Coming Together through Food: How Food-Related Activities Influence Social Cohesion between and within Social Groups in Leiden Noord

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Contents

1. Introduction

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, health has become a more important theme for policymakers. This applies to both physical health and mental health (Gemeente Leiden 2021a). Mental health has stagnated in the Netherlands since the Corona crisis started in 2020. Dutch people have, on average, become more anxious, stressed, sad, and lonely (Reep and Hupkens 2021). Social cohesion is a direct indicator of mental health (Fard and Saffarinia 2020), as social contacts and social networks can improve mental health, and avoid stress, depression, and loneliness (Kearns and Forrest 2000: 999). However, the pandemic has negatively affected social cohesion. This effect has even been greater in vulnerable communities, mainly among ethnic minorities and lower-skilled people (Borkowska and Laurence 2020).

Within the municipality of Leiden, Leiden Noord contains relatively the most people with a risk of anxiety and depression, and the most people that suffer from loneliness (Gemeente Leiden 2021b: 29). The area has a lot of inhabitants with a migration background. The neighbourhoods of Noorderkwartier and De Kooi make up the area that I have focussed on in my research, as I will discuss below. These are the only two neighbourhoods in Leiden that house over 5.500 people with a migration background each. As illustrated below in Figure 1, Leiden Noord is also one of the areas with the smallest disposable annual incomes. This is mainly due to Noorderkwartier and De Kooi having very low averages of disposable income. These two areas also have a very high percentage of people receiving welfare, compared to both the municipality of Leiden and Groenoord. Additionally, Leiden Noord has also the biggest percentage of inhabitants that have difficulty getting by financially (21%, together with the Bos- en Gasthuisdistrict) (Gemeente Leiden 2023).

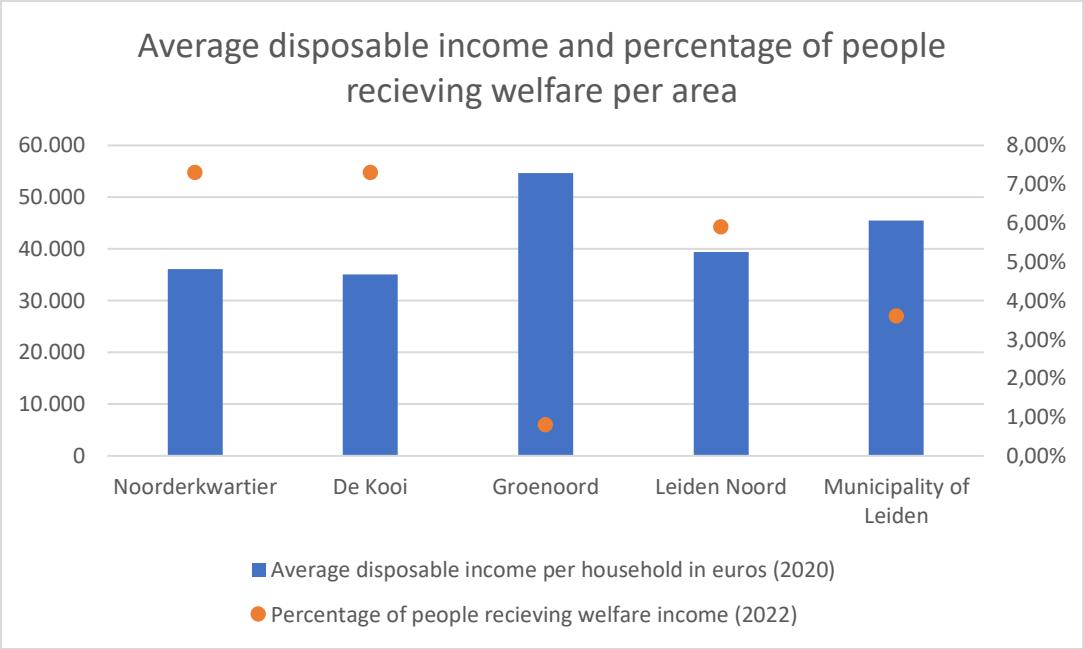

Fig. 1: The average disposable income and percentage of people receiving welfare in Noorderkwartier, De Kooi, Groenoord, Leiden Noord and the municipality of Leiden (Gemeente Leiden 2023).

In this research, I will explore the social cohesion in Leiden Noord. For this, I have had an internship at Leren met de Stad (which translates to 'Learning with the City'), which is located in Het Gebouw, a community centre in De Kooi. They have great ties with multiple social work organizations that operate within Leiden Noord, such as Incluzio and the Trefpunt with whom I worked closely during my research. Leren met de Stad explicitly wants their students to make a positive contribution to the neighbourhood besides 'just' doing research. This is highly aligned with my own values and interests, as I enjoy and prefer helping people on a practical level as part of my own research.

To improve the health of their citizens, the Dutch government has drafted the *Nationaal Preventieakkoord* ('National Prevention Agreement') (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport 2018). To apply this agreement in a more local setting, the municipality of Leiden has translated this into the *Leids Preventieakkoord*, called *Leiden gezond en vitaal* ('Leiden healthy and fit'). They have done this together with social partners, amongst which are Leren met de Stad and Incluzio (Gemeente Leiden 2021a). Even though the Nationaal Preventieakkoord does hardly pay attention to mental health (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport 2018), the Leids Preventieakkoord did include mental health as one of their four focus points. To improve people's mental health, the municipality strives to encourage social contacts (Gemeente Leiden 2021a). The Regiegroep, the writers of the municipal's Preventieakkoord, have indicated that they wanted to continue a policy that targets the focus points of the Preventieakkoord (such as improving mental health and reducing

loneliness), but in another way. For this, they have specifically asked for better insights into local, small initiatives' role in these types of policies.

Social cohesion through food

Many scholars, both within and outside the field of anthropology, have studied habits of eating together and what this implies for social relationships and structures. Eating together can establish a feeling of connection between people (Dunbar 2017). By sharing food and eating together, people take care of one another by making sure they have enough food. Sharing food establishes a reciprocal relationship (Brisson 2012). Reciprocal relationships, helping one another, and taking care of one another increases social cohesion (see Van Kempen and Bolt 2009, Chan et al. 2006, and Van der Meer and Tolsma 2014). However, food and eating together are also heavily related to cultural group identity. What we eat, how we prepare it, how we eat it, and with whom is very cultural. It shows 'who we are', and, thus, also 'who we are not' (see Mintz 1985: 3-13, Caplan 1997, and Quintero-Angel 2019). Ways to identify ourselves and our (cultural) groups are almost automatically also ways to exclude other people from these groups. This does, however, not always have to be the case. Eating can also be less 'cultural' and more 'neutral'. Rather 'neutral' foods and places can be more inclusive for a more diverse audience (see Khalek et al. 2019).

As a student that has been quite active in the student community in Leiden, I know how important it can be to eat together. At my own student association, the habit of eating together is used to bring people together. We like to think that there really is no excuse to not have dinner together. After all, as we use to say, "You need to eat anyway" ("*Eten moet je toch"*). This has brought many people of different (cultural) backgrounds together within all of my own friend groups.

When I first visited the soup afternoon at the Trefpunt, I quickly realized that people of very different (cultural) backgrounds visited. I wondered why that was and how food can bring people together in the area of Leiden Noord through these kinds of activities. This thesis, therefore, explores the following research question: *How can food-related activities in Leiden Noord increase social cohesion?*

To answer this research question, I have formulated three sub-questions:

1. What is the nature of the main food-related activities in Leiden Noord?
2. How do food-related activities increase social cohesion within social groups in Leiden Noord?
3. How do food-related activities increase social cohesion between social groups in Leiden Noord?

Field

This research explores the social interactions between different people in Leiden Noord during different food-related activities. The municipality of Leiden has split Leiden Noord into three areas:

Noorderkwartier, De Kooi, and Groenoord. Within Leiden Noord, Noorderkwartier and De Kooi are quite similar, and Groenoord is more different from those two. As illustrated above in Figure 1, in Groenoord, on average, the inhabitants have a much larger disposable income and much fewer people receive welfare than inhabitants of Noorderkwartier and De Kooi. The same distinction can be made based on the percentage of people with a non-Dutch migration background. As illustrated below in Figure 2, both Noorderkwartier and De Kooi have a rather high percentage of inhabitants with a non-Dutch migration background, and Groenoord does not.

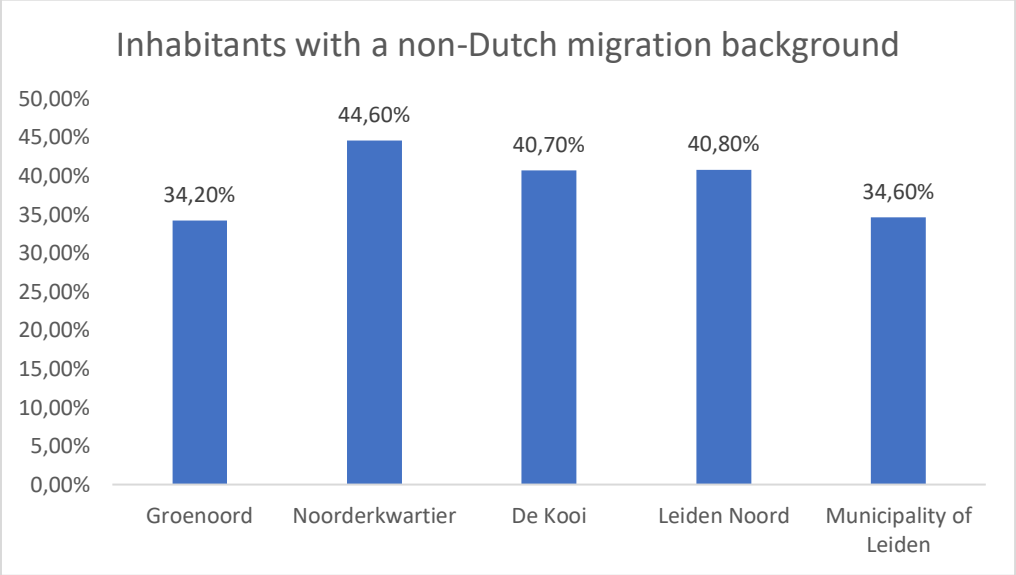

Fig. 2: Percentage of inhabitants with a non-Dutch migration background (Gemeente Leiden 2023).

Within Leiden Noord, the focus of this research has been on Noorderkwartier and De Kooi, as they are rather similar in demographic aspects. These two areas are mainly divided by the Kooilaan, which is the 'vertical' street as shown below in Figure 3. However, in this thesis, I use a slightly different division of areas than the municipality does, and that is reflected in Figures 1 and 2. In the municipality's division of areas, De Hoven is also part of these two. They divide it in half, locating half of it in Noorderkwartier, and the other half in De Kooi. However, early on in my research, I found that this does not match how the areas are experienced, both by myself and the inhabitants. De Hoven is a neighbourhood that is rather separated from the rest of Noorderkwartier and De Kooi by the Willem de Zwijgerlaan, the 'horizontal' street as shown in Figure 3. It is also a rather homogenous-looking neighbourhood, with similar streets and flats throughout the neighbourhood, and rather different from the rest of Noorderkwartier and De Kooi. I will elaborate on the nature of De Hoven in Chapter 7.

Therefore, I will use the term 'Leiden Noord' for the total area in which this research has taken place. The Noorderkwartier area 'without' De Hoven is also called the Prinsessenbuurt, which is the term that I will use further in this thesis. The division of neighbourhoods is shown below in Figure 3. An exception to division is when I use demographic data from sources such as the municipality and CBS (the Central Bureau of Statistics in the Netherlands), such as I did above in Figures 1 and 2. In these cases, I will, of course, use the names for the areas as they are assigned by the institution whose data I am using.

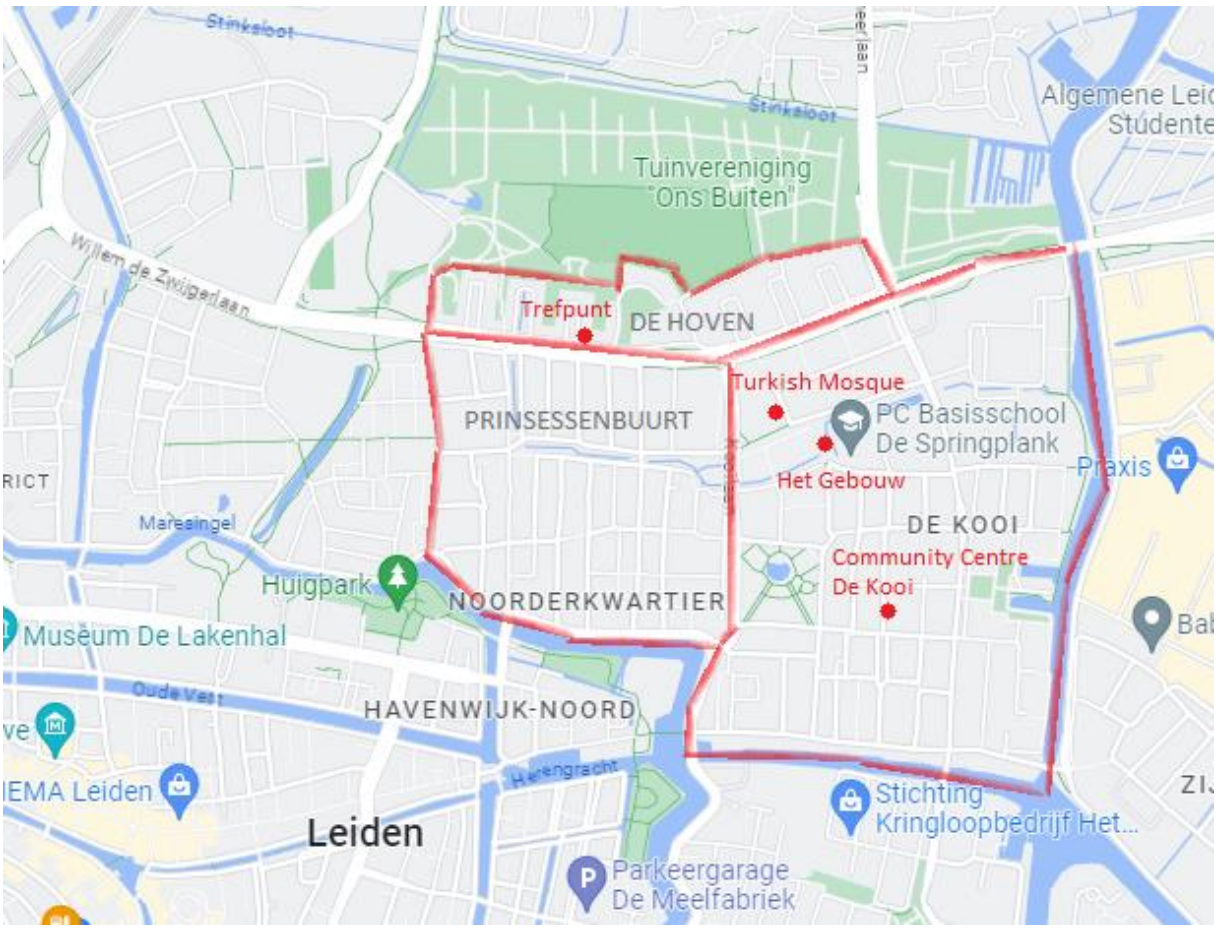

Fig. 3: The research areas and places of research

The activities in which I participated took place in three different places: the Community Centre De Kooi, the Turkish Mosque, and the Trefpunt. The Community Centre De Kooi and the Trefpunt are catering specifically towards their corresponding neighbourhood, the Turkish Mosque caters towards the Islamic Turkish community in the area of Leiden. I will expand on the nature of De Kooi and De Hoven and their inhabitants in the chapters about their corresponding activities. Het Gebouw is the community centre in which my internship at Leren met de Stad was located.

In Chapter 2, I will first give an overview of the theory on social cohesion, how it exists on multiple scales, is expressed in and caused by multiple ways, and how physical space plays a role in this. I will, then, explore how social cohesion is established through a sense of common identity, and how food is interrelated with this.

For this research, I have used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. My main research method was participant observation, which I conducted at all three of my main activities. I conducted semi-structured interviews with many people involved in food-related activities, both professionally and voluntarily. Additionally, I conducted structured interviews and structured observations during the soup afternoon. I will elaborate on these research methods, and any ethical considerations during this research in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 4, I will give a short overview of the policy that is influencing social cohesion in Leiden Noord. Furthermore, in the following chapters, I will explore each main activity I conducted research at. In Chapter 5, I will show how the lunch at the Community Centre De Kooi is an activity mainly targeted at 'old Kooi inhabitants', hence also only increasing the social cohesion within that specific social group. In Chapter 6, I will explore the women's-only breakfast and Quran reading at the Turkish mosque, and how that very 'Turkish' and 'women's' activity only improves the social cohesion within that social group. In Chapter 7, I will elaborate on the soup afternoon at the Trefpunt, where a very diverse group of people interacts with each other and representatives of multiple institutions. Lastly, I will argue that food-related activities can very much increase social cohesion between and within social groups. However, not very much both at the same time. An activity 'needs' to be rather identity-based to increase social cohesion within a social group, and it can increase social cohesion between multiple social groups by being more of a 'neutral' activity.

2. Theoretical Foundation

This thesis explores whether and how people come together surrounding food-related activities, my thesis mainly explores the concept of social cohesion. In this chapter, I will first discuss how social cohesion exists on different scales and in different sizes, and how it relates to space and group identity. Second, I will discuss how food can establish social cohesion, and how this is related to a sense of group identity.

Scale

'Social cohesion' is an extensively studied concept in anthropology. However, it is also a concept that is hard to grasp in a single definition. It is often written about to mean something like "interconnectedness" (Laurence 2011, Van der Meer and Tolsma 2014: 460-461). However, in their study of social cohesion, different authors study it at different scales. In this paragraph, I will elaborate on which scales social cohesion has been studied and how those relate to each other.

In 2007, Robert D. Putnam published research that drew concerning conclusions about the increasing diversity of the United States, and in extension, Western societies. He found that when ethnic diversity increases, as is inevitable due to increasing migration, social solidarity would decrease, and people would "hunker down" (Putnam 2007: 149) ("to pull in like a turtle" (ibid.)). Putnam argues for migration and ethnic diversity. However, both in his article (he presents multiple possible ways to prevent this 'hunkering down' (ibid.: 164-165)), as well as in the media (Bartlett 2012), his research has been widely used to argue against increasing migration, (Van der Meer and Tolsma 2014: 460).

