

Threads of Belonging: Exploring the Interplay between Place Attachment and Citizen Participation in The Hague's Southwest

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Abstract

The concept of place attachment has been instrumental in fostering meaningful connections and promoting active involvement among individuals in their local communities, urban areas, and beyond. This thesis explores the forenamed argument and, more specifically, it investigates the effect of place attachment on citizen participation within the Eastern European migrant communities residing in The Hague Southwest, with a particular emphasis on the neighbourhoods of Moerwijk, Bouwlust, and Morgenstond. By employing qualitative research methods in conjunction with literature reviews, this thesis looks into the complex nature of place attachment in relation to citizen participation, encompassing both civic and political aspects. The research revealed that migrant attachment is influenced by factors such as familial connections, social networks, cultural affinity, and life events. Moreover, the findings of this study demonstrate a correlation between attachment and engagement in civic activities while shedding light on the obstacles associated with involvement. Nevertheless, the most significant discovery pertains to the pivotal significance of the duration of one's residency. The significance of place attachment in relation to citizen participation is underscored by the influence of length of residence. Hence, the duration of one's residency significantly influences both the development of place attachment and citizen participation.

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Introduction

Migration has been a complex, multifaceted process that has shaped the global landscape for decades. Human mobility has always been an integral feature of world history as early as the Silk Roads, continuing through the migrations of the World Wars and the present-day trends. Nowadays, the world's growing interconnectedness has allowed people to traverse international borders in quest of more prosperous lives, educational possibilities, safer havens from war conflict and environmental considerations, or simply a new way of life. However, as a result, this has also negatively affected people's identity and ability to form emotional connections to certain places and develop a feeling of belonging (Easters et al., 2022). Globalisation, increased mobility, and rising environmental challenges have contributed to the frailty of "person-place" relationships between people and the places they care about (Scannell & Gifford, 2009). Individuals who choose to migrate to a foreign nation frequently encounter challenges in adjusting to the host society due to their unfamiliarity with the language, customs, locations, and cultural practices prevalent in their new environment. Numerous individuals encounter a feeling of attachment and familiarity in their native towns and nations. However, when they depart from these locations, they may experience sentiments of disconnection, particularly when confronted with the need to adapt to distinct social and cultural norms. This also gives rise to challenges in establishing a specific sense of belonging, a fundamental human aspiration. The need to establish a sense of being and belonging, which is related to but distinct from a physical location, drives migrants to identify with several homes (Fathi, 2022). Moreover, a migrant's emotional commitment to a new home or community is not a completely one-sided phenomenon as it is crucial for them to feel like they belong and are respected in their new home, but also for such sentiments to be "recognised" as valid by society at large is crucial (Fathi, 2022). Experiencing social exclusion, prejudice, and alienation can pose challenges for individuals in terms of establishing a sense of belonging within their new communities. Hence, this phenomenon can impact an individual's capacity to engage in wider societal activities, particularly with regard to citizen involvement. The political and civic engagement of migrants may be hindered by difficulties in establishing meaningful connections with the native community, resulting in a sense of marginalisation and a lack of belonging within the local society.

The absence of a robust sense of place presents challenges for migrants in engaging with their new communities, despite the proactive efforts of local governments to promote and facilitate citizen involvement from them. Currently, The Netherlands government is preparing to enact

a new Environmental and Spatial Act that legally requires citizen engagement (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2022). Hence, this new legislation necessitates Dutch municipalities to make a pivotal decision regarding how to effectively promote citizen engagement in local governance. One such municipality is The Hague. As this is such a weighty and nuanced issue, the city of The Hague has called out to the Scriptiewerkplaats Den Haag Zuidwest for input from students and academics on how to encourage greater citizen involvement in municipal affairs effectively. Four Hague localities with significant multinational migrant populations are included in this project: Bouwlust, Vrederust, Morgenstond, and Moerwijk. It is imperative that individuals who are directly impacted by a project are afforded the opportunity to express their opinions and perspectives regarding the most effective approach to its implementation. This holds particularly true with respect to migrant engagement. The migrant population in these areas is not adequately involved in the decision-making process regarding spatial planning, which has implications for social relevance. Thus, it is important to identify strategies for the integration of migrants into the project.

The thesis aims to answer the following research question: "*How does place attachment affect citizen participation within the Eastern-European migrant communities in The Hague Southwest?*". The research will concentrate on the Southwest neighbourhoods of The Hague, where a portion of Eastern European (EE) migrants reside. Its objective is to assess the potential impact of place attachment on citizen participation levels. The thesis will be divided into five chapters. The first chapter will focus on the theoretical background of place attachment and citizen participation, while the second chapter will offer the research design. Following the contextualisation of The Hague's Southwest neighbourhoods in the third chapter, the findings will be discussed in the next chapter. The final chapter will address both the hypotheses and the results. Finally, key points will be highlighted, and limitations will be discussed.

1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is presented in this section. Place attachment and citizen participation alongside others are the fundamental notions in this thesis, and this chapter will provide a theoretical context for the concepts.

1.1 Place attachment

Maslow argues that a sense of belonging is essential to the human experience and our very nature (Kitchen et al., 2015). One can feel attached to various things, including other individuals, groups, objects and physical locations. However, attachment to another human being is the most prevalent. Attachment theory explains that the ability to create intimate emotional relationships with certain individual(s) is innate to the human species, present from birth in a dormant state until old age (Giuliani, 2003). The theory includes the concepts of attachment behaviour and attachment bond. In particular, the concept of attachment behaviour refers to a pattern that leads one to become or remain in the company of another human being who is conceptualised as more capable of handling the challenges of life, while attachment bond signifies the meaning of deriving comfort and safety from another person's presence or accessibility (Giuliani, 2003). However, in recent years, researchers from a variety of academic disciplines have paid increased attention to the concept of "place attachment," particularly in the fields of psychology, environmental and social sciences. Despite the fact that a study on place attachment existed as early as 1963, no theoretical frameworks or theories were developed until much later, as explained by Giuliana (2003).

The multifaceted notion can be laid out through several different but interrelated definitions; nevertheless, the definition provided by Lewicka (2008) will be used in this thesis. Place attachment can be defined as "the bonds that people develop with places" (Lewicka 2008: 211). Additionally, the idea of a sense of belonging is closely related to the development of emotional ties to certain locations. Belonging and connection to a particular place are distinct notions, yet they are frequently used interchangeably with one another. Therefore, the notions of place attachment and belonging will be used throughout the thesis as complementary concepts. According to Esters et al. (2023, p. 470), "sense of belonging is the feeling of connectedness to a social, spatial, cultural, professional, or another type of group or community and is considered inherent to humans". Therefore, an individual's sense of belonging infuses their past recollections, shapes their present-day actions, and aids in the development of their future hopes and dreams (Fathi, 2022).

Estrella and Kelley (2017) expand on this by saying that the bond strengthens over time as a result of repeated interactions. In a similar manner, the concept of place attachments is discussed by Scannell and Gifford (2010), who point out that it is useful in various processes. For example, emotional ties to a specific location provide context for the suffering and loss experienced by displaced persons or generally to migrants and mobility. Moreover, place meaning, and attachment can also be used to design and promote the use of public spaces alongside also helping people feel more secure even in dangerous environments like war zones or, on a smaller scale, in their own neighbourhoods, where they spend more time (Scannell & Gifford, 2009). This can be related to Berg's (2020) research on urban-rural migrants, in which the author argues that belonging to one's community is a significant part of their overall sense of well-being and identity.

1.1.1 Dimensions of place attachment

The concept of place attachment is characterised by several dimensions. Among these dimensions of place attachment, the place, person, and process dimensions are among the most well-known and frequently employed (Estrella & Kelley, 2017; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). This tripartite framework was created by the works of Scannell & Gifford (2010).

In regard to the person dimension, attachment can be thought of on two levels: the individual level, which comprises feelings of emotional investment in a specific location, and the collective level, which involves a common understanding of a location's symbolic significance (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Estrella & Kelley, 2017). Concerning the individual level, meanings or attachments are formed to a location through significant personal interactions (e.g. memories, familiarity, personal growth) (Estrella & Kelley, 2017). While the collective subfield delves into the interpretations of locations held by groups, meaning informed by culture, religion and more (Estrella & Kelley, 2017). Secondly, the process axis considers the emotional and mental effects of developing a sentimental connection to a particular location (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Estrella & Kelley, 2017). Lastly, but most importantly, the place dimension concerns the attachment to the physical (such as home, neighbourhood, parks, buildings, or symbols) and social (such as cohesion, networks, or norms) aspects of a place (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Estrella & Kelley, 2017).

