted more migrants with lower levels of education. Furthermore, impoverished rural areas in the U.S., characterised by ample availability of cheap rental housing, attract large groups of migrants with low incomes, varying from working poor (Foulkes and Newbold, 2008) to welfare benefits recipients (Fitchen, 1995). Nonetheless, a more diverse group of in-migrants were found moving into fringe areas in Denmark, i.e. areas experiencing population decline and a low level of economic activity (Andersen, 2011). In addition to some groups with quite low incomes that Andersen assumes migrate for lower housing costs, these areas also attract movers with middle or high incomes, partly consisting of couples with children moving to a detached house, something they are probably unable to afford in Denmark's growth areas.

### **3.3 Migration into rural areas: why?**

The motives for migration to rural areas in general can be subdivided into three groups: residential, household, and work and education motives (Van Dam et al., 2002). The first group, residential motives, refers to the quality of the housing and residential environment. The quality of the residential environment is often seen as the most important pull factor of rural areas (Deller et al., 2001; Gkartzios and Scott, 2009; Halfacree, 1994; Halliday and Coombes, 1995; Walmsley et al., 1998). Following Halfacree (1994), physical and social features of the residential environment can be identified. Physical features are for example space, fresh air and an attractive landscape, while social features include friendly people, peaceful living and less crime. Movers to rural areas in the Netherlands most often mention the typical rural idyllic arguments such as space and quietness, after housing characteristics, as reasons for choosing their place of residence (Steenbekkers et al., 2008).

In addition to the residential environment, housing characteristics can also be an important reason for moving to the countryside, for example a better or bigger house, or a large garden (Gkartzios and Scott, 2009). For movers to rural areas in the Netherlands, the availability of a specific house or certain type of house was the most important reason for choosing the current place of residence (Steenbekkers et al., 2008). Housing-related reasons are often associated with short-distance moves (Halfacree, 1994; Mulder, 1993).

The second group of motives, the household motives, refers to moves motivated by life events such as moving in together, getting married, having children or getting divorced (Van Dam, 2000). The desire to live closer to family as a reason for moving also belongs to this category. Proximity to family and friends is mentioned by 11% of movers to rural areas in the Netherlands as having been important to their choice of current residence (Steenbekkers et al., 2008).

The third group of motives is related to employment and education. Migration motivated by a change of job, the desire to live closer to work, or to get an education, fits into this category (Van Dam, 2000). In particular, work motives play an important role in rural migration. Employment-related reasons are often associated with long-distance moves (Halfacree, 1994). In the Netherlands, migrants originating from rural areas were more often motivated by considerations related to their work than movers from urban areas (Van Dam et al., 2002).

A special motive for rural migration is return migration. Different percentages of return migrants have been found in rural migration studies, ranging from only 9% in North Devon (Bolton and Chalkley, 1990) to as much as 50% in amenity-rich rural areas in the Netherlands (Elbersen, 2001). In these cases return migration refers to moving back to a place where a person lived previously. Niedomysl and Amcoff (2011) found that return migrants are more often motivated by social reasons compared to non-return migrants. It is particularly the proximity to family and friends that motivates them to return. In addition to return migration to a specific place, more general 'return to the rural' types of in-migration have also been found. For example, in the three Irish rural case study areas of Gkartzios and Scott (2009), a large majority of the migrants appeared to have grown up in rural areas. In the

Netherlands Feijten et al. (2008) have also shown that people who had previously lived in rural areas have a significantly higher probability of moving to rural areas compared to people without experience of rural life.

When focusing specifically on motives for migrating to less-popular rural areas, it appears that residential, household, and work and education motivations for moving also play a role in these areas, but the relative importance of the different motivations seems to differ. While in general the quality of the residential environment is an important pull factor for in-migration to rural areas, household motivations such as marriage, divorce, setting up home for the first time and employment considerations appear to be the main motivations for moving to rural depopulating areas in Scotland, while housing was another important motivation (Stockdale, 2006). In their qualitative case studies into depressed rural communities attracting low-income groups, Fitchen (1995) and Foulkes and Newbold (2008) also show the importance of housing reasons, mainly relating to the availability of affordable housing. In these studies, household motivations were also important: a considerable share of migrants was attracted by the proximity to family and friends.

However, with regard to the importance of the pull of the countryside as a way of life for in-migration to less-popular rural areas, the studies show inconsistent results. While Stockdale (2006) found quality-of-life-considerations to be of little importance, accounting for no more than 10% of moves, the in-depth interviews conducted by Foulkes and Newbold (2008) reveal that in addition to the attraction of low housing costs, the rural character of the community did play a role in the decision to move there. Moving to these communities represented an opportunity to satisfy the desire to live in a rural setting. Many migrants viewed their move to the area as a step closer to their ultimate residential goal of living out in the country on a large piece of property (Foulkes and Newbold, 2008).

These different results could be caused by the different methodological approaches of the studies. Motives for moving are never one-dimensional and previous research has shown that when asking for the single most important motive for moving – as Stockdale does in her study – underlying motivations and

preferences can remain invisible (Van Dam, 2000), resulting in an underestimation of the importance of the rural character of the destination (Halfacree, 1994; Halliday and Coombes, 1995). Foulkes' and Newbold's (2008) qualitative method is probably better able to reveal this significance of the rural environment.

Another methodological issue concerning the analysis of migration motives is the distinction between motives for leaving a specific location from motives for moving to a specific location. Bolton and Chalkley (1990) showed the importance of this distinction when concluding that the reasons for leaving the previous area of residence tended to relate to lifestyle, personal or environmental factors, while the reasons for choosing North Devon were more often about jobs and house prices. In Stockdale's analysis, motives for leaving the previous place of residence are mixed with motives for moving to the specific area, probably resulting in an underestimation of the importance of the quality of the residential environment. We think that addressing these two methodological issues using a quantitative approach could help clarify the motivations of movers to less-popular areas.

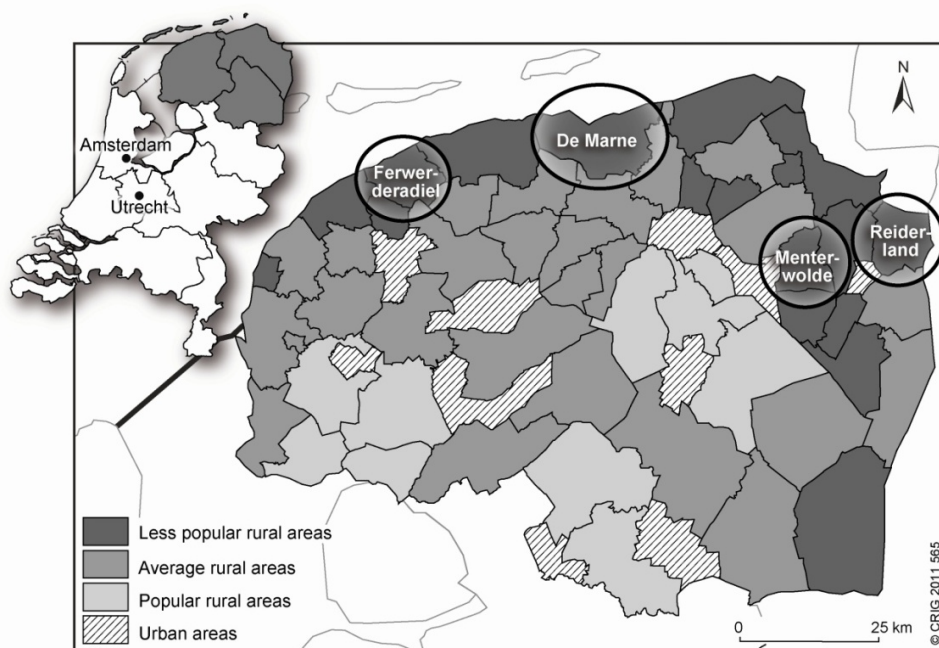
### **3.4 Methodology**

The data we present in this paper were collected in less-popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands. Even though in comparison with other European countries, the Netherlands is a densely populated and urbanised area, a considerable part of the country is defined as rural by the Dutch population (Haartsen et al., 2003). In this study we focus on the northern Netherlands because, based on address density and the perception of the Dutch people, it is the most rural part of the country. The popularity for living of our rural areas is defined using average house prices per municipality. House prices are an indication of what people are willing to pay for houses and their surroundings (Luttik, 2000; Visser and Van Dam, 2006), thus reflecting the value buyers attach to them. Therefore, we consider the average house prices in an area as an indicator of the popularity of an area for living. This average house price incorporates the residential environment as well as housing characteristics such as size and quality. The use of house prices instead of in-

migration numbers, which are often used in studies of rural areas' popularity (Argent et al., 2007; McGranahan, 2008), is more appropriate to the Dutch context. In the Netherlands population growth at the municipality level is strongly influenced by government development policy (Marlet, 2009). New housing is only allowed in a limited number of areas, while in others, building houses is very restricted, especially in rural areas, both in the open countryside and in villages (Van Dam et al., 2002). These restrictions make it impossible for the Dutch housing market to react to changes in demand for new houses, which leads to price increases rather than increased in-migration when there is increasing demand (Marlet, 2009). Rental prices differ little between regions in the Netherlands, which is why these are not considered in defining the popularity of rural areas for this study.

Based on house prices, we distinguish three types of rural areas in the northern Netherlands: less-popular rural areas, average rural areas and popular rural areas. These areas are considered rural based on Statistics Netherlands's national standard for the degree of urbanisation, the so-called address density, consisting of municipalities with an average of less than 1,000 addresses per square kilometre. The average house prices per municipality for the rural municipalities in the northern Netherlands varied from EUR 142,600 to EUR 340,000 in 2008. We performed a cluster analysis on this average house price per municipality resulting in three clusters, which we called less-popular rural areas (average price EUR 174,828), average rural areas (EUR 212,731) and popular rural areas (EUR 273,170) (see also Bijker and Haartsen, in press). When looking at average house prices per municipality in the whole of the Netherlands in 2008, the less-popular areas, which are the focus of this paper, are also the lowest in ranking. Since 2008 the crisis in the housing market has resulted in price drops and decreasing numbers of transactions in most municipalities in the Netherlands, including those in the northern Netherlands. While it is a process that still is taking place, so far this has not changed the position of the less-popular areas with regard to the whole of the Netherlands and the general pattern of popularity within the North has not changed substantially either.

Figure 1 shows that the areas with the lowest house prices, the less-popular areas, are located along the northern and eastern borders of the northern Netherlands. They can be characterised as having an open, marine clay landscape with a large proportion of large-scale arable farmland. Compared to the popular areas, they have relatively fewer natural and recreational areas and they have a relatively low proportion of hotel and catering industry employment. They are relatively distant from the centre of the Netherlands and the people who inhabit these areas have a lower average household income than those in the average and popular rural areas. In these less-popular areas, both population decline and a decline in the number of households are expected (Bijker and Haartsen, in press) and in some municipalities population decline is already occurring (Haartsen and Venhorst, 2010).



*Figure 1. Three types of rural areas in the northern Netherlands*

From the less-popular rural areas, we selected four municipalities as study areas: De Marne (10,587 inhabitants in 2009), Menterwolde (12,514) and Reiderland



(6,988) in the province of Groningen and Ferwerderadiel (8,825) in the province of Friesland (see Figure 1). In the period 2005-2009, all these municipalities experienced population decline. None of the four municipalities has a large town within its boundaries and they do not border one of the larger cities in the North. Therefore, in the Dutch context all migrants to these municipalities can be considered to be rural migrants rather than movers to a larger settlement or suburbanisers. The selected municipalities are roughly equally distant in terms of commuting distance to the larger cities in the North (around 40 minutes). While the landscape can be characterised as open in all four municipalities, due to different soil types (marine clay and peat) and historical background, the municipalities represent different landscape types in the North.

In cooperation with the municipal administrations, we selected all households who had moved into the municipality from another municipality in the period 2005-2009 based on the municipal population registers. In this selection owner-occupiers as well as renters were included. The relatively short period of 5 years was chosen to reduce the risk of memory-recall problems of the respondents and in particular post hoc rationalisation (see e.g. Walmsley et al., 1998).

In autumn 2009 a postal questionnaire was sent to all the households that met the selection criteria. In an accompanying letter we asked whether a household member aged over 18 could complete the questionnaire. A total of 664 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 20%. Statistics Netherlands provided data on the age distribution of the entire group of movers to these municipalities. In comparison to these data, it appeared that in our sample the older age groups were over-represented, while the youngest age group was under-represented. To obtain a representative age distribution we weighted the sample with regard to age for the descriptive analysis.

The questionnaire covered a variety of topics: residential history, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, housing characteristics, previous experience with the area and the motivations that were important in the migration decision. Following Van Dam (2000) and Bolton and Chalkley (1990), we separated motivations for leaving the previous residence from the motives for choosing the

destination area. Regarding the motives for choosing the destination area, we distinguished between choosing to live in a rural area in general and choosing to live in the specific less-popular rural area. Both questions on the choice of the destination area were open-ended, to take into account the multidimensionality of motives for moving. Open-ended questions offer the possibility of receiving spontaneous responses and avoid the bias that can be caused by suggesting responses, thus enabling a more open-minded and less biased approach to studying migration motives (Halfacree, 2004; Niedomysl and Malmberg, 2009). Moreover, Niedomysl and Malmberg (2009) have shown that coder variability when coding open-ended questions on migration motives is relatively low.

### **3.5 Characteristics of migrants to less-popular rural areas**

The demographic characteristics of migrants to the less-popular rural areas in our survey are summarised in Table 1. It shows that the four selected municipalities in the northern Netherlands mainly attract a young group of movers. Almost half of the migrants are aged between 20 and 34, while only 6% are over the retirement age of 65. In addition, compared to migrants to rural areas in general in the Netherlands (Steenbekkers et al., 2008), the less-popular areas seem to attract a younger group of movers. This probably also explains the fact that the share of couples without children is relatively high (47%). Covering 43% of our respondents, the proportion of movers with higher education is comparable to movers to rural areas in the Netherlands in general. Movers to rural areas seem to be quite highly educated, considering the fact that in the Netherlands as a whole, only around a third of the population has completed higher education (Steenbekkers et al., 2008).

*Table 1. Characteristics of in-migrants to the study areas (%) (n=664)*

<b>Age</b>	<b>%</b>		<b>%</b>
20-34	48	<b>Lived in municipality before</b>	16
35-44	20		
45-54	13	<b>Lived in a rural area before</b>	88
55-64	13		
65 <	6	<b>Moved from urban area</b>	43
<b>Household composition</b>			
Couple without children	47	<b>Previous residence</b>	
Couple/single parent with children	37	Surrounding municipalities	28
Single person household	16	Elsewhere in the northern Netherlands	38
<b>Level of education</b>		Elsewhere in the Netherlands	29
Lower or middle level of education	57	Abroad	5
Higher education	43		

From the analysis of the residential history of the respondents, it appears that 16% had lived in the municipality previously and can therefore be considered return migrants (see Table 1). This percentage does not seem high, given that Nedomysl and Amcoff (2011) describe that in various Western countries, around a quarter of all internal migrants can be categorised as return migrants. The more general 'return to the rural' migration appears to be of much more significance to our respondents. As many as 88% of the migrants in our study had lived in a rural area previously. Around two thirds of these migrants had lived in the countryside more than half their lives.

People may be already familiar with an area for various reasons. Not presented in Table 1 but covered in the survey is the question of whether our respondents already knew the area they moved to from personal experience. This was the case for 61%, such as through living in the municipality or the surrounding municipalities (25%), visiting friends and relatives (28%), visits for recreational activities or holidays (9%), and through work-related visits (9%). Considering the previous places of residence (see Table 1), a relatively small percentage (43%) of our respondents had moved from an urban area. For rural areas in the Netherlands as a whole, this percentage is 57% (Steenbekkers et al., 2008). With regard to the location

of the previous residence, Table 1 shows a variety of movements, ranging from a move over a longer distance from elsewhere in the Netherlands to a local move from surrounding municipalities. The largest proportion (38%) moved from within the northern Netherlands, which could be described as a regional move.

*Table 2. Socioeconomic characteristics of in-migrants to the study areas (%) (n=664)*

<b>Monthly household income (net)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Location of work<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Economic sector<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>%</b>
< EUR 1250	12	In the municipality	15	Farming and fishing	5
EUR 1250 - <2500	45	In surrounding municipalities	15	Manufacturing	9
EUR 2500 - <4000	34	In nearest city	30	Construction	6
≥ EUR 4000	9	Elsewhere in the province	15	Trade	7
<b>Source of income</b>		Elsewhere in the North	10	Hotel and catering industry	2
Paid employment	64	Elsewhere in the Netherlands	5	Transport and communication	5
Self-employed	10	Several locations	3	Financial, business/other services	19
Benefit	8	Other	8	Government	6
Pension	10			Education	9
Income partner	2			Health and social care	25
Student	2			Other	6
Other	4				

<sup>1</sup> Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding

Table 2 presents the socioeconomic characteristics of our respondents. Almost half of the migrants in our sample earn between EUR 1250 and EUR 2500 per month. A comparison with movers to rural areas in the Netherlands in general is impeded by the different categorisation of incomes in Steenbekkers et al. (2008). However, it remains clear that movers to less-popular areas have lower incomes than movers to the Dutch countryside have on average. A relatively large proportion (64%) is in paid employment. The number of self-employed (10%) and those on benefits (8%) is comparable to movers to rural areas in the Netherlands in general. The movers work in a variety of sectors. 'Health and social care' and 'financial, business and other services' are the main sectors the migrants are employed in. Although the proportion of people working in health and social care is high compared to the

Netherlands as a whole (based on Statistics Netherlands data), in the context of the northern Netherlands this percentage is less surprising. The health and social care sector is the largest employer in the northern Netherlands and employment in this sector has been increasing in recent years (Schudde et al., 2010). Around a third of the employed and self-employed work in the municipality they live in or in surrounding municipalities, which confirms that rural migration is indeed not always connected to long-distance commuting (Findlay et al., 2000).

The housing characteristics in Table 3 show that migrants to less-popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands predominantly moved to owner-occupied housing (77%). This is a larger proportion than the owner-occupied housing segment in the housing stock in the selected municipalities (65%, according to data from Statistics Netherlands). It is also a higher proportion than generally observed for movers to rural areas in the Netherlands as a whole (65%, Steenbekkers et al., 2008). In terms of the type of house the migrants moved to, the majority (58%) moved to a detached house, while 42% of the people living in rural areas in the Netherlands live in a detached house (Steenbekkers et al., 2008). This could indicate that the less-popular areas studied here offer the possibility to satisfy certain residential preferences for people who cannot afford this elsewhere, such as buying a house in a rural setting or owning a detached house.

*Table 3. Housing characteristics of migrants to the study areas (%) (n=664)*

<b>Type of tenure</b>	
Owner-occupied	77
Rented house	23
<b>Type of house</b>	
Terraced	21
Detached	58
Semi-detached	18
Apartment	3

To summarise, our migrants seem to be more diverse than the low-income groups found to move to impoverished rural areas in the U.S. (Fitchen, 1995; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008) and the movers to depopulating areas in Scotland

(Stockdale, 2006). Although they have a relatively low income in the Dutch context, the lowest-income group is only small. Combined with the relatively large proportion of working people, the variety of sectors they work in, and the large group with higher education qualifications, our movers seem to correspond better to the more diverse group of movers to fringe areas in Denmark, which includes quite a large proportion of migrants on low incomes, but also encompasses movers with middle or high incomes trying to realise housing preferences they could not afford in more expensive areas (Andersen, 2011). Based on the relatively high proportion of owner-occupied and detached houses, it appears that also in the less-popular areas we studied, housing preferences which are difficult to afford elsewhere can be realised.

### **3.6 Motivations of migrants**

Our questionnaire asked the migrants in the sample to answer three questions related to their motivations for their move. The first was a closed question about their reason for the move. Table 4 shows the reasons reported for moving. Because respondents were allowed to give more than one answer, the percentages do not add up to 100%. The move to less-popular areas is most often triggered by changes in the household career, with marriage or cohabitation as the main reason for moving (33%). Nonetheless, residential reasons are also important. One-fifth of the migrants mentioned wanting to leave the city. Dissatisfaction with the previous house or neighbourhood was also mentioned quite often. Finally, employment-related reasons, such as changes in the work situation and retirement, were also mentioned. Remarkably, the 'housing costs too high' reason, which would have been expected to be important due to the relatively low house prices in the area, was not often mentioned. The answers in the 'other' category show that dissatisfaction with the current dwelling or location is not always needed as a trigger for moving. As part of the 'other' category, around 5% of the movers mentioned residential pull factors – such as 'realising our residential dream', 'building our own house' and 'living in the open' – rather than push factors as their reason for moving. A small

number of movers did not even have plans to move, but just accidentally ‘fell in love with the house’.

*Table 4. Reasons for moving (%) (n=664)*

Marriage/Cohabitation	33	Divorce/Decease of partner	5
Getting out of the city	22	Housing costs too high	5
Previous house	18	Living closer to family	3
Change in work situation	14	Children leaving home	2
Previous neighbourhood	12	Addition to the family	2
Setting up home for the first time	8	Health	2
Retirement	7	Other	13

The answers to both open-ended questions on motives for the choice of the destination area were categorised on the basis of previous studies of rural migration (e.g. Bolton and Chalkley, 1990; Gkartzios and Scott, 2009; Halfacree, 1994; Halliday and Coombes, 1995; Walmsley et al., 1998) and also on what emerged from the survey results. Table 5 shows that quietness is the main motivation for moving to *a rural area in general*, directly followed by the physical qualities of the environment – for example ‘space’, ‘nature’ and ‘fresh air’. The social qualities of the environment are also important, such as ‘freedom’, ‘kind-heartedness’, ‘friendliness’, ‘small-scale’ and ‘social contacts in the village’. These motivations fit nicely with the elements usually associated with the rural idyll, as do escaping the negative aspects of city life included in the ‘city push factors’ motivation (for example ‘fed up with traffic jams and crowdedness’ and ‘Rotterdam became too hectic and noisy’). Housing characteristics are also important, referring for example to a ‘detached house’ or a ‘large garden’. Only one in ten of the respondents were motivated by lower house prices. On the whole, it can be concluded that other residential motives dominate the choice for rural living.

Table 5. Motivations for moving to a rural area (%) (n=664)

Quietness	43	Way of life	9
Physical qualities of the environment	42	Work	8
Social qualities of the environment	17	Proximity of family of friends	7
Housing characteristics	13	Moving in with partner	6
Familiarity with the rural	12	For the children	4
City push factors	12	Other motivations	8
Low house prices	10		

The respondents' motivations for *moving to this specific rural area* are presented in Table 6. Housing characteristics – and in most cases the availability of a specific house – were the main motivation for moving to this specific rural area, with answers such as 'this house appealed to us', 'because of the house' and 'we found the right house'. Here too, the physical qualities of the environment were important, including 'panoramic views', 'beautiful surroundings', 'space' and 'nature'. Sixteen percent of the respondents had moved in with a partner, while about the same proportion referred to another personal motivation: living close to family and friends. Fourteen percent referred explicitly to the low house prices in the area as a motivation for moving there. Work-related reasons ('closer to work', 'accessibility of my work') and familiarity with the area were also important. Some people stated in a more general sense 'I was familiar with the area', while others specifically referred to being a return migrant: 'I grew up here', 'feeling at home' and 'wanted to return'.

Table 6. Motivations for moving to this specific rural area (%) (n=664)

Housing characteristics	24	Familiarity with the area	8
Physical qualities of the environment	21	Quietness	8
Moving in with partner	16	Location	8
Proximity to family and friends	15	Social qualities of the environment	8
Low house prices	14	Other reasons	16
Work	12		

In summary, while moving to the rural in general was mainly motivated by residential reasons, moving to the specific rural area was motivated by a mixture of



residential, household and work-related reasons. These motivations do not differ that much from the reasons mentioned by movers to rural areas in the Netherlands in general. They also referred to housing characteristics, space and green, work and the proximity to family and friends as important reasons for choosing their place of residence (Steenbekkers et al., 2008).

Compared to the movers to amenity-rich rural areas in the Netherlands (Van Dam et al., 2002), it is clear that the physical characteristics of the environment and work-related reasons are less important motives for moving to less-popular rural areas, while housing characteristics, affordable housing and personal reasons are more important. This seems to support the conclusion of Stockdale (2006) that less-popular areas do indeed attract movers with different motives than popular rural areas. However, migrants to less-popular areas in the northern Netherlands do also mention the physical characteristics of the environment, and their motivations for moving to the rural in general refer to aspects of the rural idyll. Combined with the motivation of the low house prices, this appears to correspond with the findings of Foulkes and Newbold (2008) that these areas also offer the opportunity to fulfil the dream of rural living for a group with relatively low incomes.

### **3.7 Linking characteristics and motivations**

Following this overview of the background characteristics and motivations of the movers to less-popular rural areas, the two aspects of migration need to be linked – *which motivations* are mentioned by *whom*? As noted previously, people can have more than one motivation for moving to this specific rural area. We used logistic regression analysis to characterise the people who mentioned a given motivation as one of their motivations for choosing this area.

We estimated five logistic regression models, focusing on five of the six most frequently mentioned motivations. The sixth motive, moving in with a partner, was less interesting to analyse in the present context because it is more closely related to the respondents' life stage than to the area moved to.

The results of the logistic regression analyses are shown in Table 7. The regression model estimates how various personal characteristics influence having a particular motivation to move to this specific rural area. A positive B coefficient means that an increased value on the independent variable increases the probability of having this motivation. If the sign of the B coefficient is negative, an increase in the value of the independent variable leads to a lower probability of having that motivation.

The physical qualities of the environment are mentioned most often by highly educated movers and people with a monthly household income of more than EUR 4000 per month compared with the lowest income group. People aged between 35 and 64 also mention this motivation more often than the youngest age group. People who have lived in the municipality before are less often motivated by the physical qualities of the environment. This corresponds with the finding of Niedomysl and Amcoff (2011) that return migrants are less likely to choose their destination for reasons related to the living environment.

Moving to the area because of housing characteristics or the availability of a specific house is more often mentioned by people moving from an urban area. People who had lived in the municipality previously mentioned this motivation less often. The other background characteristics do not have a significant effect, meaning that a diverse group of movers is attracted to the area by housing characteristics. Based on the literature, housing reasons would be expected to be related to short-distance moves (Halfacree, 1994).

