# The Effects of Urban Restructuring on Social Contacts and Leisure Activities of Youth
# A case study in Utrecht, the Netherlands

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## Abstract

*Many Dutch cities have adopted urban restructuring policies aimed at creating a socially mixed population in deprived neighbourhoods. Low-cost, social rented dwellings are demolished and new, more expensive housing is constructed. As a consequence residents of these neighbourhoods are forced to move. This paper provides insight into the effects of urban restructuring on the social contacts and leisure activities of different categories of youth and will look at whether these effects prevail in the long run. The research took place in Utrecht, the Netherlands. We compare the situation of forced movers over the last ten years with a control group of voluntary movers and non-movers. The findings indicate that in the short run after moving youth experienced a loss of social contacts and decreased their leisure activities but that in the longer run they were also able to make new friends and participated in new activities in their new neighbourhood.*

## Introduction

Like other West-European cities, Dutch cities are confronted with neighbourhoods in which a multitude of problems are concentrated, such as high crime rates, feelings of unsafety, low levels of social cohesion, poor quality of the social rented housing stock and derelict public spaces (Andersson and Musterd 2005; Dekker 2006; Van Kempen et al. 2006). These social ills are generally seen as the consequence of spatial concentrations of households with low incomes. As a reaction to this, many cities have adopted policies aimed at changing the physical and social composition of deprived neighbourhoods and in this way counteract the concentration of problems in these areas. These urban restructuring policies generally take the form of demolition of the usually inexpensive social housing stock and the construction of more expensive alternatives in order to achieve a better social mix, especially in terms of income. One of the consequences of this policy of urban restructuring is, however, that it leads to the displacement of a large group of – often low income – households.

In the scientific literature increasing attention is paid to the effects of these policies of urban restructuring. A distinction can be made between the studies that focus on the neighbourhoods where urban restructuring has taken place on the one hand, and studies that follow the households that were forced to move on the other hand. Typical outcomes of the first category of studies are that urban restructuring leads to improvements in dwelling and neighbourhood conditions, but that the expected

interaction between different groups of residents rarely develops (Brooks et al, 2005; Kleinhans and Van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2008; Van Beckhoven and Van Kempen, 2003). The studies that follow the displaced households mostly focus on changes in housing conditions, and conclude that most movers are satisfied with their new dwelling and their new neighbourhood (Jupp, 1999; Goodchild and Cole, 2001; Kearns, 2002; Atkinson and Kintrea, 2000; Arthurson, 2002, 2007, Posthumus et al., 2010).

The impact of displacement can, however, not be solely captured by changes in dwelling and neighbourhood conditions. Moving to a new neighbourhood can have a significant influence on the leisure activities and social contacts of people. Residential mobility is generally assumed to result in a disruption of social contacts in the old neighbourhood. Moreover, it takes time to get used to the social structure in the new neighbourhood and form new social networks. This, in turn, can potentially have an impact on life trajectories of people (see Boisjoly et al., 1995; Briggs, 1998; Pribesh and Downey, 1999, Clampet-Lundquist, 2004, 2007; Pettit, 2004).

Despite our growing understanding of the effects of residential mobility on families from deprived neighbourhoods, we still know very little about the consequences of being forced to move for adolescents. This is an important shortcoming since adolescence is a period in which the transition to adulthood is made, and in which residential mobility – and the concurrent loss of social contacts – might have a significant impact on further life trajectories. Many studies show that the disruption of social ties can undermine later life outcomes, including educational and occupational achievement (see for example, Hagan et al., 1996; Pettit 2004). For these reasons this paper specifically focuses on the effects of restructuring policies on the leisure activities and social contacts of this group. We chose to look at leisure activities because these activities may form important settings for young people in which social contacts are formed and maintained. In addition, leisure activities in it self may be an opportunity for the development of capacities and sense of self-efficacy of adolescents (Du Bois-Reymond et al., 1998).

## Relationships matter

People connect with others through a variety of associations forming many different types of networks. Social relations can form an important source of information, opportunities, and social support, but can also transfer deviant norms and values (Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 1995). Especially for young people, friendships and peer relations are considered of central importance for their future development. Adolescent friendships can function as a source of companionship, stimulation, physical support, ego support, social comparison, and intimacy and affection (Gottman and Parker, 1986). When making the transition to adolescence, young people increasingly spend time with friends instead of with their parents (Larson, et al., 1996). Adolescents generally report that, outside the family, friends are their most important sources of social capital and influence. The importance of friendships is also confirmed by the large number of studies that relate relationships with friends in adolescence to variations in their well-being (for reviews, see Brown, 2004; Hartup and Abecassis, 2002).

While the psychological literature is abundant with studies on adolescent friendships, little is known about how this is related to the neighbourhood context and how residential mobility impacts on the social networks of adolescents. In this paragraph we will draw upon the choice-constraint model of Fischer and colleagues (1977) to explain the formation of social ties in relation to the context in which people reside. According to Fischer (1977, p. 43), *"people choose to construct and maintain social exchanges with some of the people they encounter, and they make that choice on the basis of weighting rewards and costs"*. A change in a social network of individuals can thus be seen as a consequence of changes in these rewards, costs and context.