Kearns and Forrest focus on the cohesiveness of societies, and the absence of conflict (Kearns and Forrest 2000: 996). A society is cohesive when common values are shared throughout the whole society. This is, according to Kearns and Forrest, expressed in different ways in societies that are built around different values (e.g., about religion or citizenship) and can also change through time (e.g., after secularization or war) (ibid.: 997-998). They also argue that a cohesive society has minimal conflict, or "absence of general conflict" (ibid.: 998). In Western societies, this is caused by the social control that exists within society (ibid.). Of course, a high amount of social control would be easier to achieve when there is a high degree of shared, common values. However, Kearns and Forrest use Turner's and Wrong's theories to expand on their criterium for the absence of conflict. They argue that, in cohesive societies, there are high levels of reciprocity and, additionally, a high level of cooperation. Turner argues how Each person has their share of the 'group's duties', of which they all benefit when done. Therefore, helping each other creates social order through reciprocal relationships. For this to work properly, the exchanging of goods and services needs to be "in balance" (ibid.), without anyone needing or giving 'too much' (ibid.).

Chan et al. acknowledge that social cohesion is often measured within communities and groups. However, they argue that in today's globalized era, social cohesion is pursued by policymakers on a societal level (ibid.: 291). Chan et al., therefore, have developed a definition for it on the scale of nation-states. This leads them to measure social cohesion on a societal scope (Chan et al. 2007). This also enables them to incorporate relations of people with national institutions, such as trust in governments and political participation (ibid.: 294).

However, they do recognize that social cohesion also exists on a local scale, within different groups in society and between individuals (2007: 290). Other authors consider the local and societal levels in their analysis of social cohesion (see Van der Meer and Tolsma 2014, Van Kempen and Bolt 2009, Kearns and Forrest 2000, and Laurence 2011). Mainly Van Kempen and Bolt (2009) focus on social cohesion on both a societal and a communal level, and how the amount of cohesion can differ between the different levels of measurement. They argue that a high degree of social cohesion within a community can cause the community to isolate itself, leading to less social cohesion on a societal scale. Most of the time, policymakers strive towards societal and communal social cohesion. However, those two might not always go together (Van Kempen and Bolt 2009: 459). When the two levels of social cohesion are recognized separately, policymakers can consider them separately and prioritize one of the two if necessary.

Some scholars consider there to be conceptual differences between multiple scales of social cohesion. They conceptualize 'social cohesion' to exist on a societal (nation-state) scale, and 'interconnectedness' on a smaller, communal scale to be 'social capital'. In this conceptualization, social capital is the direct bonds we form with people, the friends, relatives, and neighbours with whom we form social "primary networks" (Lockwood [1999] in Laurence 2011: 72). Often, a high level of social capital is considered (or sometimes even a necessity) for social cohesion on a societal scale (Kearns and Forrest 2000: 999-1001) (Chan et al. 2006: 292) (Laurence 2011: 71-73).

The 'interconnectedness' that is social cohesion can occur on multiple different levels, at the same time or not. Different scholars categorize multiple levels in different ways, but many of them agree that social cohesion on a smaller level (such as the communal/neighbourhood level) might not necessarily indicate social cohesion on a bigger scale (nation-state/societal), and vice versa (see Schiefer and Van der Noll 2007, Kearns and Forrest 2000, and Van der Meer and Tolsma 2014).

The existence of social cohesion on multiple scales also implies that multiple degrees of (perceived) social cohesion can exist at the same time, both on different scales and next to each other. Brisson (2012) emphasizes that, even though social cohesion is "a community-level construct" (Brisson 2012: 269), it should be measured at an individual level. Different people in the same neighbourhood can, of course, have different views, perceptions, and experiences of their neighbourhood's social cohesion. Someone can have a lot of trusted friends and family members in the neighbourhood, and

can, therefore, perceive a high level of social cohesion in their neighbourhood. Within that same neighbourhood, a person that does not have a similar kind of network can, however, feel a lack of social cohesion (Brisson 2012: 269).

Shape

Social cohesion can be caused by and expressed through very different causes and actions. It is often hard to differentiate between the causes of social cohesion and the expressions of social cohesion, as they are often the same. For example, helping each other is an expression of trust and social cohesion, but could also be a reason to trust each other, and therefore, have more social cohesion in the future. Furthermore, different aspects of social cohesion can strengthen each other (such as shared values and the absence of conflict, as I discussed above). However, we should not be tempted to assume this is always the case, argue Van Kempen and Bolt (2009: 458). Using Kearns and Forrest's definition of social cohesion, they emphasize that, even though different expressions of social cohesion are very much interrelated and probably often enforce each other, this does not mean that we should not study the different aspects and their relations separately and keep possible contradictions in mind (ibid.). Likewise, we should attempt to be careful to differentiate between causes and actions of social cohesion, even though this is hard. In this paragraph, I will elaborate on a few ways that social cohesion can be caused and expressed.

Social cohesion can be expressed through thought (such as feelings of trust and belonging) and through behaviour (such as helping one another) (Chan et al. 2006: 291, 293-294) (Van der Meer and Tolsma 2014: 461, 468). Of course, both ways of expressing can occur (or not) on multiple levels. For example, there can be a high level of trust within a certain own group, but not towards other groups. Similarly, people can be very active in national politics but have no sense of belonging in their own neighbourhood. For a group or society to be cohesive, social cohesion should be expressed both in thought and behaviour, and both within groups as between 'different' social groups (Chan et al. 2006: 291, 294). However, ethnic diversity does impact the different ways of expressing social cohesion differently. Van der Meer and Tolsma found that both aspects are affected negatively in communities with more ethnic diversity, but behavioural aspects of cohesion are impacted significantly less often than attitudinal aspects (Van der Meer and Tolsma 2014: 468).

Social cohesion can occur on certain types of occasions, top-down or bottom-up. Top-down occasions would be organized by institutionalised entities, such as (governmental) organizations. These "formal organizations" (Van der Meer and Tolsma 2014: 467) are often less trusted by people of ethnic minorities (ibid.). Social cohesion can also come from bottom-up occasions, which are mainly voluntary work, helping each other spontaneously (ibid.: 469). This aspect of social cohesion would be extra important for policymakers. If certain groups in which policymakers want to improve social

cohesion do not trust governmental organizations, social cohesion can hardly be improved by institutionalised entities within these groups.

Social cohesion is both caused by and expressed through helping each other. By exchanging services and goods, people form interdependent relationships. In doing so, they create extra value within their community which they all share, and all feel stakeholders of (Kearns and Forrest 2000: 998). In neighbourhoods with poverty, a high level of social cohesion can be extra influential for people's well-being. Poverty can lead to an increased risk of food insecurity, or put more bluntly, hunger (Brisson 2012: 268). However, in neighbourhoods with a high level of social cohesion, these risks are lower. In cases of solid social networks, people are more likely to share food and refer people to social organizations such as the food bank (ibid.: 268-269). This way, a community can increase both the division and the total sum of food within the community to counteract food insecurity. The degree of social cohesion in a neighbourhood, and the perceived social cohesion of individuals within said neighbourhood are direct predictors of potential food insecurity people might experience (Brisson 2012).

Space

Places where people come together are the basis of social life. Oldenburg (1989) named these "Third places" (Oldenburg 1989: 14): places that are separate from people's homes and workspaces, are very important for communal social life. They are also spaces where different people can find each other, in neutral spaces. By doing so, third places encourage "[m]utual confidence, sympathies, enthusiasms, purposes, and understandings" Sims [1920] in Oldenburg 1989: 73). For this to work properly, spaces have to feel safe and at home. In this paragraph, I will elaborate on how third places can improve social cohesion, what they (could) look like, and how and for whom they feel safe.

Third spaces can increase social cohesion by providing a space for informal interactions (Williams and Hipp 2019: 68-69). Third spaces are places that "host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work." (Oldenburg 1989: 16). Jeffres et al. (2009: 334-335) and Williams and Hipp (2019: 69) summarize some of Oldenburg's characteristics of third places. They are neutral spaces; no one takes on the role of 'host' and people of different socio-economic statuses are present. They are accessible to all people; no one should be held back or refused by policy, monetary, or physical barriers. There are regulars, that feel very much at home at the place and make other people feel this way as well. However, no one should be required to be present at a certain time and place in third places, as one can be with a job. Lastly, they are mainly about conversation. Even though an activity, such as lunch, might be at the centre of the place, "talking is always present" (Jeffres et al. 2009: 335) (Jeffres et al. 2009: 334-335) (Williams and Hipp 2019: 69) (Oldenburg 1989: 20-42).

Williams and Hipp (2019: 69) call these aspects of third places "criteria". Jeffres et al. (2019) do not use this term, and neither does Oldenburg himself (Oldenburg and Brisset 1982, Oldenburg 1989: 20-42). They rather use the term "characteristics" (see Jeffres et al. 2019: 335, Oldenburg and Brisset 1982: 270-273, Oldenburg 1989: 20-42). I would argue that 'characteristics' is a better term than 'criteria' in the case of third places. All of these mentioned above are things that exist on a scale and can be different for different people. For example, a place is never fully physically accessible for everyone at all times. Even when two people are fully able-bodied, they would still have different accessibility to, for example, a community centre, purely for the reason that one could live next door to it, and the other one on the other side of town. Complete accessibility for anyone would neither be realistic nor desirable. Therefore, we should use the 'characteristics' above as guidelines to recognize third places, and in what way and to what degree they act as third places. I do not think they should be used as a list of criteria to consider certain places not to be third places. However, there is one exception to this, which is the last 'characteristic': conversation. This is the most important characteristic of a third place: "Nothing more clearly indicates a third place than that the talk there is good" (Oldenburg 1989: 26). Therefore, I argue that conversation is at the very centre of third places and a place without conversation cannot be considered a third place.

One characteristic of third places, according to Oldenburg is that they are "largely unplanned, unscheduled, unorganized, and unstructured" (Oldenburg 1989: 33). However, this is concerning the 'casual' nature of third places. They are not as structured and punctuated as people's obligations at home or at work (ibid.: 32-33). However, people can have a (perceived) social obligation to be in third places at certain times, for example, when their friend group daily gathers at the same drugstore (see Oldenburg 1989: 40).

Whether someone feels 'at home' in a space is very much influenced by the sense of safety someone has within a physical space. For marginalized groups that might not feel as safe in public spaces, safe spaces can be created. Safe spaces can be very diverse but are mainly about (re)gaining power for marginalized people (Myslik [1996] in Rosenfeld and Noterman 2014: 1353). To do so, some safe spaces exclude people of a certain identity (e.g., men), or just try or claim to exclude discomfort for marginalized groups (Rosenfeld and Noterman 2014). Using a study on "lesbian feminist separatist communities" (ibid.: 1353) in the United States, Rosenfeld and Noterman explain how excluding men allows the women in those communities to explore and develop the non-woman parts of their identities, such as sexuality and ethnicity. This does enlarge the differences between those identities and caused some women to form separate communities of only women of colour or of only lesbian women. Additionally, their 'women's-only' safe spaces strengthened their sense of womanhood (ibid.).

Ideally, third places are accessible to and occupied by all sorts of people. This is, however, not realistic, or practically possible, as I have discussed above. Historically, many places that served as third

places (bars, town squares, etc.) were predominantly occupied by men. It can be hard for women to find places where they can just be amongst people. Women who are in charge of (most of) the household tasks are (thought to be) less entitled to a third place, as they are "eternally 'on duty'" (Oldenburg 1989: 232). This causes the places and activities where women come together are places and activities to be looked down upon. Especially when that includes 'unwinding' activities that are at the very centre of third places: women "run about" and "tattle", whereas men engage in "tippling companion" (Rysman [1977] in Oldenburg 1989: 232-234) (Oldenburg 1989: 230-233).

But women do need third places, for their own and society's sake (see Oldenburg 1989: 43-85). It is, therefore, important that there are places that can act as third places for women. If it is necessary for those places to be exclusive for women, that would not make them less of a third place (Oldenburg 1989: 230-238). As I have argued above, characteristics, such as accessibility, exist on a scale. It is the personal and societal function that these places serve that makes them a third place. For this, it can be necessary to create special safe spaces for women that might need to be women's-only.

Besides whom is allowed in a space, how (marginalized) people move through a space contributes to how safe they feel. Rosenfeld and Noterman explain this using a study on a "Latina cycling group in Los Angeles" (Rosenfeld and Noterman 2014: 1356). Moving through the streets using bicycles makes them feel much safer (ibid.: 1356-1357). A similar effect on the perception of safety is found when people carry a mobile phone with them (ibid.: 1357-1358).

Group identity

Social cohesion occurs between certain (groups of) people (or not). In groups that people are connected to (or not), scholars differentiate roughly three types of groups: in-groups, out-groups, and the general population or society. In-groups are people that have similar (ethnic) identities and backgrounds. Out-groups are people of "'other' social groups" (Chan et al. 2006: 294), with different identities from the 'in-group', but with similar identities amongst themselves (Van der Meer and Tolsma 2014: 461). Social cohesion, therefore, exists *within* in-groups, and *between* different out-groups (or not). Additionally, these groups or individuals are connected to the general popularity or society (or not). This also includes the relationship between people and the state, national politics and other national institutes and organizations (Chan et al. 2006: 290-291, 294).

Different social groups can be differentiated surrounding shared group identities. A sense of a common (cultural) identity is crucial for any 'group' to be cohesive in any way. Or rather: "the absence of some sense of identity means that one cannot apply the concept of "social cohesion" to [a group]" (Chan et al. 2006: 290). Constructing a sense of shared identity is mainly done through common norms and values (Van Kempen and Bolt 2009: 458) and through sharing things like a common religion or

ethnicity (Schiefer and Van der Noll 2017: 589). Of course, these aspects often go together and reinforce and strengthen each other (Van Kempen and Bolt 2009: 458).

As I have discussed above, accessibility of (third) places always exists as a range and can be very different from person to person and corresponds to how people relate to space. For example, people of a higher socio-economic status tend to have a higher level of mobility than people of a lower socio-economic status. Therefore, people of higher socio-economic status tend to prefer places that are centred around hobbies and personal interests and people of lower socio-economic status are more likely to visit places in their more direct surroundings, such as community centres (Williams and Hipp 2019).

However, regardless of the socio-economic class they cater to, third places also play a symbolic role in their respective communities. People tend to decorate and furnish them to their liking. Third places, therefore, are formed after the aesthetic preferences of the group they cater to. They come to reflect the cultural identity of that group. This way, third places can also (unconsciously) exclude other groups (Williams and Hipp 2019: 70).

Besides common places, other symbolic things can also contribute to the feeling of togetherness, of connection. Durkheim writes how synchronized things like making gestures and singing together can help to 'become one' (Durkheim [1912] in Applerouth and Edles 2016: 135). He argues this stems from religious settings but is also present in other situations (ibid.), for example, when cheering on a sports team (Applerouth and Edles 2016: 135). A common identity can also be strengthened through the act of (religious) rituals and commemorations (Stengs 2009: 102-103).

Food

Food and eating are the basis of human necessities; we need food to sustain ourselves. While eating is an essential human need, eating together is not. However, as Audrey Richards wrote, "in the wider sphere of human society [nutrition] determines, more largely than any other physiological function, the nature of social groupings, and the form their activities take" (Richards [1932] in Mintz 1985: 3-4). In this paragraph, I will explore how the habit of eating together shapes our social relations and how it shapes our group identities.

Eating together is thought to trigger the release of endorphins, a hormone that makes us feel connected to each other. Other activities that trigger the release of endorphins are laughing, singing, and dancing. This way, eating together is highly beneficial for our social relations. This works on both a communal and a more personal level. Communities are stronger when people eat together, and interpersonal relationships are stronger when people eat together. Consequently, people's personal health, both mentally and physically, also benefits from both of those (Dunbar 2017: 198-200).

In his research on connectedness and food sharing, Dunbar (2017) found that people who often eat together have a larger social network that can provide for them socially and emotionally. His study researched correlation, which was significant. However, it could not prove that his respondents felt more connected because of their eating together, due to the nature of the research. However, his data, especially the qualitative data, did suggest the probability of causality (Dunbar 2017: 206-207).

The food that is traditionally eaten in a specific place or culture is often the food that (historically) grows in the geographical area of that culture or has been imported for a long time (like potatoes in Europe); we like what we know. This is even more so for the 'starch ingredient' that is often the most important part of a meal. (ibid.: 8-13). When people are moving through different geographical areas, as refugees, migrants, or colonizers, they take their ways of eating with them. Migration is, therefore, a big factor in the mixing and changing of diets (Mintz and Du Bois 2002: 105).

However, especially in the modern age, the possibilities of what to eat, what ingredients to combine and what techniques to use are vast, if not endless. But we still only eat a rather limited group of dishes. We have very specific tastes in what we like and do not like, in what we eat and do not eat. What we choose to eat, is heavily cultural (Caplan 1997: 5) (Quintero-Angel 2019: 82). "Food is culture when it is consumed, because man, even though he could eat anything, or perhaps precisely for this reason, in reality does not eat everything" (Montanari [2006] in Quintero-Angel 2019: 82). The food people eat is highly interrelated with the way they identify themselves and is often used to differentiate themselves from other people (Mintz 1985: 3). What we eat is also heavily influenced by our lifestyle and interrelated with our health and activity levels. This is also very much cultural (Caplan 1997: 14-15). But food is also being physically ingested and in so many ways related to our bodies and bodily activities. This makes it, in multiple ways, a way to embody our culture.

Within social groups, eating together is used to pass on a shared identity. Sharing food is a way of taking care of one another (see Mintz 1985: 4-5). In their study of a community in rural Colombia, Quintero-Angel et al. (2019) show how the habit of eating and cooking together is very much a way to pass on cultural knowledge, which is internalized and embodied through these habits. This mainly happens through family and kinship structures and is a way to solidify these very structures. Sharing food is "a symbol of unity" (Quintero-Angel et al. 2019: 81), which strengthens communal bonds and social cohesion within the community (Quintero-Angel et al. 2019).

When certain eating habits are used to solidify bonds within a community, it is simultaneously setting the group apart from other groups and people. Mechanics of inclusion are (often) also mechanics of exclusion. They show who is part of the group and who is not; different people eat differently (Mintz 1985: 3-4). Religious dietary 'rules' are an example of how different groups use food to determine who is (not) part of their group. Khalek et al. (2019) studied how (non-)Halal eating is used to in- or exclude people in an interreligious society in Malaysia. By going to Halal restaurants,

interreligious friend groups would (sometimes) exclude their non-Muslim friends that might want to eat pork. Vice versa, by going to a non-Halal restaurant that does serve pork, they would (often) exclude their Muslim friends. However, these friend groups do find ways to make this work. Mainly through "tolerance and maturity" (Khalek et al. 2019: 1797), they adjust their dietary preferences to still eat with their interreligious friend groups. When that works, and it very often does, eating together is a great way to connect with people of different backgrounds. It helps that there are rather 'neutral' spaces to dine, mainly the Mamak restaurant (Khalek et al. 2019). This is a place which explicitly caters to all ethnicities, socio-economic classes, and religions (Olmedo and Shamsul 2019). This made Mamak restaurants inclusive, safe spaces for both Muslim and non-Muslim people, and interreligious friend groups frequently met there to eat out (Khalek et al. 2019).