Table 7. Logistic regression analysis of motivations for moving to the specific rural area

Dependent variable:	Model 1 Physical qualities	Model 2 Housing characteristics	Model 3 Proximity to family and friends	Model 4 Low house prices	Model 5 Work
Independent variables:	B	B	B	B	B
Moved from urban area (urban = 1, rural = 0)	-0.004	0.391*	-0.150	-0.173	-0.472
Lived in municipality before (yes = 1, no = 0)	-0.831**	-0.910**	0.694**	-1.763**	-0.155
Income (ref. < EUR 1250)					
EUR 1250-<2500	0.307	-0.239	-0.618	0.778	0.108
EUR 2500-<4000	0.122	0.271	-0.565	0.287	0.361
≥ EUR 4000	0.879*	0.679	-2.030*	0.608	0.020
Household composition (ref. couple without children)					
Couple/single parent with children	-0.031	0.016	0.236	0.374	-0.086
Single household	0.020	-0.208	0.795**	0.654*	-0.352
Previous residence (ref. surrounding municipalities)					
Elsewhere in the northern Netherlands	-0.439	0.257	-0.534	0.364	-0.748**
Elsewhere in the Netherlands	-0.001	-0.211	0.220	0.870**	-0.684*
Abroad	-0.808	0.433	0.512	0.789	-0.483
Higher education (yes = 1, no = 0)	0.453**	0.206	0.255	0.400	0.496*
Age (ref. 20-34)					
35-44	0.803**	-0.196	-0.854*	-0.125	0.740**
45-54	1.031***	0.214	-1.100**	-0.371	0.267
55-64	1.351***	0.032	-0.492	-0.786*	-0.709
> 65	0.236	-0.097	0.081	-0.541	-1.860*
Constant	-2.098	-1.342	-1.423	-2.835	-1.692
N	539	539	539	539	539
②	53.699***	29.416**	39.019***	31.001***	33.793***
Degrees of freedom	15	15	15	15	15
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.141	0.078	0.135	0.102	0.117

\* p < 0.10; \*\* p < 0.05; \*\*\* p < 0.01

Moving to this specific rural area to live close to family and friends is mentioned more often by people who had lived in the municipality previously. This is the only motivation for which being a return migrant has a positive significant effect. It seems that return migration to less-popular rural areas is mainly induced by the people who remained in the area and that it is not, for example, the quality of the environment that motivates such moves. Niedomysl and Amcoff (2011) also found that return migrants are motivated to move to live closer to family and friends more often than non-return migrants. Single households also mention proximity to family and friends more often. It is probably more important for this group to have their social network nearby. The same is true for the youngest and the older age groups; people aged 35-54 mention this motive less often. The youngest age group can often be in the family-building phase, during which time being close to family and friends is likely to be regarded as important (see also Niedomysl and Amcoff, 2011). From the answers there are some signs that the older age groups would rather see their children and grandchildren more often, or be able to receive the support of their children when their age leads to health problems. Finally, the lowest income group is more likely to be motivated by proximity to family and friends compared to the highest income group.

In an explorative bivariate analysis for the 'low house prices' motivation, we found the opposite of what would perhaps be expected – that the lowest income group mentioned this motivation least of all. We also found that highly educated movers mentioned low house prices more often. However, the logistic regression analysis proves that income and education are not significant predictors for being motivated to move to a less-popular rural area by low house prices. Our dataset includes owner-occupiers as well as renters. In the Netherlands the rental prices for social housing do not vary much between areas. Consequently, renters rarely mention house prices as a reason for choosing the area. The non-existent relationship between income and the low house price motive could be caused by the fact that the low-income group is overrepresented in the renting group and therefore does not mention house prices as a reason for choosing the area. However, when the

analysis is repeated with only the owner-occupiers included, the results are comparable to those shown in Table 7.

Yet other background characteristics do play a role in being motivated by low house prices. Single households mention this motivation more often. People moving from elsewhere in the Netherlands also mention being motivated by low house prices in the area more often than people moving from surrounding municipalities. This can probably be explained by the fact that for people moving from further away, house prices are low in comparison to house prices near their previous place of residence, while for people moving from nearer by, this difference is less striking. This also relates to people's search range. People moving from further away probably searched in a wide range of rural areas, and in this choice process house prices apparently played an important role, while people moving from nearby probably only searched in the surrounding areas, where house prices do not differ that much between different rural areas. People who had lived in the municipality previously are less motivated by low house prices, which also applies to people in the 55-64 age group compared to the youngest age group.

Finally, work-related motivations for choosing this specific rural area are mentioned more often by highly educated movers. This seems surprising at first sight, because the availability of jobs for which a high level of education is required does not seem to be a distinctive feature of these less-popular rural areas. However, this finding can be explained by the fact that this motivation not only encompasses living close to work, but also living at an acceptable distance from the job. Previous research has shown that higher education graduates are more inclined to commute longer distances (Sandow, 2008). It is probably also the case that, due to the more limited availability of jobs for people with higher education in or near these areas, this group only moves once they have already found a job. Movers in the 35-44 age group mention work-related motivations more often than the youngest age group, while movers over 65 unsurprisingly mention this motivation less often than the youngest age group. Moreover, people moving from elsewhere in the northern Netherlands or elsewhere in the Netherlands mention this motivation less often than people moving from surrounding municipalities. This is contrary to the finding of

Halfacree (1994), who found that employment-related reasons were more important in long-distance moves. Apparently, long-distance movers to these less-popular areas are not attracted by the availability of jobs.

### **3.8 Conclusion and discussion**

Our study of migration to less-popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands reveals a diverse group of migrants. They are characterised by having a relatively lower income, a relatively large proportion of people in work, and a large proportion of highly educated people. They are predominantly young, a substantial majority are 'return to the rural' migrants, and a small proportion moved from an urban area. The mobility circles vary from local – from surrounding municipalities – to longer distance – from elsewhere in the Netherlands – but the majority made a regional move from within the northern Netherlands. Based on migrant characteristics, we can conclude that our migrants are most similar to the diversity of migrants to fringe areas in Denmark (Andersen, 2011).

Quality-of-life motivations, which form a central part of the traditional conceptualisation of counterurbanisation, also play a role in decisions to move to less-popular rural areas. However, disentangling them into motivations for moving to *a rural area in general* and to *the specific rural area* has proved that these quality-of-life motivations are especially important in the choice for rural living in general. For moving to the specific rural area, housing characteristics were the main motivation, directly followed by the physical qualities of the environment, and personal reasons, such as moving in with a partner and living close to family and friends. Low house prices in the area only come fifth in the hierarchy of motivations.

Combining the characteristics and motivations of the movers has revealed the diversity within the movers group. The physical qualities of the environment attract a group of higher educated movers with high incomes, and middle-aged people. Furthermore, our analysis shows a group of movers motivated by living close to family and friends, consisting of return migrants, singles, the youngest and oldest age groups and also the lowest income group. Low house prices are an important

motivation for young movers, single people and for people moving from elsewhere in the Netherlands, but not for the low-income migrants. The housing characteristics motive refers in most cases to the availability of a specific house and is particularly mentioned by people moving from an urban area.

As part of the 'critical re-appraisal' of counterurbanisation, it is increasingly acknowledged that this process is not evenly spread: rural areas differ in their popularity as places to live (Argent et al., 2007; Bijker and Haartsen, in press; McGranahan, 2008; Woods, 2011). However, this notion has not yet been sufficiently translated into research studying the characteristics and motivations of migrants to rural areas, which has hitherto often focused on attractive, amenity-rich areas. We have attempted to fill this gap by studying migration into less-popular areas. Our results empirically support the idea that counterurbanisation is indeed a 'complex and differentiated phenomenon' (Woods, 2011: p. 184), also in less-popular areas. In particular, our analysis linking motivations to the characteristics of movers has helped to reveal this diversity. We have seen that less-popular areas also attract middle-class movers motivated by aspects of the rural idyll. However, the results of our analysis show that less-popular areas also attract other groups with other motivations. Our results indicate that in addition to differences in types of rural areas, the linkages between motivations and the characteristics of migrants are important to explain migration flows. Therefore, future research in popular rural areas could also use this method of analysis to further explore the presence of different groups of migrants with different motivations. Further investigation of the diversity of migrants to different types of rural areas is required to come to an empirically underpinned broader conceptualisation of counterurbanisation.

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## 4. Different areas, different people? Migration to popular and less-popular rural areas in the Netherlands<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract

Counterurbanisation is often conceptualised as urban, middle-class movers attracted by an idyllic rural setting. However, knowing that rural areas differ in their popularity for living, we argue that more attention is required to the diversity of rural in-migration within countries. We do so by comparing the characteristics, motivations and values of movers to popular and less-popular areas in the northern Netherlands using multivariate analysis on survey data (N = 1717). In contrast to earlier studies we focus on the motivations for choosing the destination area instead of mixing those with motives for leaving. We also included residential history and values in our analysis. The differences between movers to the two types of areas appear to be less distinct than indicated by previous studies. Although popular areas more often attract middle-class movers, both areas attract urban movers. Movers to less-popular areas are more often motivated by low house prices and moving in with a partner, but movers to popular areas also mention instrumental considerations related to work and location. While the physical aspects of the environment are important to moving to popular areas, social aspects are more important to moving to less-popular areas. We find that values add to our understanding of counterurbanisation. It is not possible to relate two distinct groups of movers directly to different types of rural areas within countries. Future research into rural migration should be careful not to use too simplified understandings of counterurbanisation, both in general and with regard to different types of rural areas.

### 4.1 Introduction

In recent years the dominant conceptualisation of counterurbanisation as the movement of middle-class groups from the city in search of a new life in an idyllic

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<sup>4</sup> This chapter is reprinted with some minor adjustments from: Bijker RA, Haartsen T, Strijker D. Different areas, different people? Migration to popular and less-popular rural areas in the Netherlands. *Population, Space and Place*. DOI: 10.1002/psp.1741. (available online in 'early view') Copyright © 2012 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

rural setting (Halfacree, 2008), has been reconsidered critically in several papers, including some contributions in this journal (e.g. Bijker and Haartsen, 2012; Grimsrud, 2011; Halfacree, 2001, 2008, 2012; Milbourne, 2007). One aspect of this reconsideration is the exploration of the international dimension of the counterurbanisation concept. Grimsrud (2011) shows that caution is required when applying this dominant conceptualisation originating in the core regions of Europe and America to remote rural areas. Her study in Norway shows movers to rural areas as motivated by family relations and economic concerns, instead of a desire for a rural lifestyle. Nonetheless, Bijker and Haartsen (2012) argue that in addition to these differences between countries, attention is also required to the diversity of rural in-migration *within* countries, even in densely populated and urbanised countries like the Netherlands. This follows from what Woods (2005) refers to as the 'regionally uneven nature of counterurbanization', the finding that rural areas differ in their popularity for rural living. The popularity of rural areas for migration purposes is found to be mainly influenced by their accessibility and the presence of amenities (Argent et al., 2007; Bollman and Briggs, 1992; Johnson and Beale, 1994; McGranahan, 2008). The results of Bijker and Haartsen (2012), based on migration statistics and secondary data, indicated that also within the core regions in Europe the classical counterurbanisation model does not explain all rural population change. While the characteristics of the movers to popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands fitted the counterurbanisation story, less-popular rural areas in the same region shared personal reasons as an important motive for in-migration with more remote rural areas in Europe (see for example Grimsrud, 2011).

Bijker and Haartsen (2012) conclude by stating that a more refined understanding of the phenomenon of counterurbanisation can be achieved by further considering the question of whether different types of rural areas attract different groups of migrants. They recommend separating the motivations for location choice from the motives for leaving the previous residence, instead of the analysis they performed, in which these two types of motivations were mixed. They also felt it important to pay more attention to the residential history of movers. Collecting our own survey data in seven municipalities in the northern Netherlands

(N = 1717) allowed us to incorporate these recommendations in this study. Therefore, in our current analysis we focus specifically on the motivations for choosing the destination area. We also include return migration and incorporate a more detailed description of the previous residence of the movers. In addition, besides characterising the movers using 'traditional' socio-demographic characteristics, we also use people's values. These underlying motivational factors have been used in housing research to improve the understanding of housing preferences (e.g. Coolen and Hoekstra, 2001; Coolen et al., 2002). In migration research values have received little attention so far – we want to explore whether they can also aid in distinguishing movers to different types of rural areas.

We include the values along with background characteristics and motivations in a multivariate analysis, which allows us to investigate which of these variables predict a move to a specific type of rural area, while controlling for the effect of other factors. Following Bijker and Haartsen (2012), we differentiate rural areas based on differences in popularity for living. We believe that such a direct comparison of migration flows to popular and less-popular areas can offer better insight into the diversity of rural population change within countries, compared to studies focusing on one type of rural area, which are the majority within research into rural migration. Only a few studies directly compare migration flows to different types of rural areas (Gkartzios and Scott, 2009; Grimsrud, 2011; Hjort and Malmberg, 2006), but these studies most often use univariate analyses. The results of the multivariate analysis are discussed after a short overview of the literature on rural in-migration and the use of values in housing and migration research.

## **4.2 Migration to rural areas**

As stated earlier, rural in-migration is often defined as counterurbanisation (Champion, 1989; Boyle and Halfacree, 1998), mostly referring to the movement of middle-class families from cities attracted by the quality of the residential environment (Halfacree, 2008). Following Halfacree (1994), physical and social features of the residential environment can be identified. Physical features are for

example space, fresh air and an attractive landscape, while social features include friendly people, peaceful living and less crime (Gkartzios and Scott, 2009; Halfacree, 1994). The quality of the residential environment as a motive for moving to the rural is often connected to the existence of the rural idyll: the pull of the countryside as a way of life (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009). Elements of this positive representation of the countryside are a less hurried lifestyle, peace and quiet, space and greenness: this idyllic countryside also offers an escape from hectic urban life (Cloke, 2003; Short, 2006; Van Dam et al., 2002).

This view of counterurbanisation is generally based on research into rural areas that are popular to live in. Studying migration to less-popular areas has helped bring some nuance to this classical image. However, the number of studies investigating migration to rural areas that can be regarded as less popular to live in is small. With regard to the background characteristics of movers, the limited evidence so far from different national contexts reveals the movers to be different from the middle-class movers in the counterurbanisation model. In a study of depopulating, peripheral rural areas in Scotland, Stockdale showed few in-migrants to be employed in professional or managerial sectors and only half of them to possess tertiary or vocational qualifications. Impoverished rural areas in the US with a wide availability of cheap rental housing attract large groups of low-income movers (Fitchen, 1995; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008). However, similar to in-migrants to Danish fringe areas experiencing population decline and a low level of economic activity (Andersen, 2011), a more diverse group of movers was found in a study focusing on less-popular areas in the northern Netherlands with respect to income and education (Bijker et al., in press). Nonetheless, compared to movers to rural areas in general in the Netherlands, their level of income appeared to be relatively low. Furthermore, using migration statistics and limited secondary data, Bijker and Haartsen (2012) found in the same region that compared to popular areas, less-popular areas attracted more migrants without higher education. With respect to the origin and age of the movers, it appears that less-popular areas attract young movers who have often made a local or regional move, coming from cities as well as rural areas (Bijker and Haartsen, 2012; Bijker et al., in press; Stockdale, 2006).



Looking at the motivations of movers to less-popular areas, it appears that instead of the quality of the residential environment, other motivations for choosing the destination area are more central in the decision process. Studies have shown the importance of more personal motivations, such as marriage and the proximity of family and friends, employment considerations and housing reasons, in some cases in particular related to the availability of affordable housing (Fitchen, 1995; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008; Grimsrud, 2011; Stockdale, 2006). Also in the previously mentioned study in the northern Netherlands, it appeared that the motive of living close to family and friends was more important for movers to less-popular areas (Bijker and Haartsen, 2012).

However, other studies show that the rural character of the destination is not totally insignificant to movers to less-popular areas. Foulkes and Newbold (2008) found that the low-income movers to depressed rural communities in the US also saw their move as an opportunity to satisfy the desire to live in a rural setting. In less-popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands quality-of-life motivations were particularly important in choosing rural living in general. However, when choosing a particular rural area to live in, the physical qualities of the environment were also an important motivation, in addition to housing characteristics, more personal considerations and the low house prices in the area (Bijker et al., in press).

The previous overview already shows that counterurbanisation is a more diverse phenomenon than the more narrow conceptualisation often used in research. Halfacree (2008, 2012) has attempted to develop a more general and flexible model, which includes a broader range of people and experiences than is typically the case. The model focuses on the motivations of the rural in-migrants, regardless of the origin of their move, be it an urban or rural area. Three groups of migrants are distinguished based on the extent to which 'the pull of rurality' motivated the migration. For the first group, labeled 'mainstream counterurbanisation', the rural environment is important, balanced by more practical considerations, such as proximity to employment or services. These are the people often represented in the 'classical' counterurbanisation concept. For the

second group, 'back-to-the-land counterurbanisation', the pull of rurality is absolutely central. This group has a separate position in the model because of their post-migration lifestyle, which is radically different from the mainstream group (see for example Halfacree, 2001). The third group is labeled 'default counterurbanisation': a group for which the rural character of the place is almost totally incidental and for which instrumental considerations – for example relating to employment or family support – are more important (Halfacree, 2008).

Halfacree (2008) suggests using this flexible model to explore 'the ways in which counterurbanisation is constructed and deployed in a variety of contexts' (p. 492). We want to investigate to what extent the different groups in the model are connected to different rural contexts within countries. Based on the findings from studies focusing on one type of rural area described above, it can be concluded that migration to popular rural areas is often defined as 'mainstream counterurbanisation', while migration to less-popular areas is often seen as 'default counterurbanisation'. In this study we want to find out whether this distinction remains when migration to these different types of rural areas is directly compared.

In his discussion of the model, Halfacree (2008) also states that 'the underlying motivations' of counterurbanisation, which may at least be partly unconscious for the person involved, seem until now to be only very partially addressed in research. The inclusion of the values people have in our analysis may be an attempt to gain more insight in these underlying motivations.

#### **4.3 Adding values to the analysis**

In recent years in housing research the idea has developed that traditional background characteristics (i.e. income, education or age) may no longer be sufficient to explain residential preferences due to a trend of greater differentiation in housing behaviour (see for example Heijs et al., 2009, 2011; Jansen, 2011). It is argued that this differentiation is generated by several demographic, socioeconomic and sociocultural changes that have taken place in Western countries, such as smaller households and a larger variation in household types, a greater variety of

specific lifestyle-based subcultures and the increased share of affluent households (Kersloot and Kauko, 2004). This has resulted in approaches which explore the motives underlying consumers' preferences, in order to improve the understanding of housing preferences and preferences for residential environments. In these approaches consumers are seen as acting in a goal-oriented manner, choosing a particular dwelling to satisfy values and goals that are important to them (Bettman, 1979; Jansen, 2011; Kersloot and Kauko, 2004; Rokeach, 1973). The concepts 'values' and 'goals' are closely related, as Schwartz (1994) defines values as 'desirable transsituational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity' (p. 21). Values are thus seen as objectives which, consciously or unconsciously, act as criteria in all our actions (Rokeach, 1973).

An example of research into the relationship between values and housing preferences is the small-scale study of Coolen and Hoekstra (2001), in which they use semi-structured interviews to investigate the values underlying preferred housing attributes. It appears that, for example, the preference for a garden can be based on various values, such as freedom, unity with nature, enjoying life and creativity. Using a quantitative approach, Coolen et al. (2002) study values as determinants of intended tenure choice. They use regression analysis to investigate the role that values play in the choice between renting and owning, when other important characteristics such as income and age are controlled for. They find the value orientation 'power and achievement' to be related to ownership, while 'family values' are related to renting. Coolen et al. conclude that the value orientation 'power and achievement' is related to viewing a house as a capital good, while the 'family values orientation' is more related to a house being seen as a consumer good.

In our study we explore whether including value orientations in our analysis helps characterise movers to different types of rural areas. In migration research, underlying motivational factors such as values have been paid little attention. An exception is Christenson's study (1979), which investigated the values of metropolitan and nonmetropolitan stayers and potential migrants in North Carolina. It appeared that potential migrants from nonmetropolitan areas attached more

importance to the values of personal freedom, individualism and racial and sexual equality than did nonmetropolitan stayers. He found no comparable differences between metropolitan stayers and potential migrants.

This limited attention in recent research to the values underlying migration decisions is rather strange, given that they seem to fit very well with the increasing attention being paid to the cultural dimension of migration in migration research (Halfacree, 2004). As Fielding stated: 'Migration tends to expose one's personality, it expresses one's loyalties and reveals one's values and attachments (often previously hidden). It is a statement of an individual's world-view, and is, therefore, an extremely cultural event' (1992, p. 201). This statement expresses that migration decision-making is more than a question of satisfying housing and employment requirements (Lewis, 1998). Individuals identify with locations, including their residential location, and give them social meaning. Choosing a certain kind of dwelling in a certain kind of place is an expression of a person's lifestyle, taste and identity (De Wijs-Mulkens, 1999; Van der Horst et al., 2002).

#### **4.4 Methodology**

The data we present in this paper were collected in popular and less-popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands. In comparison with other European countries, the Netherlands is densely populated and urbanised, though a considerable part of the country is nonetheless defined as rural by the Dutch population (Haartsen et al., 2003). In this study we focus on the northern Netherlands, being the most rural part of the country, both based on address density and the perception of the Dutch people (Haartsen et al., 2003). Following our previous paper (Bijker and Haartsen, 2012) we operationalise the popularity for living of the rural areas in our study using the average house prices per municipality. House prices reflect the value buyers attach to houses and their surroundings (Luttik, 2000; Visser and Van Dam, 2006). This average house price incorporates the residential environment as well as housing characteristics such as size and quality. The use of house prices instead of in-migration numbers, which are often used in studies of rural areas' popularity

(Argent et al., 2007; McGranahan, 2008), is more appropriate to the Dutch context. In the Netherlands the development of new housing is strictly regulated by the government and building is only allowed in a limited number of areas. These restrictions lead to price increases rather than increased in-migration when there is increasing demand (Marlet, 2009). Rental prices differ little between regions in the Netherlands, which is why these are not considered in defining the popularity of rural areas for this study.

Based on house prices, we distinguish three types of rural areas in the northern Netherlands: less-popular rural areas, average rural areas and popular rural areas (Bijker and Haartsen, 2012). These areas are considered rural based on Statistics Netherlands's national standard for urbanity, the so-called address density, consisting of municipalities with on average less than 1,000 addresses per square kilometre. In this study we focus on the less-popular and popular rural areas.

Figure 1 shows that the areas with the lowest house prices, the less-popular areas, are located along the northern and eastern borders of the northern Netherlands. They can be characterised as having an open, marine clay landscape with a large share of large-scale arable farmland. Compared to the popular areas, they have relatively fewer natural and recreational areas and they have a relatively low share of hotel and catering industry employment. They are relatively distant from the centre of the Netherlands and the people that inhabit these areas have a lower average household income than those in the average and popular rural areas. In these less-popular areas, population decline and a decline in the number of households are both expected (Bijker and Haartsen, 2012), and in some municipalities population decline is already taking place (Haartsen and Venhorst, 2010). Popular rural areas, on the other hand, can be characterised as having a more semi-open landscape with predominantly grazing livestock farming, a landscape type that is generally perceived as attractive (McGranahan, 2008; Ulrich, 1986). They also have a relatively large share of natural areas. Popular rural areas have an expected household growth and are the least distant from the centre of the Netherlands (Bijker and Haartsen, 2012).

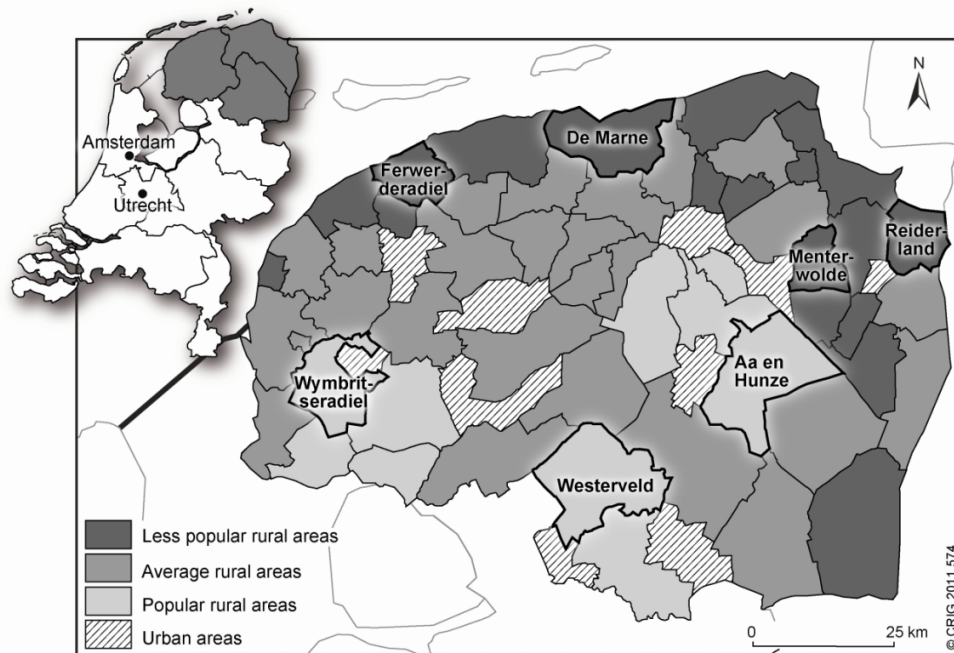


Figure 1. Three types of rural areas in the northern Netherlands

In the less-popular rural areas, we selected four municipalities as study areas: De Marne, Menterwolde and Reiderland in the province of Groningen, and Ferwerderadiel in the province of Friesland. In the popular areas we selected three municipalities: Aa en Hunze and Westerveld in the province of Drenthe, and Wymbritseradiel in the province of Friesland. (see Figure 1). None of these municipalities have a large town within their boundaries. Therefore, in the Dutch context all migrants to these municipalities can be considered to be rural migrants, rather than movers to a larger settlement.

In cooperation with the municipalities, we selected all the households who had moved into the municipality from another municipality in the period 2005–2009 using the population register. Owner-occupiers as well as renters were included in this selection. The relatively short period of 5 years was chosen to reduce the risk of memory-recall problems of the respondents and in particular *post hoc* rationalisation (see e.g. Walmsley et al., 1998). In autumn 2009 a postal questionnaire was sent to all

the households that met the selection criteria in the four less-popular municipalities. In an accompanying letter we asked whether a household member aged over 18 could complete the questionnaire. In the summer of 2010 this procedure was repeated in the three popular municipalities. A total of 1717 (664 for the less-popular areas, 1053 for the popular areas) questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 24%. In the Netherlands this is considered to be a good response rate for a postal survey. Nevertheless, if the non-response is selective, it affects the representativeness of the outcomes. However, this is not so much a problem when investigating relationships between variables like we do in this paper. There is no reason to assume that these relationships differ for people inside and outside the sample. Furthermore, there are no indications that the pattern of non-response differs between the different types of rural areas.