1.1.2 Migration and The Meaning of Home: An Examination of Place Attachment

Concerning migrants, Toruńczyk-Ruiz and Brunarska (2020) propose that a migrant's sense of connection to a certain location might proxy for how well they've adjusted to their new home

and as psychological integration. Due to its dependence on structural, cultural, and social integration, which provides a sense of security and belonging, psychological integration is frequently viewed as the culmination of the integration process (Toruńczyk-Ruiz & Brunarska, 2020). Therefore, it is also important to investigate the various attachment styles that migrants may have. The two dimensions of migrants' attachments—to their home country and their new home—are critical. These forms of attachment are articulated in a typology created by Engbersen et al. (2013). They found that seasonal workers have minimal ties to their new country, while binationals have strong ties to both their home country and their destination one. Moreover, settlers have minimal ties to their home country, and footloose migrants have weak attachments to both countries (Engbersen et al., 2013). This typology can also be connected to Gustafson's (2013) study, which proposes that those with different mobilities have distinct attachments to certain locations (Lynnebakke & Aasland, 2022). Different types of migrants can be distinguished based on the degree to which they feel attached to either their home country or their new country of residence. By categorising migrants based on their place attachment, one can better understand the factors that influence their attachment and how this relates to their citizenship participation.

Because of their transient lifestyles, migrants are stereotyped as a "floating population," implying that they do not feel a sense of belonging in their host communities (Liu et al., 2022). However, as we observed from the differential attachments' typology by Engbersen et al. (2013), this varies from person to person. Liu et al. (2022) add that one's feeling of belonging is impacted by age, profession, income and ownership status, among other socioeconomic factors. For example, it has been found that both homeownership and length of residence are significant positive determinants of a feeling of attachment in migrant cases. Regarding home ownership, individuals who possess their own residences have made financial commitments to their local communities, thereby increasing the likelihood of their long-term residency. This, in turn, serves as an indicator of their emotional connection and sense of belonging to the place (Anton & Lawrance, 2014). In a similar research, Toruńczyk-Ruiz & Brunarska (2020) propose that settling down is a byproduct of feeling at home in one's surroundings. Concerning length of residency, Lewicka (2005) and Toruńczyk-Ruiz & Martinović (2020) affirm that the emotional connection to one's place of residence intensifies with the duration of one's residency. The significance of investing time and engaging in experiences within a specific locality is underscored as a means of enhancing the depth of meaning and emotional connections inherent in the person-place relationship (Kohlbacher et al., 2015). Place attachment, once formed, may influence long-term migration plans. The course of time

provides people with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with a particular location, discover preferred locales, and establish customary practises and routines that engender a sense of belonging and comfort (Trabka et al., 2022). Shin and Yang (2022) add that this allows individuals to cultivate enduring positive experiences throughout their lifetime. For example, more social and cultural capital is accumulated when a person has been for a longer time. Both native residents and migrants experience an increased sense of local attachment through the establishment of close ties and social contacts within a certain locality (Kohlbacher et al., 2015). Moreover, Livingston et al. (2008) highlight the duration of one's residency was found to account for a greater degree of variability in community sentiments and local social bonds compared to the combined influence of social class, life stage, and urban structure. The act of spending a greater amount of time in a location and subsequently developing a sense of attachment to that place often leads to heightened levels of interest and involvement among residents (Anton & Lawrence, 2014; Lewicka, 2005).

Hence, interactions with others are also vital in shaping and maintaining a sense of belonging. These connections strengthen bonds between people and foster a culture of trust, so they are generally viewed favourably (Liu et al., 2022). It is also significant whether migrants reside in predominantly immigrant or predominantly native communities. It is argued that the social features of place attachment are fundamental and inherent, and numerous studies have shown that social capital in a specific area is directly associated with attachment to it (Trabka et al., 2022). Additionally, several studies show that the concept of "home" in the context of migration is multifaceted, with a person's sense of belonging crucial to grasping and making sense of the concept (Fathi, 2022). When one's sense of belonging is tied to a specific location (e.g., a neighbourhood) rather than a more generalised social network with no spatial boundary, studies on the effects of migration on sense of belonging have found that both domestic and international relocation increases the likelihood that one will experience a loss of that sense of belonging (Esters et al., 2022). In sum, compared to the cultural and sociological variables outlined above, the availability of employment and financial security in a specific area plays a lesser role in forming an attachment to that area (Trabka et al., 2022).

1.2 Citizen Participation

Citizen participation is "the citizen involvement in public decision-making" (Baum, 2001). Regarding participation, the term has also been applied in various contexts, such as community, civic, development, and governance (Kalandides, 2018). According to Fischer (2012), the

purpose of citizen participation in government has always been to guarantee that all citizens' voices are heard in representative political systems. Moreover, it includes expanding the public's access to information about government activities and allowing them to be consulted on matters that affect them. The transparency of government and the methods used to make decisions determine the extent to which communities may exert influence (Dekker & van Kempen, 2009). To truly take part, one must have some say in the outcome. To safeguard personal interests, voice one's views and ideas, and safeguard against governmental and societal abuse, participation in the democratic process is essential (Levin, 2013).

When considering citizen participation, it is possible to observe various dimensions. However, among the various types of participation, two that are widely recognised and frequently observed are political participation, which is considered to be more formal in nature, and civic participation (Ekman & Amna, 2012; Teorell et al., 2007).

1.2.1 Political participation

The concept of "political participation" carries with it a number of connotations. A classic definition of the notion was provided by Verba and Nie (1972, p. 2); however, this has been criticised as being too narrow in subsequent years. Therefore, numerous definitions have been offered over the years, but the definitions offered by Brady (1999) will serve as the basis for this thesis. Political participation is defined as "action by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing some political outcomes" (Ekman & Amna, 2012, p. 286; Teorell et al., 2007, p. 336).

Formal political participation, which essentially means participating in elections, is the most common way of displaying political involvement and engagement (Ekman & Amna, 2012; Teorell et al., 2007). Citizens participate in general elections to express their preference for particular parties or candidates or prevent others from gaining disproportionate power (Ekman & Amna, 2012). Moreover, people may choose not to cast a ballot in an election or referendum as a form of political protest, especially if they disagree with the political establishment or the candidates running for office (Ekman & Amna, 2012). Teorell et al. (2007) similarly add that protest culture is another way of manifesting political participation. Individuals could also show their discontent with the political system by not voting at all in the form of protest.

Apart from active participation or abstention from voting as a means of political protest, individuals also opt for political disengagement for various other reasons. Non-engagement or disengagement in activities is considered the opposite of engagement. Citizens who find

politics uninteresting would exhibit the passive form of non-engagement. Furthermore, citizens with this attitude do not see the need to become involved in politics or civic matters and often let others talk for them (Ekman & Amna, 2012). It is further argued by Putman (2000) that a decrease in political engagement is indicative of a larger decline in social capital, which encompasses the ties that unite and link communities. The dissolution of communal bonds and the concomitant decline of civic responsibility have resulted in the detachment of individuals from one another and diminished participation in political affairs (Manning & Holmes, 2013).

1.2.2 Civic engagement

Civic engagement can be defined as "an activity which is focused either on helping others within a community or working on behalf of a community, solving a community problem or participating in the life of a community (Albanesi et al., 2016, p. 179). Thus, in this context, collective actors are crucial. Ekman and Amna (2012) elaborate by pointing out the various ways people contribute to society: by voting, interest in politics or monetary donations. Moreover, voluntary work and the formation of groups to address regional issues or to advance the interests of certain social groupings (Ekman & Amna, 2012). Shin and Yang (2022) provide additional instances, such as attending a hearing, expressing a viewpoint on initiatives, or engaging actively in community deliberations. In this situation, having a feeling of belonging to a group or collective with common goals and ideals is particularly significant. For example, having ties to neighbourhood associations and neighbourhood attachment might increase people's likelihood of participating in community-wide activities (Wu, 2012). The Dutch government also discusses that many citizens with a strong attachment to their neighbourhood take part in initiatives designed to enhance living standards (Government of the Netherlands, n.d.). Furthermore, Shin and Yang (2022) explicate that place-based research, which utilises behavioural psychology principles, emphasises that individuals who possess a strong attachment to a particular place are more inclined to participate in civic activities in a responsible and nurturing manner.

It has been shown that trust has a vital role in influencing individuals, especially migrants, to join in citizen participation. To begin, Dekker (2017) stresses that mutual trust among individuals is predicated on shared values and a sense of belonging to a larger community. Second, having faith in the government has been shown to increase civic engagement (Dekker, 2007). Levin (2013) further argues that trust and civic participation mutually reinforce one another.

