Kinds of social capital from volunteer engagement

A case-study of Wedde dat 't lukt

by

Peter Gödde

S3970752

University of Groningen

Liberal Arts and Sciences

Supervisor: Julia Doornbos

Co-assessor: Dr. Theisje van Dorsten

Abstract

This thesis explores kinds of social capital that accrue to volunteers from their involvement Wedde dat 't lukt foundation [WDL]: *What kinds of social capital are born by the social relations that volunteers sustain through the volunteer network of Wedde dat 't lukt?* Qualitative in-depth interviews inform a thematic and narrative analysis. Interpretation is based on Lin's (2001b) individual, network-based conception of social capital. Inspired by 'social capital domains' (Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005), kinds are distinguished by structures of access. 'The regular' and 'the wanderer' kinds are identified, based on whether volunteers offer support to the same or different person(s). Both kinds of social capital satisfy participants' investment-decision in general, but 'the regular' faces risks and gaps in goal-achievement. Generally, social capital creation is importantly facilitated by a central responsibility- and contact-mediating role: the village supporter. To conclude, two kinds of social capital accrue to volunteers in WDL that also achieve different outcomes.

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1. Introduction

Since the first works on social capital in the 1980s and 1990s, the concept that explains how social structures influence the resource endowments of individuals and societies has gained traction in various disciplines. Applications range from economics to democratic engagement or health (Lin, 2001b; Svendsen, 2006; Häuberer, 2011). Results have, however, often been inconclusive due to conceptual vagueness and aggregations of social capital into single measures. Social capital theory operates on the premise that there are resources that individuals and collectives access via their social relationships on individual or societal – e.g. norms – levels. There is thus a social form of capital. This thesis will follow Lin's definition of social capital as: "resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions" (Lin, 2001b, p.29). The theoretical debate has moved from debating aggregation into single social capital measures to appreciating different kinds of social capital that achieve different outcomes. However, studies have primarily been quantitative and there is a lack of qualitative studies that are able to scrutinize the kinds and workings of social capital in more detail (Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005; Svendsen, 2006; Islam et al., 2006; Häuberer, 2011; Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2015; Villalonga-Olives et al., 2018; Son, 2020). This thesis addresses this gap by using qualitative in-depth interviews to explore kinds of social capital in a case-study of the Wedde dat 't lukt foundation [WDL].

WDL is an initiative by inhabitants of four villages in the Dutch province Groningen through which volunteers provide informal care work – like company, administrative tasks, gardening, doing groceries – to requesters of support. WDL works with a context of problems from poverty, loneliness and lower education, aggravated by prevalent conditions of old age or low mobility. If informal means do not suffice, people are forwarded to formal care organizations (M. Beltman, personal communication, March 15, 2022). Through the social capital lens, it is a purposefully created social structure that aims to facilitate exchange of resources like support of requesters against fulfillment for volunteers. Volunteers that carry out a great deal of the activities of WDL and continuously decide to invest (resources like time or effort) into it. Because their investment is a vital condition for the working of the network, understanding what and how kinds of social capital are generated for the volunteers may locate benefits and yield suggestions for this particular network and similar initiatives that operate in the region (Zorgzame Dorpen, 2022). More generally, it adds to understanding how social capital may be a mediator and target of health interventions (Villalonga-Olives et al., 2018). Further, the thesis contributes to understanding creation of social capital in voluntary associations.

Associations have been considered important influences on the distribution of social capital in societies (Putnam, 2000; Häuberer, 2014). The research question that emerges is:

What kinds of social capital are born by the social relations that volunteers sustain through the volunteer network of Wedde dat 't lukt?

In order to answer the research question, first background information on social capital, as well as its operationalization to the WDL-case and a general description of WDL will be provided. Second, the method section argues for the in-depth interview approach and describes the data collection, analysis, and considerations of ethics and positionality. Third, the main findings are presented, organized into personal and societal pre-conditions to social capital formation, and network features that shape what social capital emerges for volunteers. Fourth, the discussion distinguishes two kinds of social capital for volunteers from relations to requesters, presents reflections about social capital theory from the application and discusses implications for WDL, as well as limitations of this thesis. Finally, the conclusion summarizes approach and findings, and suggests future directions for research.

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter will introduce the theory of social capital, show how social capital has been operationalized for the case study of Wedde dat 't lukt, and provide background information on the Wedde dat 't lukt foundation [WDL]. First, the core idea behind social capital and the debates about its definition and measurement will be introduced. Second, the conceptualization by Lin (2001b) that is adopted in this thesis will be elaborated. Third, it will be shown how social capital is operationalized in this thesis with concrete variables. Fourth, an argument and explanation for distinguishing types of social capital is presented. Lastly, the most relevant information on WDL is summarized.

2.1 Social capital theory

2.1.1 Background

The debate about social capital was initiated in the 1980s and 1990s by the writings of scholars like Bourdieu, Coleman or Putnam (Lin, 2001b; Häuberer, 2011; Son, 2020). The core idea is an extension of what previous theories considered to be assets that may be turned into capital. 'Turned into', because capital in general describes resources that are being used, or that could be used, by individuals to meet their ends. Lin offers the definition:

> *"Capital is resources when these resources are invested and mobilized in pursuit of a profit - as a goal in action."* – Lin, 2001b, p.3

As mobilization, capital refers to resources that are *used to obtain* another resource, and as investment, capital refers to resources that are *obtained by using* another resource. The addition of *social* capital theory is to enlarge the set of what comes into question as a resource. With social capital the idea was introduced that additionally social relationships may be resources and constitute capital, because many resources are in fact accessed through social relationships and investment therein (Lin, 2001b; Häuberer, 2011). This basic idea that relates social structures to private and societal outcomes sparked various conceptualizations claiming explanatory power concerning e.g. the facilitation of individual actions and formation of other types of capital (Coleman, 1994), inter-group dynamics and civil engagement (Putnam, 2000) or individual health (Villalonga-Olives et al., 2018; Son, 2020; Häuberer, 2011). Social capital theory in general thus studies "investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace." (Lin, 2001b, p. 19). The marketplace – or location of exchange – may vary from economic to political, labor or community (Lin, 2001b).

Because no shared definition of social capital emerged, its theorized relevance has only incoherently been supported by empirical studies that often suffer from conceptual vagueness (e.g. Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009; Son, 2020; Häuberer, 2011; Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2015; Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005). A major point of debate is whether social capital should be conceived of as a resource that is used and obtained on the individual(micro)- (e.g. Lin, 2001b; Burt, 1992; Nyqvist et al., 2013), or also the collective(macro) level (e.g. Coleman, 1994; Putnam, 2000; Andersen et al., 2015). Proponents of the collective approach argue to include societal features like generalized trust into the measure of social capital, to capture how such features may yield outcomes for individuals and collectives (Häuberer, 2011; Son, 2020). Supporters of the individual approach contend that the collective-approach is inherently vague and difficult to measure because it does not explain on what level (micro or macro) results hold and macro-features may have different meanings and effects in different populations. The individual approach thinks of social capital as a property of individuals' networks, that is influenced by and influences societal level outcomes (Häuberer, 2011; Lin, 2001b; Son, 2020). Locating social capital at the micro-level can detail mechanisms and hypotheses more precisely and still include the macro-level in explanations. Relevant to the current case-study, Nyqvist et al. (2013) recommend to use an individual approach in the context of old age and loneliness, because it provides the necessary detail in networks where actors have very different positions, e.g. due to age. Although the collective approach has been dominant for public health applications, this thesis thus follows the individual approach (Villalonga-Olives et al., 2018; Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009; Coll-Planas et al., 2017; Son, 2020).

Besides the level of analysis, there has been a measurement debate about what features of social capital would be more useful for individuals. But the project of quantifying social capital in general is bound to lose valuable information. Similar amounts of different types of social capital may relate to very different outcomes and in a unified measure, more social capital may not even always translate to better outcomes for an agent (Svendsen, 2006; Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2017; Häuberer, 2011). To follow through the workings of how particular features of the networks of individuals relate to particular personal and societal outcomes, it makes sense to distinguish different *kinds* of social capital, rather than aggregating all kinds of social capital into one measure (Häuberer, 2011; Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005). Before specifying how (kinds of) social capital are operationalized, Lin's (2001b) definition of social capital that guides this paper will be introduced.

2.1.2 Lin's conceptualization of social capital

Nan Lin's (2001b) conceptualization of social capital has been an influential example of the individual approach and is chosen to guide this thesis because it overcomes challenges of vagueness and allows for a detailed account. Lin thus sees social capital as accruing to individuals, depending on *personal and societal preconditions* and resulting in p*ersonal and societal outcomes*. He defines social capital as:

> "Resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions" (Lin, 2001b, p.29).

The definition includes both resources that are accessed (obtained) and mobilized (used). Measurements that focus only on resources used would be distorted, because many factors external to the social capital definition influence the decision of an agent to mobilize a certain resource e.g. costs of mobilization. Also theoretical access to resources alone, cannot indicate social capital because in how far something constitutes social capital for somebody, also depends on how accessible it actually is (Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2004; Häuberer, 2011). This measurement challenge will be addressed in the methodology section.

The core of Lin's (2001b) theory is made up by the following four axioms[1] about (1) the social structure, (2) interaction among agents, (3) how resources are embedded in networks, and (4) a theory of action. First, structurally, there are hierarchically arranged *positions* is a society, defined in terms of access to or control over resources and relations of authority to other positions. These positions can be occupied by agents and rules and procedures structure the interactions between agents in positions. This structure is not a fixed entity but continuously shaped by the agents in the society, especially so in less formal contexts. Second, *interaction* between agents is understood as patterns of how resources from different positions are linked. The principle of homophily emerges as important hypotheses: that interaction is easiest and therefore most likely to occur among agents with similar resource-endowments and lifestyles. Third, the *networks* of individuals matter, because most resources an individual will use are embedded in the structure, that is to say are either personal resources of another agent the individual is in contact with or resources associated with a position the individual holds. Fourth, *action* of agents is understood as the rational pursuit of goals – hence 'purposive action' – that generally fall into the categories of maintaining (*expressive*) or gaining (*instrumental*) resources. Lin (2001b) thus shares the

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[1] For an overview of the original formulations see table 1 in the appendix.

assumption that individuals act in rational pursuit of their own interests – rational choice theory – with earlier social capital authors, apparent in conceptualizing various spheres of life as marketplaces on which individuals pursue their self-interest (Häuberer, 2011). This reduction of social relations to rationally pursued resource patterns constitutes a limitation to the explanatory power of the social capital model for social structures and interactions. Assuming rational choice is a widely used and varied, but far from uncontested behavior-modeling convention. Since settling the debate lies far beyond the scope of this thesis, we have to content ourselves with noting that humans do not *always* but at least *sometimes* act rationally (e.g. Kahneman, 2011; Graaf & Wiertz, 2019).