The questionnaire covered a variety of topics: residential history, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, housing characteristics, previous experience with the area and the motivations that had been important in the migration decision. Following Van Dam (2000) and Bolton and Chalkley (1990), we separated the motives for leaving the previous residence from the motives for choosing the destination area. Regarding the motives for choosing the destination area, we distinguished between choosing to live in a rural area in general and choosing to live in the specific less-popular or popular rural area.

We chose to use open-ended questions to investigate the motivations for moving to a rural area in general and for choosing the specific rural area under study, to take into account the multidimensionality of the motives for moving. Open-ended questions enable a more open-minded and less biased approach to studying migration motives (Halfacree, 2004; Niedomysl and Malmberg, 2009). The respondents could offer more than one motivation and afterwards every answer was categorised. The categories were based on previous studies of rural migration (e.g. Bolton and Chalkley, 1990; Gkartzios and Scott, 2009; Halfacree, 1994; Halliday and Coombes, 1995; Walmsley et al., 1998) and also on what emerged from the survey

results. Niedomysl and Malmberg (2009) have shown that coder variability when coding open-ended questions on migration motives is relatively low.

The questionnaire also included 8 items measuring value orientations. These items stem from a questionnaire used previously in a study in the Netherlands (see Coolen et al., 2002). This original questionnaire was based on the operationalisation of ten value domains by Schwartz (1992). Nevertheless, in the Coolen et al. Dutch study only eight value domains could be retrieved from the data: Basic values, Hedonism, Family values, Structure and order, Power and achievement, Self-esteem, Esteem from others and Self-actualization. In the original questionnaire four items were included for every value domain (Coolen et al., 2002). However, because adding 32 items to our questionnaire would have made this too long, we chose to use one item for every value domain. We tried to select the item that covered the value domain best in the context of our study. While we are aware that using a single item results in a less reliable measurement compared to a scale consisting of several items measuring a construct, we believe that using one item per value can help us explore the additional value of these underlying motivational factors for distinguishing movers to different types of rural areas. The respondents were asked to rate the importance to their lives of each value on a five-point scale (with the categories: very unimportant, unimportant, averagely important, important, very important).

## **4.5 Results**

We used logistic regression analysis to compare the movers to popular and less-popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands. The regression model estimates how various background characteristics, the ten most mentioned motivations for choosing to live in the area in question and eight personal values influence the type of rural area people moved to. To determine the relevance of the significant effects, the distribution of these independent variables is shown in Table 1. The logistic regression model omits all cases with missing values for any of the independent variables, which resulted in a total of 1345 respondents included in the model (844



movers to popular areas, 501 movers to less-popular areas). The dependent variable in the model consists of the categories 'having moved to a popular rural area' (value 0) and 'having moved to a less-popular area' (value 1). The three groups of independent variables were added to the model in three steps to see their added explanatory value to the model and to analyse how they influence the relationship between the independent variables already included in the model and the dependent variable. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2. A positive B coefficient means that increasing the value of the independent variable increases the probability of having moved to a less-popular rural area. If the sign of the B coefficient is negative, an increased value on the independent variable increases the probability of having moved to a popular rural area. We checked for multicollinearity in all three models, there appeared to be no problem.

*Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the independent variables for the respondents included in the logistic regression model for popular rural areas (PA) and less-popular rural areas (LPA) in the northern Netherlands (N = 1345).*

<b>Background characteristics (%)</b>	<b>PA</b>	<b>LPA</b>	<b>Values (1-5 scale, average)</b>	<b>PA</b>	<b>LPA</b>
Moved from urban area	48	44	Freedom	4.53	4.56
Lived in municipality before	14	13	Pleasure in life	4.54	4.57
Household income (net per month)***			A harmonious family life	4.37	4.40
< EUR 1250 euros	7	11	Self-discipline	3.72	3.76
EUR 1250-2500	34	44	Wealth	2.94	2.89
EUR 2500-4000	38	35	Being rational	3.91	3.96
> EUR 4000	21	10	Preserving public image*	2.43	2.53
Household composition			Varied life***	3.43	3.58
Couple without children	52	49			
Couple/single parent with children	33	35	<b>Motivation for choosing this area (%)</b>	<b>PA</b>	<b>LPA</b>
Single household	15	16	Physical qualities***	35	24
Previous residence***			Housing characteristics	23	26
Surrounding municipalities	24	26	Work-related***	18	12
Elsewhere in the northern Netherlands	28	36	Living close to family and friends	15	12
Elsewhere in the Netherlands	45	33	Location**	12	8
Abroad	3	5	Quietness	11	9
Higher education ***	57	46	Familiarity with the area**	11	8
Age***			Low house price***	5	14
20-34	20	32	Social qualities	8	9
35-44	23	21	Moving in with partner***	5	13
45-54	17	18			
55-64	23	20			
> 65	18	9			

\* p<0.10; \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01 (Chi2-test, T-test for values)

Model 1, only including the background variables, shows that households earning more than EUR 2500 net per month move to popular rural areas more often than the lowest income group (< EUR 1250 per month). This is an effect that would be expected, considering that the two types of areas are distinguished based on house price. However, when controlled for income, there are other background characteristics which have a significant effect on the type of area people move to. Highly educated movers more often move to popular rural areas. Combined with the effect of income it appears that the popular areas attract a group of movers that fit the 'classical' middle-class image of counterurbanisation. This corresponds with the findings of our earlier study based on secondary data (Bijker and Haartsen, 2012). Nevertheless, that study also found that people moving from urban areas more often moved to popular rural areas, another aspect of the classical view on counterurbanisation. However, in our current analysis people moving from urban areas showed the same probability of moving to popular or to less-popular areas. Apparently, including more detailed information on the residential history of the respondents, namely a variable measuring return migration ('lived in the municipality before') and a more detailed variable on the previous residence, removes the effect of having moved from an urban area. Indeed, also in our current research it appeared that when return migration was excluded from the analysis, 'having moved from an urban area' again becomes significant.

Regarding this residential history, it appears that people who have lived in the same municipality before have a greater probability to have moved to a popular area, meaning that the popular rural areas attract a greater share of return migrants. We expected familiarity with the area to be more important for less-popular areas, based on the assumption that the less-popular areas have a less positive representation due to their more peripheral position in the Netherlands and a less attractive landscape (see also Bijker and Haartsen, 2012) and the finding in earlier research that familiarity with an area creates more positive representations (Haartsen, 2002). Nevertheless, this positive effect of familiarity with an area naturally also applies to popular areas and apparently has an even stronger effect for these areas.

Table 2. Logistic regression analysis of moving to less-popular vs. popular rural areas

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Background characteristics</b>	B	B	B
Moved from urban area (urban = 1, rural = 0)	-0.194	-0.192	-0.190
Lived in municipality before (yes = 1, no = 0)	<b>-0.336*</b>	-0.232	-0.236
Income (ref. < EUR 1250)			
EUR 1250-2500	-0.257	-0.238	-0.193
EUR 2500-4000	<b>-0.625***</b>	<b>-0.538**</b>	<b>-0.499**</b>
> 4000 euros	<b>-1.275***</b>	<b>-1.187***</b>	<b>-1.197***</b>
Household composition (ref. couple without children)			
Couple/single parent with children	-0.021	0.020	0.034
Single household	-0.112	-0.021	-0.021
Previous residence (ref. surrounding municipalities)			
Elsewhere in the northern Netherlands	<b>0.434***</b>	<b>0.415**</b>	<b>0.393**</b>
Elsewhere in the Netherlands	-0.031	-0.111	-0.155
Abroad	<b>0.785**</b>	<b>0.708**</b>	0.559
Higher education (yes = 1, no = 0)	<b>-0.280**</b>	-0.186	-0.220
Age (ref. > 65)			
20-34	<b>1.193***</b>	<b>0.994***</b>	<b>0.998***</b>
35-44	<b>0.747***</b>	<b>0.728***</b>	<b>0.740***</b>
45-54	<b>0.728***</b>	<b>0.728***</b>	<b>0.733***</b>
55-64	<b>0.579***</b>	<b>0.624***</b>	<b>0.637***</b>
<b>Motivation for choosing the area</b>			
Physical qualities	-	<b>-0.445***</b>	<b>-0.494***</b>
Housing characteristics	-	0.079	0.087
Living close to family and friends	-	-0.205	-0.226
Work-related	-	<b>-0.540***</b>	<b>-0.539***</b>
Quietness	-	-0.082	-0.063
Familiarity of the area	-	-0.303	-0.309
Location	-	<b>-0.397*</b>	<b>-0.404*</b>
Moving in with partner	-	<b>0.774***</b>	<b>0.798***</b>
Low house price	-	<b>0.962***</b>	<b>0.990***</b>
Social qualities	-	<b>0.395*</b>	<b>0.428*</b>
<b>Values</b>			
Freedom	-	-	0.120
Pleasure in life	-	-	<b>-0.214*</b>
A harmonious family life	-	-	0.102
Self-discipline	-	-	-0.045
Wealth	-	-	-0.130
Being rational	-	-	<b>0.190**</b>
Preserving public image	-	-	0.065
Varied life	-	-	<b>0.156**</b>
Constant	0.577	0.473	-0.436
N	1345	1345	1345
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.103	0.165	0.180
$\chi^2$	105.421***	172.835***	190.396***

p < 0.10; \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01

The more recent residential history is included in the model by means of the previous residence of the respondents. It appears that people who moved from elsewhere in the northern Netherlands compared with people who moved from surrounding municipalities more often have moved to less-popular areas. People who moved from abroad – consisting of Dutch people returning to the Netherlands and foreign in-migrants – were also more likely to have moved to less-popular areas. However, this is only a very small group within the total group of movers (see Table 1). Other studies (Stockdale, 2006) found less-popular rural areas to mainly attract local movers, but our multivariate analysis showed popular and less-popular areas attract movers from elsewhere in the Netherlands to the same extent.

Finally, we find the movers to less-popular areas to be younger than those who moved to popular areas. All the age groups have a higher probability to move to less-popular areas compared to the oldest age group (> 65), with the youngest age group (aged 20-34) having the strongest effect. This corresponds with earlier findings in the northern Netherlands (Bijker and Haartsen, 2012; Bijker et al., in press) and in less-popular areas in other countries (Stockdale, 2006).

Subsequently, the ten most mentioned motivations for choosing the specific rural area were added to the background characteristics in the model (model 2). After this was done, the Nagelkerke  $R^2$  increased substantially, indicating that the motivations add a lot of explanatory value to the model. Physical qualities refer to answers such as nature, space, the presence of water and beautiful surroundings. People who are motivated by these physical qualities of the environment are more likely to have moved to popular rural areas. This fits with the image of the counterurbanite attracted by 'an idyllic rural setting' (Halfacree, 2008). A possible explanation for the importance of this motive for moving to popular areas can be found in the attractiveness of the semi-open landscape and the presence of nature in these areas.

People who mention work-related motivations (i.e. 'close to work', 'acceptable commuting distance' and 'started my own business') for choosing the area are also more likely to have moved to popular areas. This could partly be explained by their location closer to the central part of the Netherlands. Indeed, people who mention

the location of the area (i.e. 'central location', 'not too far from the Randstad area' and 'close to the city of Groningen') as an important motivation are also more likely to have moved to popular rural areas.

On the other hand, people who mention that they moved to the area to live with their partner are more likely to have moved to less-popular areas. People who mention low house prices as a motivation for choosing the area are also more likely to have moved to less-popular areas. The importance of these two motivations corresponds with the findings of studies focused exclusively on less-popular areas (Fitchen, 1995; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008; Stockdale, 2006).

A perhaps more surprising finding is that the social qualities of the environment – such as freedom, friendliness, nice atmosphere, lots of things going on in the village and the mentality of the people – are a more important motivation for people who have moved to less-popular areas compared to movers to popular areas. This is in contrast to the popular areas, which have the physical qualities of the environment as an important pull factor. It shows that the rural character of an area does matter for movers to less-popular areas. Apparently it is useful to distinguish between the physical and social aspects of the rural to explain moving to different types of rural areas. It also raises the question of whether – similarly to how the attractiveness of the landscape in popular areas may be linked to the importance of the motivation of the physical qualities of the environment – less-popular areas may have more to offer with regard to the social qualities of an area. Unfortunately, it is not possible to answer this question within the scope of this study. It nonetheless indicates that more attention is required to 'social amenities', in addition to the physical characteristics most often used to capture the amenity of rural areas (Argent et al., 2007; McGranahan, 2008).

The other motivations included in the model do not have a significant effect on moving to a popular or a less-popular area. Based on the findings of Bijker and Haartsen (2012), which corresponded to the outcomes in other studies (Fitchen, 1995; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008; Grimsrud, 2011), we expected that living close to family and friends would be a more important motivation for movers to less-popular areas. However, when including only the motivations for choosing the

destination area in the analysis instead of mixing the motivations for leaving the previous residence and choosing the destination, it appears that the importance of this motivation does not differ for movers to popular and less-popular areas.

Most background characteristics already included in the model remain significant after adding the motivations. Nevertheless, for 'lived in the municipality before' and 'higher education' the significant effect disappears. Because of this finding we explored possible interaction effects between these background characteristics and the motivations. An interaction effect occurs when the effect of one independent variable on the dependent variable depends on the level of a second independent variable. However, also in the additional logistic regression analysis (results not shown in the paper) including these interaction effects, 'lived in the municipality before' and 'higher education' remained not significant. This finding indicates that the results are robust for the inclusion of interaction effects.

In the final, third step, eight personal values were added to the model (model 3). The Nagelkerke  $R^2$  increased again, meaning that the values do indeed add explanatory value to the model. Even though it is a small addition, the contribution of the value orientations to the model comes on top of the characteristics and motivations of movers often used when studying migration into rural areas. The finding that values add less to the explanatory power of the model than adding motivations was confirmed when both were added to the model in reverse order (results are not shown here).

Three value orientations have a significant effect. The more important people think it is to be rational in their lives (in the questionnaire with the addition in brackets 'intelligent, logical, thoughtful'), the higher the probability that they moved to less-popular rural areas. These areas probably offer a rational choice to these movers, for example they enable buying a larger house for less money. The more importance people attach to variation in their life, the higher the probability they moved to a less-popular area. This value refers to 'a life full of challenge, novelty and change'. Apparently the less-popular areas offer a kind of adventurous choice for these movers. On the other hand, the more importance people attach to pleasure

in life (with the addition 'enjoyment, satisfaction'), the greater the probability that they moved to a popular rural area. It seems that for these movers, popular areas represent places to enjoy life.

After adding the value orientations to the model, all the background characteristics and motivations that had a significant influence on the type of rural area remained significant, except for people who had previously lived abroad. This shows that the value orientations have an independent effect on the type of area people moved to, without interacting with the background characteristics and motivations.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

In this paper we compared the characteristics, motivations and values of movers to popular and less-popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands using multivariate analysis. This study follows a previous study in the same region using migration statistics and secondary data, which results indicated that attention is required to the diversity of rural in-migration within countries. While the characteristics of the movers to popular rural areas in that study fitted the counterurbanisation story very well, less-popular rural areas shared personal reasons as an important motive for in-migration with more remote rural areas in Europe (Bijker and Haartsen, 2012). We further investigated the question of whether different types of rural areas within countries attract different migrants with different motivations, using survey data which allows for a more comprehensive analysis. Whereas in the previous study motivations for location choice were mixed with motives for moving, in our current analysis we were able to focus on motivations for choosing the destination area. We were also able to include return migration in our analysis and a more detailed measurement of the previous residence of the movers. In addition to characterising the movers using 'traditional' socio-demographic characteristics, we also used people's values to explore whether these underlying motivational factors have an added value for distinguishing movers to different types of rural areas.

When directly comparing the movers to popular and less-popular areas it appears that movers to popular areas more often belong to higher income groups and are more often higher educated. They also more often have lived in the municipality before and more often belong to the oldest age cohort. The physical qualities of the environment, work-related considerations and the location of the area are more often mentioned by them as motivations to move to an area. Compared to movers to less-popular areas, they attach more importance to the value of 'pleasure in life'. The movers to less-popular areas are more likely to have made a move from elsewhere in the northern Netherlands and they are more likely to belong to the younger age groups. Compared to the movers to popular areas they more often mentioned moving in with their partner and the low house prices in an area as motivations to move there. Movers to less-popular areas less often mention the physical qualities of the environment, but in contrast they more often mention social qualities. Compared to movers to popular areas they attach more importance to the values of 'being rational' and 'varied life'.

These results show that when using this more comprehensive multivariate analysis to compare movers to popular and less-popular areas, the differences between the two groups are less distinct than previously argued by Bijker and Haartsen (2012) and as indicated by studies focusing on one of the types of rural area. Although our current analysis does show that popular rural areas attract middle-class movers more often, it appears that both areas attract movers from urban areas. When considering motivations, movers to less-popular areas are more motivated by low house prices and the personal motivation of moving in with a partner, which suggests that moving to less-popular areas can indeed be defined as 'default counterurbanisation' (see Halfacree, 2008). However, the finding that movers to popular areas are more often motivated by instrumental considerations such as work-related reasons and the location of the area than movers to less-popular areas and that the motivation to live close to family and friends is of the same importance to movers to either type of area, suggests that popular areas also attract a group of 'default counterurbanisers'. Moreover, when identifying the



physical and social aspects of the rural character of the environment, which is the main motivation for the category of 'mainstream counterurbanisation' (see Halfacree, 2008), it appears that while the physical aspects are important for moving to popular areas, social aspects are more important for moving to less-popular areas. Apparently, the rural character of the destination also matters for those moving to less-popular areas.

Based on these outcomes we can conclude that studying in-migration to different types of rural areas within a country shows that counterurbanisation does indeed entail more than what the 'classical' conceptualisation would suggest. Our results thus empirically support the broader conceptualisation of counterurbanisation in the model developed by Halfacree (2008). However, our results also show that the two main groups distinguished in the model, mainstream and default counterurbanisation, are not directly related to different types of rural areas within countries. Future research into rural migration should be careful not to use too simplified understandings of counterurbanisation, both in general and with regard to different types of rural areas within countries.

Finally, it is interesting to see that values can add to the understanding of migration processes. Even though their addition is small, they contribute further to the characteristics and motivations of migrants when comparing movers to different types of rural areas. Moreover, they appear to have a direct effect on the type of area people move to, instead of interacting with or having an effect through the motivations for choosing an area, which could also be expected. This probably shows that these values are more related to more abstract ideas or representations that people have of the areas, which are not captured in the more concrete motivations. Apparently, the popular areas are regarded as places to enjoy life, while the less-popular areas represent a rational choice or even a kind of adventurous choice. In addition to this, the importance of the 'varied life' value for movers to less-popular areas could indicate the existence of some kind of group of creative people moving to these – in the Dutch context – peripheral areas (e.g. Bell and Jayne, 2010; Gibson, 2010). In this study we were only able to measure the values with a single item, resulting in a less reliable measurement. Based on our

results it would appear worthwhile to further explore the additional value of the use of values in migration research, using scales including more items to measure value orientations.

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## 5. Using a diary approach to explore the residential search process of movers to rural areas<sup>5</sup>

### Abstract

This paper investigates how people find new places to live in rural areas in the northern Netherlands. We use a diary approach, a new method for studying the residential search process. Our findings show that the search areas of local, regional and distant searchers differ in scale and in the extent to which they change during the search process. Explanations for these different search patterns include the local ties of local searchers and the social and work-related ties that restrict the search range of distant searchers. Contact with an area, resulting in positive perceptions, appears to be essential for including an area in the search space. All searchers also mentioned areas they avoided based on perceived characteristics, most often social characteristics. Using a diary approach provides more insight into the non-linear character of the search process and the less tangible aspects that play a role.

### 5.1 Introduction

In the context of the transition of the rural from a production to a consumption space, in-migration is often seen as an important opportunity for the development of rural areas (e.g. Andersen, 2011; Stockdale, 2006). Many studies have investigated the characteristics and motivations of potential and actual migrants into rural areas, often focusing either on people considering a move to the rural (e.g. Van Dam et al., 2002) or on people who have already made a move into the rural (e.g. Bijker and Haartsen, 2012; Bijker et al., in press; Gkartzios and Scott, 2009; Grimsrud, 2011). Little attention has been paid to the process between stated intentions to move and actual moving behaviour in a rural context.

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The first aim of this paper is to gain more insight into the residential search process in rural areas. We distinguish local and non-local searchers to determine to what extent their residential search process differs. This could help clarify why non-local movers are less likely to realise their rural location preferences than local movers (De Groot et al., 2012). This is a relevant question in the context of the processes of population decline that have started in many rural areas in Europe (Haartsen and Venhorst, 2010). Furthermore, our own work on migration into rural areas has yielded questions related to the residential search process. For instance, to what extent can the finding that more distant movers to rural areas in the northern Netherlands are more often motivated by low house prices be explained by the different search ranges of distant and local movers? (Bijker et al., in press). Does familiarity with an area create more positive representations and increase the chances of moving or at least searching there? (see also Bijker and Haartsen, 2012).

The second aim of the paper is to explore the usefulness of a new method for studying the search process: a diary approach with both qualitative and quantitative elements. Until now, the search process has been mainly studied using retrospective survey methods, computer experiments, retrospective interviews and simulation models (e.g. Donaldson, 1973; Hooijmeijer and Oskamp, 1996; Phipps, 1983; McPeake, 1998; Harper, 1991). There are few examples of longitudinal research into the search process (Huff, 1986; Cronin, 1982; Goetgeluk, 1997). A diary approach in which people are repeatedly approached during their search has the potential to offer insight into what happens between the longer intervals of a longitudinal approach. Furthermore, it prevents the risk of post hoc rationalisation that is a feature of using retrospective methods (see e.g. Walmsley et al., 1998). Finally, by including qualitative elements in the approach, it offers more insight into the often overlooked, more emotional, non-economic, less tangible aspects of human decision-making (see e.g. Levy et al., 2008). Our respondents were all looking for houses in the northern Netherlands. We recruited them through real estate agents in the area. We chose to locate our study in the northern Netherlands as the most rural part of the country, based both on address density and the perceptions of the Dutch people (Haartsen et al., 2003). Furthermore, the North contains a large variety of rural areas



in terms of characteristics such as house prices, landscape, accessibility, building style and history (see also Bijker and Haartsen, 2012), which makes the region very suitable for studying search behaviour.

We start our paper by discussing the literature on residential search in general and in rural areas more specifically. We pay some specific attention to the concept of representations. The diary approach is explained in the methodology section, followed by the results and conclusion.

## **5.2 Theory and previous research**

### ***5.2.1 The residential search process***

The individual decision-making process with respect to residential mobility includes the formation of a positive attitude towards moving, the search for and evaluation of housing alternatives and ultimately the decision to move or to stay (De Groot et al., 2012). If intending movers are unable to realize their preferences, they may choose to stay in their current homes (Brown and Moore, 1970) or resort to substitution: the acceptance of a new home that may satisfy some but not all of their initial preferences (Goetgeluk, 1997). The realization of intentions to move depends on the interaction between the triggers or motives for moving, housing preferences, individual resources and restrictions on the one hand, and the opportunities and constraints in the housing market on the other (De Groot et al., 2011a; Hooimeijer and Oskamp, 1996). Often, the motive for moving develops from one of the careers that together form the life course: the residential, the household, education or employment career (Mulder, 1993). Anticipated changes in these careers can also affect the probability that the intention to move is realized because some triggers for moving are more urgent than others. While intended moves triggered by changes in the household, employment or educational careers are usually associated with a high degree of necessity, moves triggered by residential motives are often less urgent (Goetgeluk, 1997). On the other hand, unanticipated household and employment changes can lead to the postponement or cancellation of the intended

move or result in an unexpected move within a short period (De Groot et al., 2011b; Kan, 1999; Speare, 1974).

The residential choice process occurs within the context of the housing market. By searching, the potential migrant interacts with the market. The concept of search includes several interrelated characteristics: it is a goal-directed activity, it involves a complex process of information gathering; a point is reached where search ends and a choice is made; and it happens in a context of uncertainty and within a set of constraints (Clark and Flowerdew, 1982). The process of search may be characterized by its duration, the type of information sources used, the number of houses examined, and the radius of the area searched (Huff, 1982; Walmsley and Lewis, 1993).

Brown and Moore (1970) developed a model for residential search behaviour in which they include the influence of information on the spatial aspects of search. In this model, the potential migrant possesses a spatially selective image of the area based on information acquired from previous experiences prior to starting the search. The term 'awareness space' is used to refer to those locations within the overall space about which the intended migrant household has knowledge before the search starts, based on regular, direct contact; or based on indirect contact, such as through acquaintances' experiences and the mass media (Brown and Moore, 1970; Walmsley and Lewis, 1993). Based on the preferences of the household within this awareness space a 'search space' is defined. A preference for any particular place would not depend on the objective measures of that place, but on the filtered information which is the basis of the individual's cognitive environment (Voets, 1994). For example, newspapers might present houses for sale or to let from an entire area, but many such adverts will not be considered, either because they are not located in neighbourhoods known by the intended migrant or because they are located in areas considered unlikely to contain acceptable properties (Brown and Moore, 1970). From the search space, the decision-maker constructs a choice set: a set of alternatives to be considered more carefully (Voets, 1994). In another approach to choice, the choice assumed to take place is between accepting or not accepting particular housing opportunities in sequence (Mulder, 1996).

In addition to the household's existing knowledge of opportunities or locations, potential migrants use different information sources during the search process, including newspapers, walking or driving around, friends and relatives, and real estate agents (e.g. Barrett, 1976; Rossi, 1955; Walmsley and Lewis, 1993). More recently, the internet has appeared on this list. The limited evidence so far shows that newcomers to an area are more likely to use the internet, and searchers using the internet visited a larger number of houses personally, contrary to what was expected (Palm and Danis, 2002). The internet enables rural migrants to search across the whole country for houses based on a set of search criteria, rather than searching in particular regions (Niedomysl, 2010). However, it appears that the internet has had little impact on search patterns (Niedomysl, 2010; Palm and Danis, 2002).