*Context: the importance of neighbourhood settings*

The fact that personal networks are conceptualised as the result of *"individual choices made within social constraints"* (Fischer et al., 1977, p. 42) implies, first of all, that the composition of a social network is partly determined by the social composition of the settings in which an individual participates (Mollenhorst et al, 2008; Van Eijk, 2010). Hence, since their will be no 'mating without meeting' (Verbrugge, 1977), the emergence and composition of social networks is influenced by meeting opportunities in different (neighbourhood) settings (for a review see Kalmijn and Flap, 2001). According to Feld (1981, 1982), the formation of social contacts is shaped by 'foci of activity'. A focus of activity is a *'social, psychological, legal, or physical [entity] around which joint activities are organized'*, such as persons, groups, places and activities (Feld, 1981, p. 1016, 1018). When people organize their activities around the same focus, this is assumed to increase the likelihood that they will interact and form relationships. In this research we see the neighbourhood as a combination of different settings which can serve as foci of activity, such as the micro-neighbourhood, a community centre, the school, a sports club, the street or the basketball or soccer court (see also Fischer et al., 1977, Feld, 1981, Van Eijk, 2010).

*Residential mobility: the change in context*

In the extant literature on residential mobility it is assumed that – since important foci of activity fall away - moving disrupts social ties in the short term after moving. However, the existing research primarily focuses on the disruption of the social contacts of *parents*. Little is known on how moving impacts on the social contacts of young people themselves, while this is a group for which the disruption of localised peer groups may especially be important for their life trajectories (Pettit, 2004).

Nevertheless, there are some studies that specifically focus on the effects of residential mobility on the social contacts of children and adolescents. Research of Clampet-Lundquist (2007) on resident relocation in the context of the American HOPE VI programme shows that after moving it was problematic for young people to build a new life in their new neighbourhood. The adolescents had to get used to new values and norms, organised activities were still unknown and new friends were difficult to make. The adolescents experienced a lower feeling of home in their new neighbourhood. Also Gallagher and Bajaj (2007) studied youth that moved from distressed HOPE VI neighbourhoods and found that the displaced youth showed a greater level of social isolation.

A point that is made in the literature mentioned above is that time can be an important variable. It takes time to get used to the new neighbourhood, find new leisure activities and form new networks with local people and institutions. The research of Gallagher and Bajaj (2007) shows that even after a period of four years some of the youth did still not feel fully at home in their new neighbourhood: a large share of the youth indicated that they did not have close friends in their new neighborhood.

*Choice: the agency of young people*

The most important aspect that distinguishes the model of Fischer and colleagues from more mechanistic ideas on the formation of social networks is the emphasis that is placed on *choice* (Fischer et al., 1977). In Fischer's choice-constraint model it is assumed that when forming social contacts, people seek, consciously or not, to maximize their rewards relative to their costs, and therefore tend to pick the most 'rational' option. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to how young people actively choose to participate in neighbourhood settings and form social networks, and how and to what extent these social contacts are maintained after a residential move. We specifically focus on the weighting of costs and benefits in this context. Moving may mean that the cost of maintaining a friendship will become higher than the rewards as a consequence of the physical separation.

A related aspect that influences the formation of social contacts is the lifestyle characteristics of people. According to the *homophily* principle, people tend to relate with people with similar lifestyles

and sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics (for an overview, see McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001). Also here the weighting of costs and benefits plays a role: when people share similar interests or lifestyles, relationships tend to be more rewarding (Flap et al., 2006, Huston and Levinger, 1978). The extent to which there are young people with similar lifestyles and characteristics living in the new neighbourhood can thus influence the chance to make new friends.

Another condition for the formation of social contacts within the neighbourhood is related to the alternatives a person has outside of the neighbourhood (Flap et al., 2006). We expect that social contacts in the new neighbourhood are more likely to emerge if the young person has few alternatives, such as friends in the old neighbourhood. The extent to which young people maintain social contacts in the old neighbourhood is expected to be higher for voluntary movers than for forced movers, as among the forced movers many of their friends were also displaced, which has resulted in dispersed networks which are more difficult to maintain.

Based on the literature review in this chapter we can conclude that when researching the formation of social networks of youth, it important to pay attention to the meeting places in which social contacts are formed as well as to the effect of individual preferences and choices (Huckfeldt, 1983). When adolescents have to move, the local context in which social contacts are formed as well as the function between rewards and cost might change.

## Research design

### Research city

To discover how the policy of urban restructuring has an impact on the social contacts and leisure activities of young people, an empirical study was carried out among a group of youth that were forced to move from a number of neighbourhoods where urban restructuring had taken place in the city of Utrecht, the Netherlands. Utrecht is with 307,100 inhabitants the fourth largest city of the Netherlands and is centrally located in the country (GBA City of Utrecht, 2010). Table 1 shows some of the socio-economic characteristics of the city, related to youth. It can be seen that Utrecht has a number of characteristic typical for large Dutch cities, such as quite some children living in families on welfare and living in distressed neighbourhoods; a significant group of non-western immigrants and a segregation index which is quite high. It has to be noted, however, that compared to the other three large Dutch cities, these number are relatively modest.