Nonetheless, although it was hinted that a sense of place attachment generally motivates individuals to engage in civic activities to a greater extent, this phenomenon does not invariably occur. To exemplify, Wu (2012) explains that even while there are instances when citizens have a deep affinity to their community and neighbourhood, they are not always necessarily more active in official neighbourhood associations or activities. This serves as an example of disengagement with respect to civic engagement.

1.2.3 Motivation to participate

When it comes to citizen engagement, people's reasons for being involved in the decision-making processes vary. Gustafsson and Hertting's (2017) research provides a thorough account of the factors that encourage people to take part. The three types of motivation discussed are (1) concern for the greater good, (2) pursuit of one's own self-interest, and (3) the desire to improve one's professional competence (Gustafsson & Hertting, 2017). The first two, the common good and self-interest, will be highlighted throughout the thesis. The common good aspect emphasises working together to overcome obstacles and enhance the group's problem-solving ability by drawing on the collective's accumulated wisdom and experience. The self-interest dimension emphasises the promotion of one's own group's or family's interests as well as one's political effectiveness (Gustafsson & Hertting, 2017).

However, it is also important to mention that conversely, how the mainstream culture receives migrants also impacts the motives and confidence of individuals; for example, negative stereotypes about groups might impact this (Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013).

1.3 Hypotheses of the study

People who move to a new country often face the presumption that they will be less invested in the local community as they feel excluded (Liu et al., 2022). This may be a contributing factor to the low rate of civic engagement among migrants. Therefore, it is crucial to find ways for everyone to be included in decision-making and be more active in society. Previous research has demonstrated that people are more engaged in their communities when they feel a strong place attachment and belonging (Toruńczyk-Ruiz & Martinović, 2020; Livingston et al., 2008). However, research on migrants, specifically EE migrants in the Netherlands, is lacking in this area. As a result, research can be done on attachment and how it can increase citizen engagement among migrants. Therefore, based on the theoretical framework, the main expectations of this study are the following:

H1. Migrants with limited attachment to their city or community exhibit reduced propensity to engage in local decision-making and civic activities.

H2. Enhanced place attachment within migrant communities may potentially result in citizen participation.

2. Research Design

This chapter will outline the research design used to conduct the research. Firstly, the research question will be reinstated alongside its corresponding sub-questions. Second, an operationalisation table will be presented, which will feature indicators of the dependent and independent variables. Subsequently, research approaches, methods, data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations will be described.

2.1 Research question and sub-questions

The thesis aims to answer the following research question: *“How does place attachment effect citizen participation within the Eastern-European migrant communities in The Hague Southwest?.”* In order to provide more concreteness and details to answer the primary question, the following sub-questions will be laid out:

1. What are the contributing factors to the development of place attachment among the Eastern European migrants in the Hague Southwest?
2. What constitutes citizen participation and what forms of it are observed among the Eastern European migrants in the Hague Southwest?

2.2 Operationalisation

Indicators will be operationalized from the variables employed in this study, which will be presented in the following table. The independent variable is place attachment. The dependent variable is citizen participation. All variables are presented in (sub-)dimensions and indicators.

Variable	Definition	Dimension	Sub-dimension	Indicators	Sources
Place attachment	“Development of emotional bonds with places” (Lewichka, 2008: 211).	Person dimension (Estrella & Kelley, 2017).		Personal connections to a place such as memories, milestones, personal growth; Collective	Interviews with EE migrants in the Hague Southwest

				<p>connections to groups; ex. migrants may feel more attached to a place if other people of the same nationality reside in the neighbourhood</p>	
		Place dimension (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).		<p>Not only feeling attached to a place, but also identifying with it (social); how one's sense of self is shaped by their immediate surroundings (physical)</p>	Interviews with EE migrants in the Hague Southwest
		Process dimension (Estrella & Kelley, 2017).		<p>Feelings of happiness and pride about the place and/or participating socially or involvement in community space</p>	Interviews with EE migrants in the Hague Southwest

Citizen participation	'Citizen participation' refers to citizen involvement in public decision making (Baum, 2001, 1840).	Political participation (Brady, 1999).		People take part in elections (e.g. vote), or petitions; people decide to not vote; People partake in protest culture	Interviews with EE migrants in the Hague Southwest
		Civic engagement (Akman & Amna, 2012).		Interest in both social and political issues; Voluntary work; Helping others in the community where one feels belonging	Interviews with EE migrants in the Hague Southwest
		Disengagement (Akman & Amna, 2012).		No interest in participating politically and civically.	Interviews with EE migrants in the Hague Southwest
		Motivation to participate (Gustafson & Hertting, 2017)		People have different motivation to participate in local decision making	Interviews with EE migrants in the Hague Southwest
			1) Self-interest	Promoting the interest of oneself, one's family or group	
			2) Common good	Improving the neighbourhood ; mobilizing local knowledge to improve local problems	

(Table 1.0 Operationalisation)

2.3 Methods

This thesis is explanatory research, which employs theory testing (Neuman, 2014). The initial segment of the thesis involves an analysis of extant scholarly literature pertaining to place attachment and citizen participation. However, as an integral component, a qualitative research methodology, specifically interviews, was employed to investigate the research topic. Starting preliminary data collection involved the administration of semi-structured interviews. Simply put, a qualitative interview will have a predetermined list of subjects to cover in-depth and consists of a conversation in which the interviewer sets the tone and follows up on points that the respondent brings up (Babbie, 2014). Moreover, while semi-structured interviews still adhere to a plan for covering the predetermined ground, this style permits more free-form questioning and the investigation of subjects that arise spontaneously (Ryan et al., 2009). Whenever possible, the interviews were conducted in person to allow for the observation of nonverbal cues and body language. However, per the preferences of certain participants, some interviews were conducted digitally.

2.4 Data collection

The units of analysis concentrated on migrants from the Hague Southwest neighbourhoods, and particular attention was paid to Eastern Europeans. Initially, the targeted demographic encompassed migrants originating from Central Europe and Eastern Europe. However, ultimately, all individuals who participated in the study were of Eastern European origin. Data from all participating communities in The Hague Southwest were intended to be gathered since it is not ideal to restrict the options by eliminating substantial percentages of participants. The neighbourhoods are the following: Bouwlust, Vrederust, Morgenstond, and Moerwijk. Nonetheless, since none of the interviews were from Bouwlust, the research excludes those who live there. This circumstance arose as a result of the unfeasibility of accessing participants residing in said neighbourhood.

The respondent's initials, correlating country of origin, present neighbourhood in The Hague and length of residency in the Netherlands (1-5 years and 5+ years) are displayed in the table below:

	Initials	Country of origin	Neighbourhood	Length of residency in NL
1	P.P	Bulgaria	Moerwijk	1-5 years
2	D.Y	Greece	Vrederust	1-5 years
3	S.P	Bulgaria	Moerwijk	Less than 1 year
4	A.P	Serbia	Moerwijk	1-5 years
5	P.H	Bulgaria	Morgenstond	5+ years
6	G.V	Moldova	Vrederust	1-5 years
7	R.D	Bulgaria	Vrederust	5+ years
8	S.B	Bulgaria	Morgenstond	5+ years
9	B.D	Bulgaria	Vrederust	1-5 years
10	B.S	North Macedonia	Moerwijk	1-5 years

(Table 2.0)

Participants are divided into two cohorts: individuals who migrate for employment purposes, commonly referred to as labour migrants, and those who migrate with their families, have immediate relatives or partners living in the Netherlands. The reason for this is that previous research has shown that labour migrants are less likely to form emotional ties to the host country than those who have been there for a longer period of time or with family. This is because those who have already established roots in their adopted community are likelier to feel at home there (Toruńczyk-Ruiz & Brunarska, 2020). Ultimately, the outcome was precisely divided in equal proportions, with a 50/50 split. Nevertheless, certain individuals who migrated for family reasons engage in labour-related activities.

The sampling in this thesis is based on non-probability sampling, focusing on the purposive or judgmental methods (Babbie, 2016). The participants in this study were gathered through a wide variety of approaches. Firstly, various organisations were contacted. Starting with community centres, district offices to different organisations, and so on. Moreover, crucial steps included making and sharing posts on the Facebook platform in nationality-based groups living in the Hague (ex., Bulgarians in The Hague, Polish in The Hague). The target area was visited to ask people personally whether they would be interested in participating. Complimentary to the purposive sampling, participants were also reached by snowballing. This

way, when the migrants had connections with other individuals in their network willing to be interviewed, more people were recruited to participate in the study.