Information plays an important role in the search process. After an inspection of a property, the household should have a sufficient impression of what Koopman (2012) calls observable attributes, such as the dwelling itself, accessibility, physical features and even the area's atmosphere. Nonetheless, what is difficult to determine is the social quality of an area, the "'soft" socioeconomic and demographic attributes that shape the intangible, dynamic and largely unobservable social quality of the area' (Koopman, 2012, p. 35), which also includes the frequency and nature of social interactions among residents. This is something that should be experienced rather than observed, which is why residents have an information advantage in this respect. House-seekers can adopt several strategies to avoid making the wrong choice. Using spatial search strategies (see Huff, 1986) can help reduce the amount of information that needs to be collected on distant neighbourhoods. Another strategy is relying on the neighbourhood's reputation (Koopman, 2012), a concept which is discussed in the next section.

The search process is not static or linear, it changes over time and can be seen as a learning process. As the migrant gains experience of the area during his search, some areas may come to be included in the search space, while other areas may be eliminated (Brown and Moore, 1970; Walmsley and Lewis, 1993). According to Goetgeluk (1997), during their search process, people will also learn about the

opportunities and constraints to achieving their housing preferences. During the search process, their preferences will therefore change and become more realistic in relation to the housing market.

### *5.2.2 The role of representations in the search process*

As mentioned in the previous section, the delimitation of the search space within the awareness space and the choice set within the search space is based on 'the filtered information which is the basis of the individual's cognitive environment' (Voets, 1994, p. 12). It is assumed that people base their behaviour on their image, interpretation or representation of geographical space (e.g. Bunce, 1994; Halfacree, 1994; Short, 1991; Walmsley et al., 1998). For rural areas in general the existence of the 'rural idyll' is often seen as an explanation for the decision to move to the rural (Boyle and Halfacree, 1998; Halfacree, 1994; Van Dam et al., 2002). Moscovici (1982) defines representations as 'cognitive systems of preconceptions, images and values which have their own cultural meaning' (p. 12). Social representations exist in and are produced by communication and interaction (e.g. Holloway and Hubbard, 2001). Two forms of communication are important in this: mass communication and interpersonal communication (Haartsen, 2002). Direct experience with the object of representation is also important. People who are familiar with the countryside because they have lived there or visit it frequently have other and more positive representations of the rural (Haartsen, 2002; Van Dam et al., 2002). Our assumption is that also representations of specific rural places influence the residential search and decision process and vice versa.

A concept related to representations used in housing research in an urban context is that of neighbourhood reputation. Neighbourhood reputation can be defined as 'the meaning and assessment assigned by residents and outsiders to the neighbourhood.' (Hortulanus, 1995, p. 42). This definition implies that a reputation is an image shared by a significant number of individuals; nevertheless, the same neighbourhood can have different reputations for different groups of people. Reputations differ for residents and non-residents, the internal reputation with residents is often more positive and more detailed. It appears that the rating of a

neighbourhood is most strongly influenced by the socioeconomic and ethnic composition of the neighbourhood, physical and functional characteristics appear to be less important (Permentier, 2009). As discussed in the previous section, relying on a neighbourhood's reputation during the search process can be a risk-minimising strategy when information about the social quality of an area is lacking (Koopman, 2012).

### ***5.2.3 The search process in rural areas***

Few studies have investigated the residential search process in a rural context. Lewis and Sherwood (1994, as cited in Lewis, 1998) found in England that households with locational ties to a district had usually made their choice of district well before the decision to migrate was activated. Those households without a connection to their ultimate chosen district tended to consider around eight possibilities, using a variety of information sources, though the final choice was mostly based on personal experience. For both groups, however, the choice of village or small town involved a tendency to focus the search on part of a district, and the availability of a particular type of house was the most significant criterion. This seems to be contrary to Harper's finding (1991) that settlement selection is increasingly replacing property-based selection. She signals that instead of being based on personal and prior association, the decisions of the movers were often based on abstract preconceptions of the area (cf. Walmsley et al., 1998). Niedomysl (2010) also found that in Sweden only few migrants considered more than two regions to move to, but most considered a number of alternative locations within an area.

## **5.3 Methodology**

We used a diary approach to study the residential search process in rural areas. This is a new method to study the residential search process, but has been used previously in other scientific fields and topics (e.g. Richardson, 1994; Laurenceau and Bolger, 2005; Larson, 1989; Sudman and Ferber, 1971; Rieman, 1993). Richardson (1994) identifies the ability to obtain data about processes as an advantage of the

diary approach, capturing the time sequence of events and perceptions as they unfold, rather than relying on recall of past events. Traditional longitudinal designs can also address these questions, but because they typically involve only a small number of repeated measurements taken at long intervals, they cannot capture changes in the same way (Bolger et al., 2003). The advantages of a diary approach fit very well with the idea that the search for a new house is a learning process, in which the search space, representations of areas and preferences are likely to change over time.

### *5.3.1 Diary approach*

Our respondents were looking for houses in the northern Netherlands. We started the diary approach with a semi-structured in-depth interview with each respondent. This was done because respondents were recruited at different stages of their search process. The interview was used to obtain information about the search process to that point. However, the interview also offered an opportunity for meeting the respondents in person. Personal interactions are regarded as important for the successful application of a diary approach, because they can help motivate the respondents (Richardson, 1994; Rieman, 1993). In addition to the search process, the questions considered some background characteristics, the residential history of the household and the extent of contact with rural areas in the North prior to starting the search. Furthermore, respondents were asked about their motives for moving and their residential preferences. We used a map with regions in the northern Netherlands to further discuss the search area and the associations that came up when thinking about the search area and the surrounding areas. Some of the respondents shared their search process with the interviewer by providing some examples of their favourite houses. One of the respondents produced a roadmap of the Netherlands on which he had marked his search areas. Most of the interviews were conducted at the respondents' homes, but for practical reasons, in three cases the respondent's workplace was used for the interview. Some of interviews were done with both of the partners, some with only one. It was left to the respondents to

decide which of the two options they preferred. The interviews were recorded and later they were transcribed and analysed.

Whereas a time-based design requires participants to report on their experiences at regular intervals or in response to a signal given by a signalling device, event-contingent studies require participants to provide a self-report each time the event in question occurs. When using an event-based design, it is important that events are easy to identify for respondents (Bolger et al., 2003). The residential search process consists of easy and less easy to define events. Moreover, it requires a lot of effort on the part of respondents for them to remember to complete the questionnaire after a relevant event has occurred over a longer period. Therefore, we chose a time-based design to study the residential search process.

Consequently, every two weeks after the interview until they bought a house or quit searching, the respondents were invited by e-mail to complete an electronic questionnaire by clicking on a link. When using a fixed time schedule for a diary approach, the length of intervals is an important consideration (Bolger et al., 2003). It seems that the search process can change pace and intensity. Therefore, the interval should not be too long: in an intensive period things could be missed or forgotten. To avoid a research design that is too demanding for the respondents, the interval should not be too short either. Inviting the respondents by e-mail every two weeks reminds them to complete the questionnaire, just like a signalling device (Bolger et al., 2003). A diary which is short and easy to complete helps keep people motivated to participate (Richardson, 1994; Stone et al., 1991). The electronic questionnaire was easy to complete and only showed questions relevant to the respondent, based on their answers to previous questions. The questionnaire consisted of both closed and open questions. The questionnaire focused on tracking change in the search process. When search activities or changes in the process occurred, additional questions seeking more detail about this event became visible. This design led to a short questionnaire when little had happened in the preceding two weeks, while more questions appeared when changes had taken place. Respondents were asked whether they had bought a house or had quit searching each time. Furthermore, questions were included about housing preferences and preferences about the

residential environment. Respondents could see what they had filled in the last time and could make changes if their preferences changed. If they did, they were asked why. The same applied to the search area. Furthermore, they were asked which search activities they had undertaken, with additional information being asked for some activities.

The risk of using a diary approach is that completing the diary could influence the process studied, for example by generating new thoughts about the search process. People could also feel 'lazy' if the diary arrived in their mailbox and they had not developed any search activities, causing them to feel obliged to try some new search activity for the sake of it. Therefore, during the explanation of the method it was emphasised that 'nothing happened' in the search process over two weeks was an acceptable response. So far, there is little evidence of behaviour change as a result of participating in a diary approach (Bolger et al., 2003; Litt et al., 1998). 'Habituation' could lessen the risk of influencing the process: people get used to the rhythm of receiving and completing the questionnaire, thus attending to it less self-consciously (Bolger et al., 2003). On the other hand, habituation, and more specifically the development of a habitual response style when completing the diary, could have negative effects, for instance by causing the development of a tendency to skim over questions (Bolger et al., 2003).

### ***5.3.2 Recruitment strategy***

We recruited the respondents through real estate agents in the northern Netherlands. The main eligibility criterion was that they were looking for a house in rural areas in the northern Netherlands. Rural was defined very broadly, including both villages and surrounding areas. It was quite difficult to find respondents because of the stagnation in the housing market at the time. We followed several strategies to approach respondents through the participating real estate agents. We asked real estate agents to include a message about the study to prospective house buyers to whom information about new houses on the market was regularly sent, to which some respondents reacted. If an agent had no such mailing list, we asked them to include a letter about the research in the information pack that was given to



people visiting a house with them. In some cases we received contact details from people who had visited a house with the real estate agent, which permitted us to contact them directly to ask whether they wanted to participate. Because we expected the difference between local and more distant movers to be important to the search process, we tried to assemble a group of searchers over varying distances.

### 5.3.3 Study population

The research material provided by the ten respondents offers in-depth, detailed information about the residential search process in rural areas of different types of searchers. Four of the respondents were living outside the northern Netherlands at the time of recruitment: this group will be termed distant searchers in the remainder of this paper. Three respondents were already living in the northern Netherlands and were initially searching within a wider area in the northern Netherlands (regional searchers). Three of the respondents were also already living in the North and were initially searching very locally, in the village they were living in or in a neighbouring village (local searchers). Table 1 presents the characteristics of the three groups of respondents.

*Table 1. Characteristics of the respondents*

	Local searchers	Regional searchers	Distant searchers
Age (min.-max.)	25-30	27-55	51-63
Household composition	Couples (one with children living at home)	Couples (one with children living at home)	Couples (without children living at home)
Level of education (min-max.)	Secondary-Higher	Secondary-Higher	Secondary-Higher
Max. house price (min-max., EUR)	130,000–280,000	155,000–450,000	200,000-350,000

## 5.4 Results

### 5.4.1 Overview of search process

The results section starts with an overview of the search processes of the respondents, based on the information gathered in the interviews and from the diary data. After that we focus on some specific aspects of the search process.

Table 2 shows that the search duration varied greatly, from 8 months to 8 years (while still searching). However, there are no clear differences in this respect between the three groups of searchers. The reason for moving for all local searchers relates purely to housing characteristics. For the regional and distant searchers this is more varied: housing-related reasons, wanting to leave the current residential environment, the desire to make a new start, marriage, and the wish to live closer to a specific school type. Most of the moves were not of a very urgent nature. For some of the respondents, the urgency was diminished by the fact that they first wanted to sell their existing houses. Two of the distant searchers clearly indicated that because their move was not a necessity, the new house should offer a real improvement: one of them even spoke of a 'dream house'.

Half the movers changed their house or residential environment preferences during their searches, in accordance with the idea that searching can be regarded as a learning process about the possibilities in the housing market (Goetgeluk, 1997). Nevertheless, Table 2 shows that it is not just about learning about possibilities and adapting personal preferences to them, sometimes it is also about learning what one really finds important. For instance, D10 increasingly realized how much she valued the proximity of family and friends, which led her to search closer to her place of residence. Most changes in preferences were recorded in the diary questionnaire, indicating that most changes were made later in the search process. Originally, we assumed that in order to be able to stay in their preferred place of residence, local searchers would alter their preferences more, while distant movers would more readily switch to another search area to fulfil their wishes. However, this assumption is not confirmed by our data. Both local and regional and distant movers sometimes adapted their preferences. In addition to changing preferences,

Table 2 shows that changes in the household situation can also affect the search process. L3 decided to quit searching due to her pregnancy and unemployment of her partner, while financial problems caused R5 initially to switch from a preference for buying to renting. With respect to the search areas and their development, a clear difference can be seen between local searchers on the one hand and regional and distant searchers on the other (see Table 2). Therefore, the next section covers changes in the search area. Figure 1 shows the places and areas mentioned in relation to the search areas in Table 2 and the main text.

Figure 1. Areas and places mentioned in the description of the search areas of the respondents

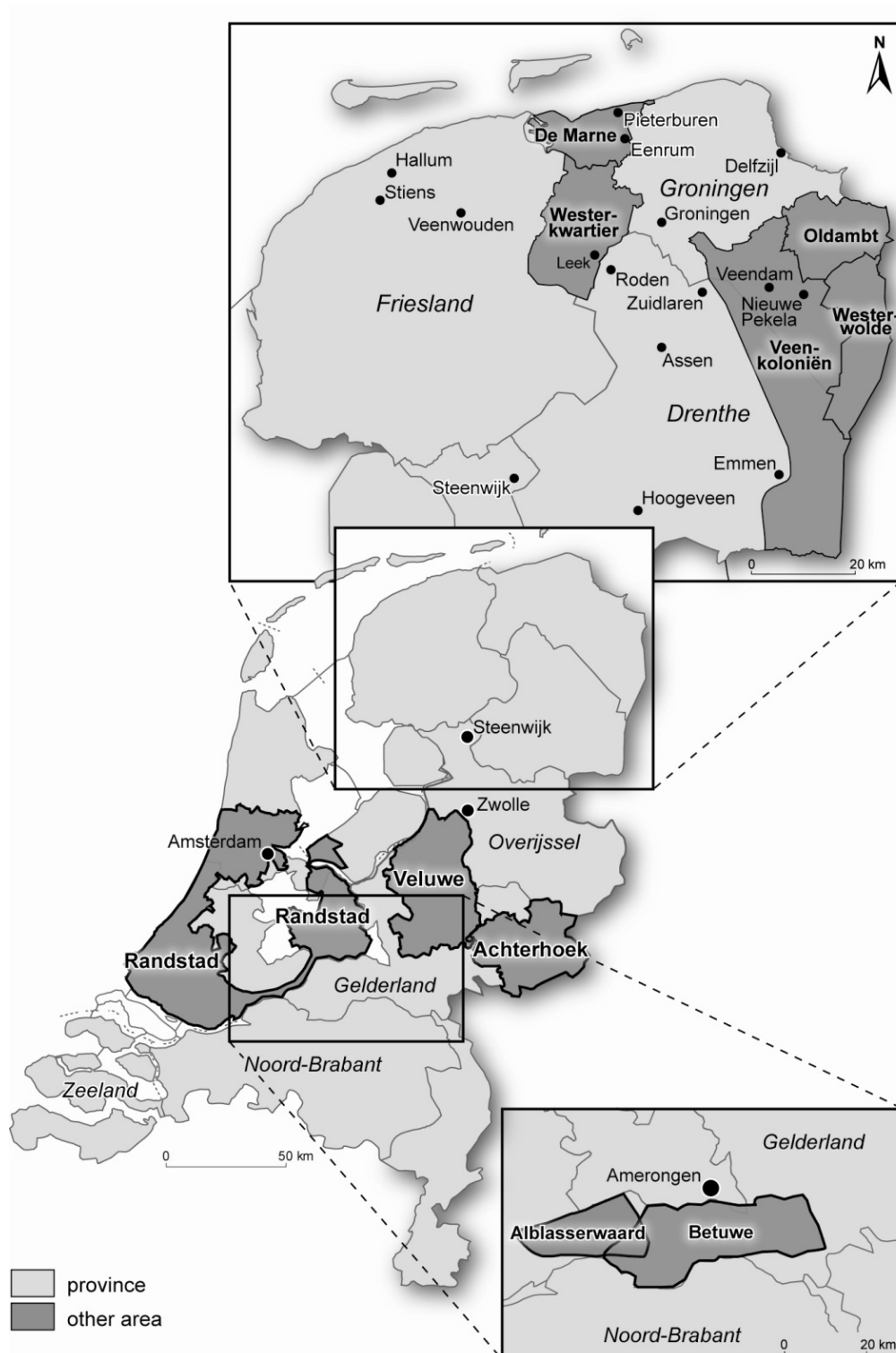


Table 2. Overview of search process of respondents (*L* = local searcher, *R* = regional searcher and *D* = distant searcher)

Resp. nr.	Search duration (months)	Reason for moving	Urgency of the move	Initial search area	Development of search area	End of search	Changes in preferences
L1	24	Move from owning to renting	Desire to move in one year (at time of interview, after one year searching)	Their current village (Hallum) and neighbouring villages	No changes	Bought a house in Hallum	Size of garden could be less with a semi-detached house; building period important (after 1990); preference for newly built, but municipality has no plans
L2	8	Desire for larger house and a quiet street	No time limit for the search to end	The larger neighbouring village (Stiens)	No changes	Bought a house in Stiens	No
L3	24	Move from renting to owning and a larger space outside	No time limit	Their current village (Hallum)	No changes	Quit searching due to pregnancy and unemployment of partner	No
R4	36 (still searching)	House had become too large, to make a new start	No time limit, important to sell the current house for a good price	Northern Drenthe, Westerkwartier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Added northwestern Groningen (around the current place of residence)</li> <li>Developed a preference for three villages: Zuidlaren, Roden and Leek</li> </ul>	Still searching, not expecting to move in short term; not sold their own house	No
R5	48	Marriage	They want to live together; urgency is quite high	The southeast of Drenthe, 15 km around Hooageveen, Oldambt, Zeeland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oldambt and Zeeland disappeared</li> <li>Focus on area around Hooageveen</li> <li>Added Hooageveen itself</li> </ul>	Bought a house in Hooageveen	Switched from preference for buying to renting to buying again; preference for a rural setting, switched to urban area

<b>R6</b>	15	To live closer to a specific school type	Waiting for more clarity about the schools and for own house to be sold	Assen and surroundings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Added Emmen and surroundings</li> <li>Focus on '10 km around Delfzijl'</li> </ul>	Quit searching because they have not sold their own house	No
<b>D7</b>	14	Job change, desire to make a new start	Desire to move within a year (at time of the interview, after eight months of searching), new house should be improvement	Veenkoloniën and Westerwolde	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For a while also around Emmen, because of the possibility of a job there</li> </ul>	Bought a house in Nieuwe Pekela	Building period of house less important, preference for older house remains; availability of public transport less important
<b>D8</b>	29	Desire for larger house and a garden, desire to leave the current place of residence in the Randstad area (lack of open space/asocial behaviour)	No time limit, searching for a 'dream house'	The North and Southwest of Drenthe, also a small area in the 'Green Heart' in the Randstad area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Added northern and northeastern Groningen</li> <li>Added northern Friesland and an area in southeastern Friesland</li> <li>Focus on northern Friesland and northwestern Groningen</li> <li>Added another area in southeastern Friesland, removed it again</li> <li>Focus on three villages in northwestern Groningen and northern Friesland</li> <li>Focus on northwestern Groningen and two villages in particular</li> </ul>	Bought a house in Pieterburen	Preference for a woody landscape, due to high house prices there they made a change to search areas with an open landscape type; design of the house and building period more important ('characteristic' house); lower maximum price; proximity of larger place and presence of facilities in the village less important; size of the village matters more
<b>D9</b>	96 (still searching)	Increasing inconvenience caused by	Every year they say to each other: 'this year	In Zeeland (near their current place of residence) on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Westerwolde</li> <li>Added northeast Groningen</li> </ul>	Still searching, planning to move this year	No

		people living in the neighbourhood (noise, rubbish)	it is really going to happen'	the island of Walcheren	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Added northern Groningen</li><li>• Focus on the municipality 'De Marne'</li><li>• Search area is widened again to Groningen and Friesland</li></ul>		
D10	18	Having to leave their official residence due to retirement of partner	Move within 18 months at time of interview (6 months after beginning the search)	Veluwe, their current village in the Randstad area, Alblasserwaard, Betuwe, Achterhoek, Amerongen, northern Netherlands with a focus on northern Groningen and southeastern Friesland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus on the northern provinces</li><li>• Groningen disappeared</li><li>• Betuwe added again</li><li>• Widened to the Netherlands (except Groningen)</li><li>• Focus on southern Friesland, Drenthe and Overijssel</li><li>• Focus on the Alblasserwaard</li><li>• Steenwijk and surroundings</li><li>• Alblasserwaard and Veluwe</li><li>• Veluwe, Betuwe and around Steenwijk</li><li>• Alblasserwaard</li><li>• Overijssel, Gelderland, Alblasserwaard , close to current house, Veenwouden</li><li>• South of Zwolle, an area in North-Brabant and around Nunspeet (Veluwe)</li></ul>	Bought a house in Nunspeet in Nunspeet (Veluwe)	Preference for an older house, newly-built now also an option; maximum price increased; proximity of a suitable parish more important than initially thought; proximity of job opportunities more important; proximity of family and friends more important; important to feel it 'click' with the house, yet the house bought did not provide that feeling (from the '70s, not an initial preference)

#### *5.4.2 Search area*

The search areas of local, regional and distant searchers differed in their scale and the extent to which they changed during the search process. While local movers spoke of the villages they were searching in, regional and distant movers initially spoke about areas, mostly consisting of several municipalities. Furthermore, the local movers in our study started searching in their own or a neighbouring village and continued to do that throughout the search process. For the regional and distant searchers, the process was much less linear. However, the degree of change varied. In some cases the search area moved to another area, in some cases the search area was expanded or areas disappeared from the search range. Nonetheless, some of the regional and distant searchers developed a preference for a municipality or even specific villages during their search process. In two cases the ultimate house was also found in these preferred villages. Respondents mentioned these kinds of changes during their initial interviews, but the diary questionnaire helped track the changes later in the search process.

It appears that the importance of local ties for local searchers is an important reason for this distinct difference in search patterns between local and regional and distant searchers. In the interviews the local searchers mentioned several types of local ties. Firstly, these ties were related to work or the proximity of family and friends, and more in general the depth of their roots in a social network. L2 described the effects of moving to another area as follows:

Then you'll miss your connection with everything you've got here,  
then you'll have to make a completely new start.

Another aspect was the continuation of daily activities, for example not wanting to change children's primary schools. Finally, some degree of emotional attachment to a place played a role. Again, as L2 noted:

Of course there are very many beautiful spots, only when you come  
back here you realize this place also has its beauty, we never really felt  
like moving far away, I guess.



This also refers to a kind of natural attachment to the place that emerged from the local searchers' answers. The regional searchers also mentioned local ties that bound them in their search. In contrast to the local searchers, these were not restricted to a specific village, as for them it was sufficient to live at 'a reasonable distance'.

Whereas these local ties are by definition very area-specific, most of the regional and distant searchers were motivated by preferences not confined to one specific rural municipality. Some of the distant and regional searchers were attracted by a specific housing type in a rural setting, others also mentioned the general benefits of rural living and the desire for an attractive landscape in the vicinity. Their less strong preference for a specific rural location made it easier for them to change search area. However, as remarked above, the specificity of the search area also increased during the search process of most regional and distant movers. It appears that more area-specific preferences are developed during the search process.

#### *5.4.3 The role of representations*

As discussed in Section 5.2, searchers start with an awareness space based on direct and indirect contact, and from within this awareness space a search area is selected (Brown and Moore, 1970). Contact also plays an important role in creating representations of areas (e.g. Haartsen, 2002). Most of the searchers mentioned in the interview that they had already had direct experience of their search area. The local searchers searched within their current residential environment. The regional searchers also mainly knew their search area from previous residential experiences or, for example, through recreational activities. However, the distant searchers also had previous direct or indirect contact with most of the areas they were searching in. Some of the distant searchers started their search close to their current residence and knew these areas by living in their proximity. One couple (D10) partly searched in areas she and her husband had lived in before. Her husband was the only distant searcher who had previously lived in the northern Netherlands. Direct experience was sometimes also as a result of holidays or visits for other reasons, as illustrated by D8 who

became acquainted with his later search area in northern Groningen through having a girlfriend who lived in the city of Groningen:

... so at the weekends I visited her. Sometimes we went for trips in the surroundings, in that way I got to know Groningen really well, of course.

Sometimes it was a more a case of indirect contact with the North in general, for example through having had a nice visit to the city of Groningen (without visiting the rural surroundings) or having a mother who grew up in the city of Groningen. D7 described a clear example of how direct contact with an area can change the representation of an area in a positive way. She did not know the town of Veendam and its surroundings, while her husband knew the area through his work and proposed looking for a house there because of a job opportunity. While at first she had a very negative idea of the region, a visit to the area changed this drastically, giving her a positive perception:

Gosh, all the way up north, I couldn't bear thinking about it. Veendam didn't sound nice at all. (...) We went to Veendam and I liked the place very much. And beautiful houses, I said 'I could really live here'.

The difference between the awareness space and the search space in the theory about the residential search process implies that knowledge of an area does not necessarily lead to a positive appreciation of the area. It means that based on certain perceived characteristics, some areas are excluded from the search process before it actually starts. On the basis of the interviews, this indeed appeared to be the case. This was discussed with the local searchers more hypothetically, because they all intended to continue searching in their current or neighbouring village. Both local and regional searchers mentioned areas within the province they did not want to live in, based on indirect or direct contact. The latter is illustrated by this quote from R5:

I worked as a trainee near Erica. Well, I do not exactly like the people there. The way they speak is completely different. They are blunt. I was young then, but my first reaction when I got home was: 'I don't want to have anything to do with them, I wouldn't dream of living there'.

Some of these searchers also mentioned specific villages they wanted to avoid. Two of the local searchers were even more specific, by saying that they also knew which street or neighbourhoods to avoid within a village. L1 explains how she distinguishes between different villages surrounding her current village:

Those villages around Hallum, you'd want to live in some of them, but in some of them you wouldn't want to live at all. Take Blija for example, that really is a boorish village. The youths go to a 'keet' (rural youth hangout, cf. Haartsen and Strijker, 2010), and that then is their goal in life. Well, my goals are different. It may have to do with education. Because what I just said about Blija, those people really seem more simple-minded.

The difference with distant movers is that they refer to whole provinces instead of smaller areas or villages when speaking about areas which are not considered in the search process based on perceived characteristics. These different levels of scale used by the different groups of searchers are comparable with the finding that the reputation of a neighbourhood is more detailed for residents than for non-residents (Permentier, 2009). D8 remarks:

Brabant, I wouldn't want to live there. Look, of course parts of Brabant are very beautiful. (...) But I have had some very unpleasant experiences with people from Brabant. I always say that people from Brabant are sneaky, they act nicely to your face, but behind your back they say something entirely different. (...) Somebody from the North will make it clear that he likes you or doesn't like you. Even then it

may take some time before he becomes friendly. You may call it stubborn, but at least it is honest.