Conclusion

Social cohesion exists on both a societal, and a communal level, and within and between different social groups. It is caused and expressed by positive interactions and a lack of conflict, both in people's ways of thinking and their behaviour towards one another. The interactions between people are highly dependent on the (third) places that house these interactions. What these places look like, who is allowed or able to access, and what food is served are all ways to include or exclude (groups of) people.

As this thesis explores social cohesion in Leiden Noord, it does not research social cohesion on a societal scale. However, it will research the social cohesion both within and between different social groups that are present in Leiden Noord, with a focus on the ones that visit food-related activities. For this, this research examines the degree and ways that group identities are reflected in these activities, and how this invites, includes, or excludes a specific social group (or not). I will focus on the food that is served but also explore how the place and physical space affect which (groups of) people visit the activity and how they interact with each other.

3. Methodology and Ethical Considerations

In this research, I have used a set of different research methods, both qualitative and quantitative. In the very early, explorative stage of this research, I found that any one method, either qualitative or quantitative, would be flawed on its own. I have, therefore, used multiple different methods to create different datasets that complement each other and fill in gaps that other datasets might have (Bryman 2008: 635-648). In this chapter, I will expand on the four different methods I have used in this research. I will explain how they worked in practice and how I dealt with some of the challenges I faced. Lastly, I will explain the ethical considerations I have made during the research and writing of this thesis and any implications these might have.

Qualitative research methods

Participant observation

My main research method was participant observation. I participated in the activities and observed what was happening and how people interacted with each other. I constantly had to find a way of combining participating and observing, or a delicate balance somewhere in between (see Bryman 2008: 440-447). I will briefly elaborate on how I conducted participant observation and my choices during each activity.

During the lunch at the Driftstraat, I helped to prepare the lunch. This was certainly a more participatory role. It did cause some issues, as I was too busy to write down notes during my participating observations and there was a physical boundary, a counter, between me and the people that visited. I did write down notes afterwards. Besides that, helping to prepare the lunch provided me with good access and familiarity with the people that visited the lunch, which I would not have achieved without volunteering at the community centre.

I was much more of an observer during the breakfast and Quran reading at the Mosque. Due to the language barrier, I often had trouble participating in conversations as they were in Turkish, which I cannot speak or understand. I could not participate in the Quran reading and praying, and out of respect, I tried to avert my gaze and keep to myself. Most times I turned to my notebook to write notes about current or past experiences, or to review some thoughts I had. The last few times I participated, however, I did do the praying gestures with the women. After the Quran reading, breakfast was eaten. I joined in this as well and took on a more participating role.

During the soup afternoon, I always arrived in the morning to eat breakfast together and to help prepare the soup. This sometimes also included getting groceries with Ali, which allowed me to observe his interactions with people outside the Trefpunt. The people with whom I prepared the soup often spoke Turkish amongst each other, as that was their first language. They did speak Dutch with

me and often spoke Dutch amongst each other so I could also understand it. While preparing the soup, I could observe how they interacted with each other and spoke of other people and institutions (the municipality, the housing corporation, etc.). After the soup was done, we sat outside to hand it out in a tent similar to a party tent but adjusted so it could close all the way around to shield people from the wind. I helped in handing out the soup and sat with people that sat with us, observing and asking questions. During this handing out of the soup, I also conducted structural observations and interviews, on which I will elaborate further down this chapter. A few times, we had a bus at our disposal, allowing us to drive around with a smaller pan to distribute soup to people's houses directly. Lastly, I also helped Ali with some administrative work, such as applying for funds and writing and distributing folders. This helped me to observe how administrative systems and the organization of activities worked in practice.

Semi-structured interviews

To get more in-depth information about the communities, the relations within and between communities and the policies (trying to) improve those relationships, I conducted semi-structured interviews. I have conducted interviews with people of important positions within the communities and/or in (municipal) social work in the neighbourhoods. I have focused on these people because they could tell me more about the communities, neighbourhoods, and activities they were (professionally) involved with, besides 'just' their personal lives.

When I asked people for an interview, I always tried to make them as comfortable as possible. I made it clear that I wanted to talk about their personal experiences and that they did not have to prepare anything. I wanted to 'downplay' the interview to not feel too formal or 'scary' for my participants, without misinforming them about my intentions. Most of the time, I did this by asking the following question: "Can I talk to you about this a bit more, maybe we can meet a bit more privately and I'll prepare some questions, would you do that?" I offered to come to a place that would be convenient for them, and most of the interviews took place in people's personal or professional spaces. I always took prepared questions with me, which I used more as guidelines. At the start of the interview, I explained a bit more about my research and my intentions for the interview itself, such as which topics I was going to ask about. I, then, asked for consent and also to record the interview and mentioned that they could always come back to me if they had any questions or second thoughts.

I always had a set of prepared questions. For a few interviews, I used the same set of questions. For most of my interviews, I adjusted some questions specifically for the interviewee, but it was always rather similar to the question list attached. I conducted five interviews together with another student I worked very close with. I will expand on this collaboration and its ethical considerations further down this chapter.

Most of the people I interviewed were officials of the municipality that were involved in social work in Leiden Noord. I have interviewed the official that was responsible for the execution of the Leids Preventieakkoord, the official that distributes subsidies for (amongst others) participation activities, and the Alderman of poverty and equal chances (which are important themes in Leiden Noord). These interviews helped me to understand the relationship between the (local) government and the people of Leiden Noord, and the municipality's focus points of their policy concerning Leiden Noord. I have also interviewed the 'neighbourhood director' ('*wijkregisseur*') of Leiden Noord, who fulfils a "connecting role" (her own words) between the municipality, key persons, and inhabitants. During the interview I conducted with Alderman Jermoumi, Marjolein Pijnacker was also present. They both preferred the interview this way, and it provided me with more comprehensive data.

Lastly, of governmental officials, I have interviewed the two 'neighbourhood police officers' ('*wijkagenten*') of Leiden Noord, who are the "eyes and ears" (their own words) of the police in the neighbourhood. These two interviews were very important for me to understand the side of the neighbourhood that was less visible to me. They told me about how many problems are behind closed doors in Leiden Noord, outside the view of people like me who participate in social work.

I have interviewed two social workers of Incluzio, the main social work organization active in Leiden Noord (mainly in De Kooi) that I have worked with. They are Bianca and Karin, although these are not their own names. I will explain more about whose personal names I use or not and why in the paragraph on ethical considerations in this chapter below. I have also interviewed five people that are each in some shape or form voluntarily involved in a food-related activity in Leiden Noord. They are also participants in the activities and/or inhabitants of Leiden Noord, and I have interviewed them about all three of those things, as much as applicable to them. These people are Greet, Ans, Emine, Narin, Ali, and Marcel. All of those names are pseudonyms, except for Ali's.

Quantitative research methods

Very early in my research, I noticed that the people visiting the soup afternoon at the Trefpunt were of different social groups that might be difficult for me to differentiate through observations and experiences alone. Qualitative methods rely on my own and other people's interpretations of these social groups. This is very vulnerable to (unintentional) biases or misinterpretations, for example, based on skin colour, religious expressions, or language capabilities. Biases and misinterpretations of identities and social groups are not ethical and would be detrimental to the validity of this research (Bryman 2008: 389-393). To understand who visits the activity and their identity and social group, I have, therefore also used quantitative methods during this activity.

Structured observations

I used structured observations to understand who attended the activity and what they did. The observation schedule I used is attached in Appendix I. Over the course of this research, over ninety different people visited the activity. Most of them introduced themselves to me (and vice versa), and many of them I got to know quite well as they visited often. However, it was not realistic for me to remember everybody's names, especially everyone that visited on their first visit. Therefore, I made up descriptive 'names' for people.

The descriptions I used were mostly based on something noteworthy about their appearance or what they were wearing (the first time I met them), in combination with their gender. Their gender was more of a practical way to make it easier to think about or write notes about. For example, I called people 'Mr. Mesh Bag', or 'Mrs. Pink Headscarf', or 'Mr. Dry Cleaning'. I avoided any descriptions that could lead to any racial classification or stereotyping as much as possible, to not create any biases in the collection of my data. It was sometimes hard to find noteworthy descriptions; at one point I almost had three men that had a description that had each a different combination of two of 'glasses', 'moustache', and 'hat'. However, having to think of these descriptive names also made it easier to remember people, as I went through an extra thinking step. When I got to know people better over the course of my research, I connected their names and any other quantitative data from surveys to their descriptive names.

I used an ad libitum sample, which meant in practice that I wrote down all actions of all people during the activity (Bryman 2008: 278). This was not always practically possible, as I sometimes was away or in a way not capable to write my observations down. However, this occurred only very few times. This way of collecting quantitative data provided me with different data than 'just' the qualitative data could have. From the participant observation, I mainly noted down notable events. This way of documenting quantitative data provided me with information about how many people visited the activity (both weekly and in total), how often they visited, and what they did during the activity.

Structured interviews

To identify the relevant social groups as best as possible without biases or assumptions, I collected quantitative data on the identities of participants of the soup afternoon. To do this, I conducted structured interviews on demographic information. About halfway through this research, I thought that the questionnaire was rather short. My participants had also made notes of that. I felt like there was much more to ask them, so I expanded this questionnaire with questions about their feelings about their neighbourhood and neighbours. The questions that were later added were less structured and acted more as guidelines for questions. I conducted these interviews during the soup afternoon,

at the Trefpunt itself. I did conduct them outside of the tent, to have a bit more privacy. Because it was never really busy, this was never a problem.

I conducted these interviews on a convenience sample (Bryman 2008: 201-202). There might have been a (slight) bias towards people that I had a personal connection with, but I tried to avoid that as much as possible by trying to be 'random' with whom I asked. I also tried to ask people of different (apparent) social groups and to include people that (had) visited different amounts of times. In total, I conducted structured interviews with about 15% of the total amount of people that visited the soup afternoon. About half of those are 'regular visitors', the other half only visiting once or twice over the course of this research. Within my sample were people from many different countries of origin. I will expand more on the social identities of the visitors of the soup afternoon in Chapter 7.

I conducted the structured interviews with a set, structured list of questions, but I did ask these questions myself. This way, I could engage with my participants and frame it more like a conversation. Most of my participants were first-generation migrants and were not fluent in Dutch. They sometimes did not fully understand the questions and by asking them myself, I could act on this by explaining them. This worked well, mostly because the participants knew me and associated me with handing out soup, creating a personal connection. This way of asking the questions myself, often more like a conversation than a questionnaire, allowed me to benefit from this personal connection.

Leren met de Stad

During this research, I did an internship at Leren met de Stad. This is an organization that facilitates different types of internships that work with communities and social work organizations in Leiden Noord. They are located in Het Gebouw and have many ties with the social work organizations that are active in Leiden Noord. They did, for example, bring me in contact with Ali. Leren met de Stad facilitates and encourages their students to work together, both in their academic work and in their knowledge about and communication with different participants and social partners. By working together with the other students at Leren met de Stad, I gained a lot of background knowledge about Leiden Noord, for example, what kinds of financial problems inhabitants of Leiden Noord struggle with. This information was hardly ever personal details about any participant. However, to protect these people's privacy, this information is not being described in this thesis, but only used by me as background information.

I worked particularly close together with one student at Leren met de Stad, who also followed the same anthropology master's as I did. Both of our researches were very similar as we both explored social cohesion in Leiden Noord. Therefore, we worked a lot with the same participants. We often exchanged knowledge and tips, both on theoretical resources and ideas, and practical tips and information about relevant ongoing events. In doing so, we were always very mindful about what we

could share and only shared information that we could have gained ourselves. We conducted five interviews together. These are the interviews with Bianca, Karin, Greet, and Ans (all pseudonyms), and one of the two interviews with Marjolein Pijnacker. I also shared two interviews with her (after the explicit consent of my participants). These are the interviews with the two police officers and with Ali.

Presentation of results and advice

This thesis researches how policy, of multiple organizations, works in practice. The development of this research has quite explicitly arisen from a question of the local government, as I have discussed in the Introduction of this thesis. Additionally, during the course of my research, multiple people have expressed interest in the outcomes of this research and the policy implications it might have for them. It would, therefore, only be fitting to provide the institutions I have worked with an understandable summary of this thesis and the advice that I have formulated as a result of this thesis. I have done this mainly by giving a presentation for officials of the municipality, employees of Incluzio, and other (voluntary) organizers of activities in Leiden Noord. I have organized this presentation together with the student with whom I have worked very closely, as our researches and our outcomes were very similar. This presentation has been given on July 4th, 2023 and is also attached in Appendix II.

Additionally, I have written an executive summary and policy recommendations. Those are attached in Appendix III of this thesis. The presentation, executive summary, and the policy recommendations are in Dutch, as they are written for a Dutch audience.

Ethical considerations

Informed consent during participant observations

During my participant observation and structured observation, I introduced myself as a researcher or researching intern and explained that I was studying 'how people live together'. However, it was not always possible or practical to introduce me to every single person I encountered. This was partly because some people I encountered did not speak Dutch (and I did not speak their language). To avoid researching people that did not feel comfortable with this, I worked with key informants. At the soup afternoon, I worked with Ali from the very beginning of my research. I discussed my intended research methods and although he did not understand why the information I wanted to gather would be relevant, he did not think it would be harmful in any way. I always had a small notebook with me in which I made notes during my participant observation and structured observation at the soup afternoon. This way, I also looked like a researcher. Sometimes, I had interesting conversations where someone told me a lot of relevant information. In these cases, I deliberately took out my notebook and asked if I could write down what they said.

Ali was the person that introduced me to the mosque. As a frequent visitor of the mosque himself, he thought it would be best if he asked them what activity I could attend for my research. At the mosque, most of the women did not speak Dutch. Through Ali, I had a contact that did speak Dutch and knew what I was doing there. The activity was led by Manise. My contact translated between me and Manise who I was and what I planned to do. She welcomed me very warmly. I do not know for certain in what way it was communicated amongst the women that I was doing research, but over the course of my research, multiple women came up to me to ask about my research. This was amplified because of my appearance; as a young, white, and relatively tall woman that did not have a Quran and did have a notebook, I stood out quite a bit. As far as language allowed me, I did explain my research to the women I talked to as best as possible. Through my conversations with them, I knew that the word had spread about me, and they knew and consented to what I was doing. Emine also expressed that she was grateful that I researched the mosque, as my research could shine a light on the positive impact that mosques can have on social cohesion.

At first, when visiting the mosque, I felt uncomfortable being the only one not covering my hair. However, wearing a headscarf or shawl to cover my hair might suggest that I followed or had converted to the Islamic religion and that I visited for religious reasons. To appear more distinguishable as a 'researcher', I actively chose not to wear a headscarf.

At the Community Centre De Kooi, I initially introduced myself to a social worker of Incluzio, the organization that managed the community centre. She organized that I could volunteer at the lunch. She and the other managers of the community centre knew what I was doing there. On my first day, I introduced myself and my research to the other two people I worked with preparing the lunch. Due to the nature of my activities (preparing the lunch) it was not possible to write down notes, so it might have been less clear that I was conducting research. However, most people that visited the lunch were regular visitors, so over the course of my research they got to know me, and I explained that I was doing research.

Consent and dealing with biased opinions

Before my structured and semi-structured interviews, I always asked people explicitly if they would participate in my research. During my semi-structured interviews, I also asked to record the interview. This was never a problem for any of my participants. Something I did struggle with during my semi-structured interviews, was that I was very interested in social groups and any (biased) opinions, bigotry, and other issues that people themselves had or had heard of. However, both because of ethical reasons and to not manipulate data, I did not want to push people towards discriminating reasoning or discourse that they did not stand by through my questions. To avoid this, I started with very open questions (e.g., "Can you tell me about the kinds of people in this neighbourhood?"). I made an effort

to really listen to the words people themselves used to describe different kinds of people and wrote those words down for myself. When I later wanted to ask about a certain social group, I made sure I used the same words people had used before, even if that were words that I would not necessarily use myself. Sometimes, people themselves said "You actually are not allowed to say such things, these days", indicating that what they wanted to say was not as tolerant as they thought it needed to be. I always expressed that they were 'allowed' to say these things to me. I did not want to make people uncomfortable with expressing potentially discriminating feelings about certain social groups to me. I was very much interested in their 'not so tolerant' opinions about other social groups, even if I did not agree with them personally.

Names and anonymity of participants

Most of the participants that are named in this thesis have been given a pseudonym. This is done to protect their identity. I tried my best to reflect people's cultural and ethnic backgrounds, age, gender, and socio-economic status in their pseudonyms. Additionally, some personal details in (diary) quotes are left out or adjusted to provide privacy. There are a few people that are not anonymised. Firstly, Ali and Ismael explicitly wanted me to use their own names. Secondly, two governmental officials are named by their own names. Marjolein Pijnacker and Abdelhaq Jermoumi are both very public figures in Leiden, and in especially Leiden Noord. For this reason, I have chosen to not anonymise them. I have, however, for this reason, discussed their quotes with them both more explicitly than I have with other participants. They have both given explicit consent to use the quotes that are used in this thesis together with their full names.

Relationship with Ali

The person I have worked with the most, without a doubt, was Ali. Before and during the soup afternoon, the activity in which I participated with him, we had a lot of time in which we just sat together. The soup afternoon was also the activity in which I participated by far the most, as this was the activity I started at the very beginning of my research in November, whereas I started participating in the other activities at the end of January. We very much had a reciprocal relationship. There was a bit of a language barrier between us at first, but we came to understand each other very well in a short time. I developed a rather strong bond with Ali, and we often made jokes to pass the time. This was amplified by how good our communication was. He often asked me to translate or explain what certain Dutch people or organizations meant. I also helped him a few times to draft formal emails or fill in official forms (mainly applications for funds), which I did as much and as well as I could. He often expressed how he appreciated me very much and how thankful he was for my help. I, in turn, always expressed how thankful I was to be able to conduct my research with him.

Ali helped me a lot as well. He put me in touch with the women at the Turkish mosque and provided me with a lot of information about the Turkish community in Leiden (Noord). He also gave me things. Besides the soup and the other foods we always ate during the soup afternoon, Ali often offered me different kinds of food, ranging from candy bars to bread to take home, and sometimes even stuff. Most times, I respectfully declined at first. This was often because I genuinely did not want what he was offering me, but also because I thought it would be inappropriate for me to accept these things. However, he could be a bit pushy with this. I ended up accepting approximately half of the things he offered me over the course of this research. This was also because I realized that declining a gift was often not (really) an option for him. The gifts were always rather small and inexpensive, and I do not believe that they have led me to write about Ali or the Trefpunt in any other way than I would have without them. This relationship with Ali has not interfered with my data but it did form a context to the caring nature of Ali and the reciprocal relationships he has with the people close to him.