In the end, the snowball sampling technique was employed as the primary method of participant selection, accounting for more than half of the sample. On the one hand, a drawback of snowballing is that picking individuals who are already part of a social group or have strong biases at the outset might sway the results of the sample (Etikan & Bala, 2017). On the other hand, in the end, the multiple channels for participation ensured a wider cross-selection of the targeted groups, which in turn allowed for diversified data collection.

2.6 Data analysis

This thesis uses a theory-driven framework in regard to data collection and analysis. This means that a deductive approach has been observed, where analysis goes from an expected pattern based on logic or theory to observations that check to see if the pattern actually happens (Babbie, 2016). In addition, however, this thesis uses a more abductive technique to evaluate new topics and theories that may have come up during the interview process and data analysis. After completing the interviews, the transcripts were written down, and afterwards, a codebook was established using the Atlas. ti software programme. The theoretical framework and operationalization table provide the basis for the core codes, which were further developed in line with the sub-questions. When an additional topic was covered in the interviews, new codes were generated. Following the coding of the interviews, a comparison was conducted to identify similarities and differences among the responses provided by the participants.

2.7 Ethical considerations

It is important to note that field research might spark moral questions. Researchers are placed in delicate ethical situations when conducting field research due to their proximity to participants and immersion in their personal life (Neuman, 2014).

Prior to commencing the interview process, the framework of the interviews and the contextual underpinnings of the questions were clarified to the participants, thereby allowing them to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of the interviews. Following that, consent forms were filled out. The consent forms were available in two languages, namely English and Bulgarian. This action was undertaken to apprise the participants regarding the purpose of the study, its intended audience, and underlying objectives. The study's participants were questioned regarding anonymising their personal information, including their full names,

and whether quotes from the interviews could be utilised. This connects to confidentiality (Babbie, 2016; Neuman, 2014). Furthermore, the procedure employed for data collection and storage was explained comprehensively.

An additional factor to be considered was the utilisation of clear language, incorporation of personal details pertaining to the interviewer, and explicit delineation of the permissible and impermissible aspects of the interview, which all contributed to the efficacy of the interviews. Furthermore, regarding inquiries to citizen participation, no form of evaluation was conducted that could potentially induce feelings of inadequacy or discomfort among the participants who chose not to participate or were unable to answer certain questions.

3. Context: The Hague Southwest

The Hague, or Den Haag, is the Netherlands' third-largest city and is situated in the country's western region. Several international bodies, like the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, are headquartered in The Hague, making it the de facto political capital of the Netherlands. Even though The Hague is home to more than half a million individuals and features a wide range of ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic communities, the city also has the highest rate of segregation of any Dutch city (Dekker & van Kempen, 2009). Various issues have arisen as a result of this, particularly in the Southwest region of The Hague. It is a large post-war residential region, home to over 67,000 people (Municipality The Hague, 2019). The four neighbourhoods in the region are Bouwlust, Morgenstond, Moerwijk and Vrederust.

In the 1960s, Southwest was a bustling area filled with middle-class families and shops. Nevertheless, time and development altered this dynamic. Urban regeneration and subsequent migration brought many people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to the Southwest (Schotanus, 2021). Currently, Southwest is a community afflicted by different economic and social issues. Poverty, debt from long-term unemployment, polarisation, and an increase in socially isolated youth are all contributing factors (Schotanus, 2021). On top of this, the neighbourhoods also suffer from a lack of social cohesiveness (Dekker & van Kempen, 2009). Almost half of the population has trouble making ends meet (Resilient The Hague, n.d.). Due to the low median income, numerous residents depend on government handouts (Schotanus, 2021). Furthermore, many locals have expressed fears for their safety in their neighbourhoods (Resilient The Hague, n.d.).

As a result, the city government of The Hague and other interested parties have been exploring methods to enhance the neighbourhoods by, among other things, implementing Regional deals, soliciting and acting upon the feedback of locals, expanding the availability of affordable housing, improving public transit, and so on. In addition, universities are encouraged to participate in research and insight into societal concerns, leading to Southwest development (e.g. Scriptiewerkplaats Den Haag Zuidwest (GMD Centre, 2021)).

4. Findings

The forthcoming chapter shall present the section on findings and analysis. The present study will engage in an exploration of the results obtained from the interviews. The major findings will be outlined, followed by an analysis and linkage with relevant theoretical frameworks. For achieving greater clarity, the breakdown of the findings and the ensuing analysis thereof shall adhere to the sequence of the operationalisation and sub-questions as previously stated.

4.1 Factors contributing in the development of place attachment

4.1.1 Hybrid and Diversified Place Attachment: Exploring the Complexities

According to Table 2.0, it is evident that four individuals are from Moerwijk, while an equal number of individuals are residents of Vrederust. The final two individuals currently reside in Morgenstond. At the outset of the interviews, the respondents were asked to identify the location where they felt the strongest sense of attachment. This location could encompass their country of origin, the host country, namely the Netherlands, or an entirely separate location. Among the group of ten individuals, nine respondents reported that their country of origin is their primary place of attachment. The construct of attachment is inherently subjective, as individual differences in attachment characteristics are known to exist among individuals. However, when asked about their rationale for selecting this particular location, various responses were given, though the most frequently cited reasons pertained to *familial connections, social networks, cultural affinity, life experiences* and related factors. Additionally, several respondents expressed a strong attachment to their hometowns, citing their upbringing and personal growth as contributing factors. Likewise, when queried about their identification with the location they designated as their place of attachment, individuals who indicated their hometowns or their overall place of origin responded affirmatively.

B.D: *“Yeah, yeah, I can strongly say that I identify as someone from Varna. We're proud to be Varnenians, to be from this city and to live by the sea and to love our city. So yeah.”*

To continue, it can be inferred that only one individual has expressed a stronger attachment to The Netherlands at present. Nonetheless, a pair of the nine individuals also expressed their attachment to both nations, and during the interviews, more than half of the participants also conveyed a certain emotional connection to the Netherlands. Irrespective of the duration of their stay in the Netherlands, it can be asserted that the Netherlands served as their home, but also their respective home countries continued. Certain individuals encountered difficulties with this task, as, on occasion, they were unable to effectively distinguish between the two domiciles.

P.H: *“Because there I am half Sofian, here I am half Dutch. Nowhere are you absolutely 100% at home. When you leave, when you go to Bulgaria or you go back to The Netherlands. Which one do you say I'm going home or I'm coming home, which I'm going to and I'm coming home, I'm going to Bulgaria and coming home to The Hague or I'm going to The Hague and coming home to Bulgaria.”*

Furthermore, when queried during the interviews regarding the possibility of having attachments to multiple locations and possessing more than one home, most responses were affirmative. It has been suggested that individuals can develop attachments to multiple places. Regarding the concept of possessing multiple homes, while a minority held the belief that an individual could only have one true home, the majority asserted that a home is a construct of one's own making rather than an inherent entity.

Although it was demonstrated that the participants displayed a greater degree of attachment towards their respective countries, this does not necessarily imply that such attachment is exclusively singular. As previously stated, the interviewees also exhibit a certain degree of attachment to the Netherlands. Individuals have expressed that they possess personal space, daily routines, and their own residence, in addition to recollections and experiences. Consequently, the migrants in question have developed a sense of attachment to the Netherlands, even if they eventually decide to return to their respective home countries. Hence, the attachment of the migrants is not a singular phenomenon but rather a hybrid and diversified one.

4.1.2 Sense of belonging and connectedness to current neighbourhood in The Hague Southwest

Irrespective of whether the respondents indicated that their primary place of attachment was in their country of origin, destination, or both, subsequent inquiries pertaining to place attachment were directed towards their present residential localities. The primary emphasis is placed on the neighbourhoods of Moerwijk, Vrederust, and Morgenstond. Topics, including cultural diversity, homeownership, and length of residency, as well as other pertinent characteristics related to the concept of belonging, will be covered.

Person dimension

The person dimension primarily focuses on the interpersonal relationships and affective attachments that individuals form with a particular location. Moreover, as described in the theoretical framework, one can see attachment at both the individual and collective levels.

Regarding the personal affiliations individuals establish with a particular location, the migrants were queried about the factors that render a place significant to them and foster their emotional attachment. Prominent responses primarily consisted of recollections associated with the location and the presence of familial and social connections. As a concrete example, when queried about the significance of their most attached place, one of the respondents provided the following response:

P.P: "Yes, absolutely my whole life. Mother, father, relatives, weddings, all kinds of social events."