2.2 Social capital operationalization

To operationalize social capital, this thesis adds variables that have been found relevant by complementary studies in social capital to the framework drawn up by Lin (2001b). Figure 1 displays the resulting framework and variables. It is an elaboration of schemes provided by Lin[2] (2001a) and Häuberer[3] (2011) that shares the organization into preconditions, network variables (social capital) and outcomes.

Figure 1: Social capital operationalization
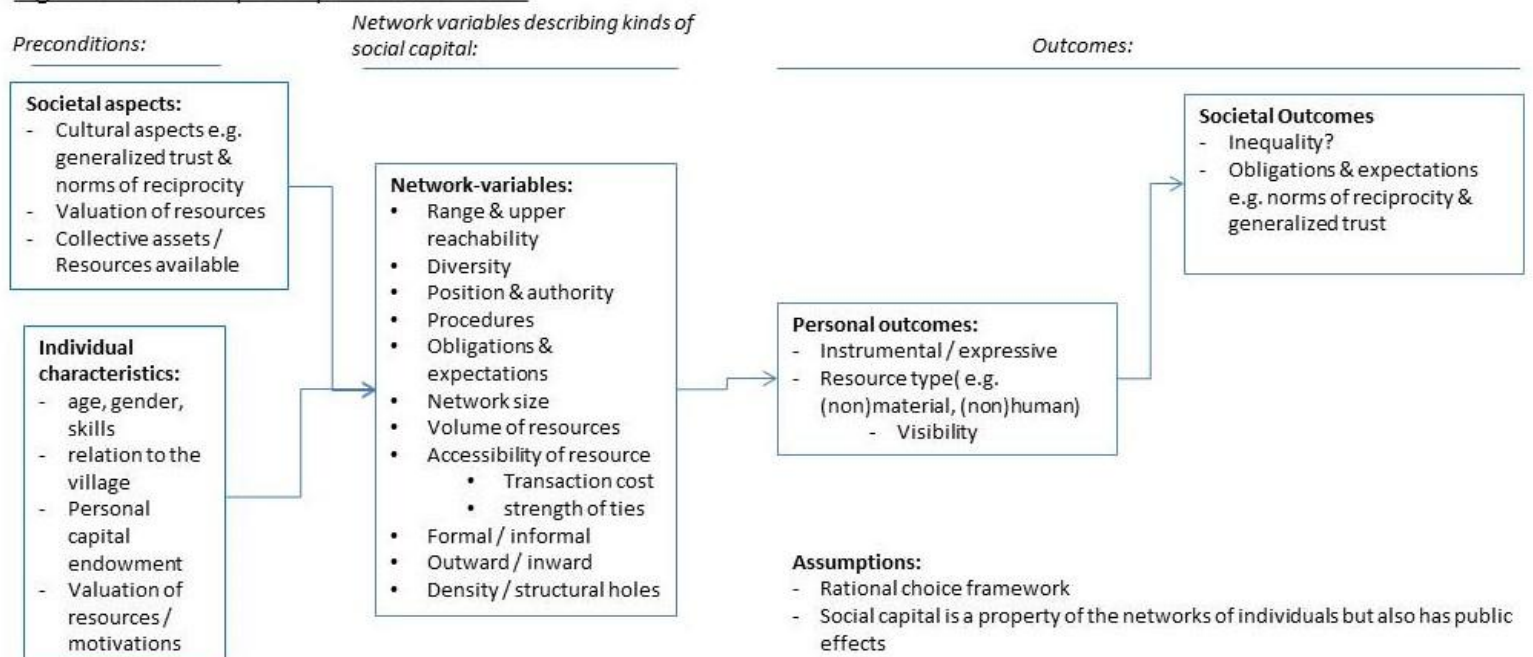
Based on Lin (2001) and Häuberer (2011; 2014), complemented by Van der Gaag & Snijders (2005; 2004), Bhandari & Yasunobu (2009), Svendsen (2006), Krishna (2012), Son (2020)

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[2] Figure 2 appendix
[3] Figure 3 appendix

The social capital of an individual is quantified as the volume and value of resources accessible or used through the network (Häuberer, 2014; Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005; Son, 2020). To grasp how social capital is described here by the network variables, Van der Gaag & Snijder's rendering of the social capital definition is helpful. They put social capital as the

> "Collection of resources owned by the members of an individual's personal social network, which may become available to the individuals as a result of the history of these relationships." (2004, p.155)

A description of social capital thus needs to include the history of relationships (featuring e.g. the continuous constitution of structures of interaction) and the kind of resources of accessed positions. Variables like size, diversity, volume of resources, outward / inward, range and upper reachability or positions and authority, serve to show which resources an individual may access or use via engagement with others in the network. Variables like procedures, obligations & expectations, accessibility of resources, formal / informal and density / structural holes describe the processes of interaction that influence the use and access to resources. A list of definitions and operationalizations of the network-variables into questions is included under appendix 5.

2.2.1 What are types of social capital?

Instead of aiming for a gross quantification of social capital across different kinds, it is interesting to quantify social capital per kind or research the workings of particular kinds of social capital in context (Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005; Häuberer, 2014). Various distinctions between kinds of social capital have been offered, the most prominent being Putnam's (2000) categories: bridging (inclusive, connecting) and bonding (exclusive, reinforcing). However, the abstract nature of the bridging / bonding distinction renders it insensitive to small, but in this case-study relevant, changes in the network variables and ambiguous to apply. Another approach to distinguishing kinds of social capital, is grouping resources that are accessed by similar patterns into 'social capital domains' (Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005). Positive correlations between accessed resources indicated domains in Van der Gaag and Snijder's (2005) study, the correlations were proxies for different patterns of resource access. This thesis adopts the latter approach of distinguishing kinds of social capital based on access-structure differences emerging from the data. This open approach fits the

explorative nature of this thesis, and also the questions about social capital's relation to inequality or negative social capital on the current research agenda of social capital theory (Häuberer, 2011; Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005; Svendsen, 2006; Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2017).

In the present operationalization (figure 1), different arrangements of the variables in the middle column titled 'network variables' will distinguish kinds of social capital. Distinguishing kinds of social capital is relevant when they are associated with different qualities (e.g. expressive / instrumental) and quantities of outcomes. For instance, following Lin (2001b), networks with larger size and range would typically be social capital for instrumental actions and outcomes. Whether and to what effects different kinds of social capital accrue to the volunteers in WDL will be the topic of this thesis.

2.3 Introducing the case-study: Wedde dat 't lukt?

This section offers a brief introduction to the Wedde dat 't lukt [WDL] foundation and its workings. WDL is a citizens' initiative and foundation that has been operating since 2015. It started in the 600[4] inhabitants village Wedde in the east of the Dutch province Groningen and grew to also cover the nearby villages Wedderveer, Veelerveen and Vriescheloo (CBS, 2021; M. Beltman, personal communication, March 15, 2022). In the area there are problems of poverty, loneliness and low education that are further aggravated by conditions of old age, decreasing health and personal mobility. WDL's declared goal is to enable the people in the villages where it operates to live longer, independently and well, at home by connecting them to informal and formal care services (WDL, 2022). The foundation employs a so-called 'village-supporter' who, full-time, establishes relationships with villagers to find out their needs, is a port of call for requests of support and arranges provision of support. If the task is not too big to be solved by the foundation the village-supporter either provides the support herself or contacts a volunteer who may help. Tasks then range from keeping somebody company to replacing a lightbulb, doing groceries for somebody, smaller tasks in the garden or personal administrative matters. The main roles in the network are thus the village-supporter, requesters who ask for support via the network and volunteers who provide

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[4] 2021 number

support or do organizational tasks like sitting in the board of the foundation (personal communication, M. Beltmann, March 15, 2022; WDL, 2022).

3. Methodology

In the following I will outline and argue for the qualitative research approach of this thesis, expand on the process of data collection, describe the method of analysis employed and discuss issues of ethics and positionality.

3.1 Qualitative research approach

The most dominant approach to measuring individual social capital – the notion of social capital employed here – is to quantify social capital by sketching an individual's network regarding her access to resources from the relations that she entertains (Son, 2020; Häuberer, 2011). The 'Resource Generator' is a development of earlier approaches. In a survey, participants are asked to indicate whether they have access to a set of predetermined resources via their social contacts, and to assess the strength of the respective relationship, as a measure for the actual availability of the resource (Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005). The approach discontinues a bias towards instrumental resources in earlier tools by focusing on resources that are found to be valuable to the participants, instead of basing valuation on general proxies like prestige of accessed positions (Häuberer, 2011). The present case-study uses qualitative in-depth interviews, but adopts the stress on measuring *access* and *actual availability* of *valued* resources because it best captures the value of social capital to an individual that also informs her decision to invest in it, or here, to engage in the network.