Time and notable events

This research took place from November 2022 until April 2023. Around this time, a few events took place that have influenced my research. I will briefly discuss those events, but I will also refer to them in the discussion of my empirical data.

Ramadan

The Ramadan of 2023 started on March 23, which was around the end of my research. The Ramadan is a sacred month of fasting, praying, and reflection in Islam. Most of my participants were Muslim and practiced Ramadan. Therefore, Ramadan has also been a topic of conversation in many of my conversations at the end of my research, and the timing has colored my conversations with people. The Muslim participants that I have spoken to about Ramadan were excited it, as it was a way of practicing their religion. However, as someone told me, it is also hard, especially the first and last week. People's rhythm of night and day is very different (as much as work allows you) due to the nightly eating and praying. The soup afternoon (my main weekly activity) did not take place during the Ramadan, as it would be too exhausting for Ali, Zemra, and Ismael to do this. The breakfast at the Turkish Mosque did also not take place during Ramadan. This formed a natural end to my research, and I finished my activities at the Community Centre De Kooi around the same time. During and after the Ramadan, I conducted two more interviews, and I attended a communal Iftar (breaking of the fast after sunset) at the Trefpunt.

Plan de Zwijger

The municipality of Leiden has planned a big rebuilding plan in Leiden Noord (see Gemeente Leiden 2021b). In practice, this plan has been called *Plan de Zwijger* ('Plan of the Zwijger', named after the

Willem de Zwijgerlaan that runs through the area that will be rebuilt). These plans have been in the making for a lot of years, I have been told. The municipality, together with executing partners such as the involved housing corporations, has communicated their plans many times over these years. On March 28, the municipality organized an open council meeting where people could ask questions or express concerns and objections. I could not attend this meeting, but I noticed a lot of talk arose concerning this subject.

The Plan de Zwijger appears to be a case of gentrification. Gentrification is a process through which the neighbourhood is getting an 'upgrade'. It gets nicer, but the 'original' inhabitants are getting pushed out and do not benefit from the improvements (see Shellae Versey 2018 and Van de Kamp and Welschen 2019). However, this is not the case in Leiden Noord. The government is not taking e away any number of social houses. Moreover, they are adding to the total number of social houses, as well as non-social houses. They are also very careful to keep the existing social structures and to house people in another house in the same neighbourhood. When this is not possible, they offer people houses that would be considered better than they had before.

Earthquake in Turkey and Syria

On Monday, February 6, 2023, an earthquake with a Richter magnitude scale of 7.8 hit Turkey and Syria. Over twenty thousand people died under the rubble of collapsed buildings and due to the cold (Maas 2023). Both the magnitude and the mortality figures made this earthquake one of the largest in the 21st century in the area of Syria and Turkey (Eshuis 2023). There was a lot of attention for the earthquake in Dutch media, partly due to the large Turkish community in the Netherlands. Many places in the Netherlands were collecting money, clothes, and hygiene products to send to Turkey and Syria (see Venneman 2023). The Turkish Mosque in Leiden Noord did so as well. I was not aware of this on beforehand, but when I arrived for the weekly breakfast and Quran reading, there were a lot of (different) women sorting clothing and other donations. I joined the sorting and this gave me the opportunity to conduct participatory observation during a very different activity at the mosque.

Positionality

I am a white woman and at the time of my research I was 25 years old. This made me significantly younger than almost all my participants. I have not had a religious upbringing and I am not religious or spiritual in any way. I am born and raised in Leiden, and I have always lived in Leiden. This gave me something to connect over with a lot of my participants. I sometimes also have a Leiden's accent, which I did emphasize when I detected the same accent in participants. This mostly happened with old Kooi inhabitant participants. I noticed early on that this was an easy way to connect with people and show some common ground. When I introduced myself as a researcher, I often mentioned that I was a student at Leiden University. However, I also always mentioned that I had an internship at Het

Gebouw. I noticed that most participants were much more familiar and comfortable when I mentioned my internship, rather than the University.

Evidently, this research would have been different if it would have been conducted by someone other than myself. The most obvious difference would have been that a man would not have had access to the women's only breakfast at the mosque. But also the fact that I have grown up in Leiden, and my personality have greatly contributed to my access to people and organizations. I believe this has improved my research and I have tried to use this to my advantage. Additionally, I have tried to describe these aspects as far as they are relevant in the following three chapters that analyze each activity. In the next chapter, I will first give a brief overview of the existing policy that is influencing social cohesion in Leiden Noord. Then, I will present and analyse the data from each of the main three activities I have researched, and any other data that is relevant.

4. Policy on Social Cohesion in Leiden

Leiden Noord, mainly the neighbourhoods that this thesis focuses on, houses a lot of people with a low income or on welfare. For the municipality of Leiden, social cohesion is an important point of focus in their policy, mainly in these areas. They see social cohesion mainly as a way to attack the problems that are present in these areas, such as poverty, health issues, and mental problems. In this chapter, I will explain the policy that is relevant to the social cohesion in Leiden Noord, to illustrate the administrative context of this research. I will first give a brief overview of the policy on social housing in the Netherlands and the region of Leiden (Holland Rijnland). This illustrates why the neighbourhoods are the way that they are and who (is allowed to) live there. Secondly, I will explain the municipality's vision of social cohesion and why they focus on it. Lastly, I will explain how social work is organized in Leiden Noord, and how local initiatives are subsidized.

Housing policy in Leiden

In De Kooi, De Hoven, and the Prinsessenbuurt, most of the houses are social houses. In the Netherlands, social houses are houses that are relatively inexpensive, with a monthly rent of a maximum of € 808.06 (in 2023). All houses below this rent rate are classified as social houses. However, most of the social houses are managed by social housing corporations. For at least 85% of their houses, they need to apply a maximum income of € 44,035 (for households of one person) or € 48,625 (for households of multiple people) to qualify for their social housing (Rijksoverheid s.a.).

In Leiden, the three social housing corporations are De Sleutels, Ons Doel, and Portaal (Huren in Holland Rijnland s.a.a). These are all three very present in Leiden Noord, with De Sleutels owning most houses in De Hoven and Ons Doel and Portaal mainly operating in De Kooi and the Prinsessenbuurt. These corporations assign houses on the basis of income, registration time, and urgency. People can only apply for houses that the corporation thinks are affordable with their income (Huren in Holland Rijnland s.a.b). When multiple people want to apply for a house (that is considered suitable for their income), it is assigned on the basis of registration time (Huren in Holland Rijnland s.a.c).

If someone is in very urgent need of a (certain type of) house and is not able to successfully apply for one, they can try to get a declaration of urgency. When a declaration of urgency is granted, they get priority over people with a longer registration time. It is unclear whether it is possible to get a house that would not be affordable with their income due to a declaration of urgency. However, this is probably not very likely. A declaration of urgency only applies to a house that fits the minimum of someone's household needs and no more. For example: if someone is single and currently living in a two-bedroom apartment, the house they would get assigned with a declaration of urgency would only be a one-bedroom apartment, even though it would be 'less' than their previous house (Holland

Rijnland s.a.). However, Holland Rijnland emphasizes that the assignment of declaration of urgencies is a matter of "customization" ("*maatwerk"*) (ibid., translated).

Declarations of urgency are granted on "either medical or psychosocial grounds" (Holland Rijnland s.a.). Before July 2017, refugees with a permanent asylum residence permit also had an urgency status to get a social house. This was imposed nationally. Currently, however, it is up to every municipality to make policy on this (Rijksoverheid s.a.). The municipality of Leiden or the Holland Rijnland region does not grant a declaration of urgency to refugees with a permanent asylum residence permit currently (see Holland Rijnland s.a. and Holland Rijnland 2022). However, multiple participants have mentioned that there are a lot of former refugees living in Leiden Noord due to this urgency policy. These are probably people that moved there due to the former legislation and are still living there.

Applying for a declaration of urgency costs € 65 (Holland Rijnland s.a.). This is, of course, quite a lot for people that are in the financial situation of applying for social housing. From a student at Leren met de Stad who was researching the topic of declarations of urgency, I heard that it is very unclear what are reasonable grounds for such a declaration. It is unclear for (potential) appliers, but also for social work organizations assisting (potential) appliers and even sometimes for the corporations themselves. The corporations are trying to prevent applications they think are not going to be granted beforehand, supposedly to prevent their applicants from the costs I mentioned above. The total amount of applications for declarations of urgency has gone down a lot: from 357 in 2019 to 230 in 2022. The amount of granted declarations of urgency has also gone down in number (200 in 2019 to 147 in 2022) but has gone up in 2022 regarding percentages: 56% in 2019, 46% in 2020, 41% in 2021, and 64% in 2022 (Holland Rijnland 2022).

Because of this policy, which applies to most of the Prinsessenbuurt, De Hoven, and De Kooi, the people in these neighbourhoods have low incomes and are often in a vulnerable position. Abdelhaq Jermoumi (Alderman of poverty and equal chances, among other things), described these kinds of people for me:

> *People who've been living on welfare level ('*bijstandsniveau'*) for years. So they have an income of twelve, thirteen hundred euros as a family [per month] that they need to come by from. So they live from regulation to regulation, from safety net to safety net. They cannot, so to say, eat meat every day. And that works through to their children. They can maybe only let one in so many children play a sport. They cannot offer everything in terms of culture or other things. And additionally, there is a health issue. The poorer you are, the unhealthier you are. That is also scientifically proven that people in poverty die sooner. So those kinds of people are what we're dealing with in*

> *Leiden Noord. Status holders (‘*statushouders’*, refugees with a status which allows them to stay permanently) come in and do not get a job quickly. They’re frustrated. We have people that might’ve gotten to a mental health institution (‘*GGZ-instelling’*) in the past. They are now living in the neighbourhoods. So that causes a certain pressure on the neighbourhoods. (Interview 31-03-2023)*

Marjolein Pijnacker added:

> *“If you have a concentration, and, of course, we are talking about cheap renting houses, in general. I always say: ‘You’ve got askers, and you’ve got carriers’. And such a neighbourhood can carry plenty, traditionally. They’re used to it. But if the balance is gone, if there are more ‘askers’ than ‘carriers’, yes, you get problems.” (Interview 31-03-2023)*

To improve these struggles, the municipality of Leiden wants to increase the participation of the inhabitants of Leiden Noord and to increase the interactions between different social groups. They mainly see it as a means to increase everyone’s livelihood. Marjolein Pijnacker, a municipality official told me about this:

> *“Look, it’s not just about the social… It has many consequences. It has consequences for health, for self-confidence, to move up in society, to build your network. For me, it is not about social cohesion. It is a means. But it is not the goal. It contributes to so many other goals. And I’m convinced that when people are happy and content, they have more confidence. Look, you’d still have the complaints because of your diabetes, but it becomes manageable. It’s so important that it’s there. And understand me correctly, we cannot force anyone, but the ones that are doing it, are happier in the end. That do stuff together.” (Interview 27-02-2023)*

To improve social cohesion in Leiden (Noord), the municipality has a few policies that (try to) bring people together. In the next paragraph, I will elaborate on these different policies.

Social work in Leiden Noord

The municipality of Leiden has three main organizations that are responsible for social work: Sol, BuZz, and Incluzio. These organizations get structural subsidies from the municipality. Sol’s focus is on children and BuZz focuses on improving basic skills, such as the Dutch language and a healthy lifestyle (BuZz s.a.). Incluzio’s focus is on the participation of inhabitants in neighbourhoods. Therefore, this thesis focuses on Incluzio, not on Sol and BuZz. In this paragraph, I will explain how the social work organization Incluzio is organized in Leiden Noord.

Incluzio's Huis van de Buurt De Kooi

Most of the community centres Incluzio manages are called '*Huis van de Buurt*' ('House of the Neighbourhood'). Incluzio has divided Leiden into seven different areas and assigned a '*Huis van de Buurt*' to each one. These areas included multiple neighbourhoods each. An employee of Community Centre De Kooi told us that they were assigned to Leiden Noord (which includes De Kooi), *Boerhaavedistrict*, and *Stationsdistrict*. Based on that information, and complemented by my personal knowledge of Leiden, the area assigned to the Community Centre De Kooi is portrayed in the map of Figure 4.

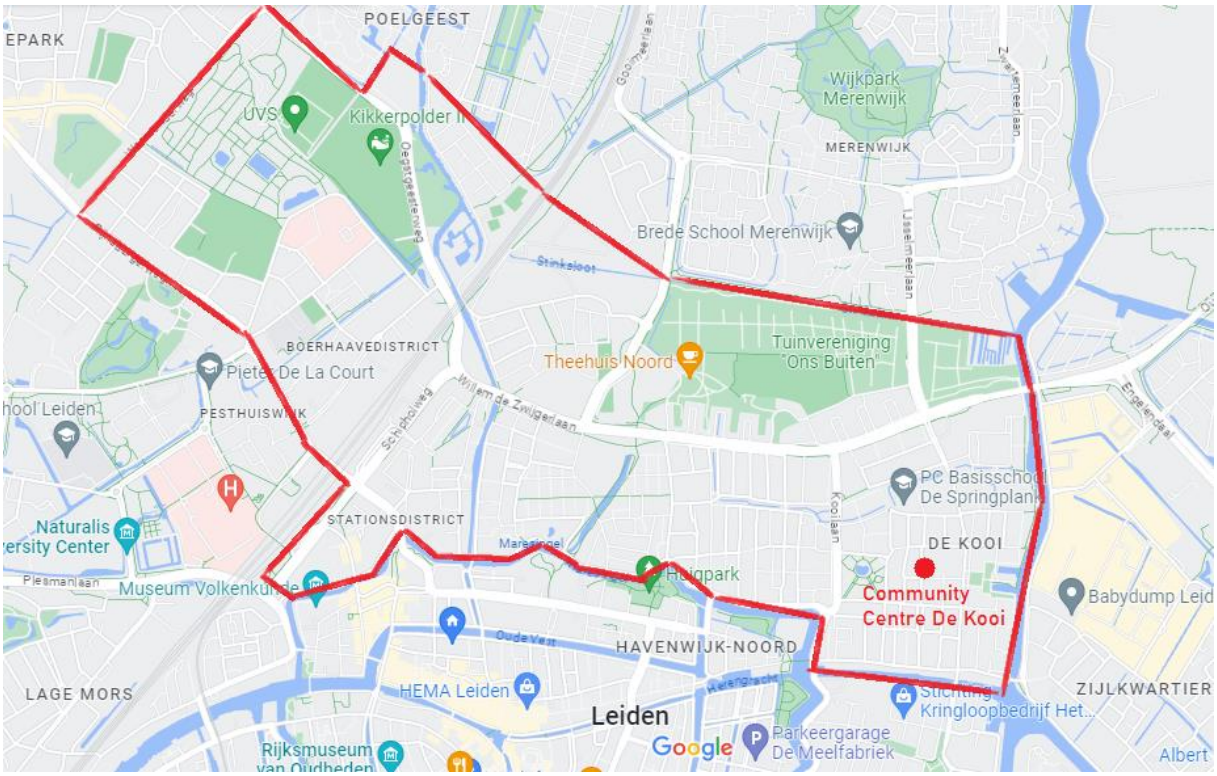

Fig. 4: The area assigned to the Community Centre De Kooi.

Of course, it stands out how much the Community Centre De Kooi is located in the east of this rather big area. This is especially given that for many inhabitants of the Hoven, the Community Centre De Kooi was experienced to be too far to visit. However, both the location of the Community Centre, as well as its having been literally named after the neighbourhood of De Kooi, did show the focus of the Community Centre's focus on De Kooi and Leiden Noord in general. This is not too peculiar; within the whole area of the Community Centre, these were the neighbourhoods with the most poverty. Below in Figure 5 is shown the same area, but with the average disposable income per household in each neighbourhood (Gemeente Leiden 2020).

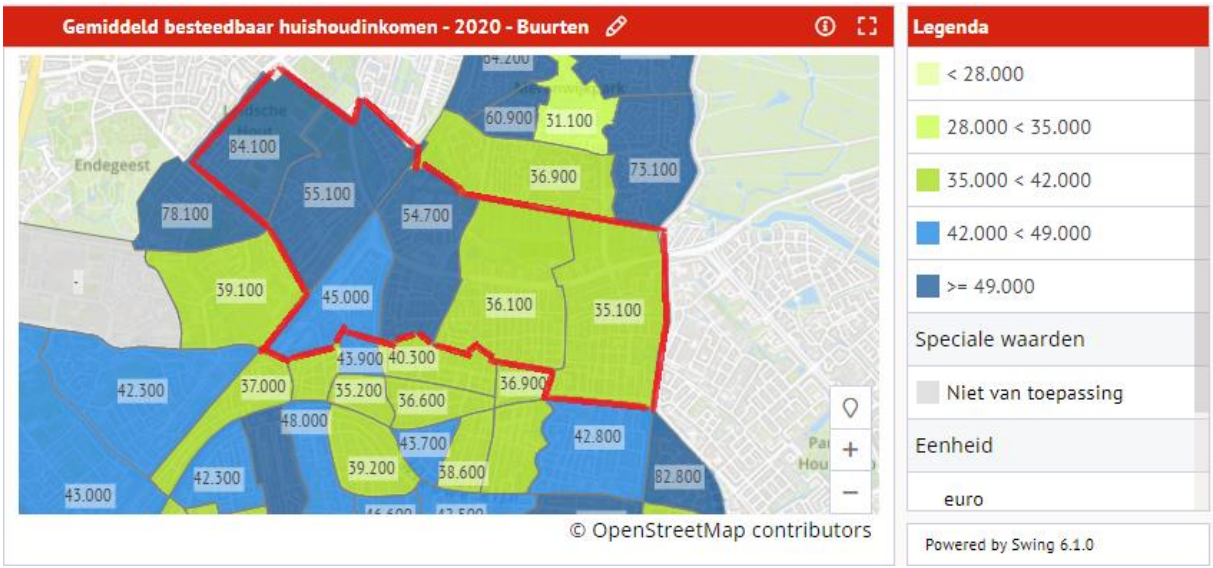

Fig. 5: Average disposable income per neighbourhood (Gemeente Leiden 2020)

The Community Centre De Kooi is housed in an old community centre and is being managed by Incluzio after the change of organization of social work within the municipality of Leiden, a few years before this research. Incluzio wanted to use the established communities within the existing community centres. Bianca told me about this:

> *"We have literally taken over these centres. And yes, that went well. All of those community centres were doing really well, of course. It were the organizations that were not allowed to operate anymore, but everyone knows these community centres. It would've been very weird to seek out a new place." (Interview 15-03-2023)*

By using the building of the old community centre, the Community Centre De Kooi is very much embedded within the 'original' community (the 'old Kooi inhabitants') of De Kooi. I will elaborate more on this community and its relationship with the Community Centre in the next chapter.