As from the year 2000, the Utrecht municipality has adopted a policy to *"improve the quality of the housing stock and increase the choice set of the Utrecht citizen"* and with the ultimate goal to *"maintain the image of Utrecht as an attractive city to live and work in"* (Communicatiegroep DUO, 2005, own translation). To this end, the municipality and a number of housing associations in the city have decided on the restructuring of early post-WWII-neighbourhoods by means of demolition of 9,500 socially rented dwellings and the construction of 9,000 new dwelling of which 3,000 in the rented sector (Gemeente Utrecht, 2010b). These demolition activities have taken place in a limited number of areas in the city. Most of these areas are characterised by relatively low rents and, consequently, by a large percentage of low-income households.

Table 1. Characteristics of Utrecht, compared to the three other large Dutch cities

|  | **Utrecht** | Amsterdam | Rotterdam | The Hague |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Children <17 years that live in families dependent on welfare (%) | **12** | 18 | 24 | 15 |
| Children <17 years that live in distressed neighbourhoods (%) | **35** | 65 | 63 | 44 |
| Non-western immigrants (%) | **21** | 35 | 37 | 33 |
| Segregation index | **37.4** | 36.3 | 38.5 | 46.1 |

*Verwey Jonker Instituut, 2008; Gemeente Utrecht, 2010a; Bolt et al., 2006*

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*The research group*

Our research focuses on how displacement as a result of urban restructuring impacts on young people between the age of 12 and 21. The lower limit of 12 years was chosen because at this age the adolescents make the change from primary to secondary education, which generally goes together with a change in the action space of the young person as well as changes in the restrictive regulations of their parents. Important foci of activity are no longer only located close to home but in a much wider environment. This transition can have an important impact on the social contacts and leisure activities of youth. The upper limit of our research group is set at 21 years of age, because especially among young people of 18-21 years there is a fair chance that at least some of them have already left the parental home and started a career on the housing as well as on the labour market. Again, such an important change may influence one's action space, social networks and leisure activities.

Besides the forced movers, we have included a control group in our research consisting of young people which were not *forced* to move. Within the control group a division was made between two sub-groups: 'other' movers, which are young people that did move, but not because of the demolition of their dwelling; and non-movers. The control group was matched with the research group based on relevant background characteristics, such as old neighbourhood, age, family composition and year of moving.

*Data and measurements*

To provide insight in the effects of urban restructuring on youth we carried out a survey between June and December 2009. Using the database of the municipality of Utrecht and data from the housing association Mitros, we were able to find households that were forced to move because of demolition activities in the period between 1998 and 2009 *and* that included youth between 12 and 21 years old at the time of the move. From the same municipal database we were able to find young people that were not forced to move for the control groups. The target group (forced movers) comprised 433 potential respondents, the control group 859 potential respondents. With a total response rate of 26.0 per cent we finally ended up with 336 successfully completed questionnaires. The response rate of the forced movers was with 29.6 per cent slightly higher than that of the other movers (24.2 per cent). The non-response was equally distributed between the respondents that refused to participate and those that repeatedly were not found at home. Table 2 shows the descriptives of the target group and the control groups. It can be seen that in the group of forced movers the share of respondents with a non-western background is higher than in the control groups. Moreover, the forced movers and non-movers are generally younger and are therefore relatively more often still following education. The age at the time of moving is somewhat higher for the other movers than for the forced movers. For the other movers, the move is often related to moving to a dwelling of their own.

Based on the survey we asked the forced movers if they wanted to participate in a follow-up interview. Of this group, 66.4 percent indicated that they would like to participate. From the summer until December 2009 we conducted 29 semi-structured interviews. We aimed at achieving an equal distribution of our respondents over different categories of forced movers (within/outside the neighbourhood, moved to another distressed neighbourhood or to a better neighbourhood), age, gender and ethnicity.

Table 2. Descriptives

|  | Displaced youth (1) | Other movers (2) | Non-movers (3) | Total non-displaced (2+3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Gender* |  |  |  |  |
| Male | 45.7 | 41.5 | 40.0 | 40.8 |
| Female | 54.3 | 58.5 | 60.0 | 59.2 |
| *Ethnicity* |  |  |  |  |
| Native, western ethnic group | 31.2 | 58.9 | 51.5 | 55.3 |
| Non-western minority ethnic group | 68.8 | 41.1 | 48.5 | 44.7 |
| *Mean age at present* | 21.6 | 25.6 | 20.7 | 23.2 |
| *Level of education (obtained or* |  |  |  |  |
| Low | 38.6 | 27.1 | 33.7 | 30.3 |
| High | 61.4 | 72.9 | 66.3 | 69.7 |
| *Level of education of parents* |  |  |  |  |
| Low | 53.9 | 35.5 | 52.5 | 43.8 |
| High (at least one parent) | 32.0 | 47.7 | 31.7 | 39.9 |
| Unknown | 14.1 | 16.8 | 15.8 | 16.3 |
| *Main activity* |  |  |  |  |
| Education | 60.0 | 29.2 | 60.0 | 44.2 |
| Work | 27.5 | 55.7 | 31.0 | 43.7 |
| Inactive | 12.5 | 15.1 | 9.0 | 12.1 |
| *Mean age at the time of moving* | 16.5 | 19.9 | N/A | N/A |
| *Average length of residency in old* | 9.9 | 9.0 | N/A | N/A |
| *Living with parents before the move* | 85.2 | 73.3 | N/A | N/A |
| *Living with parents after the move* | 79.5 | 37.7 | N/A | N/A |
| N | 128 | 106 | 100 | 206 |

Source: own fieldwork (2009)

## Results

### *Localness of networks before the move*

Before turning to the impact of moving on the social contacts and leisure activities of adolescents it is important to pay attention to the extent to which the neighbourhood is important for maintaining social ties. When networks include relatively many local ties, moving may have a larger effect on the social contacts of youth. In our research respondents were asked whether most of their friends lived in their own neighbourhood or outside their neighbourhood.