This quote again shows that direct contact by knowing people in an area does not always lead to a more positive representation. Nevertheless, as soon as the barrier raised by a negative perception of an area is broken, a perception can change, as shown by another quote from D8:

... and Friesland was a obstacle we couldn't actually overcome at first. Also because of the reputation of the Frisians being a bit stubborn. And the language, you know. To us westerners it seems that all Frisians speak Frisian. (...) And then when you get there you don't hear much Frisian being spoken at all. And you go to a friend in Goingarjip and you see that Friesland is actually really beautiful. And then you drive past this place and you think this is a place where I might want to live. Yes, that's how things go.

Representations of areas not only play a role in determining the initial search area, they can also change or become more refined during the search process and therefore influence which areas to omit or to focus on in the search process. The representations of areas that local and regional searchers had did not change very much, probably because they did not really explore areas that were new to them. The distant searchers did explore areas that were relatively unknown to them. When they did, sometimes their impression of the province they were searching in changed negatively, for example, finding it not as quiet as expected or disliking the people living there. Sometimes this results in omitting that area from further searches. Developing search activities can also lead to a more differentiated representation of a province, when searchers discover areas within the wider area which inspire different images or feelings. They described how they narrowed their search area based on these perceptions. D8 recounted the poor impression the east of the province of Groningen made on him:

Well, this is also a region, it's really a very beautiful area, you know, Bourtange, all those places. (...) Only you see straightaway that the people are not well off, oh yes, you can really see that (...) Yes, the houses, they simply look a bit shabby. There also isn't very much to do anyway, I think.

On the other hand, the northern part of the province made a very creative impression on him, which better fit with his and his partner's lifestyle and job:

And that's something we really pay attention to, for example in Eenrum. There you see people who own small galleries. And that gave us the idea, oh, creative people must live here. (...) Those must be people who came to live here, or already lived here, involved in making art.

From the answers this distant searcher recorded in his diary questionnaire, it became clear how his perceptions of villages, which he obtained during when visiting available properties, influenced the development of a preference for specific villages within his search area. After visiting a house in Oude Bildtzijl he noted 'nice surroundings, nice village, beautiful landscape', while a visit to a house in Sijbrandahuis (both villages are in northern Friesland) led him to remark 'boring landscape, no facilities nearby, somehow I like the people in Dokkum and surroundings less than the people in Oude Bildtzijl and surroundings'. Oude Bildtzijl became one of his preferred villages. However, a few weeks later he wrote 'we have visited the North again a couple of times and we think that the area around Eenrum and Pieterburen is simply great'. Quite soon after this he bought a house in Pieterburen (in northern Groningen).

The searchers themselves acknowledge that some degree of coincidence is involved in developing either a positive or a negative perception of an area. This is illustrated by the following quote from D8:

We went to Wierum, we got there sometime around dinnertime. Wierum really is a lovely, picturesque village and we ended up in a

pub and the landlord fried some fresh fish for us and that was really very cosy, that definitely has some influence on your judgment.

Notably, when referring to perceived characteristics based on which places are excluded from the search process beforehand or during the search process, the respondents often referred to social characteristics. Perhaps this is unsurprising, given that social characteristics also play an important role in the neighbourhood reputation concept (Permentier, 2009). However, the focus in literature on rural migration is most often on the importance of landscape amenities to determining residential choice (e.g. Argent et al., 2007).

According to Koopman (2012), relying on neighbourhood reputation is one way of dealing with the uncertainty about the social qualities of an area. This uncertainty is greatest for the distant searchers because they are searching in areas less well known to them. It appears that some of them use the reputations of provinces to narrow down their search space. However, when it comes to really deciding where to live within this more limited search area, these distant searchers do not rely on this 'risk-minimizing strategy' because social characteristics are too important to their choices. Therefore, they search in areas they know to some extent and they spend a great deal of effort in getting to know these areas personally. This also becomes clear from their search activities, discussed in the next section. A preference for a specific housing type was key to the search of two other distant searchers. Their social preferences were more general, such as 'people behaving normally'. Perhaps because of that, they spent less effort on the social reputations of areas and in getting to know these areas thoroughly. For them, what mattered most was finding the right house.

#### ***5.4.4 Search activities***

It is clear from the interviews that the internet, and in particular the Dutch housing website 'Funda', has developed into a central information source for local, regional and distant searchers. Searchers used the website to find available properties using search criteria, but the website also allows the user to receive notifications of new properties that fit with predetermined preferences by e-mail. Most searchers used Funda or comparable websites to find available properties

within their defined search space. Nevertheless, some of the distant searchers also used them to explore new potential search areas. D10 in particular examined several regions within the Netherlands using the internet. Based on housing characteristics and prices, she omitted some of these areas from her search space without visiting them. D9 describes how Funda led him to a new search area. While his main search area was in southeastern Groningen, his search criteria apparently also included vacancies in the North of the province. As a result, he came across a house that appealed to him greatly in the village of Pieterburen. He and his partner inspected the house, and though they decided not to take it, they discovered in the meantime that they liked the village and surrounding area very much. After a time they decided that this would become their main search space.

However, most searchers also employed other search methods as well as using the internet. The methods used slightly differed among the different groups of searchers. While several searchers received notifications from a real estate agent when suitable vacancies became available, two of the local searchers and a regional searcher mentioned some more personal contact with a real estate agent in their current or neighbouring village. This kind of contact probably gave these searchers an advantage in the sense of being notified at an early stage that a property was becoming available, but this is not explicitly mentioned. Other 'local' search methods include being notified when a local housing corporation sold some of their houses. L3 also indicated that people from the village sometimes phoned them when they saw a suitable house for sale. R5 used to cycle or drive around his search area to look for houses he liked, regardless of whether or not they were for sale. He had some 'favourites' which he kept an eye on until they came onto the market. Two of the local searchers also mentioned that they sometimes walked or cycled around the village to see whether there were suitable properties. However, despite the greater distance they had to cover, driving around looking for properties is something also done by the distant searchers. Some explained how, when visiting properties, they explored their search area more thoroughly, also looking for other houses for sale. Two other distant searchers illustrate how the residential search process is always present, one couple looking for a house they liked (D10), the other for a 'good feeling' (D8):

...and even when we are driving somewhere, our eyes are looking left and right 'is there a nice house for sale here?'

Well, then we started making trips all around the Netherlands. At a certain moment we started putting circles on the map around places that felt good. Or if I happened to be in a certain area and I thought: hey, this feels nice, you know, then you put a circle around it.

This idea of 'it felt good' is mentioned by other searchers as well, referring to areas and houses. Inspections appear to be valuable not only for investigating more deeply those objective characteristics which are not always visible on the internet, such as the quality of the house, the view from the house, the amount of facilities in the village, but also less tangible characteristics, as expressed in the following quote (D8):

Because we feel we really have to fall in love with a house (...). So perhaps it is more a matter of the heart than the head.

As Koopman (2012) argues, as a non-resident it is possible to gain insight into the observable characteristics of an area and also less tangible aspects such as atmosphere, but the social quality of an area is more difficult to discover. That residents have an information advantage in this respect is acknowledged in the interviews with the various searcher groups. The local searchers were aware that they were better able to differentiate within the area or village than outsiders. The regional and distant searchers mentioned different strategies for gaining greater insight into the social qualities of an area. D8 attached great importance to driving around, talking to people and looking for signs of the presence of artistic or creative people. R6 mentioned asking people who live in the area about their perceptions of regions or villages, he also saw the internet as a way of exploring what kind of activities go on in a village, at schools, etc. Another example is offered by D9:



By just walking around, talking to people. Asking them what it is like to live there (...). Also, talk to the neighbours when you visit a house. Ask them how they feel about living there and if there are any problems. It isn't watertight, but you try to minimize the risks this way.

#### ***5.4.5 Resources, restrictions and opportunities in the housing market***

While representations can limit the search process in some ways, there can also be more concrete factors. Obviously, the interaction between the financial resources of a searcher and what is available in the housing market determines to a large extent whether and where a move is made. Resources and opportunities were discussed in almost all the interviews. For the local and most of the regional searchers, house prices influenced choosing specific houses, but did not influence the search area. House prices did influence the search area choice of three of the distant searchers. In the Netherlands the Randstad area generally has higher house prices than the more peripheral areas (De Groot et al., 2011a). Within the northern Netherlands the most northern and eastern municipalities have the lowest house prices in the country (Bijker et al., in press). The distant searchers explained during the interviews that they discovered in their search processes that their preferred housing types were practically unaffordable for them in the central part of the country, which forced them to search elsewhere. Some areas were then also dropped from the search space due to overly high house prices. The relatively lower house prices in the northern and eastern parts of the northern Netherlands played a considerable role in their choice to search there. D8 describes how he traded-off between a preference for a certain landscape and a preference for a certain type of house due to differences in house prices within the northern Netherlands:

I prefer the woods, but living near the woods is very expensive. (...) If we consider our budget, that would imply that we could buy a small terraced house in Dwingeloo and then to be able to enjoy nature we would have to walk or cycle a few kilometres to get there. It is a possibility, but we actually really prefer a detached house. Look, I

would really be happy to be able to just walk out my door and stand on my own piece of land.

In addition to financial resources, some other types of restriction came to the fore in the interviews. First, most distant searchers mentioned social ties or work-related ties to the current residential environment. As this quote of D10 illustrates:

...on the one hand there is living in the country, our desire, a nice old house, but on the other hand there is the large distance from our family and friends. And my husband has retired, so how are we going to fill our time? Are we going to do voluntary work or will we still be able to have the opportunity to do something in our own line of work? So we really feel that we have to let many things go that are dear to us and made us very happy.

These ties resemble the local ties of the local searchers, discussed in Section 5.4.2. However, for the local searchers these ties were so strong that they prevented them from moving to another place altogether, while for the distant searchers these ties were more a constraining factor with a possible influence on their search space. Other restrictions mentioned by distant searchers are the lack of a car and a driver's license and municipal building rules. A factor mentioned by several regional and distant searchers which did not so much restrict the search space as restrict making a move at all is the possibility of selling the current house at an acceptable price, which was no longer a self-evident truth in the Dutch housing market at that time.

## **5.5 Conclusion and discussion**

This paper investigates how people search for a new place to live in rural areas in the northern Netherlands using a diary approach, a new method for studying the search process. Our findings show that the search areas of local, regional and distant searchers differ in scale and in the extent to which they change during the

search process. While local movers spoke about villages, regional and distant movers initially spoke about areas. Whereas the local movers in our study started searching in their own or in a neighbouring village and continued to do so throughout the search process, the regional and distant searchers all experienced changes in their search area.

This corresponds with the finding of De Groot et al. (2012) that intended non-local movers are less likely to realize their rural location preferences than intended local movers. While their longitudinal approach offers no explanation for this difference, our findings show that the importance of local ties for local searchers is an important reason for this distinct difference in search patterns. Their less strong preference for a specific rural location makes it easier for regional and distant searchers to change their search area. While local ties keep the local searchers close to their current place of residence, the same kind of ties act as a restriction in distant searchers' search processes. Financial restrictions often directed the search spaces of the distant searchers to the North, with its lower house prices, after other rural areas had been excluded from their search space due to overly high prices (see also Bijker et al., in press). For local and regional searchers, financial restrictions play more of a role in the choice of specific houses than in the choice of search areas. Finally, our results suggest that the better knowledge of the local housing market enjoyed by local movers does not make it easier for them to realize their preferred move. All searchers use the internet to gain information about available properties and therefore have comparable levels of knowledge in this respect. What differs is their knowledge of the social qualities of an area. Local and regional searchers are able to distinguish between different villages and even streets. Distant searchers have developed several strategies to overcome this disadvantage, ranging from driving around to meeting the neighbours when visiting a house. The importance that is attached to detecting these social qualities, and also the importance of certain feelings about areas and houses, makes the internet has not replaced 'older' search methods such as driving around and visiting houses. However, it appears that internet sites such as Funda make it easier for distant searchers to explore new potential search areas, sometimes also resulting in changes in their search spaces.

Representations of areas play an important role in the search process in different ways. First, direct or indirect contact with an area appears to be essential to include the area in the search space. However, knowledge of an area does not necessarily lead to a positive appreciation of the area. Both local and regional searchers mentioned areas within the province or specific villages in which they did not want to live, and distant movers referred to whole provinces which were omitted based on perceived characteristics. However, in the process of developing their search activities, searchers discovered areas that inspired different images or feelings within the wider area. Of note is that when referring to perceived characteristics based on which places were excluded from the search process, the respondents often referred to social characteristics. In a rural context the focus is often on the importance of landscape and locational amenities in determining residential choice (e.g. Argent et al., 2007). Our findings suggest that more attention is needed for the perceived social characteristics of rural areas, which has already been acknowledged in an urban context (e.g. Permentier, 2009).

Using a diary approach provides more insight into the residential search process, by revealing the changes in the search space and preferences that are made between the beginning and the end of the search. Following searchers over time shows the non-linearity of the process and the role played by representations. These aspects are incorporated in residential choice models such as that of Brown and Moore (1970), but remain invisible when using longitudinal methods with longer intervals. The qualitative elements elucidate the more emotional, less tangible aspects of residential decision-making (see also Levy et al., 2008) and the influence of coincidence on the process. These aspects are also overlooked when using a large quantitative longitudinal dataset. The combination of an in-depth interview with the questionnaire turned out to be very useful. The personal contact and the fact that the researcher made the effort to come and visit the respondents led to high compliance with respect to completing the questionnaire. The interview provided rich information, which also helped interpret the questionnaire answers. Due to its more quantitative nature, the questionnaire provided most information on the development of the

search process. The final decision, involving trade-offs between preferences, is harder to disentangle from it. One way of solving this would be to add a 'final interview' to the approach. The design of the questionnaire could be reconsidered on some points. For instance, the finding that half of the respondents did not change their preferences could be influenced by the fact that we showed the respondents what they filled in the last time. After some time completing the questionnaire, 'habituation' (Bolger et al., 2003) starts and it is perhaps easy to just move on to the next question. A point of concern is the recruitment of participants. We tried to find searchers through real estate agents, which was not very easy, as explained in the methodology part. An idea would be to try and approach respondents somehow through housing websites on the internet. With regard to the diary approach technology, it might be worthwhile to explore the possibilities of the increased use of smartphones, which permit people to note down their experiences during the search process in real time, for instance when visiting houses.

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## 6. Conclusions

This dissertation contributes to the critical reconsideration of the concept of counterurbanisation by studying migration to less-popular rural areas. We have examined the characteristics and motivations of movers to these less-popular rural areas. To determine the extent to which the results are specific for less-popular areas, a direct comparison with in-migrants to popular areas in the same region was included in the study. The results are also compared with existing outcomes and ideas in the literature on counterurbanisation. In addition to these questions which focus on the outcome of the residential mobility process, we gained greater insight into the residential search process before a move. We used a combination of different data and methods to answer our research questions. We studied the characteristics and motivations of in-migrants by collecting our own survey data, as well as making use of secondary data. To investigate the residential search process in a rural context, we conducted a small-scale study using a diary approach, a new method for studying the residential search process. This diary approach consisted of in-depth interviews followed by an electronic questionnaire which was sent to the respondents every two weeks.

### 6.1 Less-popular and popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands

The popularity of rural areas as places to live is defined in this dissertation using average house price per municipality. House prices are an indication of what people are willing to pay for houses and their surroundings (Luttik, 2000; Visser and Van Dam, 2006), thus reflecting the value buyers attach to them. This average house price incorporates the residential environment as well as housing characteristics such as size and quality. The use of house prices instead of in-migration numbers, which are often used in other studies of rural areas' popularity (Argent et al., 2007; McGranahan, 2008), is more appropriate to the Dutch context. In the Netherlands, population growth at the municipal level is strongly influenced by government development policy (Marlet, 2009). New housing is only allowed in a limited number of areas, while in others building

houses is very restricted, especially in rural areas, both in the open countryside and in villages (Van Dam et al., 2002). These restrictions make it impossible for the Dutch housing market to react to changes in demand for new houses, which by increasing demand leads to price increases rather than increased in-migration (Marlet, 2009). Rental prices differ little between regions in the Netherlands, which is why these are not considered in defining the popularity of rural areas for this study.

Based on house prices, we distinguished three types of rural areas in the northern Netherlands: less-popular rural areas, average rural areas and popular rural areas (see also Chapter 2). These areas are considered rural based on Statistics Netherlands's national standard for the degree of urbanisation, the so-called address density, consisting of municipalities with on average fewer than 1,000 addresses per square kilometre. In this dissertation we focus on less-popular areas, but we also compare with popular rural areas. The less-popular areas are located along the northern and eastern borders of the northern Netherlands. They can be characterised as having an open, marine clay landscape with a large share of large-scale arable farmland. This is consistent with the findings of Ulrich (1986) and McGranahan (2008), showing that people prefer areas with a mix of forest and open land and relatively little cropland. Compared to the popular areas, they have relatively fewer natural and recreational areas and they have a relatively low share of hotel and catering industry employment. The latter was also found to be an indicator of the popularity of rural areas by Argent et al. (2007). Other studies found accessibility to be an important determining factor for the popularity of rural areas (e.g. Woods, 2005). The less-popular areas in our study have a comparable travel distance to urban centres in the North, but are more distant from the centre of the Netherlands than popular areas. It seems that in this case, location relative to the centre of the country is more important than location within the northern Netherlands. The people who inhabit these areas have a lower average household income than those in the popular rural areas. In these less-popular areas, both population decline and a decline in the number of households are expected, and in some municipalities population decline is already taking place (Haartsen and Venhorst, 2010). Popular rural areas, in contrast, can be characterised as having a more semi-open

landscape with predominantly grazing livestock farming, a landscape type that is generally perceived as attractive (McGranahan, 2008; Ulrich, 1986). They also have a relatively large share of natural areas. Popular rural areas have an expected household growth and are less distant from the centre of the Netherlands.

Looking at the northern Netherlands as a whole, a region in which 10% of the Dutch population (1,700,000) lives, the net migration is slightly negative. A five-year annual average of 22,326 people (2003-2007) left the North for elsewhere in the Netherlands, while 21,913 arrived. Of these in-migrants from elsewhere in the Netherlands, 54% found a place to live in one of the 58 municipalities classified as rural based on address density. Looking at migration within the region in the same period, 31,374 people (61% of the total group of inter-municipal migrants within the North) moved to a rural municipality from either an urban or rural municipality within the northern Netherlands. Regarding the three types of areas, the less-popular, average and popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands all show a negative net migration for the period 2003–2007, and the size of the net migration rate does not differ significantly between the three types of areas. This means that more people left an area than moved to it, even for the popular areas. The average number of in-migrants per 1,000 inhabitants is around 40 for the three types of areas in the same period. Thus, popular rural areas do not attract significantly more migrants than less-popular rural areas. There is a considerable migration flow between urban areas and popular rural areas, while the migration flow between less-popular and average rural areas on the one hand, and popular rural areas on the other, is very limited.

## **6.2 Who moves into less-popular areas and why?**

Our study of migration to less-popular rural areas in the northern Netherlands (Chapter 3) based on newly collected survey data, shows that the migrants to these areas are more diverse than the middle-class movers often associated with migration to the rural (see e.g. Halfacree, 2008). However, the migrants in our study are also more mixed than the low-income groups found moving to impoverished rural areas in the US (Fitchen, 1995; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008)

and the movers to depopulating areas in Scotland (Stockdale, 2006). Although they have a relatively low income in the Dutch context, the lowest-income group is only small. Combined with the relatively large proportion of working people, the variety of sectors they work in, and the large group with higher education qualifications, our movers seem to correspond better to the more diverse group of movers to fringe areas in Denmark as found by Andersen (2011). This group of movers includes quite a large proportion of migrants on low incomes, but also encompasses movers with middle or high incomes trying to realise housing preferences they could not afford in more expensive areas. In addition to these socioeconomic characteristics our study found that the movers to less-popular areas are predominantly young, while a relatively small proportion moved from urban areas. The mobility circles vary from local – from surrounding municipalities – to longer distance – from elsewhere in the Netherlands, but the majority made a regional move from within the northern Netherlands.

For migration into rural areas in general, the quality of the residential environment is often seen as the most important motivation (e.g. Gkartzios and Scott, 2009, Halfacree, 2008). For movers to less-popular rural areas, it seems that other motivations such as marriage, the proximity of family and friends, employment considerations and housing reasons are more important (Fitchen, 1995; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008; Grimsrud, 2011; Stockdale, 2006). However, based on existing studies it was unclear to what extent the typical ‘quality-of-life’ motivations connected to the counterurbanisation concept hold true for migrants to less-popular rural areas (Foulkes and Newbold, 2008; Stockdale, 2006). Our results show that these quality-of-life motivations do play a role in decisions to move to less-popular rural areas, which corresponds to the findings of Foulkes and Newbold (2008). However, disentangling them into motivations for moving to a rural area, in general, and to the specific rural area, in particular, has proved that these quality-of-life motivations are especially important in the choice for rural living in general. Housing characteristics were the main motivation for moving to the specific rural area, directly followed by the physical qualities of the environment and personal reasons, such as moving in with a partner and living close to family and friends. Low house prices in the area only came fifth in the hierarchy of motivations.

Combining the characteristics and motivations of the movers reveals the diversity within the group of movers to less-popular rural areas even more (see Chapter 3). The physical qualities of the environment attract a group of higher educated movers with high incomes, and middle-aged people, a group very similar to the stereotypical counter-urbanite (e.g. Milbourne, 2007). Furthermore, our analysis reveals a group of movers motivated by the proximity to family and friends, consisting of return migrants, singles, the youngest and oldest age groups and also the lowest-income group. Low house prices are an important motivation for young movers, single people and for people moving from elsewhere in the Netherlands, but not for the low-income migrants. Work-related motivations are important for highly educated movers, people moving from surrounding municipalities and the 35-44 age group. The housing characteristics motive usually refers to the availability of a specific house and is mentioned by a diverse group of movers, but in particular by people moving from urban areas.

### **6.3 Different areas, different people?**

To determine to what extent these results are really specific for less-popular rural areas, we also made a direct comparison with the characteristics and motivations of in-migrants to popular rural areas in the same region. With respect to migration statistics, in Chapter 2 it appears that less-popular areas attract a larger share of movers from within the northern Netherlands, a larger inflow from rural areas and generally a younger group of movers. The multivariate analysis of secondary survey data in the same chapter showed that people who moved to their current address motivated by a desire to live closer to family and friends were more likely to have moved to less-popular areas. Highly educated people and people moving from urban areas were more likely to have made a move to popular rural areas. Based on this, we concluded that migration patterns in different types of rural areas within countries cannot sufficiently be explained by the classical conceptualisation of counter-urbanisation as the movement of middle-class people from the city in search of a new life in an idyllic rural setting (see Halfacree, 2008). The characteristics of the movers to popular rural areas do fit very well within the counter-urbanisation story, while less-popular rural areas

share personal reasons as an important motive for in-migration with more remote rural areas in Europe (see Grimsrud, 2011).

We further investigated the question of whether different types of rural areas within countries attract different migrants with different motivations in Chapter 4. Here, we used the survey data we collected ourselves, which permitted a more comprehensive analysis. In the analysis in Chapter 2 motivations for location choice were mixed with motives for leaving the previous residence, despite the fact that the reasons for leaving a place can differ from the motives for choosing a destination (see also Bolton and Chalkley, 1990). In the follow-up analysis using our own survey data we were able to focus specifically on motivations for choosing the destination area. We were also able to include return migration in our analysis and a more detailed measurement of the previous residence of the movers. In addition to characterising the movers using 'traditional' sociodemographic characteristics, we also used people's values.

When directly comparing the movers to popular and less-popular areas in this logistic regression analysis in Chapter 4, it appears that movers to popular areas more often belonged to higher-income groups and were more often more highly educated. They had also more often previously lived in the municipality and more often belonged to older age cohorts. The physical qualities of the environment (i.e. nature, space and the presence of water), work-related considerations and the location of the area were more often mentioned by them as motivations to move to an area. When looking at the eight values included in the analysis, it appears that compared to movers to less-popular areas, they attached more importance to pleasure in life (with the addition 'enjoyment, satisfaction').

The analysis shows that movers to less popular areas were more likely to have moved from elsewhere in the northern Netherlands than movers to popular areas. While the study of Stockdale (2006) suggested that less-popular rural areas mainly attract movers over short distances, our multivariate analysis showed that popular and less-popular areas attract movers from elsewhere in the Netherlands to the same extent. Movers to less-popular areas are more likely to belong to the youngest age group. Accordingly, less-popular areas attract a young group of movers, also when directly compared to movers to popular areas (cf. Chapter 3).



Compared to the movers to popular areas they more often mentioned moving in with their partners and the low house prices in an area as motivations for moving there. The importance of these two motivations corresponds with the findings of studies focused specifically on less-popular areas (Fitchen, 1995; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008; Stockdale, 2006). Movers to less-popular areas mention the physical qualities of the environment less often, in contrast mentioning social qualities such as 'freedom', 'friendliness' and 'nice atmosphere' more often. The other motivations included in the model do not have a significant effect on moving to a popular or a less-popular area. Based on the findings in Chapter 2, which corresponded to the outcomes in other studies (Fitchen, 1995; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008; Grimsrud, 2011), we expected that living close to family and friends would be a more important motivation for movers to less-popular areas. However, when including only the motivations for choosing the destination area in the analysis, instead of mixing the motivations for leaving the previous residence with those for choosing the destination, it appears that the importance of this motivation does not differ for movers to popular and less-popular areas. When looking at the values included in the analysis, we see that compared to movers to popular areas, movers to less-popular areas attach more importance to being rational in their lives (with the addition in the questionnaire of 'intelligent, logical, thoughtful'). They also attach more importance to variety in their life. This value refers to 'a life full of challenge, novelty and change'.

Halfacree (2008, 2012) has developed a more general and flexible model for counterurbanisation, which focuses on the motivations of the rural in-migrants. He distinguishes a group labelled 'mainstream counterurbanisation', for whom the rural environment is important but balanced by more practical considerations, such as proximity to employment or services. The group labelled 'default counterurbanisation' is a group for which the rural character of the place is almost totally incidental and for whom instrumental considerations – for example relating to employment or family support – are more important (Halfacree, 2008). Based on studies focusing on one type of rural area, migration to popular rural areas is often associated with 'mainstream counterurbanisation', while migration to less-popular areas is often seen as 'default counterurbanisation'.