Understanding and distinguishing workings of social capital in the WDL network requires a rich account of, for instance, what value individuals see in the network or what sort of relations they entertain. In-depth interviews allow to capture how individuals perceive, use and value social capital in more detail than the resource generator survey. The interview can be a trustful conversation where the participant, together with an outsider of the network (i.e. the researcher), may confidentially and with full authority narrate their vision of the network, including matters like valuations or concerns, that might be less freely shared in a less individual setting like a focus group (Hennink et al., 2020). In the framework of individual social capital, the individual (not the collective) perspective matters, because it is the individual who experiences, and decides to 'invest' in, a given social capital. This focus makes the limitation of in-depth interviews to information provided by participants, as opposed to

e.g. macro-data on contextual features that informs Van der Gaag and Snijder's (2005) valuation of resources, less problematic. Further, social capital is influenced by personal characteristics and the societal context in which an individual finds itself. In-depth interviews provide information about these subjective and contextual features – e.g. years lived in the area – that importantly includes the meaning participants attach to them, in relation to their engagement in WDL (Hennink et al., 2020). The detailed information further allows to distinguish social capital from participating in WDL from other sources of social capital. They are also open enough to include possible informal relations that are associated with WDL engagement but not formally a part of it, or anticipated by the researcher. That different types of social capital can be expected to arise from the differing activities of the volunteers adds to the relevance of a nuanced account of engagement. This application of in-depth interviews is an example of how qualitatively researching types of social capital may contribute towards overcoming some of the major challenges of quantifying social capital, that is to determine adequate variables, indicators and types of social capital in a specific context (Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2015; Islam et al., 2006; Svendsen, 2006; Grootaert & Bastelaer, 2002; Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005).

3.2 Methods of data collection

My analysis is based on one hour long, semi-structured in-depth interviews with four volunteers that are active for the Wedde dat t' lukt foundation. The interviews were held in Dutch and took place at the home of my participants.

The participants were selected conditional on having been active for at least a year and currently still being active. The minimum time of having been involved should ensure that they have found a position in the network and are able to reflect on their experiences and continued investment into the network. This way, the inquiry could reveal more actual sources of social capital for the volunteers, instead of, possibly, 'mistaken investments' into a relationship that does or will not yield the expected returns. For similar reasons, the focus was on currently active volunteers who - for some reasons - decide to sustain their investment in the network, and know the current network. Further, participants should represent the different types of volunteering activities done via Wedde dat 't lukt, because different forms of engagement may be the structural differences that ground a distinction between types of social capital. Volunteering activities differ, for instance, in whether always the same or always

different people are visited or what kind of support is offered, e.g. a chore in housekeeping, the garden, administrative affairs or simply company.

The village-supporter, the WDL employed person that mediates the contact between requesters and volunteers, selected the participants based on the above criteria and established the initial contact. This was beneficial because given the small number of participants interviewed, the knowledge of the village-supporter enabled to include different types of volunteers in the inquiry. Since the village supporter acted as a gatekeeper, mediating the initial contact between researcher and participant, biases and ethical issues have to be considered (Hennink et al., 2020). Selection bias may arise from the village-supporters interest to portray her work and the foundation as working well and socially beneficial. The selection bias was minimized but not entirely excludable by the criterion to choose different types of volunteers, the open research question and the fact that it was not sure what form and influence the research results would have. With their consent, the village-supporter passed the participants' contact details on to me. When I contacted the participants, I clarified the object and purpose of the study, as well as their right to refuse participation. As I suggested to them, we met at the participants' homes for a confidential and safe environment that would moreover situate them in their everyday lives to elicit personal stories and allow observation (Hennink et al., 2020). Before starting the interview (and the recording thereof), I outlied details on the study, their participant rights and took verbal consent. I especially stressed that the content of the interview would be confidential and their anonymity would be ensured in the presentation of the results – also towards the village-supporter. For this reason I use pseudonyms instead of their real names. Nonetheless, it cannot be excluded that the participants' responses were biased in favor of WDL, from a position of representing WDL against an outside observer or allegiance to the village-supporter. This bias was limited by probing for personal narratives and experiences and focusing on the structure of relationships within the network rather than overall evaluations.

The interviews were semi-structured, following both an interview guide and the personal narratives evoked. The interview guide featured a number of questions to describe the personal and societal preconditions, network-structure and outcomes for individuals, that were deduced from the social capital literature by Lin (2001b) and others (see figure 1). Some concepts were straightforward to operationalize, like 'network size': *With whom are you in contact via WDL?* and others like 'position and authority' required multiple questions like: *What are X's roles in WDL?* and *For what reasons do you get in touch with X?* For an

overview about variable definitions and corresponding interview questions see appendix 5, and appendix 6 for the complete interview guide. Additionally, interviews for another research project on a related topic (data not part of this thesis) provided context and served as pilot. The qualitative semi-structured approach fit the explorative nature of the thesis.

3.3 Analysis

The data was verbatim transcribed and analyzed using inductive and deductive codes[5]. In a thematic analysis, major themes were identified like: 'Relation to village', 'expressive outcomes' or 'description of WDL'. These were further specified by deductive codes like 'circle of acquaintances', 'resource investments' or 'procedures'; and inductive codes like '"I don't mind"', 'being helped oneself' or 'Loneliness'. Additional codes like 'identification as volunteer', 'WDL narrative' or '"letting tell"' were yielded by a narrative analysis that added a focus on the content and structure of how people presented their relationships via Wedde dat 't lukt and volunteering activities in the context of their own lives (Hennink et al., 2020). The interviews were compared for similarities and differences by using the same ever-inductively-growing codebook, and marking which codes were validated for which participants. The preconceived network variables were specified by the codes and an interpretative step described what elements constitute social capital, preconditions or outcomes. Moreover, the relevant *positions* – interconnected structures of resource access to be occupied by agents (Lin, 2001b) – in the WDL network were sketched. The analysis revealed two patterns of relationship-bound resource access that were interpreted as distinct types of social capital.

3.4 Ethics and positionality

Because my participants were contacted by the village-supporter instead of self-selected, it was important to assure their informed consent (Hennink et al., 2020). When I explained the topic of the interviews, the ways in which the results would be used and their rights as participants, the participants did not show concerns about the interview but instead interest and willingness to help. We continued to converse informally after the recorded interview ended and the participants offered their support if further questions should arise, still not showing any concerns. Still, it was important to assure their anonymity in the results to minimize possible harm or influences to the discussed relationships. Because the volunteer network is embedded in a small community, already some pieces of information connected to

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[5] The full codebook is included in appendix 5

the same person might identify participants to some. Hence, I will not use identity markers to attribute pieces of information to a particular participant when presenting sensitive data. Further, the interviews were likely to touch upon personal and emotional relationships, as well as potentially troubling questions about meaning and value (Hennink et al., 2020). The interviews were hence kept as an open space that encouraged reflection, but also a safe environment, by not unsolicitedly intruding into too personal matters. To achieve this, especially the initial questions put the interviewee in the position to direct the interview. Questions and probes throughout were kept open as to let the participant choose what to disclose but also directed the conversation back to relating easier parts of the experiences in the network at times. Further, rapport was established over introductions and empathy and the participant chose the location for the interview – which was, as suggested, their homes. Home seemed to be not only a familiar but also a comfortable location and it further established the participant as host which evened out the power relation to the researcher.

Regarding my positionality, it is note-worthy that I am German and my Dutch was sufficient, but subtle meanings might have escaped my scrutiny. Beyond language, there seemed to be no cultural barriers. Wedde is located near the German border and occasionally language mistakes actually helped to establish rapport during the interview, and put the participant into a safe position. The participants were on average 45 years older than me and I have myself never lived in a small village like Wedde, Vriescheloo or Veelerveen. In the eyes of my participants I must have represented 'the university' as well as 'the city' to a degree, but this possibility was attenuated by their apparent familiarity with both students and city life. Further, my greater knowledge of the academic background was balanced by their greater knowledge of the topic and context. I was myself nervous going into the interviews because of the ethical and academic expectations I sought to fulfill in the new role of a researcher, e.g. to direct the possibly very personal interviews onto safe grounds while also obtaining in-depth information, not suggesting answers and somehow representing the RUG. The gap in experiences that corresponds to the age gap and the foreign language contributed to my nervousness. Ultimately, uncertainties on both sides seemed to level out and the interviews were marked by trust, ease and mutual curiosity. Points of difference between our backgrounds enabled me to ask for clarification about what otherwise may seem obvious without creating an air of artificiality. My interest in the topic comes from the academic background of writing a thesis and exploring a concept, but also from my own experience in voluntary organizations and ideals about e.g. creating liveable social structures. Because of the capacity of this study, inter-person checks on the transcription, coding, analysis and

translation process that would have reduced possible misunderstandings due to language or biased interpretations based on my own personal and academic background were not possible.

4. Main findings

In the following, I will present the main findings from the interviews, and analyze the kinds of social capital that accrue to volunteers from engaging in the network. Firstly, I will first describe relevant personal and societal preconditions to the formation of social capital. Secondly, the motivation(s) of my participants to engage in the network will be outlined, because they reveal what resources my participants value. Third, I describe the structure of the network that my participants engage in and the resources that are embedded in it – i.e. the social capital.

4.1 Personal and societal preconditions

This section presents some of the personal and societal context that is relevant to what constitutes social capital to the participants. The four participants were in their 60s, three were female, one was male. Two had been involved with WDL for about one year and the other two for about four years. They all disposed of free time from retirement, temporarily not working or working reduced hours with the prospect of retirement. Further, they enjoyed financial security from the background of years of working, current employment or pension. The time that my participants invested into their volunteering ranged from an hour weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, and was regarded as very little against their background and the outcomes. None of them were originally from the area, and Jan, Vera and Marie who came from the Randstad noticed some persisting cultural differences. Two had lived in their village for under 10- and two for over 25 years. Despite having lived in the area for multiple years, the participants indicated to have only a small circle of friends or acquaintances in the area. The reasons given for this ranged from working outside of the area, little or no involvement in the local association life to time consumed by other activities or a perception that there is only little community-feeling in the area in general. The category that across participants emerged as more relevant for a community feeling – in terms of acquaintances and mutual help – than 'village', was the level of one's own street. "Noabershulp" or casual support from the neighbors was seen a practice that is rooted in the local culture, and that my participants engaged in beyond their activities for WDL. About what distinguishes WDL from informal Noabershulp, Lisa stated:

> *Asking your neighbors to also do your financial administration? That is also not so usual. – Lisa*

The idea of WDL itself was then seen as an extension of this readiness to help, beyond the type of help that one would usually offer and beyond the confines of one's street, to the four WDL villages. When it comes to the structure of collective assets that are available in the area, my participants identified loneliness and poverty as important problems in the area.