Our results indicate that before the move youth are to a considerable degree locally oriented for their social contacts: 66.1 per cent of the forced movers and 52.5 per cent of the other movers has at least half of their friends in the neighbourhood before moving (t=-2.807, df = 204, p<0.01). Thus, for most youth the neighborhood can be regarded as an important place for social interaction. To find out which factors influence the network localness of youth we conducted a logistic regression analysis on the likelihood to have at least half of the friends inside the neighbourhood (see table 3). This analysis shows that youth with lower levels of education or a non-western background are considerably more neighbourhood oriented. Moreover, living together with parents turns out to be related to higher levels of network localness. This is probably related to the age of the adolescents: young people – who are more likely to still live with their parents – usually have a smaller action space and hence more local contacts. Also of importance is how long one has lived in the neighborhood, which corresponds to Feld's (1982) notion that to meet each other, people have to spend a sizeable amount of time in the neighbourhood. Living in a deprived neighbourhood, however, does not have a significant impact on network localness.

It is often assumed that the extent to which people make use of different settings *inside* the neighbourhood, such as the community centre, the street or the park, has an impact on their network localness. From bivariate analyses it turns out that adolescents that visit a community centre (t=3.505, df=145, p<0.01) and that are playing sports on the street (t=3.669, df=217, p<0.01) have a higher localness of the networks than adolescents that do not participate in these settings. However, further analyses show that the effect of visiting a community centre on network localness disappears, and of playing sports on the street becomes very small, when we correct for individual- and household characteristics (see table 4). The effect of participation in these neighbourhood settings is most likely captured away by the ethnicity and age of the adolescent. Younger adolescents and those with a non-western background are the ones that visit the community centre quite often and play sports on the street. At the same time this is the group with the highest network localness

Table 3. Logistic regression analysis on the chance to have at least half of the friends inside the neighbourhood before the move

|  | B | Sig. |  | Exp (B) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Forced mover | .260 | .505 |  | 1.298 |
| Neighbourhood is deprived | -.620 | .207 |  | .538 |
| Time in dwelling | .052 | .089 | * | 1.054 |
| In dwelling with parents | 2.058 | .002 | *** | 7.831 |
| Gender (ref = male) | -.153 | .656 |  | .858 |
| Age | -.043 | .452 |  | ,958 |
| Non-western minority | 1.039 | .003 | *** | 2.827 |
| High education respondent | -1.273 | .001 | *** | .280 |
| Education parents (ref = low) |  |  |  |  |
| - high | -.242 | .533 |  | .785 |
| - unknown | -.142 | .780 |  | .868 |
| At least one of the parents is employed | .372 | .354 |  | 1.451 |
| Constant |  |  |  | .671 |

* = p < 0.10; ** = p < 0.05; *** = p < 0.01; N=217;  Nagelkerke R² = .296; Source: own fieldwork (2009)

Table 4: Logistic regression analysis on the chance to have at least half of the friends inside the neighbourhood before the move – including participation in neighbourhood settings

|  | B | Sig. |  | Exp (B) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Forced mover | .353 | .374 |  | 1.424 |
| Neighbourhood is deprived | -.646 | .191 |  | .524 |
| Time in dwelling | .049 | .117 |  | 1.050 |
| In dwelling with parents | 2.041 | .002 | *** | 7.701 |
| Gender (ref = male) | .278 | .496 |  | 1.321 |
| Age | -.016 | .788 |  | .984 |
| Non-western minority | .889 | .018 | ** | 2.432 |
| High education respondent | -1.282 | .001 | *** | .278 |
| Education parents (ref = low) |  |  |  |  |
| - high | -.288 | .464 |  | .749 |
| - unknown | -.030 | .952 |  | .970 |
| At least one of the parents is employed | .388 | .339 |  | 1.475 |
| Visiting community centre | .083 | .833 |  | 1.086 |
| Playing sport on the street | .816 | .051 | * | 2.261 |
| Constant |  |  |  | .153 |

* = p < 0.10; ** = p < 0.05; *** = p < 0.01; N=215,; Nagelkerke R² = .413; Source: own fieldwork (2009)

*Change in leisure activities*

Given the assumed relationship between participation in neighbourhood settings and social contacts within the neighbourhood (Feld, 1981) it is interesting to have a closer look at changes in leisure activities after moving. First of all, we found that for a large share of the adolescents moving led to quitting or decreasing their leisure activities (see table 6). Especially informal activities such as meeting friends on the street or visiting the community centre decreased. This has most likely to do with the fact that these activities are to a large extent neighbourhood based. On the other hand, moving also had an effect on more formal leisure activities – such as being a member of a music, drama or dance club. The effect of moving on being a member of a sports club turned out to be limited.