The results of our analysis in Chapter 4 show that when using a more comprehensive multivariate analysis to compare movers to popular and less-popular areas, the differences between the two groups are less distinct than in the analysis in Chapter 2, and less distinct than indicated here. Although our current analysis does show that popular rural areas attract middle-class movers more often, it appears that both types of area attract movers from urban areas. When considering motivations, movers to less-popular areas are more often motivated by low house prices and the personal motivation of moving in with a partner, which suggests that moving to less-popular areas can indeed be defined as 'default counterurbanisation'. However, the finding that movers to popular areas are more often motivated by instrumental considerations such as work-related reasons and the location of the area than movers to less-popular areas, and that the motivation to live close to family and friends is of the same importance to movers to either type of area, suggest that popular areas also attract a group of 'default counterurbanisers'. Moreover, when identifying the physical and social aspects of the rural character of the environment, which is the main motivation for the category of 'mainstream counterurbanisation', it appears that while the physical aspects are important for moving to popular areas, social aspects are more important for moving to less-popular areas. Apparently, the rural character of the destination also matters for those moving to less-popular areas.

#### **6.4 The residential search process in rural areas**

In Chapter 5 we investigated how people search for a new place to live in rural areas in the northern Netherlands using a diary approach, a new method to study the search process. Our findings show that the search areas of local, regional and distant searchers differ in scale and in the extent to which they change during the search process. While local movers speak about villages, regional and distant movers initially speak about areas. Whereas the local movers in our study started searching in their own or a neighbouring village and continued doing so throughout the search process, the regional and distant searchers all experience changes in their search areas.

This corresponds with the finding of De Groot et al. (2012) that intended non-local movers are less likely to realise their rural location preferences than intended local movers. While their longitudinal approach offers no explanation for this difference, our findings show that the importance of local ties for local searchers is an important reason for this distinct difference in search patterns. For regional and distant searchers, their weaker preference for a specific rural location makes it easier to change search area. We also found that while local ties keep the local searchers close to their current place of residence, the same kind of ties act as a restriction in the search process of distant searchers. Financial restrictions often directed the search space of the distant searchers to the North, with its lower house prices, after other rural areas had been dropped from their search space due to high prices (see also Chapter 3). For local and regional searchers, financial restrictions play more of a role in the choice for specific houses than in the choice of search areas. Finally, our results suggest that it is not the greater knowledge of the local housing market that makes it easier for local movers to realise their preferred move. All searchers make use of the internet to gain information about buying opportunities and they therefore have comparable levels of knowledge of availability. What differs is their knowledge of the social qualities of an area. Local and regional searchers are able to distinguish between different villages and even streets. Distant searchers developed several strategies to overcome this disadvantage, ranging from driving around, to meeting the neighbours when visiting a house. The importance attached to detecting these social qualities and also the importance of certain feelings about areas and houses makes the internet has not replaced 'older' search methods such as driving around and visiting houses. However, it appears that real estate websites such as Funda in the Netherlands make it easier to explore new potential search areas for distant searchers, sometimes also resulting in a change of their search space.

Representations of areas play an important role in the search process in different ways. Firstly, direct or indirect contact with an area appears to be essential for including the area in the search space. However, knowledge of an area does not necessarily lead to a positive view of the area. Both local and regional searchers mentioned areas within the province or specific villages that they did not want to live in, and distant movers referred to whole provinces to be

omitted, based on perceived characteristics. However, when developing search activities, searchers discovered areas within the wider area that invoked different images or feelings. Of note is that when referring to perceived characteristics based on which places were excluded from the search process, the respondents often referred to social characteristics.

## **6.5 Counterurbanisation reconsidered**

Our results empirically support the idea that counterurbanisation is indeed a 'complex and differentiated phenomenon', as argued by Woods (2011: p. 184). This is true when looking at migration to less-popular rural areas (see Chapter 3), but also when comparing migration flows to different types of rural areas (see Chapter 4). With regard to the less-popular areas, the analysis we performed that linked motivations to the characteristics of movers was particularly helpful in revealing the diversity within the movers group. We have seen that less-popular areas also attract middle-class movers motivated by aspects of the rural idyll. However, the results of our analysis show that less-popular areas also attract other groups with other motivations, such as a group of movers motivated by the proximity to family and friends, consisting of return migrants, singles, the youngest and oldest age groups and also the lowest-income group. Our results indicate that in addition to differences in rural area types, the links between motivations and migrant characteristics are important to explaining migration flows. Therefore, future research in popular rural areas could also use this method of analysis to explore further the presence of different groups of migrants with different motivations.

Comparing in-migration flows to different types of rural areas within a country shows that counterurbanisation does indeed entail more than what the 'classical' conceptualisation would suggest. Our results thus empirically support the broader conceptualisation of counterurbanisation in the previously mentioned model developed by Halfacree (2008), which includes groups for whom the rural environment is important, along with groups for whom instrumental considerations matter more. However, our results also show that the two main groups distinguished in the model of Halfacree, mainstream and

default counterurbanisation, are not directly related to different types of rural areas within countries. Future research into rural migration should be careful not to use too simplified understandings of counterurbanisation, both in general and with regard to different types of rural areas within countries.

## **6.6 More attention required for the social characteristics of rural areas**

In a rural context the focus is often on the importance of landscape and locational amenities in influencing residential choice (e.g. Argent et al., 2007). Our findings suggest that more attention needs to be paid to the role of the perceived social characteristics of rural areas in residential choice. In Chapter 5 it appeared that respondents often mentioned social characteristics when referring to the perceived characteristics they used in excluding places from the search process. In an urban context the role of the perceived social characteristics of areas in the residential choice process is acknowledged. The reputation of an urban neighbourhood is known to be most strongly influenced by the socioeconomic and ethnic composition of the neighbourhood, with physical and functional characteristics appearing to be less important (Permentier, 2009). Furthermore, it is assumed that relying on neighbourhood reputation in selecting neighbourhoods during the search process can be a risk-minimising strategy, when information about the social quality of the area is lacking (Koopman, 2012).

In Chapter 4 we found that the social qualities of the rural environment – such as freedom, friendliness and a pleasant atmosphere – are more important motivations for people moving to less-popular areas than for movers to popular areas. This is in contrast to the popular areas, where the physical qualities of the environment are an important pull factor. Apparently, it is useful to distinguish between the physical and social aspects of the rural environment to explain moving to different types of rural areas. It raises the question of whether less-popular areas have more to offer with regard to the social qualities of an area. To answer this question, ‘social amenities’ will have to be looked at more closely; however, they are less easy to operationalise than the physical characteristics most often used to capture the amenity of rural areas (Argent et al., 2007). We made a first attempt by using five specific dimensions of regional culture,

developed in a Dutch context by Brons (2005, 2006). They yielded some differences between the three types of rural areas. However, they are very specific to the Netherlands and the operationalisation of the dimensions is questionable in some respects. Future research should investigate which variables are relevant as indicators of the social characteristics of rural areas.

## **6.7 New methodological applications**

In addition to contributing to the discussion about the reconceptualisation of migration to rural areas, this dissertation aims to contribute to methodological development in the field of migration and housing research. This is accomplished by applying existing methodological approaches in a new field of research. Firstly, whereas recent housing research has seen approaches developed which explore the motives underlying consumer preferences (see e.g. Coolen and Hoekstra, 2001; Jansen, 2011), underlying motivational factors such as values have remained somewhat overlooked in migration research. Our results show that values can add to the understanding of migration processes. They contribute further to the characteristics and motivations of migrants when comparing movers to different types of rural areas. Moreover, they appear to have a direct effect on the type of area people move to, instead of interacting with or having an effect through the motivations for choosing an area, which might also be expected. This probably shows that these values are more closely related to the more abstract ideas or representations that people have of areas, which are not captured in the more concrete motivations. Apparently, the popular areas are regarded as places to enjoy life, while the less-popular areas represent 'a rational choice' or a kind of adventurous choice. In addition, the importance of the 'varied life' value for movers to less-popular areas could indicate the existence of a kind of group of creative people moving to these – in the Dutch context – peripheral areas (cf. Bell and Jayne, 2010; Gibson, 2010). In this study we were only able to measure the values with a single item, resulting in a less reliable measurement. Based on our results, it appears worthwhile to further explore the additional value of the use of values in migration research, using scales including more items to measure value orientations.

Secondly, the diary approach we used to study the residential search process in rural areas is a new method to study this process, but it was used previously in other scientific fields and topics (e.g. Richardson, 1994; Laurenceau and Bolger, 2005). Our results show that using a diary approach provides greater insight into the residential search process, by revealing the changes in the search space and preferences that occur between the beginning and the end of the search. Following searchers over time shows the non-linearity of the process and the role played by representations. These aspects are incorporated into residential choice models such as that of Brown and Moore (1970), but remain invisible when using longitudinal methods with longer intervals. The qualitative elements we used elucidate the more emotional, less tangible aspects of residential decision-making (see also Levy et al., 2008) and the influence of coincidence on the process. These aspects are also overlooked when using a large quantitative longitudinal dataset. The combination of an in-depth interview with the questionnaire appeared to be very useful. The personal contact and the fact that the researcher made the effort to come and visit the respondents led to a high level of compliance in completing the questionnaire. The interview provided rich information, which also helped interpret the answers to the questionnaire. Due to its more quantitative nature, the questionnaire offers the most information on the development of the search process. The ultimate decision, involving trade-offs between preferences, is harder to disentangle using it. This could be solved by adding an 'end interview' to the approach.

## **6.8 Reflection on the data and methodology**

The data we used offer a rich insight into the characteristics, motivations and search processes of rural in-migrants to different types of rural areas. However, our data and methodology naturally also have some relevant limitations. The restrictions of the secondary data used in Chapter 2 and the limited measurement of values in Chapter 4 have already been discussed in this conclusion.

In Chapter 2 we distinguish different types of rural areas using average house price per municipality. We used the average house prices available for the most recent year at the time, namely 2008. We used this classification of less-

popular and popular areas later in the dissertation to determine the study areas for the survey. Since 2008, the crisis in the housing market has resulted in lower prices and decreasing numbers of transactions in most municipalities in the Netherlands, including those in the northern Netherlands. While it is a process that still continues, so far this has not changed the position of the less-popular areas with respect to the Netherlands overall, as the lowest ranked areas. The general pattern of popularity within the North has also not changed substantially.

We chose to use the municipal level to determine less popular and popular rural areas and also as study areas for conducting our survey. We made this choice because of the availability of data at the municipal level, which permitted us to characterise the different types of rural areas in Chapter 2 and to show migration statistics for these areas. Conducting observations at the municipal level probably overlooks the diversity in popularity within the municipality. However, we took this into account by choosing municipalities without large towns within their boundaries and which were quite homogenous with regard to their physical geography.

For the survey we selected households that had moved to the municipality in the past five years. The chosen period needed to be as short as possible to reduce the risk of memory-recall problems. However, we needed to cover at least five years to ensure sufficient completed questionnaires to conduct the analyses. The consequence was that we failed to include people who moved to the municipality and left again within five years. These are either very mobile people or people who were very dissatisfied with their choice of rural area. It would be interesting for future research to focus specifically on the characteristics and motivations of this very mobile group.

The response rate for the less popular and popular rural areas taken together was 24%. In the Netherlands this is considered to be a good response rate for a postal survey. Nevertheless, if the non-response is selective, it affects the representativeness of the outcomes. This is not so much a problem when investigating relationships between variables such as in Chapter 3 and 4. There is no reason to assume that these relationships differ for people inside and outside the sample. Furthermore, there are no indications that the pattern of non-



response differs between the different types of rural areas. For the descriptive analysis presented in Chapter 3, the effects of non-response are more relevant. We were able to compare the distribution of the age variable in our sample with data from Statistics Netherlands. When compared to these data, it appeared that in our sample the older age groups were over-represented, while the youngest age group was under-represented. To obtain a representative age distribution we weighted the sample with regard to age for the descriptive analysis.

A complement to this study would be a comparable study of less-popular rural areas in other countries, more specifically in more sparsely populated countries. In comparison to other European countries, the Netherlands is densely populated and urbanised. Our results should be generalisable to other core regions in Europe, but as Grimsrud (2011) has shown, caution is needed when applying conceptualisations of rural in-migration originating in core regions in Europe to more sparsely populated countries. However, attention is also required in those countries for the diversity of rural in-migration within countries.

A final reflection on our methodology considers the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods that we used in this study. The information gathered in the in-depth interviews (see Chapter 5) turned out to be a valuable addition to the quantitative secondary and survey data used in the other chapters. The interviews provided greater insight into the process of migrating to a rural destination and the many aspects, also less tangible ones, that play a role in decision-making. Future research into rural in-migration could benefit from combining quantitative and qualitative approaches.

## **6.9 Implications for policy**

A number of suggestions for policymakers in less-popular rural areas can be formulated on the basis of the results of this research. With regard to the characteristics of the in-migrants, we found that a large share consisted of local and regional migrants. This makes it worth investing in retaining these groups in an area, instead of putting a lot of effort into attracting people from further away. The interviews with distant house searchers also revealed how strongly social and work-related ties interfere with their ability to realise their moving

intentions. When considering the migrants' motivations, it appeared that the rural quality of the environment plays an important role also in migration to less popular areas. This means that it is important to preserve qualities such as quiet, space, nature and the landscape also in less-popular areas, in order for them to remain attractive for in-migrants. In Section 6.6 we also emphasised the importance of social qualities in residential choice. However, these social qualities seem to be more difficult to influence with policy measures.

Chapter 5 shows that representations of areas play an important role in the search process in different ways. Firstly, direct or indirect contact with an area seems to be essential for including that area in the search space. Therefore, encouraging tourism in an area can be an indirect way of attracting future inhabitants, and also experiments such as handing out free train tickets or 'try living here' events could be worthwhile for areas wishing to attract people. In the province of Drenthe they have a yearly 'try living here' weekend (see [proef.drenthe.nl](http://proef.drenthe.nl)) during which the participants, often people living in the Randstad area, stay one night in a hotel in the area. The programme includes village inhabitants showing participants around and letting them experience daily life in the village. Meeting people who have already taken the step to move to Drenthe is also included in the itinerary.

However, knowledge of an area does not necessarily lead to a positive appreciation of the area. Both local and regional searchers mentioned areas within the province or specific villages that they did not want to live in, and distant movers referred to entire provinces that were omitted from consideration based on perceived characteristics. However, such perceived characteristics are difficult to influence positively by policy measures. Nevertheless, it is important not to influence them negatively. The discussion about population decline in the Netherlands leads to images in the media of houses with boarded-up windows and empty shops. In some cases it seems as though policymakers at a municipal or provincial level want to reinforce such images to strengthen their case for receiving grants from the national government, for instance. This might not be a good strategy for attracting new inhabitants. It is important to acknowledge that, as in urban areas, the reputations areas have play a role in residential choice, and that these reputations are persistent. Therefore, revitalising an area is not

sufficient, the image outsiders have of the area also needs to change (see also Koopman, 2012).

Finally, Chapter 4's results clearly show that the values people consider important in life differ for migrants to different types of rural areas, and that these values seem to be related to more abstract ideas or representations that people have of the areas. Some additional research into this phenomenon would seem worthwhile, as discussed above, and using these kinds of values in the marketing of rural areas could offer additional opportunities, in the same way that values are used in an urban context. The analysis revealed that less-popular areas represent 'a rational choice' or even a kind of adventurous choice: less-popular rural areas as locations for leading a life full of challenge, novelty and change. In general it is important for policymakers in rural areas to acknowledge that migration into rural areas is not just a matter of middle-class urbanites in search of a rural lifestyle. Based on our results it can be concluded that 'the' rural migrant does not exist. It is essential to recognise that there are different groups of migrants with different motivations and that these different groups of migrants need to be targeted in different ways.

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## Appendix A: Survey

### Vragenlijst Verhuizen [Gemeente]

U ontvangt deze vragenlijst omdat u in de afgelopen vijf jaar in deze gemeente bent komen wonen. De vragen hebben betrekking op **uw verhuizing naar deze gemeente** en dus niet op eventuele verhuizingen daarna binnen de gemeente.

In de vragenlijst wordt verschillende keren de term '**platteland**' gebruikt. Wij bedoelen hiermee zowel de dorpen als het buitengebied in uw gemeente, dus ook de grotere plaatsen vallen voor dit onderzoek binnen het platteland. Naast gemeente gebruiken we in de vragenlijst zo nu en dan ook de term '**gebied**'. We bedoelen hiermee de gemeente en de omliggende gemeentes.

De vragenlijst begint met een aantal vragen over uw huidige woonsituatie en over waar u eerder in uw leven hebt gewoond. Daarna willen we graag wat meer weten over uw beeld van het platteland en van het gebied waarin u woont in het bijzonder. Vervolgens gaan de vragen over de keuze van de woning in deze gemeente; hoe het zoeken naar deze woning in zijn werk is gegaan en welke zaken een belangrijke rol speelden in die keuze. Als laatste volgen er een aantal vragen over u en uw huishouden.

#### Huidige woonsituatie

1. In wat voor type woning woont u?
  - ☐ Tussen- of hoekwoning
  - ☐ Vrijstaande woning
  - ☐ Twee-onder-een-kapwoning
  - ☐ Appartement
  - ☐ Anders, nl. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is het een huur- of een koopwoning?
  - ☐ Huurwoning
  - ☐ Koopwoning
3. Wat is de ligging van de woning?
  - ☐ In de dorpskern
  - ☐ In een woonwijk(je)
  - ☐ Aan de rand van het dorp
  - ☐ Buiten de bebouwde kom
4. Wat is uw postcode? \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

#### Woongeschiedenis

5. Wilt u in onderstaande tabel een volledig overzicht geven van alle plaatsen waar u gewoond hebt, vanaf uw geboorte tot het moment waarop u naar deze gemeente verhuisd bent? Geef in jaren aan hoe lang u (ongeveer) in deze plaats hebt gewoond en kruis aan of het een stad of een dorp was. Indien u een partner heeft, kunt u dan hetzelfde doen voor uw partner?

Heden <----- Geboorte	Uzelf				Uw eventuele partner			
	Aantal jaren	Woonplaats	Stad	Dorp	Aantal jaren	Woonplaats	Stad	Dorp

6. Kende u voordat u naar deze gemeente verhuisde de gemeente of omliggende gemeentes al redelijk goed? (**zo ja**, dan kunt u **meerdere** antwoorden aangeven)
- ☐ Nee, voordat ik naar deze gemeente verhuisde kende ik het gebied nog niet uit eigen ervaring
  - ☐ Ja, ik heb eerder in het gebied gewoond
  - ☐ Ja, door bezoek aan familie of vrienden
  - ☐ Ja, door bezoek tijdens vakantie of recreatie
  - ☐ Ja, door werkgerelateerd bezoek
  - ☐ Anders, nl. \_\_\_\_\_

## Beelden

We willen u nu graag een aantal vragen stellen over uw beeld van het platteland en het gebied waarin u woont in het bijzonder.

7. Welke vier woorden komen het eerst bij u op als u de term **platteland** hoort? Geef per woord aan of het voor u een positieve (+), neutrale (+/-) of negatieve (-) betekenis heeft.
- |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1 _____ ( ) | 3 _____ ( ) |
| 2 _____ ( ) | 4 _____ ( ) |
8. Welke vier woorden komen het eerst bij u op als u aan het **gebied waarin u woont** denkt? Geef per woord aan of het voor u een positieve (+), neutrale (+/-) of negatieve (-) betekenis heeft.
- |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1 _____ ( ) | 3 _____ ( ) |
| 2 _____ ( ) | 4 _____ ( ) |
9. Hebt u nu een ander beeld van het gebied dan u had voordat u naar deze gemeente verhuisde? Zo ja, wat is er sinds uw verhuizing naar deze gemeente veranderd in uw beeld?
- ☐ Nee
  - ☐ Ja, nl. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Zoekproces

10. Hoe lang hebt u (ongeveer) gezocht naar een andere woning voor uw verhuizing naar deze gemeente? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Was het tijdens het zoeken naar een andere woning voor u ook een optie in de stad te blijven of te gaan wonen?
- ☐ Ja
  - ☐ Nee
12. Waar hebt u huizen bezichtigd voordat uw keuze viel op de woning in deze gemeente?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



13. Waarom hebt u niet voor de eerder bezichtigde woningen gekozen? Had dat met name te maken met: (u kunt **meerdere** antwoorden aangeven)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kenmerken van de bezichtigde woningen           | <input type="checkbox"/> Afstand/bereikbaarheid                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Huizenprijzen te hoog                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Indruk van de bewoners van het gebied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Het landschap                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Anders, nl. _____                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> De uitstraling van de bebouwing in het algemeen | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Te weinig voorzieningen                         | _____  |

14. Wilde u graag in dit gebied (deze gemeente en omliggende gemeentes) wonen en zocht u daarbinnen een huis, of zocht u vooral een bepaald soort huis en ligging en had dat in verschillende gebieden kunnen staan?

- ☐ Ik wilde vooral in dit gebied wonen  
☐ Ik zocht vooral een bepaald soort huis en ligging  
☐ Beide waren even belangrijk

15. Het zoeken naar een andere woning kan op verschillende manieren plaatsvinden. Geef voor onderstaande manieren aan hoe belangrijk ze voor u waren bij het zoeken naar een andere woning.

	Erg onbelangrijk	Onbelangrijk	Neutraal	Belangrijk	Erg belangrijk
Funda of andere huizensites	1	2	3	4	5
Woningbouwcorporatie	1	2	3	4	5
Rondgekeken in gebieden	1	2	3	4	5
Makelaars	1	2	3	4	5
Via familie/vrienden	1	2	3	4	5
Krant	1	2	3	4	5
Andere manier, nl. _____	1	2	3	4	5

## Verhuisredenen en woonvoorkeuren

16. Wat was de reden voor de verhuizing? (u kunt meerdere antwoorden aangeven)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Huwelijk of samenwonen   | <input type="checkbox"/> Vorige woning      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scheiding                | <input type="checkbox"/> Vorige buurt       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Zelfstandig gaan wonen   | <input type="checkbox"/> Te hoge woonlasten |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kinderen uit huis gegaan | <input type="checkbox"/> Weg uit de stad    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Verandering t.a.v. werk  | <input type="checkbox"/> Anders, nl. _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pensioen                 |   |

17. Waarom wilde u op het platteland (blijven) wonen?

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18. Waarom bent u juist in dit gebied gaan wonen?

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19. Hoe belangrijk waren onderstaande kenmerken van de woning in de keuze voor uw huis toen u in deze gemeente kwam wonen? Bij sommige kenmerken wordt een aanvullende open vraag gesteld, deze hoeft u alleen in te vullen als u het bewuste kenmerk erg belangrijk of belangrijk vindt.

	Erg onbelangrijk	Onbelangrijk	Neutraal	Belangrijk	Erg belangrijk
Type woning (vrijstaand, tussenwoning, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Grootte tuin of buitenruimte	1	2	3	4	5
Grootte woning	1	2	3	4	5
Prijs van de woning	1	2	3	4	5
Ligging van de woning	1	2	3	4	5
Bouwstijl van de woning	1	2	3	4	5
Hoe zou u de bouwstijl van de woning omschrijven?					
_____					
Bouwperiode van de woning	1	2	3	4	5
Hoe oud is de woning ongeveer?					
_____					
De staat van onderhoud	1	2	3	4	5
Wat was de staat van de woning?					
_____					
Ander kenmerk, nl. _____	1	2	3	4	5
_____					

20. Hoe belangrijk waren onderstaande kenmerken van de woonomgeving in de keuze voor uw huis toen u in deze gemeente kwam wonen? Bij sommige kenmerken wordt een aanvullende open vraag gesteld, deze hoeft u alleen in te vullen als u het bewuste kenmerk erg belangrijk of belangrijk vindt.

	Erg onbelangrijk	Onbelangrijk	Neutraal	Belangrijk	Erg belangrijk
Bereikbaarheid van werk	1	2	3	4	5
Nabijheid van grotere plaats	1	2	3	4	5
Beschikbaarheid OV	1	2	3	4	5
Aanwezigheid van winkel voor dagelijkse boodschappen in het dorp	1	2	3	4	5
Aanwezigheid van basisschool in het dorp	1	2	3	4	5
Aanwezigheid van voorzieningen in het dorp (bijv. sport, huisarts, dorps huis)	1	2	3	4	5
Welke voorzieningen vond u met name belangrijk?					
Soort landschap	1	2	3	4	5
Hoe zou u het landschap in uw omgeving beschrijven?					
Nabijheid natuurgebied	1	2	3	4	5
Nabijheid water (bijv. een meer, Waddenzee)	1	2	3	4	5
Nabijheid bos	1	2	3	4	5
Het imago van het dorp of gebied	1	2	3	4	5
Veiligheid	1	2	3	4	5
Rust	1	2	3	4	5
Ruimte	1	2	3	4	5
Privacy	1	2	3	4	5
De status die het wonen in het dorp of gebied heeft	1	2	3	4	5
De mate waarin religie een rol speelt in het dorp	1	2	3	4	5
Nabijheid van familie en vrienden	1	2	3	4	5
Bewoners leken een open houding ten opzichte van 'nieuwkomers' te hebben	1	2	3	4	5
Er woonden veel 'nieuwkomers'	1	2	3	4	5
Er woonden mensen met dezelfde manier van leven als ikzelf	1	2	3	4	5
Bewoners leken onderling veel contact te hebben	1	2	3	4	5
Bewoners leken vooral hun eigen gang te gaan	1	2	3	4	5
Er leek een actief verenigingsleven te zijn	1	2	3	4	5
Ander kenmerk, nl.	1	2	3	4	5

21. De vorige vraag gaat over de kenmerken die u belangrijk vond toen u de keuze maakte voor de woning in deze gemeente. Zijn sinds u in de gemeente woont bepaalde aspecten van het wonen in de gemeente u **meegevallen** en zo ja, welke?

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22. Zijn sinds u in de gemeente woont bepaalde aspecten van het wonen in de gemeente u **tegengevalen** en zo ja, welke?

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23. Geef door middel van een rapportcijfer aan hoe tevreden u bent u met het wonen in deze gemeente (1-10).

---

24. Verwacht u te gaan verhuizen binnen de komende twee jaar?

- ☐ Vrijwel zeker niet -----> Ga door naar vraag 27  
☐ Misschien  
☐ Ja

25. Waarom verwacht u binnen twee jaar te gaan verhuizen?

---

---

26. Waar verwacht u dan naartoe te verhuizen?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Binnen mijn huidige woonplaats | <input type="checkbox"/> Binnen Noord-Nederland   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Binnen de gemeente             | <input type="checkbox"/> Naar elders in Nederland |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Weet nog niet            |

### Achtergrondkenmerken

Als afsluiting van de vragenlijst willen we u nog graag een aantal vragen stellen over u en uw huishouden.