Incluzio's Huis van de Buurt Het Gebouw

In De Kooi was another Community Centre of Incluzio: Het Gebouw ('The Building'). This was the place where my internship at Leren met de Stad was housed. Het Gebouw housed much more than just Incluzio; there were, amongst other things, also a library, a primary school, and childcare, housed in Het Gebouw. Het Gebouw was built in 2013 (Rijnlands Architectuur Platform s.a.), as part of a big renovation of De Kooi. Incluzio Leiden Noord (which is now housed in the Driftstraat) was planned to move to Het Gebouw. However, they wanted to stay in the community centre at the Driftstraat, as it was an established community centre amongst the visitors. Simultaneously, the Incluzio City Centre was looking for a new place to settle, as they did not have available space in the city centre. This led

to Incluzio Leiden Noord staying in their building at the Driftstraat, and Incluzio City Centre to take up residence in Het Gebouw.

However, this division between Incluzio in Het Gebouw and Incluzio at the Driftstraat existed more on paper than in practice. Jolanda told me about this:

> *"Of course, it cannot be like when you come in there, and an Incluzio employee is like 'Sorry, madam, but you need to walk to De Kooi, because we are of the City Centre, and we do not help you or we do not talk to you." (Interview 15-03-2023)*

The community centres are all called '*Huis van de Buurt*'. Therefore, the name of the Community Centre in De Kooi (at which I participated in the lunch) community centre is, officially, *Huis van de Buurt De Kooi*. However, this name is rather long and was hardly ever used in practice. During my research, most people, including myself and employees of the community centre, called it '*Buurthuis De Kooi*' ('Community Centre De Kooi') or simply the *'Driftstraat'*, referring to the street it was located on. The term 'Community Centre De Kooi', or 'Community Centre' for short, is the clearest about both the function and the location of the place. I will, therefore, use this to refer to it. Additionally, the *Huis van de Buurt Het Gebouw* was always just called 'Het Gebouw', and I will, hence, use this term to refer to it.

Subsidies for private, local initiatives

Besides the three main social work organizations (Sol, BuZz, and Incluzio), the municipality also has a 'Societal initiatives' subsidy fund. This fund is meant for private initiatives to organize activities to promote "participation, emancipation, encounters ('*ontmoeting*'), those kinds of things", as Ben, a municipality official told me. These initiatives need to come from inhabitants of Leiden themselves, and not be for commercial purposes. This makes the municipality quite dependent on 'active inhabitants'. "If you have active inhabitants, things can move quite quickly. But if they disappear, then nothing will happen for a long while", he told me.

When inhabitants want to organize an activity, the municipality takes on quite a collaborative role. Sometimes, they have requirements before granting the money. They might, for example, require the activity to be open for a more diverse group, or to incorporate educational purposes. The municipality also helps with the organization of the activity. Ben explained to me:

> *"Imagine inhabitants saying they want to organize a party: 'We want to meet everyone in the neighbourhood'. I comply. And most times, I initiate a conversation with these inhabitants: 'What exactly do you want?' 'What is it going to look like?' Do you have a budget?' 'What do you expect of the municipality?' 'Have you thought of*

other funds?' Those things. Together with these inhabitants, we try to get to something." (Interview 26-01-2023)

The municipality does not subsidize food as part of this subsidy. Both the officials I have spoken about this could not really explain why that is and did not agree with it, but that had been decided by the municipality. This comes from an idea of 'you eat at home', one of them told me. The municipality's fund might also not be enough to cover the expenses of food, or they might need to make cuts on other activities, acknowledged another official. There are ways around this policy. Ali's soup is paid out of the subsidy he gets for his neighbourhood association, but the subsidy is not particularly for the soup. Other ways to serve food at an activity funded by the municipality's fund would be to have visitors pay for their own food, and finding other funds or sponsorships that pay for or facilitate food.

Conclusion

Due to the policy on social housing, and the number of social houses in Leiden Noord, many people live in poverty, under stress, and in a vulnerable position. The municipality strives to improve the social cohesion because this would lighten people's struggles. To do this, they assigned Incluzio to improve participation among inhabitants. Inhabitants can also organize activities themselves, and the municipality funds this through their Societal initiatives subsidy. In the next two chapters, I will explore how social cohesion is (not) increased by activities in the context of these policies.

5. Interactions during Lunch in De Kooi

Every Thursday, I helped with the lunch in the Community Centre De Kooi. During this activity, I observed how different inhabitants of De Kooi did or did not interact with each other. In this chapter, I will first elaborate on my observations during this weekly lunch, complemented with information shared by employees and inhabitants through interviews. Second, I will analyse how the nature of the activity and physical space did not invite people of different social groups to interact with each other, but how it did increase the cohesion within the 'old Kooi inhabitants' slightly.

Lunch at Community Centre De Kooi

The weekly lunch is an activity that mainly attracted 'old Kooi inhabitants' ('*oude Kooibewoners*'). They are called this by multiple Incluzio employees and municipality officials because of their age and long-time connections to the neighbourhood. They refer to themselves simply as 'inhabitants' ('*bewoners*'), but it would be clear they did not include people of different social groups with that (such as people with a migration background or '*yuppen*'). I will elaborate on the other social groups in De Kooi and the 'old Kooi inhabitant's relationships with them further down this chapter. However, people who are not part of the 'old Kooi inhabitant' social group did also visit the lunch. The 'old Kooi inhabitants' have no migration background and their families had often lived in De Kooi for multiple generations. There is a lot of social cohesion within the group of 'old Kooi inhabitants'. Bianca and Karin are employees of the Community Centre. Ans, Greet, and Cor have been regulars and volunteers at the centre for decades. In this paragraph, I will present my observations and data from their interviews, focusing on the nature of the activity and the interactions that did (not) occur during it.

Food and physical space

The lunch is every Thursday, early in the afternoon. They serve multiple staple sandwiches and fried food, and a weekly changing sandwich and soup. The weekly sandwich and soup are written on a chalkboard board. There are no menus, but the regular things served are such staples that hardly anybody would ever ask for a menu.

The main sandwich is *broodje gezond* ('sandwich healthy', a typical Dutch sandwich). The fried foods are also Dutch classics: croquette, *frikandel*, *kaassoufflé*, lumpia, and fries. They can also be ordered as a sandwich. They also serve weekly changing dishes: chicken curry sandwich (*broodje kip kerrie*), sandwich with brie, honey, and walnuts, vegetable soup with homemade meatballs, and bean soup.

I would prepare the food with two others in the kitchen. The kitchen is separated by a counter. At the front of the counter, one of the people I worked with would take orders. During my research, most people sat down at one of the tables and had their meals there. There are a few tables in the

room, as pictured below in Figure 6. When I had time, I would bring the meals to people, otherwise, they would pick it up at the counter. People can also take sandwiches home with them. This latter rarely happened during my research; only one woman would often take some more sandwiches home after she had eaten.

Fig. 6: The inside of the Community Centre De Kooi where the lunch was usually eaten.

As shown in Figure 1, there is one long table and three smaller ones. The fourth table, the one that was closest to the entrance, is covered with folders and not meant to eat lunch at. Due to the way the tables are organized, people did not have a lot of contact with each other. During my research, a group of women that had known each other for decades would always sit together at the long table. Other people would often sit by themselves at one of the smaller tables. Because of the rather high number of seats, however, over half of the seats would typically remain empty. The space does little to invite people to interact with each other.

There were also a few people visiting the lunch that were not 'old Kooi inhabitants'. These people were younger (approximately 30-50 years old) or had a migration background. However, these people hardly interacted with the 'old Kooi inhabitants', or with each other. Amir, for example, always had his food in a separate room where he liked to spend his time.

Costs and conflicts

All of the different dishes are very cheap, costing less than two euros each. Incluzio covered all the expenses, and the revenues are also for Incluzio. From what I heard about each week's groceries and what I guessed were each week's revenues, I do not think the lunch was a source of profit for Incluzio. In multiple conversations with different employees, I noticed a dilemma between minimizing costs and quality. For example, to cut costs, a lot of work in community centres is done by volunteers. However,

when people are not being paid, their availability and dependability also go down, because people feel less obligated to be available or show up. Similarly, when food is free or cheap, it cannot live up to everyone's expectations (of quality, speed, etc.) due to the cutting of costs when it comes to employees, ingredients, and utensils.

The need to minimize costs to keep prices down did sometimes cause a little conflict between visitors and us, who prepared and served the food. This was mainly about the food, for example about the speed or accuracy of orders. These were never big conflicts. I often did have a feeling as if this was an unsteady balance. When I served the wrong order, I noticed how the tight atmosphere made me a little anxious. Afterwards, I wrote down the following diary entry about the incident:

> *She reacted angrily, but I was sure I had made the right order. […] When Ans also understood that I was not in the wrong, I was relieved to be on her 'good side' again. I did not want to have her against me. (Personal notes 09-03-2023)*

Between visitors, there were never conflicts. However, this might also have been because certain people did not visit the lunch to avoid conflict. Bianca told me about how conflict between families caused some people to avoid the Community Centre:

> *"It clashes. Even though, I say, it is ours now, Incluzio's. So come over for a cup of coffee. 'Yes, no, but they are always sitting there.' I say, 'Yes, I know that.' That's very old ('*oud zeer*'), you know. So, that is very hard. Because, then someone of the other 'clan' comes walking in, and you see them going like, 'I don't see you.' You know, like that. That's just very hard. That's just very old. I can't do much about that. Even though we do try to." (Interview 15-03-2023)*

A safe space for Cor

There is one man, Cor, who had been living in De Kooi and had been visiting the community centre for a long time. During my research, he was always moving slowly, often walking behind a walker, and could not always hear or understand it when you were saying something to him. He volunteered at the lunch every week; he was in charge of the dishwasher. Sometimes, people would make jokes behind his back, but never really mean ones. At one point during my research, something bad happened to him. After that, people were more cautious around him and kept a closer eye on him, giving him leftovers from the lunch so he would have something to eat. It would have been very easy for someone else (me, for example) to operate the dishwasher instead of him. However, both the employees and the regular visitors were very clear to me that that was his job. Volunteering at the community centre was something to keep him busy. He could get out of his house, feel useful, and have some social contact. Karin, especially, was very concerned with him:

"Cor has been coming here in this community centre for such a long time. 20, 22 years already. As long as I've been working here, anyway. So they've become a part of this house, kind of. But also of yourself. Because you've gone through so much with these people." (Interview 09-03-2023)

The Community Centre is very much a safe space for Cor. This is mainly because he is surrounded by people and a space that he knew and felt comfortable with. Although being exclusive for a certain group is not necessary for a space to feel safe, it can contribute to the perception of safety (Rosenfeld and Noterman 2014). The Community Centre is not exclusively for 'old Kooi inhabitants', but in practice, the lunch had little visitors that were not 'old Kooi inhabitants'. Cor's sense of safety is amplified by the fact that he has a task that is his responsibility: operating the dishwasher. It gives him a purpose and a way to move through the space, which greatly contributes to a sense of control and safety (ibid.).

Analysis of the interactions during the lunch

In this paragraph, I will analyse who visited the lunch at the Community Centre, and how and why the nature of the lunch and the physical space of the community centre contributed to the social cohesion between these people (or not).

It is hard to tell whether the 'old Kooi inhabitants' are cohesive because they have lived together in De Kooi for such a long time, or whether they have lived there because this community is quite tight. Bianca told me about the sense of reciprocity amongst the 'old Kooi inhabitants':

"People were willing to go quite far for each other. Everyone knew each other. That is, of course, quite generalizing, but roughly put. People also always had chairs in front of the house. Because if you sat outside, you sat outside in the front. Because then you saw this one, you saw that one… […] That was the mentality. There was a lot of help. I still hear that. You know, you had something. You did not have to shut yourself inside with your curtains closed because someone would come knocking, like, 'Is something up?' 'Are you sick?' 'Are you still alive?' Those kinds of things." (Interview 15-03-2023)

Most of the 'old Kooi inhabitants' who visited the lunch were people who had been visiting or volunteering at the Community Centre for decades and felt very connected to the place. This sometimes caused some conflict between them and the Incluzio employees, as it was Incluzio's task to make everyone (not just them) feel at home. "We've been here for years. At least 20, 23 years with Marco and Karin. It just has become our own home. As a matter of speaking. It is not allowed, but it's like that", said Ans. She refers to the feeling that 'they', the 'old Kooi inhabitants' that have been involved in the Community Centre for decades, own the place. This feeling, and how these people

sometimes carry out this feeling of 'owning the place' does make other people, mainly people that are not 'old Kooi inhabitants', feel excluded.

These regulars do contribute to the place feeling more like a home. Additionally, its hosts, mainly Karin and Bianca, are very informal. The building is physically accessible, and the activity has little to no monetary requirements. However, the lunch does not very much to initiate conversation. The people at the larger table on the side did talk quite a lot with each other, but the people on the more separate tables would often eat by themselves in silence. Therefore, I would not say the community centre (during the lunch) does not very much act as a third place according to Oldenburg's characteristics (Oldenburg 1989: 20-42, Williams and Hipp 2019: 69, Jeffres et al. 2009: 335).

Dilemma of cutting costs and reciprocity

I want to highlight the matter of the monetary costs of the lunch, which were rather small and not required if you would not want to eat something. As I illustrated above, the dilemma of cutting costs was the source of most of the conflicts during the lunch, and costs are in direct relation to the accessibility of a place. The managers of the *Theehuis van Noord* ('Tea House of North'), another place of coming together, just north of the Hoven, make a direct connection between the spending of money on food and the quality of the interactions and connections made during an activity. They believe there needs to be monetary compensation for food for people to contribute to the social cohesion. Therefore, they operate by the principle of "what is free, is worthless". Marcel, one of the founders and managers of the Theehuis, told me about what he thought would happen if they would not apply this principle:

> *"What I notice, is that people come very specifically, [for example], to have breakfast. And then they're gone. Yes. So we wonder, what does that contribute to the coherence and mutual connections? That's what we have doubts about." (Interview 17-01-2023)*

However, this principle does not apply to the 'old Kooi inhabitants'. They help each other a lot. This reciprocity is both a cause and an expression of social cohesion. This was also visible during the lunch. For example, we often put leftover soup in the refrigerator so Ans could warm it up the next day. Karin told me:

> *"People do want to, if someone's sick… As long as it does not become structural, of course. I do want to mention that, too, because the elder people just do not want that. But they do want to do some extra groceries. Or they cook for an extra person. So they do have warm food. Those kinds of things. […] That still happens here. And that does not happen anywhere else these days. […] You can see it yourself, of course. Indeed, there's that togetherness (*'samenhorigheid'*)." (Interview 09-03-2023)*

By helping each other, members of the community build interdependent relationships of reciprocity that strengthen their feeling of 'togetherness'. By bringing value to each other and (indirectly) to their community, they feel more connected. This creates a high level of social order and control (Kearns and Forrest 2000: 998). Additionally, neighbourhoods and communities that have high social cohesion help each other with food. This is even more so in poorer neighbourhoods and communities (Brisson 2012), such as De Kooi.

This help also extended to the Community Centre and its employees. Greet, a regular and long-time volunteer of the Community Centre, had a lot of knowledge about the Community Centre and its visitors. She often helps the employees or takes shifts from them. She told me about when Karin was sick, on the evening and morning before the interview:

> *"Now, we've been running the neighbourhood rooms ('*Wijkkamers'*, activity at the Community Centre) for three mornings. The elderly people really love that. If someone from management is sick, you try to fill in for each other, as a team. That's cooperation." (Interview 23-03-2023)*

The 'old Kooi inhabitants' also very much make use of Incluzio's resources to help one another. In turn, they also help the employees of Incluzio, and in extension, Incluzio itself. This is done through volunteering, which is rather formal, and more spontaneous help, as is illustrated above. Greet even refers to herself as part of the 'team' of the Community Centre, even though she is not formally employed. Therefore, I would argue that Incluzio itself is incorporated in the reciprocal relationships that are so fundamental to the social cohesion within the group of 'old Kooi inhabitants'. The lunch at the Community Centre being cheap, or being able to sit there without having to spend money, is not lessening people's engagement with each other. It is the fact that it is cheap which creates this reciprocal relationship with the Community Centre, and in turn, with the 'old Kooi inhabitants' community.

Other people of De Kooi

The younger generations of the 'old Kooi inhabitants' are moving out of De Kooi. It did not become very clear to me why this is the case. Karin has stated that younger people move out because of the rising house prices and the growing social housing waiting lists: "All of them are moving. My children as well! They're saying, 'Mum, I can't afford a house of 400 grand. I could get that same house in [another town] for 200 grand.'" The neighbourhood police officer, however, told me that only the children of the 'old Kooi inhabitants' that are 'better off', that can afford it, are moving out of De Kooi. "Those of the working class, so to say, that can afford it, […] are better 'situated', you see them leaving

the neighbourhood." Regardless of the reasons behind it, the fact that the younger 'old Kooi inhabitants' are leaving De Kooi does cause the older ones to be lonelier and less taken care of.

There are also new, 'different' people moving people into De Kooi. These people are mainly people with a migration background and '*yuppen*' ('young, urban professionals', young couples or families with a high socioeconomic status). The 'old Kooi inhabitants' have little in common with these 'new' inhabitants, and they feel like they do not put as much effort and time into the neighbourhood as they do or have done. Marjolein Pijnacker told me about this:

> *"Leiden Noord did not use to be attractive at all. But now, it's very attractive. There's a piece of water in between, that is called the outer canal ('*singel'*)], and you are in the city centre. You're at the train station like that. […] It's becoming a super attractive neighbourhood. That's what you're seeing. That's called gentrification. That's what's happening now. […] In Nieuw Leyden, when I'm standing at the outer canals, I see all the cargo bikes go to the city centre. And the children of De Hoven cross over to Het Gebouw. […] That's a problem. But we're trying our very best. To make sure the authentic inhabitants ('*authentieke bewoners'*) can remain to live there. That's hard." (Interview 27-02-2023)*

During my time in the field, the municipality made plans for a big housing project in Leiden Noord. The 'old Kooi inhabitants' did not agree with this plan. This was mainly because they were anxious that their neighbourhood would be affected, although it did not become clear to me what exactly they were afraid of. However, even though Marjolein called this project 'gentrification', the municipality is very careful to (try to) not let the inhabitants of De Kooi and other parts of Leiden Noord be affected negatively by this plan. This conflict exposed their complicated relationship with the (local) government. Mainly Greet, as a sort of representative, was very involved with the decisions of the municipality and met with different municipality officials multiple times. Through these meetings, and other informal talks with municipality officials, she and other 'old Kooi inhabitants' were quite active in participating and letting their voices be heard in local politics. However, they had little trust in politics and the (local) government. They did not think the municipality actually listened and cared about their opinions.