Table 5. Leisure activities before move

|  | **Forced movers** | **Other** | **N** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Visiting community centre | 38.8 | 26.3 | 220 |
| Meeting friends on the street | 74.4 | 58.2 | 219 |
| Member of sports club | 45.9 | 46.5 | 221 |
| Other organized activities (music, drama, dance | 43.8 | 44.4 | 220 |

Visiting community centre p<0.05; Cramer's V = .133; Meeting friends on the street p<0.05; Cramer's V = .172; Member of sports club p>0.1; Cramer's V = .087; Other organized activities p>0.1; Cramer's V = .006
Source: own fieldwork (2009)

Table 6. Changes in leisure activities after moving (%)

|  | **Forced movers** | **Other movers** | **N** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Quit or decreased visiting the community centre | 66.0 | 50.0 | 73 |
| Quit or decreased meeting friends on the street | 55.6 | 47.6 | 147 |
| Quit or decreased being member of a sports club | 7.7 | 11.3 | 119 |
| Quit or decreased other organized leisure activities (music, drama, dance etc.) | 45.3 | 40.9 | 97 |

Only those that participated in the activities before the move; Visiting community centre p>0.1; Cramer's V = .156; Meeting friends on the street p<0.1; Cramer's V = .185; Member of sports club p>0.1; Cramer's V = .062; Other organized activities p>0.1; Cramer's V = .044; Source: own fieldwork (2009)

Table 7. Chance to quit or decrease formal leisure activities after moving

|  | **B** | **Sig.** |  | **Exp (B)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Forced mover | -.108 | .831 |  | .898 |
| Lost friends | -.008 | .985 |  | .992 |
| New neighbourhood is deprived | -.594 | .189 |  | .552 |
| Distance old and new dwelling | .254 | .003 | *** | 1.289 |
| Time in old dwelling | .048 | .133 |  | 1.049 |
| Moved to own dwelling | .827 | .143 |  | 2.286 |
| Gender (ref = male) | -.193 | .613 |  | .824 |
| Age at time of moving | -.074 | .265 |  | .929 |
| Non-western ethnicity | 1.040 | .014 | *** | 2.830 |
| Respondent has high level of education | -.159 | .724 |  | .853 |
| Level of education parents (ref = low) |  |  |  |  |
|     high | .221 | .620 |  | 1.247 |
|     unknown | -.448 | .478 |  | .639 |
| constant |  |  |  | 1.064 |

Only those that participated in sports- or other leisure activities before the move are included in the analysis
* = p < 0.10; ** = p < 0.05; *** = p < 0.01; N = 147;  Nagelkerke R² = .238; Source: own fieldwork (2009)

Table 8. Chance to quit or decrease meeting friends on the street after moving

|  | **B** | **Sig.** |  | **Exp (B)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Forced mover | -.190 | .703 |  | .827 |
| Friends in the old neighbourhood | .173 | .692 |  | 1.189 |
| New neighbourhood is deprived | -.298 | .497 |  | .742 |
| Distance old and new dwelling | .097 | .247 |  | 1.102 |
| Time in old dwelling | .105 | .004 | *** | 1.111 |
| Moved to own dwelling | .893 | .136 |  | 2.443 |
| Gender (ref = male) | -.160 | .679 |  | .852 |
| Age at time of moving | -.133 | .051 | * | .876 |
| Non-western ethnicity | .775 | .071 | * | 2.171 |
| Respondent has high level of education | -.146 | .727 |  | .864 |
| Level of education parents (ref = low) |  |  |  |  |
| high | -.063 | .884 |  | .939 |
| unknown | -1.231 | .046 | ** | .292 |
| constant |  |  |  | 3.308 |

Only those that met friends on the street before the move are included in the analysis
* = p < 0.10; ** = p < 0.05; *** = p < 0.01; N = 141; Nagelkerke R² = .256; Source: own fieldwork (2009)

To provide insight in the factors that influence the likelihood to quit leisure activities we performed a logistic regression analysis (table 7). This analysis indicates that the chance to quit sports or other formal leisure activities such as music, drama or dance, is primarily related to distance. When adolescents move further away from their old neighbourhood, it is a logical decision to quit participating in these activities. Moreover, being a non-western minority is positively related to decreasing organized leisure activities.

Further, we conducted a logistic regression analysis on the chance to quit or decrease meeting friends on the street. This analysis shows that the most important factor is the time in the old neighbourhood: for youth that used to live longer in the old neighbourhood, moving seems to have a larger impact than for young people that only lived there for a shorter period of time. Also being from a non-western background and being younger lead to a slightly higher likelihood to quit or decrease meeting friends on the street after moving. These findings are likely to be related to the network localness of this group. Adolescents that live longer in the old neighbourhood and have a non-western background generally have more friends inside the neighbourhood and therefore the chance to quit meeting friends on the street is larger. The logistic regression analysis shows no independent effect of having most of the friends inside the (old) neighbourhood because this effect is captured away by the time in the old dwelling, age and ethnicity of the respondent.