27. Wat is uw geslacht?

- ☐ Man  
☐ Vrouw

28. In welk jaar bent u geboren? \_\_\_\_\_

29. Wat is uw hoogst voltooide opleiding?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> lagere school, basisschool  | <input type="checkbox"/> VWO, Atheneum, Gymnasium, HBS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LBO (LTS, LEAO, LHNO, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> HBO/Universitaire opleiding   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MAVO, MULO, VMBO            | <input type="checkbox"/> Anders, nl. _____             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HAVO, MBO                   |  |

30. Wat is uw belangrijkste vervoermiddel?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auto             | <input type="checkbox"/> Brommer/scooter   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Openbaar vervoer | <input type="checkbox"/> Motor             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fiets            | <input type="checkbox"/> Anders, nl. _____ |

31. Over hoeveel auto's beschikt uw huishouden?

32. Hoe is uw huishouden samengesteld?



- ☐ Eenpersoonshuishouden Ga naar vraag 34
- ☐ Echtpaar/vaste partners zonder kinderen
- ☐ Eén ouder met thuiswonende kinderen
- ☐ Echtpaar/vaste partners met thuiswonende kinderen
- ☐ Andere samenstelling

33. Wat is/zijn de leeftijd(en) van uw thuiswonende kinderen?

\_\_\_\_\_,\_\_\_\_\_,\_\_\_\_\_,\_\_\_\_\_,\_\_\_\_\_,\_\_\_\_\_,\_\_\_\_\_

34. Kunt u aangeven in welke klasse het netto maandinkomen van uw huishouden (uzelf + evt. partner of andere inwonende gezinsleden valt)?

- ☐ minder dan € 1250 per maand
- ☐ € 1250 tot € 2500 per maand
- ☐ € 2500 tot € 4000 per maand
- ☐ meer dan € 4000 per maand

35. Wat is uw belangrijkste bron van inkomsten?

- ☐ Loondienst
- ☐ Inkomsten uit eigen bedrijf

- ☐ Uitkering
- ☐ AOW/(Pre)pensioen
- ☐ Anders, nl. \_\_\_\_\_

} Ga naar vraag 40

36. Wat voor werk doet u?

\_\_\_\_\_

37. In welke sector bent u werkzaam?

- ☐ Landbouw en visserij
- ☐ Delfstoffenwinning
- ☐ Industrie
- ☐ Nutsbedrijven
- ☐ Bouw
- ☐ Handel en reparatie
- ☐ Horeca
- ☐ Vervoer en communicatie
- ☐ Financiële instellingen
- ☐ Zakelijke dienstverlening
- ☐ Openbaar bestuur
- ☐ Onderwijs
- ☐ Zorg
- ☐ Overige dienstverlening
- ☐ Anders, \_\_\_\_\_ nl.

38. In welke plaats werkt u? \_\_\_\_\_

39. Werkt u overdag regelmatig thuis?

- ☐ Nee, nooit
- ☐ Minder dan 1 dag per week
- ☐ Minimaal 1 dag per week
- ☐ Meestal

40. Indien u een partner heeft: werkt uw partner?

- ☐ Nee
- ☐ Ja, in deze plaats: \_\_\_\_\_

41. Naast deze achtergrondkenmerken hebben mensen verschillende persoonlijke en sociale waarden die ze belangrijk vinden in hun leven. Hieronder staan een aantal van deze waarden genoemd. Geef voor elk van deze waarden aan hoe belangrijk deze is in uw leven.

	Erg onbelangrijk	Onbelangrijk	Gemiddeld belangrijk	Belangrijk	Erg belangrijk
Vrijheid (in denken en doen)	1	2	3	4	5
Plezier in uw leven (genot, voldoening)	1	2	3	4	5
Een harmonieus gezinsleven	1	2	3	4	5
Zelfdiscipline (zelfbeperking, bestand tegen verleidingen)	1	2	3	4	5
Rijkdom (materiële bezittingen, geld)	1	2	3	4	5
Rationeel zijn (intelligent, logisch, nadenkend)	1	2	3	4	5
Uw imago bij anderen in stand houden (gezichtsverlies voorkomen)	1	2	3	4	5
Afwisseling (een leven vol met uitdaging, nieuwigheid en verandering)	1	2	3	4	5

## Overig

42. Bent u bereid mee te werken aan een vervolginterview? Zo ja, wilt u uw telefoonnummer of emailadres noteren zodat wij eventueel contact met u kunnen opnemen hiervoor?

\_\_\_\_\_

43. Heeft u nog vragen of opmerkingen over de vragenlijst?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Dit is het einde van de vragenlijst. Heel erg bedankt voor uw tijd en moeite.**

# **Appendix B: In-depth interview guide**

## **Startinterview dagboekbenadering**

### **Algemeen**

- Hoe is uw huishouden samengesteld?
- Hoe lang woont u al in deze plaats?
- Kunt u vertellen waar u en uw partner vanaf de geboorte tot nu hebben gewoond?
- Heeft u, naast misschien door wonen, nog op een andere manier een bepaalde affiniteit of contact met bepaalde landelijke gebieden in Noord-Nederland? Met welke gebieden is dat?
- Werken u en uw partner?
- Zo ja, wat voor werk doet u en wat voor werk doet uw partner? (als met pensioen: welk werk hiervoor gedaan?)
- Verwacht u voor u of uw partner na de verhuizing een verandering wat betreft werk?
- Bent u door uw werk of andere factoren gebonden om in de buurt van een bepaalde plaats of in een bepaald gebied in Noord-Nederland te wonen?

### **Zoeken naar andere woning**

- Waarom wilt u verhuizen?
- Hoe lang geleden bent u begonnen met zoeken naar een ander huis?
- Toen u begon met zoeken naar een andere woning, in welk gebied zocht u toen? Waarom in dit gebied?
- Op welke manier heeft u uw zoekgebied vervolgens aangepast? Wat was daarvoor de aanleiding?
- Wat is op dit moment het gebied waarin u naar huizen zoekt?
- Is in plaats van platteland wonen in de stad ook een mogelijkheid?
- Wilt u graag in dit gebied wonen en zoekt u daarbinnen een huis, of zoekt u vooral een bepaald soort huis en plek, en zou dat in verschillende gebieden kunnen staan?
- Op welke manieren hebt u tot nu toe gezocht?
- Waarom wilt u graag op het platteland (blijven) wonen?

- Wat maakt dan in het bijzonder het gebied wat u zojuist noemde (zoekgebied) aantrekkelijk voor u om te wonen?
- Wat ziet u als nadelen van dit gebied?
- Denken u en uw partner overwegend hetzelfde over waar u zou willen wonen en wat belangrijk is in die keuze voor een plek?
- Wat zijn wat dit betreft de verschillen tussen u beide?
- Is er een bepaalde termijn waarbinnen u verhuisd wilt zijn?

### **Beeld platteland en plattelandsgebieden in Noord-Nederland**

- Welke vier woorden komen er het eerst bij u op als u de term platteland hoort?
- U hebt zo straks verteld in welk gebied u naar huizen zoekt. Als we naar de kaart kijken, in welke gebieden bevindt uw zoekgebied zich dan?
- Welke vier woorden komen er het eerst bij u op als u [één van de gebieden die binnen het zoekgebied vallen] hoort? -> deze vraag voor ieder genoemd gebied stellen
- Welke gebieden zouden (bijv. qua ligging) ook in aanmerking kunnen komen?
- Wat is uw beeld van deze gebieden?

### **Woonvoorkeuren**

- Ik wil graag weten welke kenmerken u van belang vindt voor uw volgende woonomgeving en woning. Ik onderscheid daarbij 5 thema's: het landschap, voorzieningen, sociale kenmerken, locatie en kenmerken van de woning. Het is de bedoeling dat u per thema kenmerken noemt die u belangrijk vindt in de keuze voor een nieuw huis.
- Kenmerken van het landschap (bijv. soort landschap, nabijheid natuurgebied, nabijheid water, nabijheid bos)
- Voorzieningen (bijv. supermarkt, basisschool, kinderopvang, huisarts, dorpshuis, sportvoorzieningen, culturele voorzieningen, openbaar vervoer)
- Sociale kenmerken (bijv. privacy, religie, actief verenigingsleven, bevolkingssamenstelling, het imago van een dorp of gebied, de status die het wonen in een dorp of gebied heeft, houding bewoners t.o.v. nieuwkomers, mate van onderling contact van bewoners)
- Locatie (bijv. grootte van de plaats, buitengebied of dorp, bereikbaarheid werk, nabijheid grotere plaats)



- Kenmerken woning (bijv. type woning, aanwezigheid bijgebouwen, vormgeving woning, bouwperiode, aantal kamers, oppervlakte woning, oppervlakte perceel, staat van onderhoud, ligging)
- Tenslotte zou ik nog graag willen dat u een rangorde aanbrengt in deze verschillende thema's, hoe belangrijk zijn ze voor u in de keuze voor een nieuwe woning?

### **Aanvullend schriftelijk vragenlijstje (ter plekke laten invullen)**

In welk jaar bent u geboren?

.....

In welk jaar is uw partner geboren?

.....

Wat is de leeftijd van uw kinderen?

....., ....., ....., ....., ....., ....., ....., .....

Wat is uw hoogst voltooide opleiding?

1 lagere school, basisschool

2 LBO (LTS, LEAO, LHNO, etc.)

3 MAVO, MULO

4 VMBO

5 HAVO

6 MBO

7 VWO, Atheneum, Gymnasium, HBS

8 HBO

9 Universitaire opleiding

10 Anders, nl. ...

Kunt u aangeven in welke klasse het netto maandinkomen van uw huishouden (uzelf + partner valt)?

1 minder dan € 1250 per maand

2 € 1250 tot € 2000 per maand

3 € 2000 tot € 3000 per maand

4 € 3000 tot € 4000 per maand

5 meer dan € 4000 per maand

Over hoeveel auto's heeft uw huishouden de beschikking?

...

Kunt u aangeven wat ongeveer de maximale prijs is die u voor uw nieuwe huis wilt betalen?

...



## Appendix C: Electronic questionnaire

### Elektronische vragenlijst dagboekbenadering

De respondenten ontvingen iedere twee weken via email een link naar deze elektronische vragenlijst. Doordat ze inlogden met een persoonlijke code konden ze bij sommige vragen zien wat ze de keer ervoor hadden ingevuld. Daarnaast biedt een elektronische vragenlijst de mogelijkheid op basis van het antwoord op de voorgaande vraag bepaalde vragen wel of niet te tonen op het scherm. In deze schriftelijke weergave is dat zo goed mogelijk geprobeerd weer te geven.

### Verhuizen Noord-Nederland

*Welkom bij de tweewekelijkse vragenlijst over uw zoektocht naar een nieuwe woning. De vragen gaan over wat u in de afgelopen twee weken hebt ondernomen met betrekking tot het zoeken van een nieuwe woning en uw ideeën over uw toekomstige woning en woonomgeving.*

*Alvast erg bedankt voor het invullen van de vragen!*

Heeft u in de afgelopen twee weken een huis gekocht?

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee

**Indien huis gekocht dan verschijnen deze vragen:**

In welke plaats staat dit huis?

-----

Welke kenmerken van het huis waren belangrijk in uw beslissing om dit huis te kopen?

U kunt meerdere kenmerken kiezen. Geef voor de gekozen kenmerken in de open ruimte aan wat dit kenmerk in dit geval inhoudt. Als voor u bijvoorbeeld 'ligging' een belangrijk kenmerk is, kunt u hier aangeven wat de ligging van het huis is.

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| <input type="radio"/> Type woning               | _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Grootte perceel           | _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Aantal kamers             | _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Aanwezigheid bijgebouwen  | _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Prijs van de woning       | _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Vormgeving van de woning  | _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Bouwperiode van de woning | _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Staat van onderhoud       | _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Ligging                   | _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> ander kenmerk, nl.:       | _____ |

Welke kenmerken van de woonomgeving waren belangrijk in uw beslissing om dit huis te kopen?

U kunt meerdere kenmerken kiezen. Sommige kenmerken spreken meer voor zich dan andere. In de open ruimte kunt u de door u gekozen kenmerken eventueel toelichten. Als u bijvoorbeeld 'soort landschap' een belangrijk kenmerk vindt, kunt u hier aangeven welk soort landschap zich in de woonomgeving bevindt.

- Bereikbaarheid van werk
- Nabijheid van grotere plaats
- Aanwezigheid van winkel voor dagelijkse boodschappen in het dorp
- Aanwezigheid van basisschool in het dorp
- Aanwezigheid van andere voorzieningen (bijv. kinderopvang, dorpshuis, huisarts, sportvoorzieningen)
- Aanwezigheid OV
- Het is een relatief groot dorp
- Het is een relatief klein dorp
- Soort landschap
- Nabijheid water
- Nabijheid bos
- Aantrekkelijke bebouwing
- Het imago van een dorp of gebied
- Veiligheid
- Rust
- Privacy
- De status die het wonen in het dorp of gebied heeft
- Het dorp is niet-kerkelijk
- Religie speelt een belangrijke rol in het dorp
- Nabijheid van familie en vrienden
- Bewoners hebben een open houding ten opzichte van 'nieuwkomers'
- Er wonen veel 'nieuwkomers'
- Er wonen mensen met dezelfde manier van leven als ikzelf
- Bewoners hebben onderling veel contact
- Bewoners hebben onderling weinig contact
- Actief verenigingsleven
- ander kenmerk, nl.:

**Dan: Einde vragenlijst**

**Indien geen huis gekocht dan verschijnt deze vraag:**

Bent u nog op zoek naar een ander huis?

- Ja
- Nee, definitief gestopt met zoeken

**Indien 'Nee, definitief gestopt met zoeken' dan verschijnt deze vraag:**

Waarom bent u gestopt met zoeken?

---

---

---

**Dan: Einde vragenlijst**

**Indien ja (nog steeds op zoek) dan verschijnt deze vraag:**

Heeft u in de afgelopen twee weken huizen bezichtigd?

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee

**Alleen als het antwoord ja is verschijnen deze vragen over de bezichtigingen:**

In welke plaats(en) bevindt dit huis / bevinden deze huizen zich?

Huis 1: Bijv. Groningen \_\_\_\_\_

Huis 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Huis 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Huis 4: \_\_\_\_\_

**Per huis verschijnen de volgende twee vragen:**

Wat ziet u na het bezichtigen van huis 1 in [Groningen] als positieve aspecten van de woning en de woonomgeving?

---

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Wat ziet u na het bezichtigen van huis 1 in [Groningen] als negatieve aspecten van de woning en de woonomgeving?

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---

---

### De volgende vragen verschijnen voor iedereen:

Als u de vragenlijst voor de eerste keer invult geef dan aan hoe belangrijk u onderstaande kenmerken vindt voor uw toekomstige woning.

Als u de vragenlijst eerder hebt ingevuld hebt u aangegeven hoe belangrijk u onderstaande kenmerken vindt voor uw toekomstige woning. Pas uw antwoord(en) aan als het belang van een of meerdere kenmerken voor u veranderd is. Voor de kenmerken waarvan het belang voor u gelijk is gebleven kunt u de antwoorden ongewijzigd laten.

	Erg belangrijk	Belangrijk	Neutraal	Onbelangrijk	Zeer onbelangrijk	Geen antwoord
Type woning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grootte perceel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aantal kamers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aanwezigheid bijgebouwen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prijs van de woning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vormgeving van de woning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bouwperiode van de woning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staat van onderhoud	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ligging	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Op de volgende pagina worden **de kenmerken weergegeven die u belangrijk vindt** voor uw toekomstige woning. Geef voor de kenmerken waarbij nog niets staat ingevuld aan welke invulling deze volgens u zouden moeten hebben.

Bekijk voor de kenmerken waarbij al iets staat ingevuld of de invulling nog steeds overeenkomt met uw huidige ideeën. Als dit niet het geval is, pas de invulling van het kenmerk dan aan (bijvoorbeeld: uw voorkeur gaat ten aanzien van de bouwperiode in plaats van naar vooroorlogs nu uit naar nieuwbouw).

Type woning	_____
Grootte perceel	_____
Aantal kamers	_____
Aanwezigheid bijgebouwen	_____
Prijs van de woning	_____
Vormgeving van de woning	_____
Bouwperiode van de woning	_____
Staat van onderhoud	_____
Ligging	_____

Als er iets veranderd is in de kenmerken die u belangrijk vindt of in de gewenste invulling daarvan, kunt u dan aangeven wat de aanleiding was voor deze verandering(en)?

---

---

Als u de vragenlijst voor de eerste keer invult geef dan aan hoe belangrijk u onderstaande kenmerken vindt voor uw toekomstige woonomgeving.

Als u de vragenlijst eerder hebt ingevuld hebt u aangegeven hoe belangrijk u onderstaande kenmerken vindt voor uw toekomstige woonomgeving. Pas uw antwoord(en) aan als het belang van een of meerdere kenmerken voor u veranderd is. Voor de kenmerken waarvan het belang voor u gelijk is gebleven kunt u de antwoorden ongewijzigd laten.

*(net als bij de vraag op de vorige bladzijde kon hierbij gekozen worden uit de opties: Erg belangrijk, Belangrijk, Neutraal, Onbelangrijk, Zeer onbelangrijk, Geen antwoord)*

Bereikbaarheid van werk

Nabijheid van grotere plaats

Aanwezigheid van winkel voor dagelijkse boodschappen in het dorp

Aanwezigheid van basisschool in het dorp

Aanwezigheid van andere voorzieningen (bijv. kinderopvang, dorps huis, huisarts, sportvoorzieningen)

Aanwezigheid OV

Het is een relatief groot dorp

Het is een relatief klein dorp

Soort landschap

Nabijheid water

Nabijheid bos

Aantrekkelijke bebouwing

Het imago van een dorp of gebied

Veiligheid

Rust

Privacy

De status die het wonen in het dorp of gebied heeft

Het dorp is niet-kerkelijk

Religie speelt een belangrijke rol in het dorp

Nabijheid van familie en vrienden

Bewoners hebben een open houding ten opzichte van 'nieuwkomers'

Er wonen veel 'nieuwkomers'

Er wonen mensen met dezelfde manier van leven als ikzelf

Bewoners hebben onderling veel contact

Bewoners hebben onderling weinig contact

Actief verenigingsleven

Op de volgende pagina worden **de kenmerken weergegeven die u belangrijk vindt** voor uw toekomstige woonomgeving. Voor de kenmerken waarbij nog niets staat ingevuld kunt u eventueel toelichten welke invulling deze volgens u zouden moeten hebben. Bekijk voor de kenmerken waarbij al iets staat ingevuld of de invulling nog steeds overeenkomt met uw huidige ideeën. Als dit niet het geval is, pas de invulling van het kenmerk dan aan (bijvoorbeeld: uw voorkeur gaat nu uit naar een ander soort landschap dan eerder).

Bereikbaarheid van werk

Nabijheid van grotere plaats

Aanwezigheid van winkel voor dagelijkse boodschappen in het dorp

Aanwezigheid van basisschool in het dorp

Aanwezigheid van andere voorzieningen (bijv. kinderopvang, dorpshuis, huisarts, sportvoorzieningen)

Aanwezigheid OV

Het is een relatief groot dorp

Het is een relatief klein dorp

Soort landschap

Nabijheid water

Nabijheid bos

Aantrekkelijke bebouwing

Het imago van een dorp of gebied

Veiligheid

Rust

Privacy

De status die het wonen in het dorp of gebied heeft

Het dorp is niet-kerkelijk

Religie speelt een belangrijke rol in het dorp

Nabijheid van familie en vrienden

Bewoners hebben een open houding ten opzichte van 'nieuwkomers'

Er wonen veel 'nieuwkomers'

Er wonen mensen met dezelfde manier van leven als ikzelf

Bewoners hebben onderling veel contact

Bewoners hebben onderling weinig contact

Actief verenigingsleven

Als er iets veranderd is in de kenmerken die u belangrijk vindt of in de gewenste invulling daarvan, kunt u dan aangeven wat de aanleiding was voor deze verandering(en)?

---

---

---



Als u de vragenlijst voor het eerst invult geef dan hieronder aan in welk gebied u naar huizen zoekt.

Als u de vragenlijst eerder hebt ingevuld staat hieronder hoe u het gebied waarin u naar huizen zoekt omschreven hebt.

---

---

---

Heeft u uw zoekgebied aangepast in de afgelopen twee weken?

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee

**Indien zoekgebied aangepast dan verschijnen de volgende vragen:**

Wat is het totale gebied waarin u nu naar huizen zoekt? [het antwoord op deze vraag verschijnt dan als de vragenlijst weer wordt ingevuld bij de 'zoekgebiedvraag' hierboven]

---

---

Wat was de aanleiding voor de aanpassing van uw zoekgebied?

---

---

In welke van de onderstaande **gebied(en)** bevindt uw nieuwe zoekgebied zich? (als u op de link klikt ziet u een kaartje waarop de gebieden worden weergegeven)

- ☐ Noordoost Friesland
- ☐ Noordwest Friesland
- ☐ West- en midden- friesland
- ☐ Zuidwest Friesland
- ☐ Zuidoost Friesland
- ☐ Friese Wouden
- ☐ Westerkwartier
- ☐ Noord Groningen
- ☐ Slochteren en omstreken
- ☐ Oldambt
- ☐ Westerwolde
- ☐ Veenkoloniën
- ☐ Noord Drenthe
- ☐ Centraal Drenthe
- ☐ Zuidwest Drenthe

**Per aangevinkt gebied verschijnt de volgende vraag:**

Hoe zou u het gebied [bijv. Noordoost Friesland] omschrijven?

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---

---

**Deze vragen verschijnen voor iedereen:**

Heeft u in de afgelopen twee weken een of meerdere van onderstaande zoekactiviteiten ondernomen?

- ☐ Geen zoekactiviteiten ondernomen
- ☐ Naar huizen gezocht op Funda of een vergelijkbare huizensite
- ☐ Contact met een makelaar gehad
- ☐ Rondgekeken in landelijke gebieden waar u mogelijk zou willen wonen
- ☐ Andere zoekactie: \_\_\_\_\_

**Indien contact met een makelaar:**

Waaruit bestond dit contact met een makelaar?

- ☐ Verzoek om informatie
- ☐ Ingeschreven als zoeker
- ☐ Verzoek om mee te gaan bij bezichtiging
- ☐ Aanvraag van bezichtiging bij verkopende makelaar
- ☐ Anders, nl.: \_\_\_\_\_

In welke plaats bevindt deze makelaar zich?

---

**Indien rondgekeken:**

In welke gebied(en) hebt u rondgekeken?

---

---

---

Had u tijdens dit zoekproces al eerder in deze gebieden rondgekeken?

- ☐ Nee
- ☐ Ja

**Niet eerder rondgekeken:**

Kunt u per gebied een korte beschrijving van uw indruk van het gebied geven?

---

---

---

**Wel eerder rondgekeken:**

Heeft u nieuwe indrukken opgedaan in deze gebieden?

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee

**Indien ja:**

Kunt u deze nieuwe indrukken (evt. per gebied) kort beschrijven?

---

---

---

**Voor iedereen:**

Zijn er zaken met betrekking tot uw zoektocht naar een nieuw huis die niet in de vragenlijst naar voren zijn gekomen die u nog graag wilt noemen?

---

---

---

Heeft u nog vragen of opmerkingen over de vragenlijst?

---

---

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**Dit is het einde van de vragenlijst.**

**Heel erg bedankt voor uw medewerking!**

## Summary in Dutch

### **Migratie naar minder populaire plattlandsgebieden**

#### **De kenmerken, motieven en het zoekproces van verhuizers**

##### *Achtergrond, doel en methode*

Het dominante beeld van migratie naar het platteland is dat van de welvarende stedeling op zoek naar een nieuw leven in een idyllische plattlandsomgeving. De wetenschappelijke belangstelling voor migratie naar het platteland, waarvoor vaak de term counterurbanisatie gebruikt wordt, begon in de jaren '70 van de vorige eeuw en resulteerde in een grote hoeveelheid onderzoeksresultaten. Recentelijk is er in de wetenschappelijke literatuur een hernieuwde aandacht waarbij het verschijnsel kritisch tegen het licht wordt gehouden. Deze dissertatie levert een bijdrage aan deze kritische herziening van het verschijnsel migratie naar het platteland.

Eén aspect van dit opnieuw bekijken van verhuizen naar het platteland is de toenemende erkenning dat plattlandsgebieden verschillen in hun populariteit als woongebied, mede onder invloed van de aantrekkelijkheid van het landschap en bereikbaarheid. Ook is vastgesteld dat naast de aantrekkingskracht van de rurale idylle ook andere motieven een rol spelen, zoals de nabijheid van familie en vrienden of aan werk gerelateerde redenen. Naast de eerder genoemde middenklasse blijken ook groepen mensen met lage inkomens en arbeidsmigranten naar het platteland te trekken en het blijkt dat naast migratie vanuit de stad ook migratie binnen het platteland van belang is.

Hoewel dus steeds vaker wordt erkend dat plattlandsgebieden verschillen in hun populariteit als woongebied is dit idee nog niet terug te vinden in het onderzoek naar de kenmerken en motieven van verhuizers naar het platteland. Dergelijk onderzoek richt zich vaak op het platteland in het algemeen of op die plattlandsgebieden die erg aantrekkelijk zijn om te gaan wonen. Migratie naar minder populaire plattlandsgebieden is daarbij onderbelicht gebleven. Door migratie naar minder populaire plattlandsgebieden in Noord-Nederland te onderzoeken wil deze studie een bijdrage leveren aan de ontwikkeling van een

breder en genuanceerder opvatting van counterurbanisatie met een empirische basis. Dit is niet alleen wetenschappelijk relevant, maar het levert ook interessante informatie op voor beleidsmakers. Net als andere plattellandsgebieden in Europa heeft het Nederlandse platteland, vooral in de meer perifere gebieden waaronder Noord-Nederland, te maken met bevolkingskrimp. In-migratie is één van de factoren die van invloed zijn op de bevolkingsontwikkeling, naast geboorte, sterfte en uit-migratie. Daarom is het belangrijk meer te weten over de kenmerken, motieven en zoekstrategieën van mensen die naar dit soort gebieden verhuizen en met name over de verschillende migratiestromen naar verschillende soorten plattellandsgebieden.