> We live in a region where there are many elderly. Many people live alone, many maybe far from the children. There is surely a great demand, that somebody does something for you. – Vera

> There still is poverty and loneliness. Also, in a prosperous country like the Netherlands. [...] But that did shock me. If you see how some people live…that is bizarre. – Participant

Together with conditions like old age, illness or immobility, poverty and loneliness were perceived to put people into intense situations of need. The function ascribed to WDL was then not to solve these problems entirely, but to make a contribution towards them in the sector of what can be done informally, and further, to reconnect people to other providers of support.

> So many people are in need, people that just do not have a network anymore – Lisa

The context-similarities between the participants' decision to engage in the network are thus being personally financially well-off and have additional free time. Further, they draw onto the cultural framework of noabershulp and are not or little involved in a village-life. At the same time there is need for support greater than what is covered.

4.1.1 Motivation to engage

This section presents an overview over the motivations of the participants for their involvement or the resources they value in the network. Not all participants showed all motivations, but the relative importance of motivations to the participants could be coherently organized in three ranks from A (high) to C and is displayed in table 2[6]. Motivations will be discussed under the simplifying assumption that individuals make rational choices based on

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[6] Against their own background of relative financial security or existing networks, getting support from the WDL network themselves was not a was not a value sought by the participants when deciding to get involved. However, on a more abstract and distant level they expressed valuation for living in a society where support would be available if they should need it.

their best knowledge about a situation and in pursuit of their self-interest (Graaf & Wiertz, 2019; Lin, 2001b).

	Motivations (ranked by importance) *(Table 2)*		
A	'Getting to know people'	'Abstract fulfillment'	'Personal fulfillment'
B	'Not start anything too big'		
C	'Pleasant activity'	'(local) knowledge'	

Most motivations were clustered around the goals of 'getting to know people', 'abstract fulfillment' and 'personal fulfillment'. 'Getting to know people' captures that three of the participants wanted to enlarge their social circle in the village by having access to the network of WDL. The fourth participant did not mention this motivation and was more rooted in the spheres of village life already. 'Getting to know people' did not mean establishing friendships although it was not ruled out. Some of the participants also experienced loneliness generally – or, in one case, rather de-connection from the local people – so already occasional conversations and greetings would be valued. As the quote shows, it is not only the requesters who are helped:

> *On the one hand it is indeed for myself, because otherwise, you get back into loneliness. – Participant*

Here the line between volunteer and requester blurs. It reappears in concerns about expectations that could emerge from relationships and constrain the participant's disposition of free time. These 'not start anything too big'-concerns were present for relations to requesters and appeared to be grounded in perceived inequalities that could engender dependency-relations. With the homophily principle, some social capital authors have proposed that agents usually decide to interact with others that are similar in characteristics or resources (Lin, 2001b; Putnam, 2000). However, Häuberer (2014) argues that homophily is less relevant in more formal voluntary associations where choices about structural interaction are formed a priori, instead of spontaneously. For WDL, the balance between formality and

informality kept through a shared narrative about e.g. roles, and procedures like mediation of contacts by the village-supporter, facilitated interaction across differences and was seen as an advantage of offering support via WDL over other kinds of offering support. Attenuating inequalities, Jan and Vera[7] positioned some requesters as sources of general and local knowledge:

> *It is just like scanning a neighborhood, so that you know where the good fish seller is or; well, where to buy or find things. – Jan*

They expressed the motivation 'getting to know people' also in order to get access to their knowledge. All of my participants sought two types of fulfillment from volunteering, described as the good feeling that you can mean something for someone else. First, 'personal fulfillment' comes from the direct responses of people to the offered support. Jan describes how fulfillment comes from seeing positive responses, and Vera that she indeed expects these responses:

> *You take a little hour for it, and when you see what it does for the people… It is appreciated. – Jan*

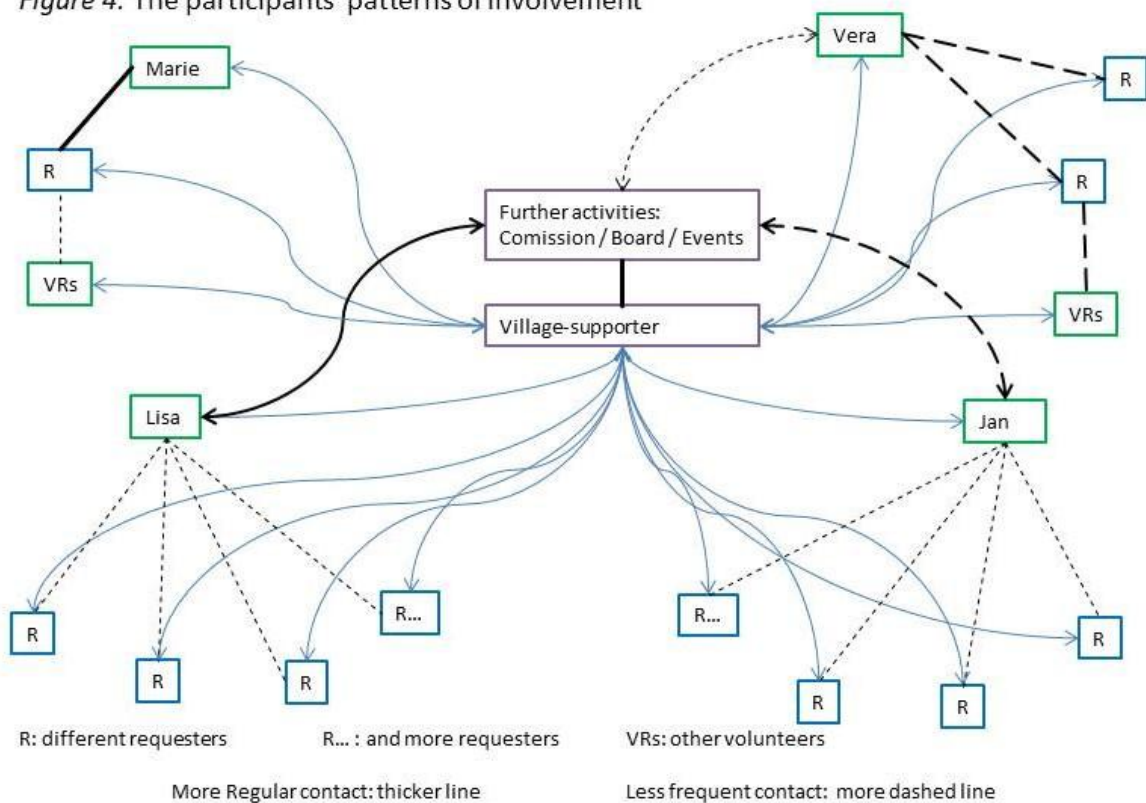> *I do not need anything more but you could really just say how nice or thank you! – Vera*

'Personal fulfillment' thus is sought, and depends on the impact of the support for the requester, as well as on how it is received. Second, my participants understand their volunteering in more abstract narratives of themselves and the world. Satisfaction from such frames will be called 'abstract fulfillment' and was given as: 'being a caring person', 'giving something back', 'I always had it good' or 'duties of care for fellow people'. With terms like 'fellow people', 'each other' or 'fellow villagers' the participants explicitly narrated the requesters as an in-group at differing levels of locality and on eye-level with the volunteers. Inequalities were not considered relevant in determining who is able to confer fulfillment to the volunteer by being supported. Lastly, since the outlined goals were not bound to particular activities, the participants did not mind what they would do exactly, except for a couple of ruled-out activities. However, if volunteering was experienced as a 'pleasant activity', this offered additional expressive motivation.

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[7] Vera did not link this motivation to WDL requesters but to people she was supporting otherwise.

4.2 Network structure: social capital

I move on to describe social capital by the structure of their volunteer-involvement in WDL. As described in section 2.3, WDL employs a village-supporter that facilitates the contact between volunteers and requesters. This includes establishing relations of trust, receiving support requests from requesters, offers of support by volunteers, matching them and getting updates after activities or if there are any complications[8]. The volunteers usually work individually and solve tasks that take about one hour and vary depending on their skills and preferences from doing groceries, gardening, housekeeping to administration, transport or keeping company. Figure 4 shows the respective patterns of involvement of the participants that result from these processes, in terms of strength, frequency and quantity of contacts via the network.

Figure 4: The participants' patterns of involvement

R: different requesters   R... : and more requesters   VRs: other volunteers

More Regular contact: thicker line   Less frequent contact: more dashed line

Everybody in the network has direct access to the village-supporter – usually via phone or email. Besides that, there are generally few regular connections to other positions (other than

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[8] She also forwards requesters to professional providers of support if the request lies out of the scope of WDL.

the village supporter), especially not between volunteers[910]. Marie and Vera regularly see the same requesters, but in turn only see few: one and two, respectively. Lisa and Jan see many different requesters but usually only once the same. Frequency and regularity of contact indicate the strength of a relationship that may matter for what kind of expectations emerge or whether social capital can be mobilized (Lin, 2001b; Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005).

The social capital that accrues to my participants from engaging in the WDL network, is constituted by resources of the village-supporter, other volunteers or requesters, that my participants have access to because of their relationships in the network. With 'position', Lin (2001b) describes structures of access to resources and to other positions, that may be occupied by individuals. Patterns of social capital are visible when combining the structural relations between positions (figure 4) with the valued resources that each offers. Table 3 characterizes the different positions in WDL by the resources – relevant to the participants' interests – that they offer. It also includes some variables that influence actual access to the resource. Given the scope of the thesis, I simplify the WDL positions to the formal roles 'volunteer', 'requester' and 'village-supporter' and allow for some diversity within these positions[11].