Conclusion

The Community Centre De Kooi is very much a place for the 'old Kooi inhabitants'. This group clearly has a high degree of social cohesion already, but the lunch clearly contributes to this as well. The food is very oriented towards the 'old Kooi inhabitants'. It is a place of meeting and a safe space for people from within the 'old Kooi inhabitants' group, such as Cor. The fact that the activity is cheap makes it

accessible for them, even though they do not have a lot of money. In fact, it contributes to the reciprocal and community-based interactions during and surrounding the activity. These relationships are already very present within the group of 'old Kooi inhabitants' and are only deepened by the lunch in the Community Centre De Kooi. Therefore, the lunch does contribute to the social cohesion within this social group. However, this effect is not very big. The 'old Kooi inhabitants' that visit are not very many, and most of them have known each other for a long time.

The contact with and amongst people outside of the 'old Kooi inhabitants', however, is very little. People often eat their lunch alone without talking. The appeal towards the 'old Kooi inhabitants' and the feeling of them 'owning the place' seems to not make people outside this social group feel welcome. This effect was amplified by the physical space, through which people are easily sitting on their own. Because of this, the lunch at the Community Centre De Kooi did nothing to increase the social cohesion between different social groups of De Kooi or Leiden Noord.

6. Interactions during Breakfast and Quran Reading in the Mosque

Every Monday, I participated in the women's-only Quran reading and breakfast at the Turkish mosque. During this activity, I observed how the women interacted with each other. In this chapter, I will first elaborate on my observations during this weekly activity. Second, I will analyse how and why the nature of the activity, in combination with the physical space increased the social cohesion within the social group of women with a Turkish migration background.

Breakfast and Quran reading in the Turkish Mosque

The weekly breakfast and Quran reading is very much a 'Turkish' activity, and exclusively for women. Manise is the host of the activity. Emine is a regular visitor that had also been involved with the mosque. She helped me to interpret the interactions I observed. I will elaborate below on the women that participated in this activity. In this paragraph, I will first explain what sort of place the mosque is, what the activity looked like, and what interactions I observed.

The Turkish mosque

The Imar Sinan Mosque is a Turkish mosque in De Kooi. The mosque has been in practice since 1995. The building had been a previously reformed church, of which the tower has been replaced by a minaret (Reliwiki s.a.). The mosque is housed on the *Kooiplein* ('Kooi Square'), the most central square of De Kooi with a lot of different shops and a fountain in the middle, as is visible in Figure 7 below. The entrance of the mosque is not on the square but on *Curaçaostraat* on the other side of the building. The breakfast and Quran reading took place in the room facing the square.

Fig. 7: The Kooiplein (left) and the Imar Sinan Mosque (right) from the back. The room where the activity took place was on this side of the mosque (in white), the entrance was on the other side of the building.

The mosque is a Turkish mosque, which mainly means that Turkish is the main language. All my participants called it the 'Turkish Mosque', or simply 'the mosque'. I will, therefore, also refer to the mosque this way. Leiden has two other mosques, Islamic Centre Imam Malik and Islamic Centre Al

Hijra. Both these mosques are considered Moroccan mosques, with their main language being Arabic. The Islamic Centre Imam Malik is also located in Leiden Noord, on the west side of the Hoven. The Islamic Centre Al-Hijra is on the other side of Leiden (Islamitisch Centre Imam Malik, s.a.) (Al Hijra, s.a.). The mosque where I conducted research is the only Turkish mosque in the region of Leiden and it caters to men and women from the region of Leiden. However, a lot of the women that visit the weekly breakfast are from Leiden Noord.

The Turkish Mosque does not only provide activities for Turkish people but is also embedded in its neighbourhood. Alderman Jermoumi told me about this:

> *"[The Turkish Mosque] has [during Ramadan] daily collections for the food bank. They don't put it on display. And there are other parties that ask subsidies for that, so to speak, to do that. But they just do this. 'This is our neighbourhood; we do this for the people.'" (Interview 31-03-2023)*

During this research, the women that visited the breakfast were mainly first-generation Turkish migrants, or Dutch with a Turkish migration background, as Emine explained to me. Most of them were seniors, approximately between forty and seventy years old. They exclusively spoke Turkish amongst each other. Some of them spoke Dutch with me, ranging from fluent to having quite some difficulty. Most of them did not talk to me but seemed too hesitant or too insecure about their Dutch when I tried to talk with them. It was often the younger women that talked Dutch to me, but not always. They always covered their hair. Most of them wore a hijab, some covered their hair with a shawl or some sort of beanie. One woman that visited a few times always came in with her hair uncovered and quickly put on a shawl when she came in. Her shawl, however, would slowly come off after the praying was done.

The start

I joined the weekly women's only breakfast and Quran reading on Mondays. The activity starts at ten o'clock in the morning. It often took a few minutes before everyone greeted one another and sat down. Everyone sat at a large table, with Manise at the head of the table. She always led the meetings with a microphone and often had to ask people to sit down and be quiet to start.

Depending on the number of women that were present, they naturally formed groups sitting together. However, the fact that everyone had to sit at the same table did significantly contribute to the space facilitating conversation. Additionally, Manise was very much an informal host that was one of them. This was more so as she often joined the chatter and let others do some of the singing. The way the physical space encouraged conversation and the fact that Manise was an informal host show how the breakfast acts as a third place, according to Goldenburg's (1989: 20-42) characteristics.

The atmosphere at the weekly breakfast was very warm and welcoming. Manise often had difficulty getting all the chatter quiet before starting. Sometimes people showed photos of their new-born grandchild, which caused a lot of praise, kisses, and blessings. One time, Manise shared perfume that she had acquired in Mecca, where she had just been. Inside the mosque, everyone is expected to be nice to one another, as it is a holy place ("Outside, you can have arguments and enemies, but here, in the house of Allah, you need to be nice to each other"). Many of the women knew each other. "There is a group of people, mainly first-generation, they almost always come. Every week, you see this group, sitting together. Maybe you've noticed that. And they always sit together," Emine told me. However, they are also very open to new people:

> *"People are quite open. They kind of want to know new faces. Even more so when they really know new faces. Then, they go talk to them. Then, they ask who is here. They are very curious. Then, you always want to know who that is and where they came from." (Interview 22-03-2023)*

They always welcomed me as well. My appearance did raise questions a few times ("Not often do you see a Dutch woman in the mosque"), but never in a negative way. They also encouraged me to get to know their religion and food ("If you leave here, you are half-Turkish").

Praying and commemoration

Most women had their own Quran with them and read from it as Manise sang the text. Sometimes, other women took turns singing. One particular prayer was always sung by all women together, and everyone held their hands with their palms facing upward. After this prayer, everyone prayed for themselves, often mumbling softly, before lightly stroking their face. I did not join with this at first, but during one of the last times I was there, one woman quietly indicated that I had to do the gestures as well. This had a deep impression on me. I wrote about this the following diary entry:

> *During the collective singing of the prayer, the woman beside me hinted that I had to hold up my hands. I did this and she nodded encouraging. Suddenly, I felt very connected with all of the women. I feel quite an outsider all the time, but not at all at that moment. Through that gesture, I felt one with all the women there.*
>
> *After the singing, everyone got quiet and mumbled softly (their own prayer, I assume). I am not religious, but I liked to think about things that I find important at that moment. (Personal notes 20-03-2023)*

The combination of singing and embodied gestures contributed greatly to the social cohesion between the women. This supports Durkheim's theory of how (religious) gestures can make people 'become one' (Durkheim [1912] in Applerouth and Edles 2016: 135).

One day, one of the women whom I regularly talked to gestured for me to sit at another place than where I had sat down: "Go sit with them, they also speak Dutch." The women I came to sit with were a few younger women whom I had never seen before. They also had their daughters with them, and they only wore a shawl over their hair during the praying and Quran reading. They did know some of the other women that visited regularly, but they did not usually visit the mosque and were also from outside Leiden, one of them explained to me. Today, however, was special. It was the one-year commemoration of a man that was widely known in the Turkish community in Leiden. The younger women were this man's family and had taken their daughters with them to remember him. The Quran parts that were read that morning were specially selected for that morning. The younger women did not understand Arabic, but Manise did translate and explained the Arabic spells for them in Turkish. The commemoration is a way of reinforcing a common identity (Stengs 2009: 102-103).

Food, costs, and end

After approximately one hour, the praying and Quran reading was finished, and breakfast started. The food was always prepared by the same handful of women and was always already ready before the activity started. After the praying, all the women would get up one by one and form a line for the food. The food was displayed on a few tables put together, as a sort of buffet. Women would take a plate and pick up some food themselves. The women who had cooked would stand behind the tables to scoop up some food. There always were many types of foods, including different types of homemade bread, salads, feta, stew, and baklava. The women handing out the food knew me and always urged me to try all the different foods, which I was always very happy to do (it was delicious). The women sitting with me sometimes commented on my eating or urged me to eat some things a certain way.

After about half an hour, most women were finished eating and starting to leave. They took their plate and other stuff to the dishwashing station, often taking other women's stuff with them as well. One woman went around with a bowl, and everyone put some cash in it, ranging from a few euros to ten or twenty euros. I did not always have cash on me, so sometimes I could not donate anything. I then made sure I brought some extra money the week after. I felt like this was the right thing to do, but I did not feel like that was required. No one ever said anything about it. The lack of requirement of (significant) monetary spending is also a characteristic of a third place. It makes it more accessible for everyone and, therefore, acts as a social leveler (Oldenburg 1989: 23-26, 32-33).

Analysis of the interactions during the breakfast and Quran reading

In this paragraph, I will analyze how and why nature of the breakfast and Quran reading to the social cohesion of the women that visited the activity. I will elaborate on the importance of safe spaces for this group and how it relates to the accessibility of third places.

The mosque as a third place

For Dutch women with a Turkish migration background, it can be hard to 'get out of the house'. Their places are rather segregated. Third places, even though not explicitly stated, are exclusive for men. Emine told me about this:

> *"[M]en can go to a restaurant or a café. They can meet each other. But for women, there are little of such things. In the mosque, those activities such as breakfast…There, the women that rarely come outside can come together for social contact. So they are not as lonely. And then they come… They can eat there for little money." (Interview 22-03-2023)*

This segregation is rooted in their Islamic values and is meant to protect women. Emine told me:

> *"According to Islam, men and women should be separated, actually. That is to protect a woman, so to say. That 'apartheid' is only to protect women. From the 'hungry eyes of men'." (Interview 22-03-2023)*

The breakfast at the mosque acts as a place where women can unwind and interact with each other in an informal setting. Even though it is exclusive to women, that does not disqualify it as a third place (Oldenburg 1989: 230-238). It is rather the nature of interactions that indicates whether a place acts as a third place.

It varied a lot in how many women come each week, over the course of this research. People were not expected to come each week. However, the mosque intends that they do visit every week, to build stronger connections with each other and the mosque. This is very much a characteristic of third places; you do not have to come, but when you come regularly, it becomes more of a place of leisure and relaxation (Oldenburg 1989: 32-36).

The mosque as a safe space

On another occasion, I joined a Ladies' Night party in Het Gebouw. This party was formally open for all women, but it was organized by and promoted towards Arabic women. The night was organized by Incluzio, Sol (the social work organization for youth in Leiden), and *Stichting Narcis* ('Foundation Daffodil'), a foundation for Arabic women (Stichting Narcis, s.a.). It was very important during the whole evening that it was a very safe space.

At the start of the night, Rahma welcomed everyone in Dutch and in Arabic. She said there was a prayer room. There was one man, as he was required to operate the sound systems. The rest of the 'staff' were all women: the DJ, the people behind the bar, the people behind the stalls. Rahma also said explicitly that no one should take photos of one another without asking. Later that evening, Rahma had to say again that it was really necessary for the man to be there because women had been complaining about that.

During the evening, more and more women began to dance more and more enthusiastically to the music. A few women took off their headscarves during the evening. No alcohol was served, and the party lasted until 23 pm. (Personal notes 28-01-2023)

Marcel told me that accommodating certain groups or people can also mean that you exclude other people. He told me how they struggle with this dilemma at their organization:

"We do have halal stuff, so to say. But people can have doubts about that, maybe. We do serve alcohol, that is something that we do not want to let go of, because… I would find that very strange. We live here in the Netherlands and that should just be possible. So, we also say, I mean…"

Rosa*: - "Do you notice that people have issues with that?"*

Marcel*: - "There have been made comments about that, yes. […] But I'm sorry, we are not going there. You know, there has to be mutual understanding ('*wederzijdse tolerantie'*), just like we expect people that are not as open towards us to organize halal food." (Interview 17-01-2023)*

In many cases, multiple social groups can exist besides one another, when they take each other's (cultural) preferences into account (see Khalek et al. 2019). However, this is not always enough. Sometimes, providing providing safe spaces for certain groups means that other groups have to be excluded from those spaces (Rosenfeld and Noterman 2014). I would argue that because these Muslim women need to be 'protected' from men, the breakfast at the mosque can only be a safe space for these women because of its exclusivity.

Conclusion

The breakfast at the mosque is very much a place for women with a Turkish migration background. They have quite a high degree of social cohesion, but this is very much because of this activity where they can come together in a safe space. The activity is very much focused on their shared identity

characteristics: Turkish, Islamic, and women. This creates a safe and positive environment which these women might not find elsewhere. The activity is also very accessible; if you cannot pay, it is not required. The activity of singing and praying together adds a spiritual and embodied experience over which these women connect, besides talking and eating together. Additionally, the physical invites people to interact and conversate with one another. This activity is highly effective in increasing social cohesion among Turkish women. The combination of religion and food is crucial for this. Both create a reason to come to the activity and to connect with each other, and I believe this would not work as well when the activity would be either breakfast or Koran reading.

However, people that are not women with a Turkish migration background do not visit this activity. They claim to be open to 'other' people and they were very open and warm towards me, but they do little to nothing to invite other people in. Therefore, this activity does not increase the social cohesion between different social groups.

7. Interactions during the Soup Afternoon at the Trefpunt

Every Wednesday, I helped at the soup afternoon ('soepmiddag') at the Trefpunt in De Hoven. During this activity, I observed how people of different migration backgrounds interacted with each other. In this chapter, I will first elaborate on my observations of the nature of the Trefpunt and the soup afternoon, its visitors, and their interactions. Second, I will analyse how and why this activity and the physical space of the Trefpunt increased social cohesion between the people of different social groups.

Soup afternoon at the Trefpunt

During the soup afternoon, Ali handed out soup to people for free. The people that visited the soup afternoon were mainly inhabitants of De Hoven. In this paragraph, I will elaborate on my qualitative observations during the soup afternoon, combined with the data of the structured interviews and structured observations I gathered during the activity. I will highlight a few regular visitors, Arif and Yasin, and go into interactions with representatives of institutions.

De Hoven and the Trefpunt

The Trefpunt is a rather small meeting place in De Hoven. De Hoven are a series of flats north of the Willem de Zwijgerlaan, as can be seen above in Figure 8. The neighbourhood is part of Leiden Noord, but it is north of the Willem de Zwijgerlaan, a busy road that can only be crossed at a few places. Where the Willem de Zwijgerlaan meets the Kooilaan, the road is elevated with a roundabout on top (the fast cars go underneath). This way, the Willem de Zwijgerlaan forms a physical boundary that separates De Hoven from the rest of Leiden Noord. Ali started the Trefpunt for this very reason and still runs it. The Trefpunt is a place where people of different cultural backgrounds find and connect with each other. The neighbourhood is newer than other neighbourhoods in Leiden Noord; they have been built not long after the second world war (Leefmans 2017).

Fig. 8: De Hoven from above

The streets in De Hoven are in an upside-down U-shape with grass in the middle, and the flats on the outside. The houses that connect the flats (both on the north and the south sides) are not flats. The name of the neighbourhood, De Hoven, translates to 'courtyards', referring to the way the flats enclose

the green spaces in between. The flats are each four storeys high, with a porch and staircase every eight houses (two houses per floor). “You do not have an elevator, of course, so everyone meets one another there, in the staircase. So you know who your neighbour is”, said a neighbourhood policeman. However, this was not guaranteed.

> *“It remains hard, like, who lives on the third floor? Yes, [the people of] the first two stories, they will run into one another. But for the ones that are upstairs, maybe one neighbour comes up to their floor. That’s the social control. So yes, in general, higher residences always cause anonymity.” (Interview 17-03-2023)*

The Trefpunt is very much a meeting place for De Hoven. It is located rather in the middle of De Hoven. It was also very close to where you would come down from the physically lifted roundabout where the Kooilaan and the Willem de Zwijgerslaan meet. This makes it a natural meeting point.

The people that visited the soup afternoon at the Trefpunt had very different backgrounds. Most people were first-generation Dutch migrants. By this, I mean that they had the Dutch nationality, but were not born or brought up in the Netherlands, and neither were their parents. Most first-generation migrants of my participants had come from Turkey or Morocco, but other countries of origin include Somalia, Egypt, and Sudan. Besides one exception, people’s country of origin and their parent’s always matched. Additionally, their stated first language always corresponded with their country of birth. The only exception to this was a Moroccan-born migrant stating that now, Dutch had become his first language and Arabic his second. When I write about someone as a ‘first-generation migrant’, or when I state someone’s country of origin, this person provided me with this information, either through a structured interview or conversation.

Preparing the soup

The soup afternoon was a weekly moment on Wednesdays when Ali, with the help of two other people, made and handed out soup. Besides myself, two people joined him: Ismael and Ayla. They were Turkish migrants, just like Ali. We gathered in the morning. Before making the soup, Ali and I first always had breakfast together, and Ismael always joined us a bit later. Ali always made sure we ate well. Even when I was late, he only allowed me to start cooking after I had eaten. Ayla came in even later and never ate with us, as she was quite particular about her eating habits.

Ayla was in charge of cooking. I was expected to help her, and Ali and Ismael helped as well. Sometimes, other people came in to help as well, or just drop by to have a chat. Sometimes, Ali had to do stuff and he often took me with him, for example, to get groceries, to pick up something from his house. Starting in the morning and the rest of the day we drank a lot of coffee, and I was usually expected to make sure there was always a fresh pot of coffee, both for visitors and ourselves.

The soup was usually ready between one and two o'clock in the afternoon. When the soup was ready, we would put it on the stove outside in the tent, as is visible below in Figure 9. We would sit with it in the tent. The tent was a sort of party tent, but with plastic tent-like 'flaps' that could close all the way down with a zipper. When it was really cold and windy, we would close the flaps to protect us from the wind, so the heat from the stove would keep us warm. Most of the weeks, however, we kept the zipper or preferably even the flaps open altogether. This way, we thought people would feel more welcome to come in. Against the wall on the other side, there was a table with some necessities and a place to put your soup when eating. In the tent, there were three wooden seats and a small plastic bench inside the tent to sit on.

Fig. 9: Ali handing out soup at the Trefpunt.