Similarly, another participant provided a comparable response:

B.D: "Well, maybe the fact that my whole family is there, mostly for the people, for my friends, my parents, my grandmother. And all the memories I have from my childhood.."

While the responses above pertained to the migrants' countries of origin, they were also congruent with the responses regarding their present residential circumstances in Moerwijk, Vrederust, or Morgenstond. Responding to the questioning concerning personal and physical attachment within the neighbourhoods, the participants indicated that mostly familial acquaintances and their current residence were the objects to which they held attachment and contributed to their sense of belonging. For example:

S.P: *"Well, it's more towards my husband from a personal point of view, from another point of view, towards the apartment we live in [...]."*

Multiple responses were documented at the collective level, likewise. When questioned about whether the proximity of fellow citizens in either neighbourhood in The Hague Southwest would be advantageous for fostering a sense of place attachment, the majority of respondents expressed a positive viewpoint. This, in turn, also pertains to culture and the significance derived from cultural influences.

B.D: *"It would be nice, just because it would build that, maybe some greater sense of community. To feel attached."*

Place dimension

With respect to the place dimension, the migrants were queried primarily about the physical characteristics, in addition to the social factors, that impact their attachment to their present neighbourhoods.

The findings from the interviews showcase that the primary physical determinant of individuals' place attachment is the presence of their own residence, which some of the respondents share with family. Concerning the neighbourhoods' physical characteristics and social factors, the responses exhibited convergence, although several recurring topics were identified. One notable aspect that emerged across all neighbourhoods was the presence of several positive attributes, including the accessibility of green spaces, water bodies, and an efficient transportation system. On the contrary, there was consensus regarding the Southwest neighbourhoods, which were commonly perceived as exhibiting a deficiency in cleanliness and a state of disorder. Moreover, it was reported that there was a lack of adherence to regulations, and the neighbourhoods were deemed unsafe during nocturnal hours, among other things.

One specific aspect that aroused curiosity was the subject of cultural diversity, which serves as a phenomenon with both positive and negative implications. One advantageous aspect of the cultural diversity present in neighbourhoods is the abundance of diverse cultural and commercial establishments that are accessible. Nevertheless, a significant portion of Eastern European migrants have expressed their discontent regarding the melding of cultures in these areas and that this amalgamation of cultures was perceived as a detrimental neighbourhood

attribute. For instance, 3 out of 4 of the participants cited the residents in Vrederust as the primary factor for their negative perception of the neighbourhood and desire to relocate. The individuals conveyed that the prevalence of Dutch inhabitants in this neighbourhood is minimal, and the persistent fusion of diverse cultures and traditions has resulted in the neighbourhood being perceived unfavourably and uninviting for habitation. In addition, it was reported that there was a lack of adherence to regulations, among other things.

P.H: "*[...] there must be really a diversification in nationalities. We can't be four countries in one neighbourhood, one neighbourhood of them all, and the Dutch flee en masse because the Dutch don't feel, don't feel at home. We rather feel at home than they do.*"

Another raised issue pertained to the persistent coexistence of homeowners and social renters, which posed a challenge due to the varying attitudes towards property maintenance and upkeep. The homeowners among the migrants have expressed that homeownership fosters an emotional connection with their area of residence. However, their satisfaction diminishes when they observe that others are not putting in the same effort. Furthermore, one of the interviewees expressed that a significant factor contributing to her lack of attachment is the behaviour of her neighbours. The respondent's attachment to the neighbourhood has been diminishing daily due to several issues that have arisen with their neighbours in recent months.

Concerning the identification component of the place dimension, the migrants conveyed that their present residential area does not significantly contribute to their process of identity formation. This stands in opposition to the responses provided by individuals regarding their primary place attachment site and its significance for their sense of self, specifically referring to their hometown or home country.

Process dimension

The process dimension pertains to an individual's subjective experiences within their residential environment, including their emotional well-being, social connections, and level of involvement in the local community. A factor identified as influential in fostering attachment to the neighbourhoods is the establishment of social contacts and links. Such connections may encourage individuals to develop stronger emotional ties to their community.

S.P: "*[...] I don't know many people yet. I hope to build some social contacts in the future.*"

Furthermore, during the interviews, participants expressed their willingness to increase their level of engagement within the community if they possessed a more extensive network of contacts or had access to additional examples of individuals actively participating.

Nevertheless, what proved intriguing and unforeseen in this context was the significant influence that the duration of residency actually exerts on place attachment and the level of engagement. As illustrated in Table 2.0, 3 of the participants have been residing in the Netherlands for a period exceeding five years. 6 of the participants have been residing for a period ranging from 1 to 5 years, while the remaining individual has resided for less than a year. During the interview process, an inquiry was made regarding the extent to which the interviewee's sense of place attachment had increased over the course of their residency in The Hague, irrespective of the specific neighbourhood. The findings from the codings and subsequent analysis indicate that most participants discuss how the length of their residency significantly and the most impacts their attachments, social connections and well-being. They explain that one becomes accustomed to their home over time, that some pick up the local language, and accumulate new experiences, memories, and so on. For instance, one of the participants provided the following statement regarding a former residential area of theirs located in The Hague.

P.H: "Yeah, absolutely. Every day I grew more attached to my old neighbourhood and grew to love it more. There hasn't been a day that I regret being there for 11 years."

Furthermore, a participant who has resided in The Hague with her spouse and child for the past 18 years expressed that while she wants to return to Bulgaria, she would undoubtedly experience a sense of longing for The Hague.

S.B: "I've even contemplated that even though we really want to go back to Bulgaria [...], I'll miss The Hague. I will miss the place I live in currently because, after all, these are 18 years or even more, one gets more or less attached to the place you live in."

Notwithstanding the fact that a significant proportion of the interviewees expressed a positive correlation between the duration of their residency and their level of connectedness, one of the respondents held a contrary viewpoint.

B.S: *"No, I don't think I feel more connected with time. Even in the beginning, I liked it more living here than I do now."*

However, this lack of emotional connection to the locality was due to the reasons that the sole purpose of being there for B.S. was work-related.

4.2 Factors influencing citizen participation

4.2.1 Political engagement

To kick off the section of the interviews pertaining to citizen participation, the respondents were questioned regarding their inclinations towards political and social matters. Subsequently, individuals were asked regarding their involvement. Initially, a significant majority of the respondents provided an affirmative response when asked about their inclination towards the topics. Nevertheless, although there was an expression of interest, it varied from one individual to another. Certain individuals exhibited an inclination towards both social and political matters, while others displayed a preference solely for social matters as opposed to political ones. Furthermore, some of the Eastern European migrants exhibited a preference solely for their country of origin as opposed to their intended country of arrival.

Voting in country of origin

With respect to political engagement, the respondents received questions regarding their participation in voting processes both in their country of origin and in the Netherlands. Out of the total of 10 respondents, 6 of them indicated that they cast their votes in their respective countries of origin. Three individuals abstained from voting on the basis of their belief that the political system in their respective countries was unlikely to undergo any significant change and that their individual vote would not yield any discernible impact. One respondent from Bulgaria reported that she was unable to cast her vote due to her naturalisation in the Netherlands. The last interviewee expressed that she would love to vote more in her home country; however, most of the time, she is here. Overall, those who cast ballots in their own nations made apparent at the outset of the interview that their attachment was to their home countries.

Voting in the Netherlands

Only three people took part in an election of some sort in The Netherlands. One of them was a naturalised citizen, one had lived in The Netherlands for a longer amount of time, and one claimed to have a stronger commitment to his own country but also had a bond with his previous neighbourhood. However, what made this case interesting was that, despite the fact that theory suggests those who are attached to their neighbourhood, city, or country would engage in more political and civic activity, the only person who responded initially that their main attachment was to The Netherlands, did not vote there due to their little interest in Dutch politics, among other things.

Motivations to participate

Initially, it was posited that the incentives for participation could be categorised as either individualistic or collective, with the possibility of some degree of intersectionality between the two. Although both responses were provided by the participants, the primary theme was centred around the concept of the common good and contributing to the betterment of the community.

B.S:” *So that motivates me, I want to see the change in my country.*”

R.D: “*For Bulgaria, to change something in Bulgaria.*”

B. D: “*Well yes. Especially for me and for the society that lives in Bulgaria. After all, I identify myself as Bulgarian and I am very interested in what is happening in my country and this will always be at the forefront.*”

It is evident that individuals who possess a stronger sense of attachment to their country are more likely to engage in political activities. The sole deviation from the mentioned trend was observed in the case of a participant whose place attachment was directed towards the Netherlands yet refrained from engaging in political activities. Nevertheless, it was also observed that certain individuals exhibit a higher degree of disinterest or engage in the culture of protest.