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[9] Requesters may receive support from multiple volunteers (labeled VRs), which might put them into bridging positions for contact between volunteers. However, none of the participants got into contact with another volunteer via a requester and this is also not foreseen by the formal roles. The connection is only exemplarily depicted here because the focus lies on the volunteers' role and the participants did not suggest the requesters as a source of social capital in the sense of laying a connection to other volunteers.

[10] Participants rarely knew or met acquaintances via WDL outside of WDL activities.

[11] This depiction captures resources that mattered to the participant but also fall under formally endowed resources, i.e. those inherent in the WDL narrative understanding of roles or structural processes. Informal processes may create additional positions that participants were not aware of, but the focus on formally endowed resources is justified because it applies to volunteers in general.

Table 3: Resource-endowments to positions in the WDL network

Resources owned by: the village-supporter (VS)	Access relative to i.a. the:	Resources owned by: Requesters (R)	Access relative to i.a. the requester's:	Resources owned by: Volunteers (VR)	Access relative to i.a. the Volunteer's:
'not start anything too big' Delegate responsibility and expectations	Degree of VS mediation of the volunteer–requester relationship	Abstract fulfillment	fit with a given narrative of being helped in a situation of need	Get to know people	Network size & strength of tie to the volunteer
Connect to volunteers and requesters	Type of VR activity in the network (e.g. size of accessed network)	Personal fulfillment	Signs of gratitude	(Local) knowledge	Knowledge & network
		(Local) knowledge	Knowledge & network		
		Get to know people	Network size & strength of tie to the volunteer		
		Pleasant activity	Type of task demanded and interaction		

The village-supporter provides social capital first, in that she enables to 'not start anything too big' by taking over responsibility and incorporating volunteers' preferences in processes of continuous contact, and second, by establishing contact with other members of the network. The participants all valued this mechanism. Jan recalls a conversation with somebody he later helped:

> *You talk about it [WDL volunteering] with people, and she knew about the foundation, and I said from there [WDL], I can also mean something for you. – Jan*

The quote shows how Jan cared to situate activities in the WDL frame for the benefits of the village-supporter-mediation. Interaction with requesters provided the list of resources – depending on some variables – that have already been explained in section 4.1.1. The fulfillment and pleasant activity motivations were only found here. Contact to other volunteers was very limited, but also pursued for the sake of 'getting to know people'. To this end volunteers can work together in occasional events, come to the yearly get-together or take up more coordinating positions in the WDL network by being part of its board, a commission or organizing one-time projects. From working at events, Jan knew some other by sight volunteers. Lisa and Vera were engaged in organizational activities but still did not indicate to know many other volunteers. That in general ties in the network were weak according to the participants' description may be due to limitations in the frequency of seeing each other, and divergence of interests in the relationship – e.g. between volunteers: 'getting to know people'

vs more formal organizational tasks or between volunteer & requester: 'abstract fulfillment' vs company. However, occasional contact with acquaintances rather than friends (weak ties) sufficed for e.g. the 'fulfillment' and 'getting to know people' motivations and aided to 'not start anything too big'. Still, one of my participants would have liked to establish stronger ties to volunteers and generally more contact to volunteers was desired. Besides 'getting to know people', volunteers could provide access to more resources like '(local) knowledge' or other forms of social capital. Generally, active members of associations seem to have more social capital than non-actives and non-members (Häuberer, 2014). But due to little contact between volunteers this barely played a role. In sum, the most important procedures and associated positions for the participants were to support requesters, and facilitation of this by the village-supporter.

5. Discussion

This section will distinguish two forms of engagement that constitute different kinds of social capital labeled 'the regular' and 'the wanderer'. A reflection on social capital theory based on the WDL application follows. Then, implications of the findings for WDL will be discussed. Lastly, I outline the limitations of this thesis.

5.1 Kinds of social capital from interactions with requesters: The regular and the wanderer

This section presents the two kinds of social capital and their associated outcomes that were found to apply for participants. Drawing on Van der Gaag and Snijders (2005) 'social capital domains', kinds of social capital are distinguished by different structures of access to (socially embedded) resources as described by the network variables in figure 1 above. Whether the volunteer has regular contact with the same requester or with always different ones influences how other resources were accessed and is the relevant structural difference that allows to distinguish two kinds of social capital from relations to requesters. I will refer to these kinds as 'regular' and 'wanderer' and outline how their social capital differs, how the differences matter in relation to the motivation of the volunteers and how they may explain different outcomes. Table 4 shows the two distinct kinds of social capital. As the above network sketch (figure 4) illustrates, Marie and Vera were 'regulars' and Jan and Lisa 'wanderers'. Table 4 also includes some factors that remained constant across types and the ~ in front of a personal outcome symbolizes lesser realization thereof. The participants' relations to volunteers also differed structurally, but it goes beyond the scope of this thesis to also distinguish possible kinds here, and the focus shall lie on relations to requesters since these were much more prevalent and also relevant to the participant's motivations.

Table 4: Kinds of social capital for volunteers from interactions with requesters

Kinds of social capital for volunteers from interaction with requesters:	'Regular': Marie, Vera	'Wanderer': Lisa, Jan
Requester visited	*Always the same*	*Always different*
Network size (in WDL)	-	+
Diversity within accessed positions	-	+
Risk to not get resources	+	-
Strength of tie to requesters	+	-
Expectations in requester relationship	+ informal - formal	+ formal - informal
Investment in volunteering	little	
Range of positions accessed	Requester, Village-supporter, little/no volunteers	
Transaction costs of mobilizing capital	Little	
Directedness / target group of activites	Inward (Group: 'each other', 'fellow villagers', 'fellow people')	
Resources valued / motivation	'Fullfillment' (abstract & personal) 'Getting to know people' 'Pleasant activity' 'Not start anything to big'	'Fulfillment' (abstract & personal 'Getting to know people' 'Pleasant activity' 'Not start anything to big' '(local) Knowledge'
Personal outcomes	Abstract 'Fulfillment' ~ personal 'fulfillment' ~ 'Pleasant activity' ~ 'not start anything too big'	'Fulfillment' (abstract & personal) 'Getting to know people' 'Pleasant acticivity' 'not start anything too big' '(local) knowledge'

The 'wanderer' participants met more requesters, thus had a bigger network size and achieved 'getting to know people', unlike the 'regulars' who would have liked to meet more people. Meeting more requesters also entailed a higher diversity in terms of what resources may be accessed via the requester(s). To illustrate, Jan related how the people he supports sometimes offer '(local) knowledge' that interests him, while others do not. In the context of her non-WDL involvement, 'local knowledge' also was a motivation for Vera (regular) but not expressed related to WDL, which might be due her not experiencing it as a possible benefit in WDL activities. Since Marie and Lisa both did not show this motivation, a relation to being regular or wanderer cannot be established, but could serve as a hypothesis for follow-up research. For 'pleasant activity', higher diversity increases chances to find aspects that they, from their individual background of interests or preferences, liked; but to a degree the matching of people by the village-supporter already takes preferences into account. Higher diversity lowers the risk of not having access to the hoped-for resource – e.g. one participant recounted interactions with a requester who showed less gratitude which lowered the experience of 'personal fulfillment'. Moreover, like the connection of Marie to the requesters that she sees weekly shows, the regular will form stronger ties than the 'wanderer'. This does

not necessarily equate to an equal friendship, since e.g. for Marie it was still really clear and intended that she is in the role of providing support and company instead of other possible roles. In general, stronger ties were mainly seen as a risk from the concern to 'not start anything too big' and weaker ties sufficed to satisfy the goals in relations to requesters. Regular contact between volunteer and requester is less actively meditated by the village-supporter and with this decrease in formality, expectations may be more directed towards the volunteer e.g. to continue to come regularly. In Marie's case, the person she was seeing was understanding if she could not make it on the usual date, but Marie still from out of herself felt a pressure and will to stick to the coming each week arrangement.

Ultimately, type of engagement of course depends on individual preferences and both kinds of social capital overall satisfied the participants to be positive about WDL, their own involvement and outcomes. Still, the regular kind of social capital is more at risk of not achieving goals. The most important difference was that regulars did not achieve 'getting to know people'. The kinds distinguished can be expected to obtain for volunteers in WDL in general, because they build on structural differences of engagement that are inherent to the volunteer role in WDL.

5.2 Reflections on the theory of social capital

This section presents some findings on social capital theory itself from applying it to the WDL case. The individual approach to describing social capital, in relation to preconditions and outcomes proved workable. Inspired by Van der Gaag and Snijders' (2005) social capital domain approach, this thesis used network variables to identify patterns of access that are *population specific*, and relate to particular sets of outcomes. The 'regular' / 'wanderer' typology was not reflected in the reviewed literature and established summarizing categories like 'bridging' / 'bonding'(Putnam, 2000) were ambiguous to apply to the specificities of the WDL case. Häuberer (2014) found that more active individuals in association have greater social capital on average. The present kinds show differences even at similar levels of activity. This thesis adds to the called for understanding the creation and mobilization of social capital (e.g. Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005; Svendsen, 2006) by illustrating Häuberer's (2014) finding that homophily is less relevant in more formal networks. Participants also helped people outside of WDL, but were very clear about the benefit that they see in helping others via a structure that e.g. alleviates 'not start anything too big' concerns via processes of feedback and shared role-understandings. The more formal elements of WDL thus enabled the creation and mobilization of social capital across inequalities. Lastly, the results go against Lin's (2001b)

strength-of-tie proposition: "The stronger the tie, the more likely the social capital accessed will positively affect the success of expressive action." (Lin, 2001b, p.76). In the present case, even weak ties facilitate expressive action – 'abstract fulfillment' & 'personal fulfillment' – and stronger ties may engender expectations that make expressive action more costly. This finding supports the earlier argument for distinguishing kinds rather than aggregation into one value.