Another interesting point that emerges from this analysis is that distance does not play a role in determining whether someone quits or decreases meeting friends on the street, whereas this was one of the most important determinants for quitting sports or other formal leisure activities. In other words, for meeting friends on the street it does not matter whether someone moves to a neighbourhood close by or a neighbourhood further away. This probably has to do with the fact that the meeting places of peer groups disappear as foci of activity, even by a move over a short distance. Youth do not meet on a casual basis anymore, but need to make appointments to meet each other. These conclusions can be illustrated by the following quote of F. (18 years, male, moved in 2007):

*I'm playing basketball and soccer much less now. This has to do with the move. Most of my friends lived in the neighbourhood, and when the weather was nice we were always on the square playing basketball and soccer. Now it is much more difficult to meet with my friends (…).*

*Reasons for change in leisure activities*

There are different reasons for quitting or decreasing leisure activities. First, there can be differences between the old and the new neighbourhood in the extent to which facilities are available. Moreover, it turned out that it is not only important that certain neighbourhood facilities are present, but that it is also crucial that these facilities match the demand of the young people. Adolescents can feel that the facilities in the neighbourhood are not for them. The following quote of N. (23 years, female, Moroccan, moved in 1999) indicates that certain facilities in the neighbourhood can function as a focus of activity for a specific group of youth, but by doing so exclude other groups.

> *I think that there are especially few activities for girls. For boys, there are a number of facilities they can go during the day (…). When you are younger, you don't really have that distinction between girls and boys. But at a certain age this becomes more important. Then you think: I could hang around with a group of boys, but then they only talk about soccer or something like that. Well, I really don't feel like doing that.*

Further analysis of the interviews indicates that the knowledge about facilities and activities in the neighbourhood is important. There may well be the same amount of facilities in the new neighborhood as there were at the old neighbourhood, but some of the young people simply do not know about them yet.

A. (15 years, female, Turkish, moved in 2009) illustrates this as following:

> *I had heard about it at school and we could go there every week [in the old neighbourhood] (…). You could practise sports and participate in other activities and you could even organise activities yourself (…). Now I don't even know where the community centre is (…). I haven't heard or seen that anything was organised in the neighbourhood.*

Another variable that plays a role here are existing networks and familiarity with the neighbourhood and the people living there. In our theoretical framework we referred to Feld's (1981, 1982) ideas on foci of activity around which people meet each other. It is, however, important to have a closer look at how these foci of activity emerge, or put differently, on how young people come to participate in certain settings. The relation between neighbourhood settings and the formation of social contacts is not unidirectional, but there is an iterative relationship between the two. Neighbourhood settings do not only influence the formation of social networks, but having networks generally leads to easier participation in other settings because of more comfort and familiarity. Referring to the rules of relevancy in social relations (Goffman, 1959), youth might feel awkward when participating in settings where they do not know anybody. Already having social contacts in neighbourhood settings can thus reinforce the possibility to make new contacts. This is illustrated by the following story from N. (23 years, female, Moroccan, moved in 1999) about visiting the community centre:

> *Here I know nobody and there [in the old neighbourhood] you went to a familiar environment. You knew the group leader, the children, which isn't the case in the new neighbourhood. So then I have the feeling: no, I don't have to [participate in these activities]*

In summary, we can see that changes in participation in leisure activities after a move are largely related to the presence of facilities and the relevance of these facilities for the youth involved; to the knowledge about these facilities and to knowing people. It has to be noted, however, that personal factors also play an important role in quitting leisure activities after the move. Variables like changes in age, changes in interests and going from primarily to secondary school turned out to have a significant impact on the leisure activities of youth.

*Present leisure activities*

It can be concluded that in the short run, moving has an impact on the leisure activities of youth, but an interesting question is whether this effect persists in the long run. We can conclude that in the present situation (2009) there are no large and significant differences between forced movers, voluntary movers and non-movers in terms of leisure activities. The only difference that can be seen is

in meeting friends on the street: the group of other movers are less likely to do so. We can, however, question whether this difference has to do with the move, and whether it was forced or voluntary; or rather with the fact that the voluntary movers are generally older and are more often already employed (see table 2).

To provide insight in which factors influence the present participation in leisure activities and whether (forced) moving has an impact, we conducted a number of logistic regression analyses (not shown). These analyses show that, after controlling for a number of individual, household and neighbourhood characteristics, on none of the present leisure activities mentioned in table 9 (forced) moving has a significant effect. Whereas it is shown in the previous chapters that moving has led to the decrease of leisure activities for a large share of the adolescents, based on our analyses we can conclude that in the long run moving does not have a significant impact.

Table 9. Present leisure activities (%, 2009)

|  | **Forced movers** | **Other movers** | **Non -movers** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Visiting community centre | 13.5 | 5.7 | 9.9 |
| Meeting friends on the street | 42.1 | 29.5 | 43.6 |
| Playing sports on the street | 31.2 | 33.0 | 28.7 |
| Member of sports club | 41.4 | 36.8 | 45.5 |
| Other (formal) leisure activities | 28.9 | 30.8 | 24.8 |
| N | 128 | 106 | 100 |

Visiting community centre: $p>0.1$; Cramer's V = .108; Meeting friends on the street: $p<0.1$; Cramer's V = .127; Playing sports on the street: $p>0.1$; Cramer's V = .037; Member of sports club: $p>0.1$; Cramer's V = .070; Other (formal) leisure activities: $p>0.1$; Cramer's V = .054; Source: own fieldwork (2009)

*Changes in social contacts*

The fact that the networks of youth are to a large extent locally oriented leads us to expect that moving results in the loss of friends for a large share of the youth involved. This to a certain extent turns out to be the case: among the forced movers 21.5 per cent lost one or more friends. Of the voluntary movers this percentage was 25.0. On the positive side this means that a bit less than 80 percent of the forced movers were able to maintain their friendships.