People would come in with a pan from home and we would fill it. Sometimes, when we thought we might run out of soup, I had to give less soup to people, but otherwise, I had to fill their pans to the top. If someone wanted to sit down or even seemed to linger, Ali usually urged them to take a seat (if necessary, his own) and offered them soup and coffee. We handed out the soup until it was empty. This was usually around four o'clock. A few times we ran out much earlier, and we did not have soup for a few people that came asking for it. Sometimes, we had soup leftover at four o'clock, but we would close up regardless, and Ali would save the soup for himself to eat it the next day.

Interactions during the soup afternoon

It varied a lot whether people only came to take away soup, or if they stayed to chat, eat, or drink coffee. The amount of three different actions and the total amount of visitors each week is made visible below in Figure 10. On average, sixteen people visited per week, but this varied from seven people to twenty-three. It also varied a lot in how many people had a seat with us, between five and nineteen each week. Out of all the people that visited on a day, 36-100% of people sat down with us. On average, forty per cent of the people that came by took soup with them, with two outliers (79% and 0%). How many people came by and what they did is pictured in the figure down below.

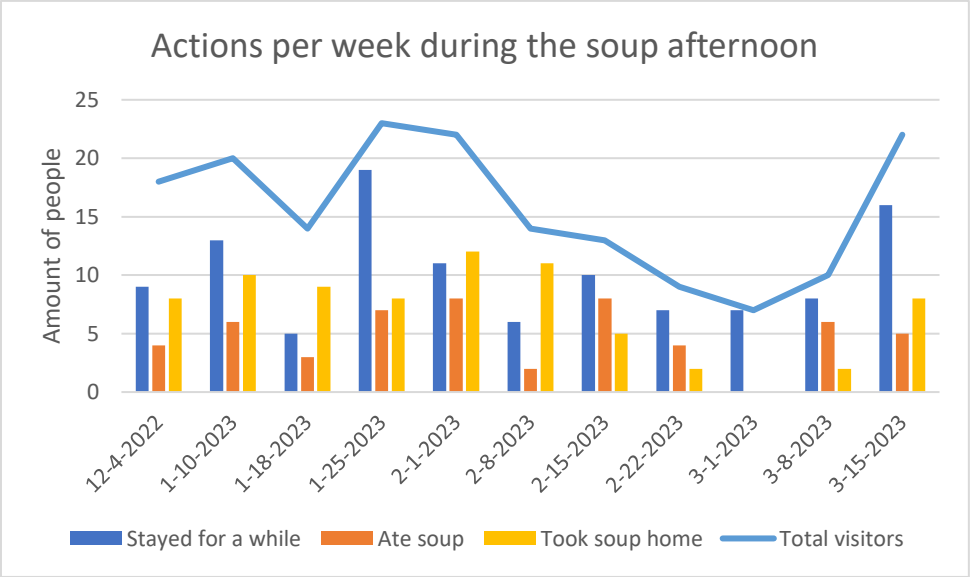

Fig. 10: Actions per week during the soup afternoon. When people ate soup, they were also written down as 'Stayed for a while'.

People would visit the soup afternoon between one and four in the afternoon. During this time, between seven and twenty-three people would visit in total, with the average being sixteen. On average, this would be approximately one visitor every ten minutes. These visits ranged from people staying a while and sometimes even helping with the soup, to some not even saying a word and being on their way. Therefore, there were not that many encounters between people because people would not always run into each other.

In the weeks I conducted structural observations, I counted 101 different visitors in total. Of these people, a group of twenty people accounts for almost half of the total visits (48%). Even more so, of those twenty people, an even smaller group of ten people account for two-thirds of these visits, and almost a third of all visits (32%). I have conducted structured interviews with eight of those twenty people and have determined to which social group they belonged through this data. Two other people were representatives of institutions: a neighbourhood policeman and a representative of the housing

corporation. The other ten people, I have met and spoken to often enough to assume their social group, based on what they have told me about themselves, the language they spoke, and their assumed age.

Even though quite a large amount of people visited the soup each week and over the course of this research in total, people did not run into each other that often. All of these visits were somewhere in between the (approximately) three hours in which the soup was handed out. This does not mean that no one ran into another. Of all the visits during this research, 191 in total, 125 of those times someone stayed to sit down or have a talk. These were often the same people, but not always; of the 101 people that visited, 84 people stayed to sit down or have a talk at least once. When people sat down or had a talk, they always interacted with either us or other visitors. Furthermore, people often visited at different times during the soup afternoon when they did visit. This way, people encountered different people each time.

The 'top twenty' most frequent visitors

Within this group of 'top twenty' visitors, all four social groups that visit the soup afternoon (Dutch with a Turkish migration background, Dutch with a Moroccan migration background, Dutch with another migration background, and Dutch without a migration background) were represented quite equally, as well as two representatives of institutions. There were five Dutch with Turkish migration background, three Dutch with Moroccan migration background, six Dutch with a non-Turkish or -Moroccan migration background, and four Dutch without a migration background. Whereas the overall 'top twenty' stayed over half the times when they came over, this differs a lot throughout the different social groups. The Dutch with a Moroccan migration background, even though they were only three people, stayed two-thirds of the times they visit. The Turkish migrants and the non-migrant Dutch stayed about half of the times they visit. The Dutch with other migrant backgrounds, however, stayed much less of the time.

Yasir, a Somalian first-generation migrant, also often visited the soup afternoon at the Trefpunt. Although he rarely stayed by, he was always very friendly and concerned with Ali, always greeting him in Arabic and calling him 'papa'. I had asked him about his occupation during my structured interview and he told me he was an artist and he wanted to give me something. Over the course of a few weeks, he gave me a few things he had made and a book about the teachings of Islam. Besides his friendliness with me, he sometimes went to get his neighbour's pot to give her some soup as well. During my structured interview with him, he expressed feeling very much at home in the neighbourhood. He also really liked the diversity there, but he had most contact with other Somali. He did express his trust in the other people in his neighbourhood. He trusted us as well; sometimes, he stopped by to drop off his pot on his way to the store to pick it up with soup later.

Another activity that was organized by Ali was a cleaning day at the beginning of January to clean up firework litter from the New Year's celebration. I wrote the following diary entry:

> *[Ali] expected nobody to show up on the cleaning day, he did not hear from anyone that they would come. (Personal notes 04-01-2023)*

Three people, however, helped to clean. One of them was Arif, an Egyptian migrant that visits the Trefpunt often and is one of the 'top twenty' visitors.

> *I've cleaned with Arif. There was not a lot of firework litter, but there was a pile of clothes and other things that'd been put aflame. It stank a lot, we cleaned it with gloves on. It was very heavy, I thought. Arif thought the trash bag would be too heavy for me. On the grass field more to the west was a lot of household waste, as if a whole trash bag had fallen off of a balcony, or the like. I cleaned that as much as possible, but I was drained, also due to having too little to eat. Arif cleaned two trash bags after that. I wanted to put everything in the container, but he thought bigger things should be collected by the municipality. He thought it was very bad that, in a country such as the Netherlands, it could become such a mess. (Personal notes 04-01-2023)*

These two anecdotes illustrate what the interactions during the soup afternoon were like: very friendly and cooperative. The Trefpunt very much acts as a third place. The atmosphere is very informal, which is mainly because of the host's, Ali's, inviting nature. The way the space is organized, very small and close together, and kind of amateurish, also contributes to its informal feel. There are a few 'regulars', that frequently visit, on which I will elaborate below. They feel very much at home themselves, which makes any other person also feel at home almost instantly. Additionally, the soup is free, which makes the activity very accessible. All these attributes contribute to the Trefpunt being very much a third place (Oldenburg 1989: 20-42).

Analysis of the interactions during the soup afternoon

In this paragraph, I will analyze which social groups visit the Trefpunt, and how they relate to the (representatives of) institutions.

Social groups that visit the Trefpunt

Almost a tenth of all people in Leiden Noord has a Turkish migration background (Gemeente Leiden 2023). In the 1970s, a lot of Turkish and Moroccan people came to the Netherlands as labour migrants. Mainly the families of those first Turkish migrants still have contact with each other, Emine told me. Ali explained to me that it is easy for them to have a lot of contact with other people with a Turkish migration background, to speak Turkish, and to meet each other, for example, at the Turkish mosque.

However, this also makes it less necessary for many people to have contact with people from Dutch or other cultures. The ability to speak Dutch varies a lot among Dutch with a Turkish migration background whom I have been in contact with, as well as their confidence and willingness to speak Dutch. Notably, most people with a Turkish migration background also know (some) Arabic, which helps in communication with other migrants that speak Arabic (mainly Moroccan migrants).

The Dutch with a Moroccan migration background have a migration background that is quite similar to those with a Turkish migration background. Most of them or their (grand)parents came to the Netherlands as labour migrants in the 1970s. They are also mostly Islamic, which helps with connections to people with a Turkish migration background and other Islamic Dutch with a migration background.

Other (non-Turkish or -Moroccan) first-generation migrants are also very present in Leiden Noord. For the purpose of my research, I did not focus on the reason that people came to live in Leiden Noord, but more on social groups based on people's origin (birthplace and parent's birthplace), age, religion, and first and second languages. Based on these aspects, this group of first-generation migrants are different from first-generation Turkish or Moroccan migrants, and also from other Dutch without a migration background. The other Dutch first-generation migrants are born and raised outside of the Netherlands, Turkey, or Morocco (or the West). Besides that, they tend to be younger than Turkish and Moroccan: mostly middle-aged, rather than seniors. They also do not share the same background of labour migration as the Turkish and Moroccan people. Most of the other Dutch first-generation migrants are Muslim, and many of them speak (some) Arabic. This helps with making connections with each other and Dutch with Turkish and Moroccan migration backgrounds.

The non-Turkish or -Moroccan Dutch first-generation migrants also have a lot of diversity between them as they have cultural upbringings in many different cultures. Therefore, they do not have a particularly high social cohesion within their group, but rather the same kind of connections with each other as they have with Turkish and Moroccan migrants. However, they do seek out connections with people from the same land of origin. It is often hard for them to find these kinds of connections within Leiden Noord, and they do also seek out people from outside Leiden Noord for this purpose (for example, through Sudanese parties).

The non-Turkish or -Moroccan migrants stayed fewer times, but almost always took soup with them. The soup that was handed out at the Trefpunt did attract the people of the non-Turkish or -Moroccan migrant group, more than the social part of the activity. That they did not stay to have a chat, or a cup of coffee does not mean that there is no increase of social cohesion when people stop by.

Lastly, there are also inhabitants of De Hoven that have visited the soup afternoon that did not have a migration background. These are the people that are born and raised in the Netherlands but

not in De Kooi as the old Kooi inhabitants are. The Dutch without a migration background are almost all elderly, and some of them lived in the elderly house a few streets away from the Trefpunt. They also have a rather positive attitude towards people with a migration background and seek out interactions with them, which is often lacking in old Kooi inhabitants.

Where the other meeting places claim to (want to) be inclusive, I would argue that the Trefpunt is the only place that *practices* inclusivity. This is very much due to Ali's attitude. He is very open and inviting. The soup that is made and distributed at the Trefpunt is purposely vegetarian to not hold people back from consuming it. When there were Turkish people, he would often keep speaking Dutch so I or other Dutch people could follow the conversation. When people seem to be interested but hesitate, Ali invites them in and offers them a place to sit, some soup to eat, and some coffee to drink. This was not always positive; I had the impression that he sometimes scared people away as his way of inviting them could come off as aggressive.

Interactions and relationships with institutions

In conversations at the Trefpunt, the government and other institutions sometimes came up. One of the neighbourhood police officers visited the soup afternoon every week. There are two neighbourhood police officers in Leiden Noord, but the other one was always off on Wednesdays, so he always came by himself. He always came early in the afternoon to eat soup and talk about what was happening in the neighbourhood. Very often there was nothing important to discuss, but by making small talk regularly he had built a bond with Ali.

The interaction between the police officer and other inhabitants was also always positive. The amount of interaction was, however, quite little. This was because of the same reason that people, in general, did not have a lot of contact with each other during the soup afternoon. So, during the approximately half-hour that the police officer would be there, only a few people would come by. However, this does not mean that the visits of the police officer were useless. On the contrary, the police's relationship with people like Ali was important for them, as one of the police officers told me:

> *"They're our network partners, so they're where we get our information from. That's why we stay in touch with them, to get signals. Ali, for example, has a good picture of a certain group. And also on whether things are okay or not. They can share information with us. So, we get information, through which we… As police, we're constantly trying to find all the puzzle pieces to make a puzzle. That's it. And then, you hope to see whether it's going well or not. On a very small, micro level, or in the whole neighbourhood. So that's why all of these contacts are very important for us." (Interview 17-03-2023)*

This relationship is very much one everyone benefits from. Inhabitants are often more likely to talk to people like Ali about their problems, the police officers told me. Ali also finds it important to share his information with them. “I always pass things down to the neighbourhood police officer. Our neighbourhood police officer, he’s quite excellent!” he told me.

The relationship of Ali and inhabitants with other municipality’s officials is, however, much more complex. The municipality wants people to participate in their decision-making and to inform them, mainly about the Plan de Zwijger during the time of this research. This was very difficult, as it would feel like quite an obstacle for the inhabitants in De Hoven to actually participate in, e.g., meetings with counsellors. However, it was a big topic amongst the inhabitants. “Not many people come to that, but the next day they all talk about it”, Ali told me. In conversations during the soup afternoon, the building plans came also up a few times, often complaining. One day, Johan visited the soup afternoon. Later that day, wrote in my diary:

> *He asked if Ali wanted to join the participation group, on behalf of the inhabitant’s association. Ali did not want that. Johan and Ali had a discussion because they had gotten/believed different information. At a certain moment, Johan said: “This way, the municipality wants to play us against each other.” (Personal notes 18-01-2023)*

On another occasion during the soup afternoon, Femke, a volunteer for a campaign that promotes reducing gas and energy consumption, had set up a little stand at the Trefpunt with information about easy, rental-friendly steps to reduce gas and energy consumption. People could talk to her about how to make their houses sustainable and reduce costs. They could sign up for more information and a free package of rental-friendly products that people could use to make their homes more sustainable. Almost half of the people that stopped by that day (eight out of nineteen), talked with her about this. However, almost all of these people were non-migrant Dutch or non-Turkish or -Moroccan migrants. Below, in Figure 11, is shown how many visitors talked to Femke, and their migration background.

Migration background	Talked to Femke	Did not talk to Femke	Total
Turkish	0	3	3
Moroccan	1	2	3
Other	4	3	7
None	3	3	6

Fig. 11: The number of visitors that talked to Femke, and their migration background.

During another activity at the Trefpunt, the high energy bills also came up:

> *The conversations were about the high energy bills, increasing poverty, and the role of the municipality and housing corporations in that. (Personal notes 06-01-2023)*

During this conversation, someone brought up that if you want the government to act, you have to speak with politics. A few days later, he took me with him to a new year's reception of the local *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour Party). Our visit was unrelated to the conversation earlier, but I did bring it up.

> *The chair of the local party introduced us to the leader of the local council's party. I told Ali that he is the 'politics' Ingrid had said to go to with complaints about a high energy bill. We went to sit somewhere separate, to talk a bit more quietly. Ali told about the poverty and problems of the neighbourhood, and how badly the houses were isolated (energy bills are almost as high as the basic rent). The police officer listened well and emphasized that he finds it important to hear these stories. (Personal notes 08-2023)*

The local politician wanted to visit the soup afternoon to hear more of Ali's stories and the troubles of the neighbourhood. He came by the very next week. Ali was very impressed by how well he listened. Ali was generally impressed by an 'important visit' from someone of the local government. When the Food Donation Cupboard was just built, an Alderman of the municipality of Leiden came to officially open it. Ali was always quite impressed by such important visitors, and everything had to be perfect.

> *Today was the day the Alderman visited. The day started normally, but today were (mainly) Ismael and Ali very stressed. They said they did not find it exciting, but I thought they did. they were quite agitated and sometimes had a small argument with Ayla. […] Ali and Ismael wanted the place to look nice. The stones had to be hosed down and a tent was set up. Both the outside tables got plastic tablecloths. Ayla made finger food. (Personal notes 30-11-2022)*

During the opening of the Food Donation Cupboard, many officials of the municipality and other institutes were present. There were also a few inhabitants of the neighbourhood present. These two groups, however, hardly mixed with each other.

> *During the opening itself, mainly 'municipality people' were standing around the cupboard, the people of the neighbourhood were sitting under the tent to eat. The people of the neighbourhood went to look at the cupboard later. (Personal notes 30-11-2022)*

These instances illustrate the difficult relationship between inhabitants and their local government. On one hand, they have great respect and even awe for them. However, on other occasions, they do

not trust that they are there for them. (Local) politics have let them down many times, are hard to understand, and it is hard to make themselves heard. Marjolein Pijnacker told me about this:

> *"What we see now, is that there are groups of people standing up because of the plan to take down houses. […] And then, you have a common enemy. And that is very nice for the social cohesion. That's just how it works." (Interview 27-02-2023)*

The Trefpunt does act as a way to establish communications between the housing corporation or municipality and inhabitants. Ali told me about this:

> *"People come with questions, sometimes. Sometimes people look on the internet, that's possible. But if people can't look on the Internet and can't read the newspaper, they come to me with questions. But I can't call the municipality each time to ask this, I cannot do that. We have an intermediary in the municipality and the housing corporation, and when we have an appointment, they come to tell me. […] And what they tell me, I can explain it to inhabitants when someone asks something." (Interview 24-04-2023)*

Conclusion

Marjolein Pijnacker summed up the soup afternoon as follows:

> *"At Ali's, everyone visits. And, of course, they are not large numbers, but at least they do visit. And amongst them, everything is totally fine. […] And then, I think, this is kind of the ideal world with each other. But it's a pity that they are with so few people." (Interview 27-02-2023)*

She empathized the lacking social networks of most of the inhabitants of De Hoven: "A small group has a social network. But very many surely don't. And that is what you see. […] Look, the social networks are present within that group. But the group is bigger, you know?" This seems to be supported by the small group of twenty people who are the regular visitors of the soup afternoon. However, the data of over 80 other people that have visited the soup afternoon once or twice during my research shows that it is not only a small group of people that visits the soup afternoon.

The soup afternoon is a much more 'neutral' activity than the lunch at Community Centre De Kooi or the breakfast at the Turkish mosque. The soup and the physical space do not particularly reflect one single culture. This causes the soup afternoon to be very accessible to all people. Besides being accessible, the Trefpunt is also very inviting to different people. It is actively inviting different people in, instead of 'just' being 'open' to different people. This causes very different people to visit the soup afternoon and to come in contact with one another.

The interactions are rather short, as many people only pick up soup and do not stay. However, a rather large group does stay, at least for a moment to take a seat or talk. This creates interactions between different people each time. Additionally, this is also a way for representatives of multiple institutions to be in contact with inhabitants. Ali and the Trefpunt both work as a vessel for information both from and towards the local government and institutions. This also increases the social cohesion between inhabitants and the (local) government and society. There is not really a single group that makes up the main visitors of the soup afternoon. However, the soup afternoon very much increases social cohesion between a multitude of different social groups.