5.3 Implications for WDL

The following section discusses what implications follow for WDL from finding the two kinds of social capital. It appears that the 'regular' type has less of its interests met, since 'getting to know people' is not provided and there are more risk factors to meeting the other interests than for the 'wanderer'. If volunteers see their interests met it encourages them to sustain their involvement in the WDL, which is desirable for both organization and requesters. To stay true to the mission of WDL, however, optimizing the social capital of my participants, and in particular of the 'regulars', has to take into account and prioritize the mission of WDL to provide care for 'each other' (WDL, 2022). For some requesters, regular contact to the same volunteer may constitute an important part of- or a condition for receiving support via WDL (M. Beltman, Personal communication, March 15, 2022). It does thus not follow that 'wanderer' engagement is generally preferable. Moreover, also the 'regulars' amongst my participants were satisfied with their investment in WDL such that they wanted to either sustain or increase their current investment.

A smaller network size, less diversity, more informality and stronger ties constitute risks to the fulfillment of goals of the 'regular' that is dependent on resources provided by the requester and the ability to delegate responsibility to the village supporter. The continuous contact that the village-supporter maintains to the volunteers reduces these risks because it allows to indicate and accommodate preferences. This is an important argument from both analysis and the participants' evaluation for the central and active role of the village-supporter.

If there is demand for 'regular' type of engagement, the 'getting to know people' goal may still be met by increasing connections between volunteers. Inter-volunteer relations barely featured in the analysis because they were not an important source of social capital for the participants. However, most expressed the wish to get to know more of the other volunteers, to 'getting to know people' but also to exchange experiences about the volunteering.

At the moment, volunteers meet:

1. when they take up coordinating roles: but some of the participants did not want to do this, because they saw more intensive involvement that also is further away from the 'personal fulfillment' experience and not such a 'pleasant activity'. Further, some took more formal organizational relations to contribute less to the 'getting to know people' goal. The organization was perceived to proactively reach out to volunteers to show options of becoming more involved, while respecting choices to do less.
2. at events where volunteers work together, e.g. preparing food.
3. once a year for an informal get-together, where their efforts are valued and experiences exchanged.

The most accessible option to increase informal contact possibilities between volunteers seem to be occasions of working together, including time and space to mingle in the planning of events. A future possibility lies in that some participants perceived '(local) knowledge' of requesters as valuable resources that motivated engagement. Exploring what resources one person holds that could be valuable to another, holds the potential to uncover more possible relationships of mutual benefit. For the future development of WDL, this application of social capital located where exactly value is created in the engagement of the volunteers, including a sense of what is valued and what interests are yet unmet.

5.4 Limitations

The following section outlines limitations of this thesis. In general, Lin's social capital theory operates on the contested assumption of rational choice theory and the explanatory power of this thesis equally hinges on how many choices or actions within WDL are rational. Further, by focusing on what participants deemed relevant, the investigation also excluded possible but not consciously valued forms of social capital. For example, volunteers do get access to support structures, even though they do not currently need or access them. An assessment of these possibilities could evaluate societal and long term outcomes of WDL's activities e.g. how social capital for WDL volunteers relates to community resilience, and would require a more comprehensive assessment of individual preconditions, as well as the positions in the network.

The information about WDL from the four interviews and personal communications with the village-supporter and the initiator of the foundation was mostly coherent and to large extents repetitive. Still, because of the small number of participants, it cannot be claimed that saturation has been reached and thus not excluded that there are more distinct ways of accessing social capital via WDL for volunteers (Hennink et al., 2020). For instance, contact between volunteers was not the focus of this thesis for its low prevalence but it could show additional patterns of social capital. Finally, because the interviews were conducted in Dutch, all quotes from my participants had to be translated, which invariably led to a loss of original nuance. Moreover, more implicit meanings might have escaped my non-native understanding already during the interview and the data analysis. In order to reduce this limitation, there is a list of the original quotes in Dutch under appendix 1.

6. Conclusion

This paper has sought to answer the question: *What kinds of social capital are born by the social relations that volunteers sustain through the volunteer network of Wedde dat 't lukt?* Wedde dat 't lukt is an association operating in the Groninger villages Wedde, Wedderveer, Vriescheloo and Veelerveen, that seeks to connect people in need with formal care services, or, with volunteers that provide informal support. The thesis adopted the definition of social capital as: "Resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions" (Lin, 2001b, p.29). Social capital was further operationalized by a number of variables derived from Lin (2001b) and others that describe the network-structure of individuals. Kinds of social capital are then configurations of these network variables. It is worthwhile to distinguish kinds of social capital instead of conflating them into one measure of total social capital, because different kinds of social capital work to achieve different outcomes. For the case study of Wedde dat 't lukt, four in-depth interviews with volunteers yielded a thick description of different ways in which volunteers are active in the network, including their motivations and personal outcomes. The qualitative approach allowed to distinguish kinds of social capital more specifically than possible with large-scale quantitative surveys like that by Van der Gaag and Snijders (2005).

The WDL network was described by sketching interrelations of the most important roles in the network – volunteer, requester and village supporter – and the resources (valuable to the participants) that they command. The most important motivations for participants were feelings of 'abstract fulfillment' (from serving a larger moral frame), 'personal fulfillment'

(from personal responses) and 'getting to know people'. For an example of what social capital is, consider this sketch of how Jan realizes 'getting to know people': His social capital resource is his relation to the village-supporter and the village-supporter's relation to a requester that contain im- and explicit agreements on the terms of an exchange: the village supporter establishes contact to the requester, in exchange Jan's helps the requester e.g. to cut a hedge, and gets to know the requester who is willing for a chat. The social capital that accrues the volunteers of Wedde dat 't lukt may be distinguished into two kinds depending on whether they regularly and repeatedly visit the same requester ('regular') or always a different one ('wanderer'). This difference accounted for changes in 5 of the network variables and influenced which of the participants' interests in participating were met. In sum, the 'regular' type faces more risks to whether her interests can be satisfied and neither of the 'regular' participants achieved the 'getting to know people' motivation. The social capital for 'regulars' could be further optimized by increasing opportunities for interactions between volunteers[12], like working together instead of individually, for instance, on events. Moreover, the mediation of contacts by the village supporter is an existing pathway to indicate preferences – e.g. about meeting more different people – and 'not start anything too big'. A similarity across participants' evaluations that was confirmed by the theoretical analysis is that the village-supporter role is crucial for enabling the social capital of volunteers and a comparative advantage over unstructured help outside of WDL. Another similarity were strong 'fulfillment' motivations about helping another person out that, together with the perception that WDL makes an important difference for people, grounded the participants' general satisfaction with WDL even across differences in other motivations and whether they were fulfilled. A dissimilarity was whether participants saw requesters as valuable sources of '(local) knowledge'. Research into how people come to see others as sources of valuable resources – e.g. life-experience – and the societal effects thereof could be a valuable addition to the theory and practice of social capital creation.

The application of social capital theory to WDL fits into the research agenda of how social capital can be used to address socio-economic inequality that is called-for by authors like Häuberer (2011) or Van der Gaag and Snijders (2005). It is a case study of how self-interested individuals can cooperate for mutual benefit across divides of inequality. In future research with capacity for a larger sample, it would be insightful to include former volunteers, to find out what kinds of social capital may not be found in the network or what barriers to its realization may exist. For instance, Svendsen's (2006) work on how, based on inter-group dynamics, different kinds of social capital may in fact work against each other which could

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[12] Especially if it does not demand additional (e.g. time) investment by volunteers.

provide hypotheses for WDL. WDL actively tries to be accessible and understanding barriers that keep people from access, like e.g. reservations against WDL or against asking for help, may help WDL to better serve its community. Finally, the balance between informality and formality that was important in WDL to, on the one side offer unbureaucratic and personal support, but on the other side to give away responsibility, could be further analyzed. In this vein, studying how narratives are dispersed and facilitate collective action (e.g. Mayer, 2014), or comparatively studying what organizational structures foster voluntary engagement (e.g. Maloney & Deth, 2010), may help to understand the creation of social capital.

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Appendix:

1. *List of participants' quotes in Dutch (original) and English (translation)*
2. *Table –: overview over Lin's theory*
3. *Figure –: Social capital model of Lin*
4. *Figure –: Refined social capital model from Häuberer*
5. *codebook including variable definitions and operationalizations into interview-questions*
6. *interview guide in Dutch*

1. List of participants' quotes in Dutch (original) and English (translation)

Original:

Van je buren te vragen om ook je financiële administratie te gaan doen? Dat is dan ook niet zo gebruikelijk. – Lisa

Translation:

Asking your neighbors to also do your financial administration? That is also not so usual. – Lisa

Original:

Je praat het toch door met mensen, en ze wiste van de stichting af. En ik heb al gezegt, van daaruit kan ik ook voor jouw wat betekenen. – Jan

Translation:

You talk about it [WDL volunteering] with people, and she knew about the foundation, and I said from there [WDL], I can also mean something for you. – Jan

Original:

Ik hoef verder niks maar je kan toch wel even zeggen wat fijn of dankje wel. – Vera

Translation:

I do not need anything more but you could really just say how nice or thank you! – Vera

Original:

Het is enerzijds inderdaad voor mezelf omdat je anders in die eenzaamheid terug komt. – Participant

Translation:

On the one hand it is indeed for myself, because otherwise, you get back into loneliness. – Participant

Original:

Je trekt er toch even een uurtje voor uit, en als je ziet wat het voor mensen doet … en het wordt gewaardeerd. – Jan

Translation:

You take a little hour for it, and when you see what it does for the people… It is appreciated. – Jan

Original:

Het is net als scannen van een wijkje, dat je weet waar de goede visboer zit of eh, ja, waar dingen te koop of te vinden zijn. – Jan

Translation:

It is just like scanning a neighborhood, so that you know where the good fish seller is or, well, where to buy or find things. – Jan

Original:

Dat er nog steeds armoede is en eenzaamheid. Ook in een welvarend land als in Nederland. […] Maar daar ben ik wel van geschrokken, als je ziet hoe sommige mensen wonen, ja dat is bizaar. – Participant

Translation:

There still is poverty and loneliness. Also, in a prosperous country like the Netherlands. [...] But that did shock me. If you see how some people live…that is bizarre. – Participant

Original:

Voor zo veel mensen heb je dan daar nood tussen, en mensen die gewoon geen netwerk meer hebben. – Lisa

Translation:

So many people are in need, people that just do not have a network anymore – Lisa

Original:

Kijk we leven hier toch wel in een gebied, ja waar veel oudere zijn. Veel mensen woonen alleen, veel mensen, ja misschien ver van de kinderen, het is toch een grote vraag naar, dat iemand iets voor je doet. – Vera

Translation:

We live in a region where there are many elderly. Many people live alone, many maybe far from the children. There is surely a great demand, that somebody does something for you. – Vera

## 2. Table 1: overview over Lin's (2001b) theory

Overview about Lin's theory:

1. "The structural postulate: Valued resources are embedded in social structures in which positions, authority, rules, and occupants (agents) usually form pyramidal hierarchies in terms of the distribution of valued resources, number of positions, level of authority, and number of occupants. The higher the level in the hierarchy, the greater the concentration of valued resources, the fewer the number of positions, the greater the command of authority, and the smaller the number of occupants." (Lin, 2001b, p.75)
2. "The interaction postulate: interactions usually occur among actors with similar or contiguous characteristics of resources and lifestyles – following the homophily principle. The greater the similarity of resources characteristics, the less effort required in interaction." (Lin, 2001b, p.75)
3. "The network postulate: in social networks, directly and indirectly interacting actors carry varying types of resources. Some of these resources are in their personal possession (personal resources or human capital), but most of the resources are embedded in others with whom each actors is in contact, directly or indirectly, or they are embedded in structural positions each actor occupies or is in contact with." (Lin, 2001b, p.75)
4. "The action postulates: actors are motivated to either maintain or gain their resources in social actions – purposive actions. Action to maintain resources can be called expressive action, and action to gain resources can be called instrumental action. Maintaining resources is the primary motivation for action; therefore, expressive action is the primary form of action." (Lin, 2001b, p.75)

3. Figure 2: social capital model of Lin (2001a, p.21)
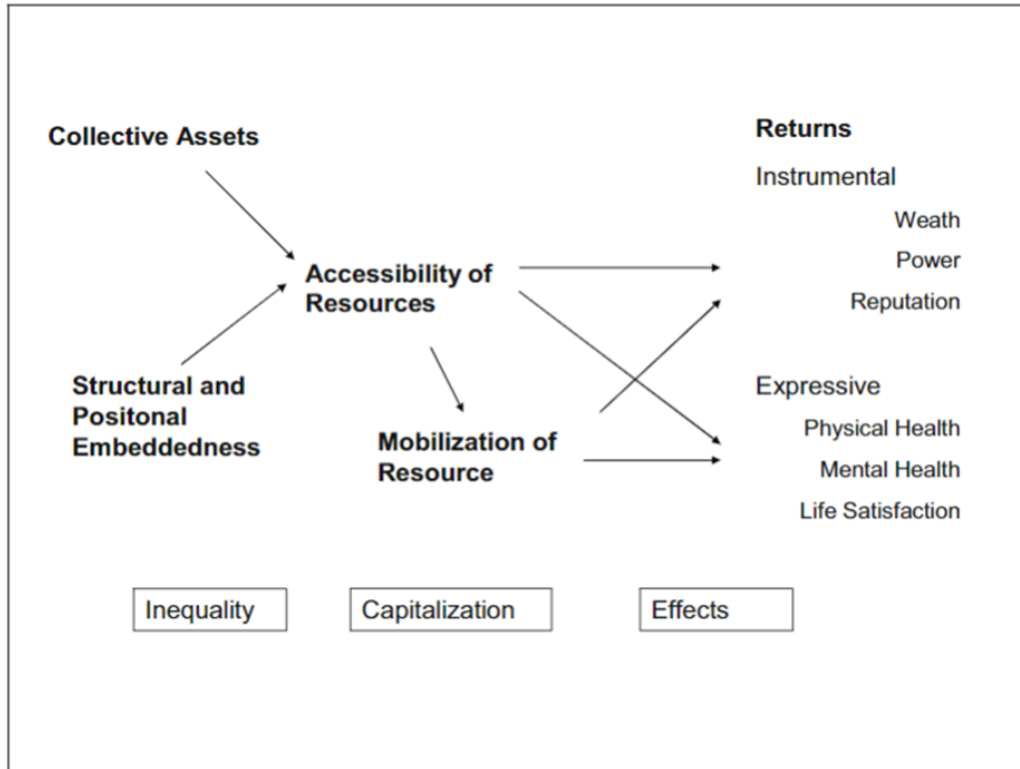
4. Figure 3: Refined social capital model from Häuberer (2011, p.150)
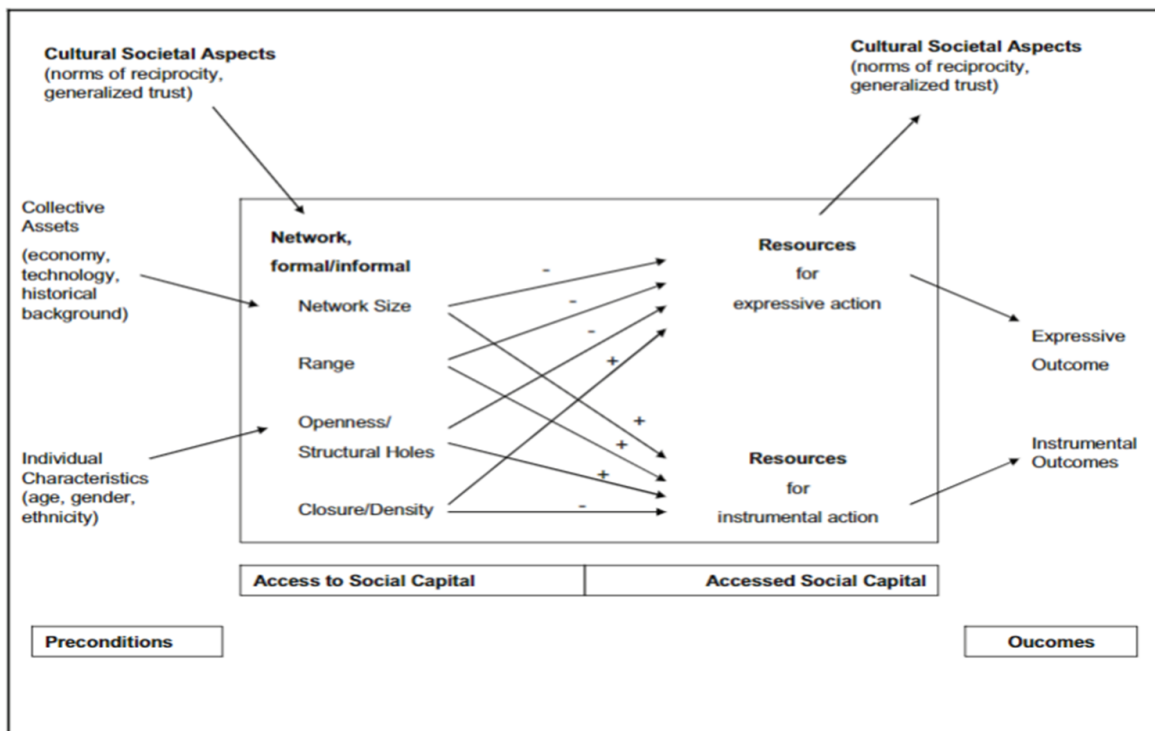
5. Codebook including variable definitions and operationalizations into interview-questions

<div align="right">(d.) = deductive   (i.) = inductive</div>

Code	Sub-code (s)	Definition (where relevant)	Operationalization (where relevant)
Individual characteristics (d.)	Age, Gender, Skills, other form of capital endowment, valuation of resources (d.)		questions about participant, probes
Relation to village (d.)	Circle of acquaintances, work location, Years lived in village (i.)		e.g. Would you say that you are acquainted with many people here?
Instrumental outcomes (d.)	Resource investments (costs), being helped oneself, no disadvantage, Macro-outcomes (e.g. cheap help, nicer living together) (i.), knowledge	Gain of resources or outcomes that help to gain resources, primarily dependent on the response of an exchange partner (Lin, 2001)	e.g. How much time to you invest into into WDL? What do you get from the different activities of the volunteer work?
Expressive outcomes (d.)	I don't mind it, abstract fulfillment, personal fulfillment, Challenge, pleasant activity (i.)	Maintaining of resources or resources that legitimize existing access to resources, dependent on action of ego (Lin, 2001)	e.g. What do you get from the different activities of the volunteer work? What are challenges or problems?

Motivation to engage (i.)	Not start anything too big, free time, that you can mean something for somebody, fulfillment of solving a problem, do something locally for once, getting to know people, Why WDL?, moral obligation, pleasant activity	motivation in terms of resources sought (based on rational choice theory)	e.g. What do you get from the different activities of the volunteer work? What do you hope to get? What matters for you?
Range & upper reachability (d.)		The range of different positions accessed from high to low, especially the highest (in terms of controlled resources) of accessed positions (Häuberer, 2011)	e.g. With whom are you in contact via WDL?
Diversity (d.)	Volunteers, Requesters, village-supporter (i.)	The number of different resources accessed via contacts	e.g. For what matters do you contact X? Can you describe your contact to the village-supporter?
Position & authority (d.)	Knowledge of the network, task, time involved in WDL, involvement in organizations outside of WDL, relation to & perception of the village-supporter (i.), volume of resources owned, identification as volunteer, letting tell	Structures of access to resources and to other positions that are continuously, formally & informally, created by the members of the network; control over resources (of others) (Häuberer, 2011)	e.g. Could you describe your role or activities within WDL? With whom are you in contact via WDL? What are their roles? Do you need anything to fulfill your volunteer role?