*Table 10: Chance to lose friends after moving*

|  | **B** | **Sig.** |  | **Exp (B)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Forced mover | .180 | .695 |  | 1.197 |
| Most friends in old neighbourhood before moving | 1.548 | .003 | *** | 4.702 |
| Old neighbourhood is deprived | .246 | .655 |  | 1.279 |
| Meeting friends on the street in old neighbourhood | -.232 | .634 |  | .793 |
| Distance old and new dwelling | .128 | .074 | * | 1.136 |
| Time in old dwelling | .043 | .195 |  | 1.044 |
| Moved to own dwelling | 1.211 | .032 | ** | 3.356 |
| Gender (ref = male) | .351 | .346 |  | 1.420 |
| Age at time of moving | -.206 | .002 | *** | .814 |
| Non-western ethnicity | -.090 | .818 |  | .914 |
| Respondent has high level of education | -.090 | .817 |  | .914 |
| Level of education parents (ref = low) |  |  |  |  |
| high | -.177 | .656 |  | .838 |
| unknown | -.883 | .150 |  | .413 |
| constant |  |  |  | .784 |

* = $p < 0.10$; ** = $p < 0.05$; *** = $p < 0.01$; N= 207, Nagelkerke R² = 0.253; Source: own fieldwork (2009)

To provide insight in the factors that influence the chance to lose friends after moving we conducted a logistic regression analysis (table 10). First of all, it turns out that forced moving, compared to voluntary moving, does not have a significant impact on the likelihood to lose friends. The fact that for forced movers the social networks after the move are likely to be more dispersed – as most people in the old neighbourhood were forced to move – does thus not lead to a higher chance to lose friends. Further, it turns out that when young people move large distances it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain contacts in their old neighbourhood. In Fischer's (1977) words, the costs of maintaining a relationship become higher than the benefits. Our interviews show that the loss of friends after moving is for a large part related to the falling away of shared foci of activity. The following quote of A. (22 years, moved in 2007) illustrates that the micro-neighbourhood functioned as an important setting in which social contacts were maintained but once this focus of activity fell away it became increasingly difficult to meet each other:

*Most of my friends used to live in the same neighbourhood. We grew up together and we were together almost every day (…). Anyway, after the move the group fell apart. Each of us moved to different neighbourhoods. Of course they also have to work or have to go to school. Hence it is very difficult to get everybody together, like before the move (…). Now I need to have some kind of diary to meet with my friends.*

In this context, time turns out to play an important role. Shortly after the move most adolescents try to maintain the contacts in their old neighbourhood, but after some years this becomes more of a cost because of the physical distance. F. (18 years, male, moved in 2007) illustrates this as follows:

*In the first months after the move I spend most of my time hanging around with friends from the old neighbourhood. After the first year I started to visit the old neighbourhood less and less. I had much less time to always cycle there. The longer I lived in the new neighbourhood, the less often I went to the old neighbourhood.*

From the logistic regression analysis it further turns out that youth that had more than half of their friends in their old neighbourhood and that are younger have a higher chance of losing friends. This indicates that adolescents that have a high level of network localness are more likely to lose friends after moving.

A final and related issue is the ties the adolescents keep with people in their old neighbourhoods. It is expected that when people move to unknown neighbourhoods where their access and knowledge of neighbourhood facilities and people is limited, they are likely to be drawn to friends and family left behind (Stack, 1974). Our analyses show that, half a year after the move, 41.2 per cent of the forced movers returned to their old neighbourhood at least once a month. These visits are primarily for visiting friends and family members. For the voluntary movers this percentage is higher, namely 53.8 per cent. This difference might have to do with the fact that the social networks of forced movers were scattered, as most of their neighbours were also forced to move. In table 10, however, it was shown that forced movers are not more likely to lose friends than voluntary movers. The fact that forced movers do return to their old neighbourhood less often, does thus not result in a higher risk of losing friends.

The finding that a large share of the adolescents tends to look behind, especially in the short run after moving, has important implications for neighbourhood effect research. As social ties with the old neighbourhood are still maintained, the new neighbourhood might turn out to be a weak predictor of social outcomes.

*Making new friends after moving*

While some young people lost friends after moving, a large share was also able to form new friendships again. Our analyses show that of forced movers 47.7 per cent was able to make new

friends, for the voluntary movers this percentage was 44.9. Above we have shown that voluntary movers tend to go back to the old neighbourhood more often – and thus have more alternatives outside the neighbourhood for social networks. This, however, turns out not to have a clear impact on the formation of new friendships in the new neighbourhood.