8. Conclusion and discussion

In this thesis, I explored the following research question: How can food-related activities increase social cohesion in Leiden Noord?

Social cohesion exists on multiple scales at the same time, and is caused and expressed through positive interactions between people and a lack of conflict. This thesis has explored social cohesion on a communal level, mainly between and within different social groups. These social groups are identified by common characteristics, which are (often) cultural. These social identities are often reflected in the places and foods of activities at which people come together. Heavily 'cultural' places and foods can act as mechanics of in- and exclusion; it shows who belongs and who does not. However, more 'neutral' places and foods provide occasions at which people of different (cultural) backgrounds can come together and find each other.

To research social cohesion through food-related activities, I researched three main activities in different places of community in Leiden Noord. Through participant observation, I have observed and experienced the interactions during these three activities and towards which social group they cater through their spaces and foods. Semi-structured interviews have allowed me to complement this data with participants' experiences and further context. Additionally, during the soup afternoon, I also conducted structured observation to determine who visited, to which social group they belong, how many times they visited, and what they did during their visits. I connected this with data from structured interviews, to determine which social group (a sample of) these people belong to.

In this conclusion, I will review each activity again and the different aspects that did (not) increased the social cohesion within their respective social group or between different social groups. Finally, I will argue that food-related activities do increase social cohesion both within and between social groups but do so mainly when they are combined with an activity that encourages conversation.

The food at the lunch at the Community Centre De Kooi was catered towards the old Kooi inhabitants. It was a lot of fried food and sandwiches, often with meat. The community centre itself was also a place that was very much of the old Kooi inhabitants. They had been coming to the community centre for decades and it very much felt 'their own' for them. They also indicated that this was because of the interior, which made them feel at home. The way the space was organized did little to initiate interaction and conversation. The long table was where the most interaction took place, but the other tables made it possible (and logical) for people to sit by themselves and have little contact with other people. The visitors at the lunch in the Community Centre De Kooi were five to ten old Kooi inhabitants that visited almost every week. There were only a few other people that visited: a few of which were other old Kooi inhabitants and a few people that were not. There always was a lot of interaction between old Kooi inhabitants, but there was very little interaction between old Kooi

inhabitants and other people, and between different non-old Kooi inhabitants. The lunch at the Community Centre De Kooi did little to increase the social cohesion within the group of old Kooi inhabitants. The interaction was rather positive, but it was between only a few people that had known each other already for a long time (mostly). The lunch did nothing to increase social cohesion between people of different social groups. The lunch attracted few people outside the old Kooi inhabitants, and the people that did visit had little to no interaction with each other or anyone of the old Kooi inhabitants.

The breakfast and Quran reading at the Turkish Mosque was very much an activity based on a common identity. The spoken language was Turkish, and the food was Turkish. It took place inside a mosque, and they read the Quran, which made it very much an Islamic activity. Through commemoration, (common) norms and values were (re-)established. Through singing and praying together, including gestures of praying, feelings of connectedness were stimulated. During the Quran reading and eating, all of the women sat at one big table. This forced them to interact with each other and make connections. The people that visited the breakfast and Quran reading were women with a Turkish migration background. Many of them were first-generation migrants, but not all of them. Many women knew each other, but they were very open to new people. It was women's only, there were never men. There were never people without a Turkish migration background (besides me). The breakfast and Quran reading increased the social cohesion within the group of women with a Turkish migration background a lot. There were many women each week and also a lot that visited only a few times, making the total amount of people that had been visiting over the course of this research even higher. They had a lot of interaction that they would not have had outside of the activity, as it was the activity that brought them together. The activity did not increase the social cohesion between women with a Turkish migration background and other people, because other people did not visit the activity.

The soup afternoon at the Trefpunt was not very identity-bound, but a rather neutral activity. The soup could be considered somewhat 'Turkish', but it was mainly "just good-tasting soup!", as Ali called it. The Trefpunt itself was also a very neutral space, without the cultural or historical assumptions which did surround the Turkish mosque and the Community Centre De Kooi. The physical space at the Trefpunt very much encouraged conversation and interaction between its visitors. It was small, and once someone was inside, it was hard not to engage with the people inside. The visitors to the soup afternoon were mostly people with a Turkish migration background, but also a lot of people of other migration backgrounds and people without a migration background. There was always positive interaction between the people that visited at the same time. This was all different combinations of people, as hardly anyone visited at the same time each week. However, due to the relatively short visits and the rather long time span in which these occurred, people did not run into each other very often. The activity quite increased the social cohesion within the group of people with

a Turkish migration background, but this was not a lot of people and they often already knew each other. The soup afternoon at the Trefpunt increased the social cohesion between people of different migration backgrounds a lot. Often, people would only run into one or two people during their visit, but these were almost always different people and they always had very positive interactions.

The observations of these separate activities lead me to argue that food-related activities do increase social cohesion both within and between social groups. Serving food is a great way to attract people, especially in a neighbourhood where a lot of inhabitants have a lower socio-economic status. However, only serving food is not enough. There has to be something else that sparks interaction between people of the same or different social groups to increase the respective social cohesion. What this 'something' could be, depends on whether it is the social cohesion within a social group or between social groups is to be increased. To increase social cohesion within a social group, a place and activity should be related to a shared identity. This way, people can connect over this common identity. These activities can also be used to (re-)establish shared norms and values. To increase social cohesion between different social groups, activities and their places should be rather neutral, so anyone feels invited. To increase either of these forms of social cohesion regardless, the physical space should encourage people to talk to and interact with each other.

Discussion

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I discussed how different expressions of social cohesion (in thought and in behaviour) can be affected differently by changes in demography. I found it rather hard to research social cohesion in thought and have, therefore, focused on how people interacted with one another. This was much easier for me to observe. However, I wonder whether food-related activities have different effects of those two types of expressions of social cohesion. I would assume that the habit of eating together or sharing food has the most effects on social cohesion in behaviour, as it is a rather physical act. However, as I have discussed, eating is also very much related to people's identities, which is very much something 'in thought'. For this, I recommend further research to be conducted.

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10. Appendix

I. Observation schedule structured observations

Alias/name	Took soup home (yes/no)	Stayed to 'chill' (sit down or talk) (yes/no)	Drank coffee* (yes/no)	Ate soup* (yes/no)

**) If people drank coffee and/or ate soup, they always also were marked as 'yes' on 'Stayed to 'chill''.*

II. Presentation of Executive Summary and Policy Recommendations

Sociale cohesie in De Kooi/Leiden Noord

Rosa Vroom & Marieke van der Heijden

Universiteit Leiden

Leren met de Stad

Opzet presentatie

- Sociale cohesie als concept
- Onderzoeksmethoden
- Uitkomst onderzoeken
- Aanbevelingen

Sociale cohesie als concept

Sociale cohesie op buurtniveau kan worden bestudeerd door te kijken naar de volgende aspecten:

1. Het delen van waarden en normen,
2. Een zekere mate van sociale controle,
3. De beschikbaarheid en onderlinge afhankelijkheid van sociale netwerken,
   a. Formeel
   b. Informeel
4. Het bestaan van vertrouwen tussen bewoners,
5. De bereidheid om gezamenlijk oplossingen te vinden voor collectieve problemen
6. Afwezigheid van conflict.

Sociale groepen

Identiteitskenmerken

Netwerken vaak binnen groepen

Activiteiten die sociale cohesie verbeteren:

- Binnen groepen: identiteit
- Tussen groepen: 'neutraal'

Fysieke en sociale ruimte

- Fysieke ruimte: Hoe ziet de ruimte er uit

- Sociale ruimte: Betekenis die mensen aan een ruimte geven

Methode

Verschillende locaties:

- Rosa: Trefpunt, Buurthuis De Kooi en de Turkse Moskee
- Marieke: Buurthuis De Kooi, Buurthuis Het Gebouw, activiteit SOL

Participerende observatie: observeren én meedoen!

Interviews met professionals, vrijwilligers en bewoners

Uitkomst onderzoek Marieke

Fysieke ruimte

- Het Gebouw: groot en ongezellig
- De Kooi: gezellig en een 'huiskamer'

Sociale ruimte

- Het Gebouw: open sfeer
- De Kooi: gesloten groep

Conclusie: Beschikbaarheid en onderlinge afhankelijkheid van sociale netwerken afwezig.

Sociale cohesie binnen de buurthuizen is sterk, maar sociale cohesie tussen de buurthuizen is zwak.

Uitkomst onderzoek Rosa

	Draagt bij aan	
Activiteit	Sociale cohesie binnen groep(en)	Sociale cohesie tussen groepen
Lunch in Buurthuis De Kooi	Ja	Nee
Ontbijt en Koran lezen in de Turkse Moskee	Ja, heel erg	Nee
Soepmiddag bij het Trefpunt	Ja	Ja, heel erg

Conclusie: Activiteiten met eten op zichzelf zijn niet genoeg om de sociale cohesie te bevorderen, maar eten kan wel (verschillende) mensen trekken naar een activiteit

Aanbevelingen voor sociale cohesie binnen groepen

Mensen hebben behoefte aan contact met mensen die op hen lijken

Nu al veel activiteiten en hoge sociale cohesie, ga hiermee door!

Aanbevelingen voor sociale cohesie tussen groepen

Nu al activiteiten die verschillende groepen verbinden: ga hiermee door!

Neutrale plek en activiteit

Ruimtelijke inrichting of activiteit moet uitnodigen voor gesprek

Inclusiviteit: houd rekening met bepaalde groepen

Eten helpt om mensen te trekken

Aanbeveling: een buurtbarbecue

Samenwerking verschillende partners

Neutrale plek: Kooipark

Inclusief: Vegetarisch, halal, etc.

Eten subsidiëren

Zijn er nog vragen?

III. Executive Summary and Policy Recommendations (Beleidsadvies)

Samenvatting

Door samen te eten voelen mensen zich verbonden met elkaar. In mijn onderzoek naar drie verschillende activiteiten in Leiden Noord heb ik onderzocht hoe sociale cohesie tussen en binnen 'groepen' verbeterd kan worden. Ik heb gezien dat activiteiten met eten rondom een gezamenlijke identiteit de sociale cohesie binnen een 'groep' verbeteren. Daarnaast kunnen activiteiten met eten ook sociale cohesie tussen 'groepen' verbeteren. Hiervoor is het juist belangrijk dat een activiteit 'neutraal' en inclusief is. Daarnaast is het belangrijk dat activiteiten aanmoedigen tot interactie, bijvoorbeeld door iedereen aan één (grote) tafel te laten zitten.

Inleiding

In Leiden Noord, met name in De Kooi en het Noorderkwartier (de Prinsessenbuurt en De Hoven), wonen relatief veel mensen met een laag besteedbaar inkomen en veel mensen met een migratieachtergrond. Daarnaast hebben deze mensen de grootste kans op mentale problemen zoals eenzaamheid en stress, wat vaak voorkomt bij praktisch opgeleiden en etnische minderheden. Sociale cohesie kan mentale problemen juist tegengaan. Ik heb onderzoek gedaan naar hoe sociale cohesie in Leiden Noord verbeterd kan worden door activiteiten met eten. Naar aanleiding van dit onderzoek is dit beleidsadvies tot stand gekomen, wat zich richt zich op het verbeteren van sociale cohesie door middel van activiteiten met eten.

Sociale cohesie en eten

Eten verbindt! Dat blijkt ook uit de theorie. Samen eten wordt geassocieerd met dat we ons verbonden voelen tot elkaar, zowel op een gemeenschapsniveau, als in één-op-één relaties. Wat we lekker en fijn vinden om te eten wordt sterk beïnvloed door onze culturele achtergrond en levensstijl. Samen eten kan daarom een gedeelde identiteit versterken en doorgeven. Hier hebben mensen behoefte aan. Sociale cohesie gaat, echter, verder dan je verbonden voelen met je 'eigen groep'. In een stad of land met een hoge sociale cohesie gaan ook verschillende mensen van verschillende 'groepen' goed met elkaar om. Mechanismen die een gedeelde identiteit versterken (zoals samen eten), kunnen mogelijk ook mensen van buiten die 'groep' uitsluiten. Door te laten zien wie 'erbij' hoort wordt namelijk, vaak automatisch, ook duidelijk wie er niet 'bij' hoort. Dit hoeft niet voor alle activiteiten met eten te gelden. Activiteiten die 'neutraal' zijn, qua plek, activiteit, en/of eten, kunnen juist mensen van verschillende achtergronden verbinden.

Ik heb in mijn onderzoek gekeken naar hoe mensen van zowel dezelfde 'groep' als mensen van verschillende 'groepen' met elkaar omgaan en hoe dat contact is tijdens activiteiten met eten. Deze 'groepen' zijn gebaseerd op identiteitskenmerken, zoals sociaaleconomische status, leeftijd en geloof.

Ik schrijf over ‘groepen’ tussen aanhalingstekens, omdat deze ‘groepen’ in de praktijk veel meer divers zijn dan we vaak denken, of dan wordt gesuggereerd door ze als één ‘groep’ neer te zetten. Het is, echter, voor dit onderzoek wel belangrijk om te onderscheid tussen verschillende ‘groepen’ mensen te maken, omdat sociale netwerken zich vaak binnen een ‘groep’ bevinden. In mijn onderzoek heb ik ‘groepen’ zoveel mogelijk onderscheiden op basis van informatie en ervaringen van mijn participanten en zoveel mogelijk zonder vooroordelen.

Methodes en resultaten

Om dit te onderzoeken heb ik meegelopen met drie activiteiten in Leiden Noord: de Soepmiddag bij het Trefpunt, het Koranlezen en ontbijt voor vrouwen bij de Turkse Moskee en de donderdaglunch bij het Huis van de Buurt De Kooi. Ik heb ook met een paar eenmalige activiteiten meegelopen. Tijdens die activiteiten heb ik participerende observatie gedaan; ik heb meegedaan en meegeholpen, gesprekken gevoerd en interacties tussen bezoekers geobserveerd. Daarnaast heb ik bij de Soepmiddag ook bijgehouden welke mensen de activiteit bezochten (structurele observatie) en vragenlijsten afgenomen (structurele interviews). Om deze data beter te begrijpen, van context te voorzien, en eventuele blinde vlekken weg te nemen heb ik ook semi-gestructureerde interviews afgenomen met verschillende ambtenaren, vrijwilligers en Incluziomedewerkers.

Tijdens de donderdaglunch in het Huis van de Buurt De Kooi komen met name een relatief kleine groep ‘oude Kooibewoners’, die elkaar onderling al heel goed en lang kennen. Zij hebben veel en goed contact, en de lunch in het buurtcentrum draagt daar erg aan bij. Naast mensen van deze ‘groep’ komen er ook mensen lunchen die niet deel uitmaakten van deze ‘oude Kooibewoners’. Zij hebben, echter, weinig contact met elkaar en met de ‘oude Kooibewoners’ die er zaten. Dit komt vooral doordat de activiteit, met name de ruimtelijke inrichting, weinig uitnodigt voor interactie. Daarnaast is het eten afgestemd op de ‘oude Kooibewoners’: broodje gezond, frituur en soep met ballen.

Tijdens het Koranlezen en ontbijt voor vrouwen in de Turkse Moskee komen alleen vrouwen met een Turkse migratieachtergrond, maar wel een relatief grote groep. Deze activiteit is erg gericht op een gemeenschappelijke identiteit: een Turks-Nederlandse migratieachtergrond, Islamitisch en vrouw. De voertaal is Turks, het eten was Turks en er werd Koran gelezen en gebeden. Vooraf aan het Koranlezen en tijdens het ontbijt is er heel veel positief onderling contact. De ruimtelijke inrichting, één grote gemeenschappelijke tafel, nodigde uit tot conversatie en ontmoeting. Daarnaast helpt het dat de activiteit draait om een gemeenschappelijke identiteit voor een gevoel van verbinding.

Bij de Soepmiddag komen mensen met veel verschillende achtergronden, die vooral in De Hoven woonden. Er komen relatief veel mensen met een Turks-Nederlandse migratieachtergrond, maar ook veel mensen met een andere of geen migratieachtergrond. Door het relatief hoge verloop

komen mensen elkaar soms niet of slechts kort tegen. Echter, meer dan de helft van de keren dat iemand tijdens mijn onderzoek langskwam (125 van de 191 keer) bleef diegene 'hangen' en dit ging vrijwel altijd samen met een gesprekje met wie er verder was. Hierdoor waren er interacties van steeds wisselende 'combinaties' van mensen tijdens de Soepmiddag. Verder is de plek (het Trefpunt) en het eten (een wisselende soep) relatief neutraal. Hierdoor trekt de activiteit veel verschillende mensen aan. De kleine tent nodigde daarnaast uit voor ontmoeting en gesprek.

Adviezen

Uit mijn onderzoek blijkt dat activiteiten met eten de sociale cohesie tussen verschillende 'groepen' en binnen 'groepen' kan verbeteren. Om dit te versterken heb ik een aantal adviezen geformuleerd naar aanleiding van mijn onderzoek.

Ten eerste zijn er een aantal aspecten eigenlijk in alle gevallen helpen om sociale cohesie te verbeteren. Door mensen aan één (grote) tafel te laten zitten wordt interactie aangemoedigd. Daarnaast helpt het serveren van gratis of goedkoop eten om mensen te trekken. Een informele sfeer helpt ook om mensen zich thuis te laten voelen.

Bepaal daarnaast of je wilt dat een activiteit sociale cohesie binnen een bepaalde 'groep' bevorderd, of tussen verschillende 'groepen'. Voor het verbeteren van sociale cohesie binnen een bepaalde 'groep' werkt het het beste als de gedeelde identiteit gereflecteerd wordt in bijvoorbeeld de plek, het eten en de activiteit zelf. Dus: organiseer het waar 'die mensen' zich thuis voelen, serveer wat 'ze' lekker vinden en organiseer wat 'ze' leuk vinden om te doen.

Voor het verbeteren van sociale cohesie tussen verschillende 'groepen' kan een activiteit het best 'neutraal' zijn. De plek, aankleding, activiteit en het eten moet niet te veel afgestemd zijn op een bepaalde 'groep'. Houd hiermee ook rekening met inclusiviteit, toegankelijkheid en de wensen van alle verschillende 'groepen' die zouden kunnen komen. Denk hierbij bijvoorbeeld aan het serveren van Halal eten, vegetarisch eten én vlees, rolstoeltoegankelijkheid, een gebedsruimte en duidelijke communicatie in meerdere talen. Dit kan lastig zijn, met name als een activiteit vanuit één organisatie wordt georganiseerd. Mijn advies is daarom om activiteiten om de sociale cohesie tussen verschillende 'groepen' te bevorderen te organiseren met meerdere (welzijns)organisaties. Hierdoor worden sneller de wensen van alle verschillende 'groepen' meegenomen in de organisatie.