4.2.2 Civic engagement

With regard to the participants' interest in social issues and civic participation, the majority responded affirmatively, indicating that they have engaged in various civic activities. Merely two persons have expressed disinterest and have refrained from participating in civic activities. Nevertheless, all these answers pertained to their respective countries of origin. In The Netherlands, there has been only one instance of an individual displaying civic engagement.

Civic engagement in country of origin

Individuals who indicated that their place attachment stems from their country of origin, which primarily includes their hometowns, long-term places of residence, or other factors such as the natural environment and cultural aspects, have attested to their engagement in various forms of citizen participation. Many of these occurrences pertain to voluntary work, which may be conducted on a city-wide or neighbourhood-specific basis. Several instances of volunteer work involve helping at orphanages, elderly homes, and the Red Cross, as well as engaging in activities such as cleaning the local neighbourhood or around one's own residence, painting and repairing benches in their hometown, and providing animal care within the neighbourhood. Individuals who have resided in coastal communities have reported engaging in the practice of beach and environmental clean-up. Some examples:

- B.S: *“I have helped homes for elderly people. And also homes for children without parents. [..]. And I like helping there a lot.”*
- P.P: *“[..] physical assistance in the city. Cleaning of the beach [..].”*
- S.P:” *[..] We take care of the animals, we spay them, we feed them, we nurse them, and it's all voluntary. We also painted the benches to make the town look a little nicer, welcoming.”*

When queried about the reasons for individuals' inclination towards participating in civic activities, it was found that they derive a sense of satisfaction and belonging from being a part of a collective effort and making a positive contribution towards the greater good. Furthermore, it has been observed that individuals who hold a vested interest in their respective locales exhibit a propensity towards active engagement and involvement. For example:

G.V: *“I have a strong sense of attachment there, and I think that would influence me, like influence would influence me very like, uh. Hardly to participate in events, for example, even if it's the sense of community that is so important in my participation that even if I had like work or just some other plans, I would just cancel so I could be involved in the community project or whatever that is.”*

Furthermore, when asked about whether their involvement contributes to their sense of attachment, respondents expressed a positive response.

S.P: *“Well yes, all that when you feel helpful for something, and you see that there is a result of the efforts made. After all, family and friends are there, you feel good.”*

P.P: *“It motivates that you have some belonging to some kind of community, you know, to help in some way. It doesn't matter if it's to a person, if it's to nature.”*

Civic engagement and willingness to participate in country of destination

As previously stated, thus far, only one individual has demonstrated civic engagement within their local community in The Netherlands. Although some individuals reported taking care of the green spaces surrounding their residences, the level of participation was not extensively analysed. The individual who has been actively participating in civic affairs presently resides in the Morgenstond neighbourhood located in The Hague. The noteworthy aspect of this situation is that despite the individual's efforts to engage in various civic activities within their current neighbourhood and residential area, such as conducting surveys for their building, overseeing building maintenance and parking facilities, liaising with municipal workers from The Hague to encourage greater community involvement, they have encountered limited interest and communication from fellow residents in the neighbourhood.

P.H: *“Here you are seen as an obstacle as you want to change something, even for good. They are not used to it. You get an anarchic society and in the moment, you try to somehow come to help. And the help itself is a kind of change for them and they don't want it. Difficult or impossible.”*

Nonetheless, during the interviews, participants received questions about their future engagement in civic activities. Eight individuals expressed their willingness to participate,

while only two individuals stated their reluctance to engage in such activities. Out of the two individuals who expressed their disinclination to participate in civic engagement, one of them had experienced challenges with their neighbours and perceived the presence of multiple cultures as having a negative impact. The other individual simply chose not to engage. In regard to factors that would motivate individuals to participate included the provision of additional information regarding potential events, the availability of assistance in specific areas, and access to information about community centres, among others. The migrants expressed their desire for the availability of language centres or related information to facilitate their language learning process. Furthermore, other factors for participants to engage were possessing a greater sense of community and belonging, exhibiting a positive attitude towards their place of residence, have more friends and family, among others.

Moreover, as previously noted, the present study examined the factors contributing to increased place attachment, including but not limited to familial and social ties, environmental cleanliness, and access to green spaces. While the majority of participants reported that proximity to family and social networks fostered greater engagement and motivated them to do more, one individual's experience diverged from this trend.

S.P: *“Well, I don't think so, because one can participate in civic and political activities anywhere, as long as there is, as long as one is interested. It doesn't matter where one lives. The point is to be interested in the activities in question, because if one has no interest, it doesn't matter where one lives.”*

4.2.3 Barriers to participation in The Netherlands

The participants were posed questions regarding any impediments hindering their involvement in the civic aspect of citizen participation. According to the Eastern European migrants, the two most prevalent obstacles impeding their participation are the language barrier and a lack of available time to engage. Several individuals have expressed that due to their work commitments and other obligations, they are unable to allocate sufficient time to be more actively involved. Some of the migrants also expressed this sentiment regarding their participation in certain activities in their countries of origin. Another big factor in not participating in The Netherlands is the language barrier the migrants experience.

P.P: *“One of the main ones is the language barrier.”*

D.Y: *“Here, it's not that easy because, uh, most of the people and most of you know, the policies and all these things that is about society, is attached to the society are in Dutch. So I cannot understand many things. So if I knew Dutch, maybe I would be more engaged with.”*

A different barrier encountered by migrants was the lack of acceptance from Dutch society. Individuals do not experience a sense of belonging to the community, thereby impeding their engagement.

G.V: *“I think I would, but I still have this, uh, the, I think the main thing that stops me is the Dutch people.”*

B.S:” *Yeah, yeah. I feel excluded oftentimes when I'm surrounded by Dutch people.”*

Two additional barriers were discussed. One of the factors that contributed to this sentiment was the non-EU status of certain individuals, which created a perceived barrier to participation and heightened the perception of obstacles. The final impediment, or rather the factor that discouraged participation, was the social dimension. According to two of the migrants, the individuals residing in their immediate neighbourhoods constituted a significant obstacle to their involvement in communal activities, thereby impeding their participation. One of the respondents reported that in their former residential area, they were highly involved in social activities. However, upon attempting to replicate this level of engagement in their current neighbourhood and motivate others to participate in similar pursuits, they encountered a lack of enthusiasm and indifference from the community.

M.D: *“That is, even if you want to do something, there is no communication from other people.”*

P.H: *“Absolutely the neighbourhood acts demotivating. This should be strongly emphasised.”*

5. Discussion & Conclusion

The objective of this empirical study was to examine the effect place attachment has on citizen participation. This study was conducted in the setting of Eastern-European immigrants residing in the localities of Moerwijk, Vrederust, and Morgenstond in The Hague, Netherlands. The majority of respondents indicated that their main place attachment pertains to their respective countries of origin. One of the ten participants expressed a stronger attachment to the Netherlands; however, all participants conveyed a degree of attachment to the Netherlands during the interview. This attachment can be linked with Engerbersen et al. (2015)'s typology, as referenced in the theoretical framework. It can be observed that individuals who migrate for work-related reasons or on a seasonal basis exhibit a greater degree of emotional connection to their country of origin while displaying a comparatively weaker attachment to the Netherlands. While the data indicates that the nation of origin is the object of most attachment, this attachment is not exclusive. Individuals indicated that attachment may be directed in many directions, regardless of how much or how little attachment is present. Additionally, place attachment to The Netherlands was seen even when some individuals showed some discontent behaviour or a desire to return to their home country. Thus, it is clear that attachment is hybrid. A two-sided attachment is also explored in Engbersen's (2013) typology, which is related to this.

Answer to first sub-question

When people were asked what makes a location special to them and why they feel such a strong connection to the places they mentioned, several different reasons, including those related to family, friends, memories, experiences, culture, and nature, emerged. Previously, the tripartite organising framework proposed by Scannell and Gifford (2010) was discussed, and it is noteworthy that these findings can be linked to the first dimension of this framework, which pertains to the person dimension. The person dimension encompasses both individual and collective place attachment, with a notable degree of overlap between the two (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). At the individual level, the significance of the place derives from personal connections that evoke memories, milestones, realisations, and other experiences. Therefore, it can be argued that the meaning of the place is not solely derived from its physical attributes but rather from the subjective experiences that occur within its confines, which can be referred to as "experience-in-place" (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p.2). When inquired about the extent to which individuals are influenced by their surroundings and whether they establish a sense of

identity with their chosen locale, answers were positive. This identification can be associated with the place dimension of the tripartite framework. Concerning the final dimension, namely the process dimension, it can be inferred that individuals who identify with and are attached to their particular locales experience a sense of contentment and pride as they are surrounded by their loved ones and participate in social and civic engagements.