To provide insight in which factors influence the likelihood to make new friends in the new neighbourhood, we conducted a logistic regression analysis (not shown). From this analysis it turned out that younger adolescents have a higher chance to make new friends in the new neighbourhood than older ones. This might have to do with the fact that for youth in their (late) childhood or early adolescence it is easier to make new friends by just playing on the street. The variance explained by our logistic regression model is, however, rather limited (Nagelkerke $R^2$ = .117), which means that other factors that are not in the model play a more important role. Our interviews indicate that the choice and agency of the adolescents is important in this context, which confirms the choice-constraint model of Fischer and colleagues. This is illustrated by the following example of Y. (15 years, male, Turkish, moved in 2006):

> *When I came to live here, I started to study the neighbourhood. I often went outside to play on the street and in this way I made a lot of new friends.*

The extent to which new friends are made is also related to the *homophily* principle. Young people tend to form social ties with others that are similar to them in terms of lifestyle, age, ethnicity or other characteristics. When in the new neighbourhood there are primarily youth that are very dissimilar, the chance to form new friendships is likely to be more limited. This is illustrated by the following quote from F. (18 years, moved in 2007):

> *I don't have any friends in my new neighbourhood. Here there are few boys my age (…). The boys my age that are here have different interests than I have. I don't like to hang around with them. When I see those boys, I don't want to belong to that group. They smoke, drink and just damage things, so I don't want to be associated with them.*

*The quality of social contacts in the new neighbourhood*

In addition to the quantity of social contacts, the quality of networks of people is also important. About one third of the forced movers feel that their social contacts were of lower quality after moving. A little bit less than one third, on the other hand, thinks that the social ties in their new neighbourhood are better than those in their previous neighbourhood.

Social networks have an important impact on feeling at home and safe in the neighbourhood. Of the youth that feels that residential mobility has led to an improvement in neighbourhood conditions, a large share points to the importance of social contacts in this context. F. (25 years, female, Moroccan, moved in 2006) illustrated this as follows:

> *It was a very lonely place (…). My god, actually I've never been happy to live there, but I thought I had to stay there; I couldn't go anywhere (…).In the neighbourhood after the move I had Turkish neighbours, I had very good contact with them and Dutch neighbours. We talked a lot with the neighbours. Moroccan women came to visit me every now and then and I visited them.*

Moreover, many respondents indicate that moving resulted in improved social networks in terms of social and financial support. J. (17 years, male, Dutch, moved in 2007) illustrates this as follows:

> *My neighbour has his car parked here and he is very proud of this car because he doesn't have much money and still he was able to buy that car. His wife had, very unfortunately, driven into a pole, and then people in the neighbourhood helped him with the repair costs. His children are walking on the street and his wife is a little bit overworked, because one of the children has*

*behavioural problems (…). Sometimes the neighbours say: 'Let the child sleep a night at my place, so that you can have your sleep'.*

On the other hand some respondents also state that the social support networks in their new neighbourhood are worse than in their old neighbourhood.


## Conclusion

In this article the effects of (forced) residential mobility on the leisure activities and social contacts of youth have been studied. It can be concluded that in the short run moving leads to decrease in leisure activities for a large share of the youth, and thus results in a loss of foci of activity. Moreover, about one fifth on the forced movers in our survey stated that they lost friends after moving. Because of increasing physical distance and the loss of foci of activity it became increasingly difficult to maintain contacts with friends in the old neighbourhood. Forced moving, however, turned out not to be more disruptive than voluntary moving: in both situations residential mobility leads to an equal decrease in activities and social contacts. This is an interesting outcome, as we expected a forced move to be more disruptive because most people from the old neighbourhood were also displaced and hence social networks were dispersed over different neighbourhoods.
Based on our findings we can thus conclude that the effects of moving on the leisure activities and social contacts of youth are rather strong, especially for those who moved over a longer distance. On the other hand, we should be careful to account all the changes in leisure activities and social contacts to residential mobility. Some of the adolescents indicated that they changed leisure activities and quit meeting friends because of other reasons than the move. Moreover, it turns out that adolescents are to a large extent able to adopt new leisure activities and make new friends in their new neighbourhood again. When we look at the *present* situation of the forced movers, the voluntary movers and the non-movers we can find no significant differences between the three groups in terms of leisure activities. Thus, as there are strong short-term effects of moving on adolescents, in the longer run these effects turn out to be limited.

An important factor that comes forward in our study – and which is often overlooked in research on neighbourhood effects and residential mobility - is the choice and agency of the young people. Adolescents are not passive victims of residential mobility and of neighbourhood conditions, but can be active agents in constructing their environments and choosing which networks to form. This is illustrated by the fact that some of the youth actively visit neighbourhood settings in the new neighbourhood and try to form new social contacts there, whereas other do not.

This study has both programmatic and theoretical implications. From a theoretical perspective, this research shows that the effect of (forced) residential mobility on adolescents is not as straightforward as generally assumed. On the one hand there is a group of adolescents that show high level of resiliency and are able to participate in settings in the new neighbourhood and form new social contacts there. On the other hand there is a group of youth that find it rather difficult to adopt new activities and form a new social network and that feel that their social contacts are worse in their new neighbourhood. In further research on neighbourhood effects and residential mobility it is therefore necessary to pay attention to the ways agency and choice of youth influence the adoption of leisure activities and the formation of social contacts and how both the old and new neighbourhood play a role in this. Moreover, since some youth experience difficulties in adapting to their new neighbourhood, it is important to assist young people and their parents when moving. Institutional actors may need to be more proactive in providing guidance and information to get families connected to their new neighborhoods. The current policy of urban restructuring is more focused on getting people out of dilapidated social housing rather than focusing on the neighbourhoods are moving into.

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