Procedures (d.)	Request → solution allocation, give away responsibility, quickly solve requests, in take talk with village-supporter (i.)	Structures of interactions	How are you matched to a requester? How does the contact continue? If you could, what would you change about the workings of WDL?
Network size (d.)		number of contacts	e.g. With how many people are you in touch via WDL? Did you know them before?
Transaction costs (d.)	Village-supporter mediation, runs by itself (i.)	costs of mobilizing a resource	e.g. How is contact to requesters established and continued? How is your relationship with the village-supporter?
Strength of tie (d.)	weak, strong, acquaintance, friendship, expectations (d. & i.)	frequency & regularity of contact, quality of interaction (Häuberer, 2011)	e.g. How often to you see X? Could you describe your WDL activities and your relationship to X?
Formal / informal (d.)	direct contact to requester, contact outside of foundation, board (i.)	Difference in role-understanding: association or membership vs friendship or family (Putnam, 2000)	e.g. Do you also meet outside of WDL? How formal is your contact to X?
Obligations & expectations (d.)	regular visits, ungrateful elderly (i.)		e.g. How does the contact continue? What makes a good volunteer?

Outward / inward (d.)		Location where group-interests or purpose are realized: outside or inside of the group (Häuberer, 2014)	e.g. Could you describe what matters WDL addresses?
density / structural holes (d.)	Village-supporter bridge, work individually, yearly get-together, less dense (i.)	amount of redundant connections in the network, opposed to bridges to other networks (Häuberer, 2011; Burt, 1992)	e.g. How dense is the network? How often do you see each other? Are there people that are only connected to WDL via you?
Collective assets available (d.)	Digital know-how, loneliness, poverty, support structures, presence of family, old age, there is a big demand that somebody does something for you, association life (i.)		e.g. Could you describe what issues WDL addresses here?
Cultural aspects (d.)	Community feeling village-level, noabershulp, difficult to reach people, attitudes towards volunteering, super friendly, different rhythm of life, afraid of Dutch fuss, In the west… (i.)		e.g. In what context does WDL operate here?, mostly probes
First contact (with WDL) (i.)	Information meeting, key person, village newspaper (i.)		How did you first get in touch with WDL?

Description of WDL (i.)	Mission, activities, role of volunteers, role of requesters, WDL narrative (i.)		e.g. Could you describe what issues WDL addresses here?
Future involvement in WDL (i.)	Quality, quantity (i.)		probes, e.g. based on motivation questions

6. Interview guide (in Dutch)

Inleiding & toestemming

- Onderwerp: WDL van uw standpunt begrijpen, uw ervaringen, vragen over wat je doet en wat dat voor jouw bedoelt.

- Vraag voor pausen, mag ook geen antwoord geven

- Onderzoek van de RUG over de invluut van dorpsondersteuners; resultaten worden gebruikt om een rapport te schrijven. Daarnaast schrijven 2 studenten incl. Mezelf hun afstudeerscriptie over dit onderwerp. Nog niet voorzienbaar maar de resultaten kunnen gepubliceerd of gepresenteerd worden.

- In onze onderzoek verzamelen we een hoop van ervaringen, zodat in onze resultaten er niks op je persoonlijk terug te voeren gaat zijn. *Ik wil nog benadrukken dat we ook vooral niks van deze conversatie met andere leden van WDL, inclusief Marian, gaan delen.*

- Ok onze gesprek op te nemen?

Opening:

1. Mag ik je leeftijd vragen? Wat doe je naast van en vrijwilliger voor WDL te zijn?
2. Hoe lang leef je al in Wedde/Vriescheloo/Veelerveen?

1. Waarom bent jij verhuisd?
2. Zou je zeggen dat je met veel mensen hier bekend bent?
3. Vertel me alsjeblieft over hoe je in contact met WDL kwam.
   1. Waarom wordt betrokken?
   2. Wanneer?
4. *Kan je kort beschrijven welke behoefte WDL hier in Wedde/Vriescheloo/Veelerveen aan pakt?*
   1. Met welke achtergrond neemt WDL de beslissing actief te worden en iets te doen?

Key vragen:

1. Kan je alsjeblieft je rol of werkzaamheden in de WDL organisatie omschrijven?
   1. Omschrijf een normale dag of week
      1. Hoeveel tijd bestuur je aan WDL in het algemeen?
   2. Met wie ben je in contact door WDL? Wat zijn hun rollen in WDL?
      1. Alleen in Vriescheloo/Wedde/Veelerveen, of ook die andere 2 dorpen?
   3. Zijn er verschillende rollen/posities die een vrijwilliger kan op zich nemen?
      1. Wat is je rol/positie?
   4. Moet je verantwoording afgeven? Zo ja, aan wie?
2. Hulpvragers:
   1. Hoe word je aan en "hulpvrager" gematcht? (noem hem "hulpvrager"?)
      1. Wat voor hulpvragen los je op?
         1. *Wat soort van steun kan je bieden?*
         2. *Wat soort van steun kan je niet bieden?*
         3. Voor wie?
            1. Alleen in Vriescheloo/Wedde/Veelerveen, of ook in de andere 2 dorpen?
   2. Hoe gaat je contact verder? E.g. persoonlijk of via Marian of …
   3. Hoe formel is je contact met de mensen die jij hulp geeft?
      1. Veranderd met de tijd?
   4. Ontmoet je elkaar ook toen je niet als vrijwilliger bezig bent?

1. Afhangelijk van de soort van je contacten krijg je nogal persoonlijke dingen mee. Hoe ga je met de privacy van je hulpvragers om?
     1. Voorbelden
2. Hoe ga je met je eigen privacy om?
     1. Voorbelden
3. *Heeft het vrijwilligerswerk invloed op je relaties met de mensen in het algemeen, ook toen je niet als vrijwilliger bezig bent?*
     1. Hulpvrager, vrijwilligers, andere inwooners
     2. voorbelden
2. Was jij met hun bekend voordat je vrijwilliger wordt?
3. Heb je iets nodig om je rol voor WDL te kunnen invullen?
     1. Steun van Marian of vrijwilligers of hulpvragers?
     2. Stel dat de WDL-netwerk morgen weg zou zijn - zou je (nog in staat zijn) verder (te gaan)?
          1. Stel dat niemand Marian's functie zou invullen - zou de netwerk kunnen verder gaan?

Laten we terug gaan naar die andere mensen met wie je door het WDL netwerk in contact staat.

3. Marian (Dorpsondersteuner):
     1. Kan je je relatie met de dorpsondersteuner eens omschrijven?
          1. Voor welke onderwerpen sta je in contact met haar?
          2. Hoe vaak contact?
          3. Verandering met tijd?
4. Ben je bekend met Hans Berg of en ander stichtend lid or bestuurslid?
     1. Hoe heeft dit je beslissing een vrijwilliger te worden beïnvloed?
5. Volunteers:
     1. Ben je in contact met andere vrijwilligers van WDL? Kan je jullie relatie omschrijven?
          1. E.g. vaak zien? Geplande activiteiten? Bekend van eerder?

2. Vrag je soms iemand van de vrijwilligers netwerk om hulp voor iets, e.g. hulp of een advies?

1. Zo niet, denk je dat je er waardevolle hulp van krijgen kan?

1. Voorbeelden

Algemeener:

1. Hoe heeft het vrijwilligers netwerk ontwikkeld over de jaren?

1. Verschil tussen Vriescheloo/Wedde/Veelerveen?

2. *Doen alle vrijwilligers ongeveer die zelfden activiteiten of zijn er meerdere manieren om actief te zijn?*

1. omschrijf

3. Wat maakt een goede vrijwilliger uit?

1. E.g. bekend met / woonen in Wedde/Vriescheloo/Veelerveen of ook buiten? Bepaalde vaardigheden?

6. Hoe dicht is het netwerk?

1. Zou je kunnen inschatten met hoe veel van de actieve mensen je bekend bent, van hulpvrager tot Marian?

2. Heb je nieuwe kennissen gemaakt door WDL? Voorbeeld

3. Hoe vaak zie je elkaar? Geplande vergaderingen?

4. *Zijn er mensen met die alleen maar door je met de WDL netwerk in contact staan?*

7. *Wat krijg je[1] van de verschillende activiteiten die het vrijwilligerswerk beinhoudt?*

1. Waarom houd je jezelf bezig met de verschillende activiteiten die je doet?

1. Wat hoop je van het vrijwilligerswerk te krijgen?

2. Wat is belangrijk voor jou, waar wil je je tijd in stoppen?

3. Verandering over tijd?

2. Wat heb je nodig om deze persoonlijke doelen te bereiken?

1. *Wat zijn de normale problemen of uitdagingen die je tegen komt?*

1. *Negatieve ervaring / uitdaging voorbeeld*

2. *Moeilijk te bereikende mensen? Ervaring*

1. *Emoties / vertrouwen?*

2. Hoe red je het om het vrijwilligerswerk met je dagelijks leven te combineren?

3. Hoe heeft vrijwilligerswerk te doen de rest van je leven beïnvloed?

8. *Stel dat ik erover nadenk vrijwilliger voor WDL te worden, wat voors en tegens zou je me zeggen om te overwegen?*

1. Wat voor kansen of verplichtingen zijn ermee verbonden?

2. Waarom doet je vrijwilligerswerk via WDL, in plaats van gewoon iemand met wie je bekend bent hulp aan te bieden? Is er een verschil?

3. Probe only: Waar wil je aan bijdragen door actief te zijn in WDL?

9. Hoe denk jij dat WDL invloed had in Wedde/Vriescheloo/Veelerveen sinds het begon met zijn activiteiten?

1. Alleen maar voor mensen die direct deelnemen aan acties?

2. Denk jij dat er hier veel mensen zijn die graag iemand help lenen, bvb door vrijwilligerswerk?

3. Hoe zijn mensen met [de situatie in .. waarover we het in het begin hadden] omgegaan voor WDL?

4. Volgens jouw, zijn burgerinitiatieven zoals WDL de juiste manier om met [zulke problemen of zaken] om te gaan?

Closing questions

1. Wat is iets dat je geleerd hebt over de tijd van vrijwilligerswerk voor WDL?

1. *Als u iets mogen veranderen aan de werkzaamheden van WDL, wat zou dit dan voor je zijn?*

2. *Zullen vrijwilligers volgens jouw meer coördinerend rollen overnemen?*

2. Is er iets belangrijks dat we gemist hebben? Heb je nog iets toe te voegen?