Alongside this, on the one hand, research shows that the prevailing viewpoint in the field of place attachment research is that the development of a robust attachment to a particular location typically requires a significant amount of time (Shin & Yang, 2022; Toruńczyk-Ruiz & Brunarska, 2020; Liu et al., 2022; Trąbka et al., 2022). On the other hand, research has also indicated that there is no discernible correlation between the duration of residency in a particular location and the level of emotional or psychological attachment experienced towards that place (Toruńczyk-Ruiz & Brunarska, 2020). Nevertheless, this was not the situation in the present study. Although the primary focus of this study did not initially prioritise the examination of the duration of residency and its correlation with place attachment, it became evident that the length of time spent in a particular location plays a crucial role in fostering a strong sense of attachment concerning the Eastern European migrants in the Hague Southwest. Individuals who are capable of dwelling in a particular location for a significant duration are presented with increased prospects of establishing favourable recollections and developing a sense of attachment to that place (Shin & Yang, 2022; Kitchen et al., 2015; Toruńczyk-Ruiz & Brunarska, 2020). This assertion has been confirmed by the responses provided by the participants in this study.

Concludingly, the response to the sub-question "*What are the contributing factors to the development of place attachment among the migrants from Eastern Europe?*" indicates that the determinants that impact the development of place attachment among Eastern-European migrants include, but are not limited to, familial ties, social connections and associations, environmental factors, cultural influences, communal affiliations and most importantly length of time.

Answer to second sub-question

The discussed findings indicate that a significant proportion of migrants exercise their voting rights only in their countries of origin. What motivates them is both self-interest, but more so for the common good. This finding can be linked to the research conducted by Ekman and Amna (2012), wherein the authors posit that there are two forms of participation, an individual form and a collective one. The individual form demonstrates that people can exhibit

attentiveness towards political issues and social issues. Nonetheless, it is evident that self-interest can be channelled into communal modes of political engagement. This pertains to the concept of affiliation, or sense of belonging, with a particular group (Ekman & Amna, 2012). This is especially true regarding the participants in this study. Concerning the minority of two individuals refraining from doing so, they engage in such behaviour due to a lack of trust in the political system. This phenomenon can be linked to the culture of protest in the realm of political engagement (Teorell et al., 2007; Ekman & Amna, 2012). Therefore, it could be argued that these individuals exhibit political engagement and concern, given their awareness of current events. However, they choose to abstain from participation as a means of expressing their lack of faith and dissatisfaction with the established system.

The answer to the second sub-question, “*What constitutes citizen participation and what forms of it are observed among the Eastern European migrants in the Hague Southwest?*” can be provided now. With respect to civic participation, a considerable number of individuals participate in civic activities, primarily within their nation of origin. The factors that were found to be contributing to citizen participation would be additional information regarding potential events, activities, community centres, and the availability of language centres. Furthermore, other factors for participants to engage were possessing a greater sense of community and belonging, heaving positive emotions towards their place of residence, and having more friends and family. Another factor to consider, which may vary depending on the individual, is the level of cultural diversity present within the surrounding neighbourhoods.

The EE migrants conveyed that factors such as time constraints, language barriers, lack of acceptance from Dutch society, and a demotivating neighbourhood acted as impediments to their engagement. Moreover, the impediment caused by the language barrier has also been deliberated in other academic literature, such as the study conducted by Gele and Harsløf (2010). The participants hold the belief that their lack of proficiency in the native language precludes their inclusion in any organisation or limits their ability to engage in civic participation (Gele & Harsløf, 2010).

Theoretical hypotheses

Based on the observations, it appears that the location to which individuals exhibit the strongest attachment and connection also corresponds to the location where they are most actively involved. Hence, it has been demonstrated that although certain migrants exhibit a degree of attachment to The Netherlands, they do not actively participate. This is in accordance with the first hypothesis. Furthermore, the results obtained from the findings indicate that increased

familial and social networks, as well as a heightened sense of community and connectedness among migrants, can potentially result in greater levels of participation. The attributes are observable in the determinants that impact the establishment of place attachment. Thus, Hypothesis 2 has also been validated. The sole inconsistency with Hypothesis 2 pertains to the solitary participant who expressed primary place attachment to the Netherlands. The individual conveyed a lack of interest in politics within the Netherlands and a corresponding lack of civic engagement. However, this phenomenon can be elucidated by the unfavourable circumstances prevailing in her neighbourhood and her mild lack of interest.

Nevertheless, although the study's proposed hypotheses have been substantiated, a significant factor that plays a crucial role in this investigation was overlooked in the beginning: the duration of time plays an even more important role in the relationship between place attachment and citizen participation. The duration of time has been demonstrated to be particularly significant for migrants, as it greatly influences their sense of belonging and integration within a community.

Answer to main research question

Therefore, the main research question can be answered. It can be concluded that place attachment has a positive effect and contributes to citizen participation within the broader context of research inquiries. Individuals who exhibit a sense of place attachment towards their country of origin tend to actively participate in both political and civic engagements. Thus, if the migrants develop a place attachment towards the Netherlands, more civic participation can be expected. However, research highlights that one perspective posits that civic engagement may engender a heightened sense of attachment. Conversely, an alternative viewpoint contends that a stronger attachment to a particular locality motivates individuals to undertake endeavours aimed at safeguarding or improving said locality (Livingston et al., 2008). When concluding the interviews and subsequent analysis, it was seen that this attachment does not function as a linear arrow. It suggests that the involvement of citizens in a given context may also foster a sense of place attachment. Hence, it can be posited that there exists a reciprocal relationship between place attachment and citizen participation, and it can be characterised as having a dual nature.

Yet, the most significant discovery in this thesis still pertains to the influence of the duration of residency on both place attachment and citizen participation. While previous research has already examined the impact of place attachment and participation and vice-versa, this study has made a valuable contribution to the existing scientific literature by highlighting the

significant influence of the length of residence on both place attachment and civic participation, particularly among migrant populations. As migrants actively participate in various societal activities, undergo a feeling of inclusion, and actively contribute to the political and social fabric of their host community, it is probable that their attachment to their place of residence will strengthen as time progresses.

This observation highlights a constructive interaction between the concepts, whereby each concept can function as both the impetus and the anticipation of the other. In the long term, it can be observed that place attachment not only fosters citizen participation, but citizen participation also cultivates a sense of belonging and attachment among citizens. However, most importantly, the significance of considering the temporal dimension in relation to both place attachment and citizen participation is crucial.

5.1 Limitations and reflection

It is necessary to engage in a discourse regarding the constraints and restrictions of this study. One initial limitation pertains to the sample size of the participants. Although the number 10 is not as small, it would be advantageous and enlightening to increase the pool of individuals available for the interview process. This constitutes a limitation, as it is not feasible to make a broad generalisation. Additionally, a second constraint pertains to the inadequacy of national diversity. As initially indicated, the original plan entailed the inclusion of individuals from Central and Eastern Europe; regrettably, this objective was not realised. Furthermore, the predominant sampling technique employed was the snowball method. Although the utilisation of this method was highly advantageous in the recruitment of participants, it has the potential to introduce bias (Babbie, 2016). Nevertheless, despite the fact that individuals were linked, such as through familial ties or social connections, it was intriguing to observe the contrasting viewpoints expressed by the participants regarding their neighbourhoods and personal encounters.

When conducting the interviews, it was apparent that a few of the interview questions were connected to one another and occasionally resulted in repetition. Nonetheless, the overall interviewing process was satisfactory and provided valuable and intriguing insights.

5.2 Recommendations

A potential recommendation for future research could be to expand the dataset, as previously indicated. Particularly, to increase the number of participants and diversify the nationalities

represented. Furthermore, the present thesis has examined the region of The Hague Southwest. During the research, it was discovered that the area predominantly housed individuals of Turkish, Moroccan, Antillean, and other nationalities. It would be advantageous to undertake a comparable study, albeit with individuals of these respective nationalities.