Het doel van deze dissertatie is om meer inzicht te krijgen in migratie naar minder populaire plattellandsgebieden. Om te bepalen in hoeverre de gevonden uitkomsten specifiek zijn voor minder populaire gebieden is een directe vergelijking met verhuizers naar populaire gebieden in dezelfde regio gemaakt. De populariteit van plattellandsgebieden als woongebied wordt in dit onderzoek vastgesteld aan de hand van de gemiddelde huizenprijs per gemeente. Binnen Nederland is het Noorden gekozen als studiegebied, omdat het als het meest landelijke deel van Nederland kan worden gezien aan de hand van de omgevingsadressendichtheid en de perceptie van de Nederlandse bevolking. Op basis van het doel van het onderzoek zijn drie onderzoeksvragen geformuleerd:

1. Wat zijn de kenmerken en motieven van verhuizers naar minder populaire plattellandsgebieden?
2. In hoeverre verschillen de kenmerken en motieven van verhuizers naar minder populaire en populaire plattellandsgebieden?
3. Hoe zoeken potentiële verhuizers naar een plek om te wonen in plattellandsgebieden?

Om deze onderzoeksvragen te beantwoorden is gebruik gemaakt van een combinatie van verschillende soorten data en methodes. De kenmerken en motieven van verhuizers zijn in eerste instantie onderzocht door gebruik te maken van secundaire data afkomstig van het CBS en WoON. Uit deze

verkenning bleek dat aanvullende data nodig waren om de onderzoeksvragen op een goede manier te beantwoorden, zo ontbrak informatie over terugmigratie en waren motieven voor vertrek vermengd met motieven voor de keuze van de nieuwe woonlocatie. Daarom hebben we zelf data verzameld door middel van een schriftelijke enquête onder nieuwe inwoners van vier gemeenten die in hoofdstuk 2 als minder populair geclassificeerd waren en drie populaire gemeenten (N = 1717). Deze dataverzameling kon plaatsvinden door de goede samenwerking met de betreffende gemeenten.

Om het zoekproces naar een nieuwe woning op het platteland te onderzoeken is een kleinschalige studie uitgevoerd die gebruikmaakt van een zogenaamde dagboekbenadering, een nieuwe methode om het zoekproces naar een nieuwe woning te onderzoeken. Deze dagboekbenadering bestond uit diepte-interviews die gevolgd werden door een elektronische vragenlijst die iedere twee weken per mail naar de respondenten gestuurd werd, totdat zij een huis kochten of stopten met zoeken.

#### *Minder populaire en populaire plattelandsgebieden in Noord-Nederland*

De populariteit van plattelandsgebieden als woongebied wordt in dit onderzoek gedefinieerd aan de hand van de gemiddelde huizenprijs per gemeente. Huizenprijzen geven een indicatie van wat mensen bereid zijn om te betalen voor het huis en zijn omgeving. De gemiddelde huizenprijs omvat zowel waarderingsaspecten van de woonomgeving als van de woning zoals grootte en kwaliteit. Waar in andere (buitenlandse) onderzoeken vaak in-migratiecijfers worden gebruikt om de populariteit van plattelandsgebieden te bepalen, is in de Nederlandse context het gebruik van huizenprijzen meer geschikt. In Nederland wordt bevolkingsgroei op gemeenteniveau sterk bepaald door overheidsbeleid. Nieuwbouw wordt slechts in een beperkt aantal gebieden toegestaan, terwijl in andere gebieden het bouwen van nieuwe woningen sterk beperkt wordt. Dit laatste geldt voor veel plattelandsgebieden. Deze beperkingen zorgen ervoor dat bij een stijgende vraag naar huizen de prijzen toenemen in plaats van de aantallen in-migranten. Huurprijzen zijn niet gebruikt bij het bepalen van de populariteit van plattelandsgebieden in dit onderzoek, omdat deze weinig verschillen tussen gebieden in Nederland.

Op basis van huizenprijzen hebben we in hoofdstuk 2 drie typen plattellandsgebieden onderscheiden in Noord-Nederland: minder populaire gebieden, gemiddelde gebieden en populaire gebieden. Deze gebieden worden als platteland beschouwd op basis van de maat die het CBS gebruikt voor de stedelijkheid van een gebied, de omgevingsadressendichtheid. Ze bestaan uit gemeenten met gemiddeld minder dan 1000 adressen per vierkante kilometer. In deze dissertatie staan de minder populaire gebieden centraal, maar er wordt ook een vergelijking met de populaire gebieden gemaakt. De minder populaire gebieden liggen langs de noordelijke en oostelijke grens van Noord-Nederland. Ze worden gekenmerkt door een open zeeleilandschap met een groot aandeel grootschalige akkerbouw. Dit komt overeen met bevindingen uit eerder onderzoek dat mensen in het algemeen juist een voorkeur hebben voor gebieden met een afwisseling van bos en open stukken en een klein aandeel bouwland. In vergelijking met de populaire gebieden hebben de minder populaire gebieden minder natuur- en recreatiegebieden. De minder populaire gebieden hebben een vergelijkbare reisafstand naar de belangrijke steden in het noorden, maar liggen verder weg van het midden van Nederland dan de populaire gebieden. Voor deze minder populaire gebieden worden zowel bevolkings- als huishoudensrimp voorspeld, in sommige gemeenten is de bevolking al aan het afnemen. Hier tegenover staan de populaire gebieden die juist gekenmerkt worden door een semi-open landschap met overwegend veeteelt. Ze hebben ook een relatief groter aandeel natuurgebieden. Verder is voor deze gebieden huishoudensgroei voorspeld en liggen ze minder ver van het midden van Nederland.

Als we aan de hand van migratiestatistieken van het CBS naar Noord-Nederland als geheel kijken blijkt dat het migratiesaldo negatief is. In de periode 2003-2007 zijn gemiddeld 22.326 mensen uit het noorden vertrokken naar elders in Nederland, terwijl 21.913 mensen zich er vestigden. Van deze in-migranten vanuit elders in Nederland ging 54% in één van de 58 gemeenten wonen die als platteland geclassificeerd kunnen worden. Als we in dezelfde periode naar migratie binnen de regio kijken blijkt dat 31.374 mensen (61% van de totale groep verhuizers tussen gemeenten in Noord-Nederland) naar een plattellandsgemeente



verhuisd zijn, afkomstig uit zowel stedelijke als plattelandsgemeenten. De drie typen plattlandsgebieden, de minder populaire, gemiddelde en populaire gebieden, laten allemaal een negatief migratiesaldo zien voor de periode 2003-2007 en de migratiesaldi verschillen niet significant tussen de drie typen gebieden. Er zijn dus meer mensen vertrokken uit de gebieden dan ernaartoe verhuisd zijn, ook in populaire gebieden. Het gemiddelde aantal in-migranten per 1.000 inwoners is eveneens vergelijkbaar voor de drie gebieden. Populaire gebieden trekken dus niet significant meer mensen aan dan minder populaire gebieden. Er vindt een aanzienlijke migratie plaats tussen stedelijke en populaire gebieden, terwijl migratie tussen minder populaire en gemiddelde gebieden aan de ene kant en populaire gebieden aan de andere kant erg beperkt is.

*Wie verhuizen er naar minder populaire gebieden en waarom?*

De uitkomsten die in hoofdstuk 3 gepresenteerd worden op basis van nieuw verzamelde enquêtegegevens laten zien dat de verhuizers naar minder populaire plattlandsgebieden in Noord-Nederland meer divers zijn dan de middenklasse die vaak geassocieerd wordt met verhuizen naar het platteland. Ze zijn eveneens meer divers dan de verhuizers naar verarmde of krimpende plattlandsgebieden die in buitenlandse studies gevonden zijn. Hoewel de verhuizers in de Nederlandse context een relatief laag inkomen hebben is het aandeel van de laagste inkomensgroep slechts klein. Gecombineerd met het relatief grote aandeel werkenden, de variatie aan sectoren waarin ze werkzaam zijn en het grote aandeel hoger opgeleiden lijken deze verhuizers meer op de diverse groep verhuizers zoals die ook gevonden werd in perifere gebieden in Denemarken. Naast deze sociaaleconomische kenmerken laten onze resultaten zien dat de verhuizers naar minder populaire gebieden vaak jong zijn, terwijl een relatief klein deel vanuit de stad verhuisd is. Het soort verhuizing varieert van lokaal (vanuit omliggende gemeentes) tot over grotere afstand (vanuit elders in Nederland), maar de grootste groep komt vanuit elders in Noord-Nederland.

Het klassieke beeld is dat de kwaliteit van de woonomgeving het belangrijkste motief is om naar het platteland te verhuizen. Uit andere onderzoeken is gebleken dat voor verhuizers naar minder populaire plattlandsgebieden andere motieven vaak juist belangrijker zijn, zoals de

nabijheid van familie en vrienden en werk gerelateerde redenen. Maar op basis van deze onderzoeken bleef het onduidelijk in hoeverre de typische 'kwaliteit van leven' motieven die vaak met counterurbanisatie geassocieerd worden ook een rol spelen voor verhuizers naar minder populair platteland. Onze studie laat zien dat dit soort motieven ook belangrijk zijn voor verhuizers naar minder populaire gebieden, maar dan wel vooral voor de keuze voor verhuizen naar het platteland in het algemeen. Voor de keuze van het specifieke plattellandsgebied zijn kenmerken van de woning het belangrijkste motief, meteen gevolgd door de fysieke kwaliteiten van de omgeving en persoonlijke redenen, zoals intrekken bij een partner en dichtbij familie en vrienden willen wonen. De lage huizenprijzen in het gebied kwamen slechts als vijfde naar voren in de lijst van motieven.

Als de kenmerken en motieven van de verhuizers gecombineerd worden komt de diversiteit binnen de groep verhuizers naar minder populaire plattellandsgebieden nog meer naar voren. De fysieke kwaliteiten van de omgeving trekken een groep hogeropgeleide verhuizers met hogere inkomens, en verhuizers tussen de 35 en 64, een groep die overeenkomsten vertoont met het stereotype beeld van counterurbanisatie. Daarnaast laat onze analyse een groep verhuizers zien voor wie de nabijheid van familie en vrienden een belangrijk motief is. Deze groep bestaat vaker uit terugmigranten, alleenstaanden, de jongste en de oudste leeftijdsgroep en ook de laagste inkomensgroep. Werk gerelateerde redenen zijn belangrijk voor hoger opgeleiden, mensen die vanuit omliggende gemeenten verhuizen en de leeftijdsgroep 35-44. Kenmerken van de woning als motief verwijzen vaak naar de beschikbaarheid van een specifieke woning. Dit motief wordt door een diverse groep verhuizers genoemd maar met name door mensen die vanuit de stad verhuisd zijn.

#### *Verschillende gebieden, verschillende mensen?*

Om te bepalen in hoeverre deze uitkomsten echt specifiek zijn voor minder populaire plattellandsgebieden hebben we ook een directe vergelijking gemaakt met de kenmerken en motieven van in-migranten naar populaire gebieden in dezelfde regio. In hoofdstuk 2 blijkt uit migratiestatistieken dat minder populaire gebieden een relatief groter aandeel verhuizers van binnen Noord-Nederland

aantrekken, een grotere instroom vanuit plattelandsgebieden en ook een jongere groep verhuizers. De multivariate analyse van secundaire survey data (afkomstig uit WoON) laat zien dat mensen die naar hun huidige adres verhuisd zijn vanwege de wens om dichtbij familie en vrienden te wonen een grotere kans hebben om naar een minder populair gebied verhuisd te zijn. Hogeropgeleiden en mensen die vanuit een stedelijk gebied verhuizen hebben juist een grotere kans naar een populair gebied verhuisd te zijn. Op basis hiervan concludeerden we dat het klassieke beeld van counterurbanisatie niet voldoet om migratiepatronen in verschillende typen plattelandsgebieden binnen landen te verklaren. De kenmerken van de verhuizers naar populaire gebieden lijken te passen binnen het klassieke beeld van counterurbanisatie, terwijl minder populaire gebieden persoonlijke redenen als een belangrijk migratiemotief delen met perifere plattelandsgebieden in Europa.

In hoofdstuk 4 hebben we de vraag of verschillende typen plattelandsgebieden binnen landen verschillende groepen migranten met verschillende motieven aantrekken verder onderzocht met gebruikmaking van nieuw verzamelde enquêtegegevens. Deze data maakten een betere analyse mogelijk, onder meer omdat nu alleen motieven over de keuze van de bestemming opgenomen waren, terwijl deze in de voorgaande analyse vermengd waren met motieven om uit de vorige woonplaats te vertrekken. Ook kon nu een variabele voor terugmigratie worden opgenomen en een meer gedetailleerde variabele over de vorige woonplaats.

De verhuizers naar populaire en minder populaire gebieden worden rechtstreeks vergeleken door middel van een logistische regressie analyse. Daaruit blijkt dat de verhuizers naar populaire gebieden vaker behoren tot de hogere inkomensgroepen en dat ze vaker hoogopgeleid zijn. Ze hebben ook vaker eerder in de gemeente gewoond en vallen vaker in de hogere leeftijdsgroepen. De fysieke kwaliteiten van de omgeving (bijv. natuur, ruimte), werk gerelateerde redenen en de ligging van het gebied werden door hen vaker genoemd als motief om naar dit gebied te verhuizen. Om de verhuizers te karakteriseren zijn naast de meer traditionele achtergrondkenmerken ook acht waarden die mensen meer of minder belangrijk kunnen vinden in hun leven in

de analyse opgenomen. Het blijkt dat in vergelijking met verhuizers naar minder populaire gebieden deze verhuizers meer belang hechten aan de waarde 'plezier in het leven'.

De analyse laat zien dat verhuizers naar minder populaire gebieden vaker vanuit elders in Noord-Nederland verhuisd zijn dan verhuizers naar populaire gebieden. Terwijl eerder onderzoek concludeerde dat minder populaire gebieden vaker verhuizers over korte afstand trekken, laat onze multivariate analyse zien dat populaire en minder populaire gebieden in dezelfde mate verhuizers vanuit elders in Nederland aantrekken. Verhuizers naar minder populaire gebieden vallen vaker binnen de jongste leeftijdsgroep. Minder populaire gebieden trekken dus inderdaad een jonge groep verhuizers, ook wanneer direct vergeleken wordt met populaire gebieden. In vergelijking met de verhuizers naar populaire gebieden noemen ze vaker het intrekken bij een partner en de lage huizenprijzen in het gebied als motieven om ernaartoe te verhuizen. Verhuizers naar minder populaire gebieden noemen de fysieke kwaliteiten minder vaak, daarentegen worden sociale kwaliteiten als vrijheid, vriendelijkheid, juist vaker door hen genoemd als motief om naar dit gebied te verhuizen. Als we naar de waarden kijken blijkt in vergelijking met verhuizers naar populaire gebieden, dat verhuizers naar minder populaire gebieden meer belang hechten aan 'rationeel zijn' en aan 'afwisseling in het leven'.

#### *Het zoekproces naar een nieuwe woning in plattelandsgebieden*

In hoofdstuk 5 hebben we onderzocht hoe mensen naar een nieuwe plek om te wonen zoeken binnen het platteland van Noord-Nederland. Hierbij is gebruik gemaakt van een dagboekbenadering, een nieuwe methode om het zoekproces naar een nieuwe woning te onderzoeken. We onderscheiden drie groepen zoekers in dit hoofdstuk. Respondenten die buiten Noord-Nederland wonen (verre zoekers), respondenten die al in Noord-Nederland woonachtig zijn en die aanvankelijk in een groter gebied in Noord-Nederland zoeken (regionale zoekers) en respondenten die eveneens al in Noord-Nederland wonen en heel lokaal zoeken (lokale zoekers). De zoekgebieden van deze groepen verschillen in schaal en de mate waarin ze veranderen gedurende het zoekproces. Terwijl lokale zoekers het hebben over dorpen, spreken regionale en verre zoekers in het

begin over gebieden. En terwijl de lokale zoekers zijn begonnen met zoeken in hun eigen of een naburig dorp en dat blijven doen verandert het zoekgebied van regionale en verre zoekers veel meer. Het belang van lokale bindingen voor lokale zoekers is een belangrijke verklaring voor deze verschillende zoekpatronen. De minder sterke voorkeur voor een specifieke plattelandslocatie maakt het voor de regionale en verre zoekers makkelijker om hun zoekgebied aan te passen. Dezelfde soort lokale bindingen die lokale zoekers in de buurt van hun huidige woonplaats houden, werken ook als een beperking in het zoekproces van verre zoekers. Financiële beperkingen stuurden het zoekgebied van verre zoekers vaak richting het noorden met zijn lagere huizenprijzen, nadat andere plattelandsgebieden uit hun zoekgebied waren verdwenen vanwege te hoge prijzen. Voor lokale en regionale zoekers spelen financiële beperkingen meer een rol in de keuze voor specifieke huizen dan in de keuze van zoekgebieden. Tenslotte laten de resultaten zien dat het niet de grotere kennis van de lokale huizenmarkt is die het voor lokale zoekers makkelijker maakt de woning van hun voorkeur te vinden. Alle zoekers maken gebruik van het internet om informatie krijgen over hun mogelijkheden op de huizenmarkt. Ze hebben daardoor vergelijkbare kennis over wat er beschikbaar is. Wat wel verschilt is hun kennis van de sociale kwaliteiten van een gebied. Lokale en regionale zoekers zijn in staat onderscheid te maken tussen verschillende dorpen en zelfs straten. Verre zoekers ontwikkelden verschillende strategieën om deze achterstand in te halen, zoals rondrijden door het gebied en contact zoeken met de burens bij het bekijken van een woning. Het belang dat aan deze sociale kwaliteiten wordt gehecht en ook het belang van het gevoel bij een gebied of een woning zorgt ervoor dat het internet 'oude' zoekmethoden als rondrijden en huizen bezichtigen niet heeft vervangen. Het lijkt er wel op dat huizenwebsites zoals Funda in Nederland het makkelijker maken voor verre zoekers om nieuwe potentiële zoekgebieden te verkennen, wat soms resulteert in een aanpassing van het zoekgebied.

Representaties van gebieden spelen op verschillende manieren een belangrijke rol in het zoekproces. Direct en indirect contact met een gebied blijkt essentieel te zijn om het gebied op te nemen in het zoekgebied. Maar het is ook zo

dat kennis van een gebied niet noodzakelijkerwijs leidt tot een positief beeld van een gebied. Zowel lokale als regionale zoekers noemden gebieden binnen de provincie of specifieke dorpen waar ze niet willen wonen, en verre zoekers verwezen naar hele provincies die ze links lieten liggen op basis van hun beeld ervan. Wanneer ze zoekactiviteiten ontplooiën ontdekken zoekers binnen het grotere gebied vaak gebieden die verschillende beelden en gevoelens oproepen. Wat opvalt is dat de respondenten vaak verwezen naar sociale aspecten, zoals het type mensen dat ergens woonde, wanneer ze het hadden over kenmerken op basis waarvan plekken werden uitgesloten van het zoekproces.

#### *Een nieuwe blik op counterurbanisatie*

Onze resultaten bevestigen het idee dat counterurbanisatie 'een complex en gedifferentieerd fenomeen' is, zowel wanneer je kijkt naar migratie naar minder populaire gebieden als wanneer gekeken wordt naar migratiestromen naar verschillende typen plattlandsgebieden. Zoals eerder gezegd liet de analyse waarin de motieven en kenmerken van verhuizers aan elkaar gelinkt werden de diversiteit zien binnen de verhuizers naar minder populaire gebieden. Op een vergelijkbare manier zou ook in populaire gebieden de aanwezigheid van verschillende groepen verhuizers geanalyseerd kunnen worden.

Het vergelijken van migratiestromen naar verschillende typen plattlandsgebieden binnen één land laat zien dat counterurbanisatie inderdaad meer is dan het klassieke beeld suggereert. Een bredere opvatting van wat counterurbanisatie inhoudt is dus noodzakelijk. Dat idee is al eerder naar voren gebracht, maar vaak wordt dan het traditionele beeld geassocieerd met populaire plattlandsgebieden, terwijl het beeld van andere groepen die naar het platteland trekken met meer praktische motieven vaak gekoppeld wordt aan minder populaire gebieden. Onze uitkomsten laten zien dat het onderscheid niet zo scherp te maken is. In onze analyse blijkt bijvoorbeeld wel dat populaire gebieden meer verhuizers met hogere inkomens trekken, maar beide typen gebieden trekken verhuizers uit de stad. Ook voor verhuizers naar populaire gebieden spelen meer instrumentele redenen gerelateerd aan werk en locatie een rol. En terwijl de fysieke kwaliteiten belangrijk zijn voor verhuizers naar populaire gebieden noemen verhuizers naar minder populaire gebieden vaker de

sociale kwaliteiten. Specifieke ‘plattelandskwaliteiten’ doen er dus zeker ook toe voor verhuizers naar minder populaire gebieden. Toekomstig onderzoek naar migratie naar het platteland doet er dus goed aan voorzichtig te zijn met het gebruiken van een te simpele opvatting van counterurbanisatie, zowel in het algemeen als met betrekking tot verschillende typen platteland binnen landen.

#### *Meer aandacht nodig voor de sociale kwaliteiten van plattlandsgebieden*

In de context van het platteland ligt de nadruk vaak op de invloed van landschap en ligging op woonplaatskeuze. Onze uitkomsten suggereren dat meer aandacht nodig is voor de rol van sociale kenmerken van plattlandsgebieden in de keuze voor een nieuwe plek om te wonen. In hoofdstuk 5 bleek dat respondenten vaak sociale aspecten noemden wanneer ze spraken over kenmerken op basis waarvan ze gebieden uitsloten van hun zoekproces. In een stedelijke context wordt de rol van percepties van sociale kenmerken van gebieden in het proces van het zoeken naar een nieuwe woning wel erkend. Zo is bijvoorbeeld bekend dat de reputatie van een stadsbuurt het meest beïnvloed wordt door de sociaal-economische en etnische samenstelling van de buurt, terwijl fysieke en functionele kenmerken veel minder van belang zijn.

In hoofdstuk vier vonden we dat de sociale kwaliteiten van de omgeving, zoals vrijheid en vriendelijkheid, voor verhuizers naar minder populaire gebieden een belangrijker motief waren om naar dit specifieke plattlandsgebied te verhuizen dan voor verhuizers naar populaire gebieden. Voor verhuizers naar populaire gebieden waren de fysieke kwaliteiten van de omgeving juist belangrijker in de keuze voor hun huidige woongebied dan voor verhuizers naar minder populaire gebieden. Hieruit blijkt dat het nuttig is een onderscheid te maken tussen fysieke en sociale aspecten van de plattlandsomgeving om verhuizen naar verschillende typen platteland te verklaren. Het roept de vraag op of minder populaire gebieden wellicht meer sociale kwaliteiten te bieden hebben. Helaas zijn sociale kwaliteiten lastiger te operationaliseren dan de fysieke kwaliteiten die vaak gebruikt worden om de aantrekkelijkheid van plattlandsgebieden vast te stellen. Om deze vraag te kunnen beantwoorden is dan ook nader onderzoek nodig om te bekijken welke variabelen relevante indicatoren kunnen zijn voor de sociale kwaliteiten van plattlandsgebieden.

### *Beleidsoverwegingen*

Op basis van de resultaten van dit onderzoek kan een aantal suggesties voor beleidsmakers in minder populaire plattelandsgebieden geformuleerd worden. De uitkomsten laten zien dat het aandeel lokale en regionale verhuizers groot is. Dit maakt het de moeite waard te investeren in het behouden van deze groepen voor het gebied, in plaats van veel moeite te doen om mensen van verder weg aan te trekken. De interviews met verre zoekers lieten ook zien hoe sociale en werk gerelateerde bindingen aan hun huidige woonomgeving het soms lastig maken hun verhuisplannen te realiseren. Verder bleek dat de kwaliteit van de omgeving zeker ook een belangrijke rol speelt bij verhuizen naar minder populaire plattelandsgebieden. Dit betekent dat het belangrijk is kwaliteiten als rust, ruimte, natuur en landschap ook in minder populaire gebieden te bewaren, om aantrekkelijk te blijven voor in-migranten. Hoofdstuk 5 laat zien dat representaties van gebieden op verschillende manieren een belangrijke rol spelen in het zoekproces. Direct of indirect contact blijkt essentieel te zijn om het gebied op te nemen in het zoekgebied. Daarmee kan het bevorderen van toerisme in een gebied een indirecte manier zijn om nieuwe inwoners aan te trekken, en ook experimenten als het uitdelen van gratis treinkaartjes en 'proefwonen' kunnen van waarde zijn voor gebieden die mensen willen aantrekken. Maar kennis van een gebied leidt niet altijd tot een positief beeld. Lokale en regionale zoekers noemden gebieden binnen de provincie of specifieke dorpen waar ze niet zouden willen wonen en verre zoekers hele provincies, op basis van hun perceptie van het gebied of dorp. Negatieve percepties zijn lastig positief te beïnvloeden met beleidsmaatregelen. Niettemin is het belangrijk ze ook niet in negatieve zin te beïnvloeden. De discussie over bevolkingskrimp in Nederland leidt tot beelden in de media van dichtgespijkerde ramen en lege winkels. Soms lijkt het alsof beleidsmakers deze beelden willen versterken, bijvoorbeeld om hun verzoek om financiële steun bij de landelijke overheid te ondersteunen. Voor het aantrekken van nieuwe inwoners is dit geen goede strategie. Het is belangrijk om te erkennen dat net als in stedelijke gebieden reputaties van gebieden een rol spelen in de woonplaatskeuze en dat deze reputaties hardnekkig zijn. Daarom is revitaliseren van een gebied niet voldoende, ook het beeld naar buiten toe moet veranderen.



Tenslotte laten de resultaten van hoofdstuk 4 zien dat de waarden die mensen belangrijk vinden in het leven verschillen voor migranten naar verschillende typen plattlandsgebieden, en dat deze waarden lijken samen te hangen met de meer abstracte ideeën of representaties die mensen hebben bij deze gebieden. Nader onderzoek hiernaar is noodzakelijk, maar het gebruiken van dit soort waarden in de marketing van plattlandsgebieden zou nieuwe mogelijkheden kunnen bieden, net zoals dat gebeurt in stedelijke gebieden. De analyse liet zien dat minder populaire gebieden staan voor een rationele keuze of zelfs een avontuurlijke keuze: minder populaire gebieden als plekken om een leven vol uitdaging, vernieuwing en verandering te leiden. In het algemeen is het belangrijk voor beleidsmakers in plattlandsgebieden om zich te realiseren dat migratie naar het platteland niet alleen een zaak is van welvarende stedelingen op zoek naar een plattlandsidylle. De uitkomsten van dit onderzoek laten zien dat 'de' verhuizer naar het platteland niet bestaat. Het is essentieel om te erkennen dat er verschillende groepen verhuizers zijn met verschillende motieven en dat deze verschillende groepen op verschillende manieren benaderd moeten worden.