With respect to recommendations for The Hague Southwest, the participants in this study expressed their perspectives on areas that could be enhanced. There is a growing demand for enhanced accessibility to environmentally friendly areas, improved infrastructure, and a decrease in the heterogeneity of nationalities residing within the neighbourhoods. One of the suggestions proposed by a participant was to enhance the availability of long-term housing alternatives. This phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that frequent relocations have the potential to diminish an individual's capacity to form emotional connections and establish a sense of belonging. Moreover, more information and language centres should be made available.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview questions (English version)

1. Introduction:

- Who am I? What is my topic? Why am I doing this topic? What is the purpose of the interview? How is the interview structured?
- Signing of consent forms and explaining that they can opt out at any time/ decline answering some questions.

2. Interview questions:

Basics: What is your name? From which country are you? Which neighbourhood do you live in? For how long have you lived in the Netherlands, and more particularly The Hague?

1. Place attachment

- Is there a certain place, or space, that you feel most attached to?
- Why this specific place? What makes it important, do you have certain emotional connection to it, some memories, milestones?
 - Do you identify yourself with this place?
- What are your favourite characteristics about this place?

a) If it's back in **country of origin**: why do you think you thought about a place back in X country, instead of the place you currently reside in?

b) If it's in **country of destination**: is there a particular reason you chose the Netherlands than a place back in your country of origin?

c) Is it both?

- What makes this place special for you? In general, what makes a place special for you?

Questions for The Hague

- Why did you choose this neighbourhood to reside in?
- Can you describe what you like, or you do not like about your current living situation?
- To what/where/whom are you attached in this neighbourhood?
- How would you describe your sense of belonging, or feeling at home to this place?

- a) What factors contribute or detract from these feelings?
- b) If not, are there maybe certain factors that will influence your attachment to your current place?
- Finally, would you say you can be attached to multiple places? Can you have more than one “home”?
- How do you experience a collective network in your neighbourhood?
 - Have you made connections and formed links with other people?
- How do you communicate with your neighbours?
 - If no, why not?
- How would you feel if more people from your nationality would live in your neighbourhood?

2. Citizen participation

- Do you have an interest in social and political issues? In what ways do you educate yourself on what happening in your immediate surroundings both politically and socially?
- Do you vote in local elections? Do you vote in both countries (Netherlands and X country of nationality)?
 - a) What motivates you to participate? For yourself, or for the common good? Or something else?
 - b) If you do not vote, why?
- In what ways have you personally participated in civic activities or community projects in the past?
- If they participate:
 - Can you describe the ways in which your participation in community places or activities has influenced your feelings of connectedness and belonging?
- a) If yes, what motivates you to participate?
- b) If no, why not?
 - In what ways do you aim to improve your participation in the future?
 - How would you like to see the neighbourhood around you improve for the better? Do you want to take part in the process that leads to the improvement?
 - What do you believe are some of the barriers that prevent individuals from participating in civic activities, and what ways can be employed to address these barriers?
 - Have you ever felt discouraged due to a particular reason to not participate?

If participant answered in the beginning that he/she has more attachment to country of origin:

- Why do you have a stronger place attachment to your home country than to where you currently reside?
- Can you name a few things that can help you feel more at home in this location?
- Are you planning to move back to your country of origin? Why, or why not?

For people who have been living in the Netherlands, specifically The Hague, for a longer period of time:

- Why did you decide to stay?
- Would you say that the longer you lived here, the more you began to feel a connection to the community/city/etc and take an active role in its affairs?
- Will you be relocating to country X at any point?

3. Place attachment + citizen participation

- Can you think of an example when your strong feelings of belonging prompted you to get involved in politics or other civic activities? Or can you think of a general example from what you have seen?
- Earlier in the interview, you explained what factors contribute to a stronger sense of attachment to a place. Do you believe these characteristics are connected to how much one civically and politically participates? Can you elaborate, why yes and why not?

Questions more specifically for The Thesis Hub:

- How can organisations work to engage residents in ways that promote both civic participation and a deeper connection to the places where they live?
- Are there any recommendations for the city of The Hague to make the city and your neighbourhood more attractive and amicable?

Appendix 2: Interview questions (Bulgarian version)

Въпросник

1. Въведение:

- Коя съм аз? Каква е моята дисертация? Защо се занимавам с тази тема? Каква е целта на интервюто? Как е структурирано интервюто?

- Подписване на формуляри за съгласие и обяснение, че могат да се откажат по всяко време/ да откажат да отговорят на някои въпроси

2. Въпроси за интервюто:

Основи: Как се казвате? От коя държава сте? В кой квартал живеете? От колко време живеете в Нидерландия и по-конкретно в Хага?

1. Привързаността към мястото

● Има ли определено място или пространство, към което се чувствате най-привързани?

● Защо точно към това място? Какво го прави важно, имате ли определена емоционална връзка с него, някакви спомени, важни събития?

● Идентифицирате ли се с това място?

● Кои са любимите ви характеристики на това място?

а) Ако е обратно в страната на произход: защо мислите, че сте мислили за място обратно в страната Х, вместо за мястото, на което пребивавате в момента?

б) Ако е в Нидерландия: има ли конкретна причина, поради която сте избрали Нидерландия вместо място в страната на произход?

в) Ако е двете държави?

● Какво прави това място специално за вас? Като цяло, какво прави едно място специално за вас?

Въпроси към Хага

● Защо избрахте този квартал за живеене?

● Можете ли да опишете какво ви харесва или не ви харесва в сегашната ви начин на живот?

- Към какво/къде/кого сте привързани в този квартал?
- Как бихте описали чувството си за принадлежност или усещането си за дом на това място?
 - a. Кои фактори допринасят или намаляват тези чувства?
 - b. Ако не, може би има определени фактори, които ще повлияят на привързаността ви към настоящото място?
- Как усещате колективната мрежа във вашия квартал?
- Установявали ли сте контакти и връзки с други хора?
- Как общувате със съседите си?
 - Ако не, защо не?
- Как бихте се чувствали, ако във вашия квартал живеят повече хора от вашата националност?
- И накрая, бихте ли казали, че можете да бъдете привързани към множество места? Можете ли да имате повече от един "дом"?

Ако участникът отговори в началото, че е по-привързан към страната на произход:

- Защо имате по-силна привързаност към родната си страна, отколкото към мястото, където живеете в момента?
- Можете ли да посочите няколко неща, които могат да ви помогнат да се чувствате по-уютно на това място?
- Планирате ли да се върнете в страната си на произход? Защо, или защо не?

За хората, които живеят в Нидерландия, по-специално в Хага, от по-дълго време:

- Защо решихте да останете?
- Бихте ли казали, че колкото по-дълго сте живели тук, толкова повече сте започнали да чувствате връзка с общността/града/т.н. и да участвате активно в неговите дела?

2. Участие на гражданите

- Интересувате ли се от социални и политически въпроси? По какъв начин се информирате за случващото се в непосредственото ви обкръжение както в политически, така и в социален план?
- Гласувате ли на местните избори? Гласувате ли и в двете страни?
- Какво ви мотивира да участвате? За себе си или за доброто на обществото? Или нещо друго?
 - Ако не гласувате, защо?
- По какъв начин сте социално ангажирани? Например, по какъв начин сте участвали лично в граждански дейности или обществени проекти в миналото? (примери: доброволен труд, квартални общности или подпомагане на други хора)
 - Ако да, какво ви мотивира да участвате? Ако не, защо не?
 - Можете ли да опишете начините, по които участието ви в обществени места или дейности е повлияло на чувството ви за свързаност и принадлежност?
- По какъв начин се стремите да подобрите участието си в бъдеще?
- По какъв начин бихте искали да подобрите квартала около вас към по-добро? Искате ли да участвате в процеса, който води до подобрието?
- Какви според вас са някои от пречките, които възпрепятстват хората да участват в граждански дейности, и какви начини могат да се използват за преодоляване на тези пречки?
 - Чувствали ли сте се някога обезкуражени поради конкретна причина да не участвате?

3. Привързаност към мястото + участие на гражданите

- Можете ли да се сетите за пример, когато силното ви чувство за принадлежност ви е подтикнало да се включите в политиката или в други граждански дейности? Или можете ли да се сетите за общ пример от това, което сте виждали?

- По-рано говорихме за фактори, които създават чувства на привързаност към дадено място. Смятате ли, че тези характеристики са свързани с това доколко човек участва в граждански и политически дейности? Можете ли да уточните защо да и защо не?

Въпроси по-конкретно за Thesis Hub:

- Как организациите могат да работят за ангажиране на жителите по начин, който насърчава както гражданското участие, така и по-дълбоката връзка с местата, където живеят?
- Имате ли някакви препоръки към град Хага, за да направите града и вашия квартал по-привлекателни и приятелски настроени?