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Social capital in green urban citizen initiatives

Exploring the role and underlying mechanisms of social capital

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Preface

The cartoon on the previous page was made by an artist that I met at an event organized by *'Groen Dichterbij'* earlier this year. I had a very interesting, almost philosophical, conversation with him after which he made this drawing for me. He surprised me with his ability to capture the story that I just told him, into this cartoon. For the non-Dutch speaking people, it says 'Ik heb boerenverstand' which could be translated into 'It's common sense'. For this study it represents the participants who are active as a volunteer in the citizen initiatives that are interviewed. The different people in the vegetable garden drawn in the cartoon bundle their abilities and invest their time doing something they feel is necessary. Using their 'common sense' they set up the initiatives, bringing people together and in most cases the results are impressive. For me personally it represents how I have experienced my studies over the last years. I have gained knowledge, I have developed my scientific skills but for me it is really important to always use your common sense, no matter what you do.

Writing this thesis has been an exciting journey during which I have learnt many things, both scientifically and personally. I owe many people a sincere 'thank you'.

First of all I would like to start with thanking all the participants that have been interviewed, for their truly inspiring enthusiasm and openness to share their experiences. Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisors Lenneke Vaandrager and Carlijn Wentink for their support during my master thesis. Lenneke, thank you for guidance, critical view and support during both my internship and thesis. Carlijn, for your contribution to the data collection and analysis and for having your door always open for a 'I'm stuck can I please come by in 5 minutes-meeting'.

I am grateful to my parents Tiny and Elly, your encouragement and unconditional support (also financially, but that is something we will figure out later) have brought me where I stand today. My sisters Anneke, Wies, and Jolein, for always keeping an eye on your little sister. My friends, for the countless cups of coffee, stimulating discussions, and pep talks. Finally, Jordi, for your love and (not infrequently from remote places) support over the last years.

Evelien Janssen

Wageningen, December 2014

Summary

An increasingly more active role for citizens is demanded by the Dutch government, and indeed sometimes citizens come into action in citizen initiatives where the government cannot or will not undertake action. In previous research it became clear that social capital plays an important role in the process of realizing the goals of the citizen initiatives. Social capital as a relational resource has become wide-spread and well-known in social science, but there seems to be paucity of knowledge about the mechanisms that construct social capital in specific groups like citizen initiatives. Therefore, the overarching purpose of the current study was to explore social capital initiatives, and to better understand the mechanisms of the concepts that constitute social capital in green citizen initiatives. The research question answered is: What is the role of social capital in green urban citizen initiatives and what are the underlying mechanisms of social capital?

Initiators and key actors from seven green urban citizen initiatives have been interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. Initiatives were eligible when their purpose was related to the local living environment and 'green' (e.g. green public spaces, community gardening, collectively investing in sustainable products, etc.). Transcripts have been coded top-down, using four central concepts of social capital: internal morality, connectedness, reciprocity and exchanges, and trust. Per code themes are identified that present the recurring mechanisms that could be found in the interviews.

Volunteers connect to the initiatives through existing social networks, bonded by the ideal of the initiative. Once connected, the volunteers bring resources like knowledge, skills and networks that are beneficial for the initiatives. The established connections can be a means to achieve the goals of the initiative, or an end in itself. The internal morality of an initiative influences the norms and values of the initiative and the composition of the group of volunteers. Merely people that identify themselves with the internal morality of an initiative will connect and stay connected. Tangible returns and a clear envisioned plan motivate the volunteers in the beginning, whereas volunteers that have been committed for longer time express more intangible returns like personal development, increased feeling of social security and a satisfied feeling of doing something meaningful. Mutual trust is relatively low in the beginning, when initiators only have the trust in their collective ideal to rely on. Nurtured by experiences, over time trust in each other and in the initiative grows which makes processes more efficient because initiators can let go of control.

This study gives insight in the underlying mechanisms that play a role in social capital. The internal morality appeared of key importance, influencing the norms and values and who gets connected to the initiative. Volunteers' invested time and energy gets repaid in both tangible and intangible returns. Over time, trust among and between the volunteers develops. The identified mechanisms construct social capital as a self-reinforcing vicious circle.

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, the findings cannot simply be extrapolated to citizen initiatives in other areas. It does give impetus for further research about social capital in voluntary-based citizen initiatives.

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1   Introduction

1.1 Background

Over the last years, low levels in voter turnout and the sense that the government had failed, combined with societal changes, has provoked an increasing opposition to government decisions with a loss of the governments' traditional power as a consequence (Edelenbos, 2005; Mol, 2006). Moreover, the perception emerged that too much distance exists between governments' priorities and what is seen as important at the local level (Edelenbos, 2005). Accordingly, the Dutch government states that the following societal trends force the government to reconsider its position: an increasing self-organisational capacity of society, a withdrawing government due to cutbacks, and an increasing need for social cohesion (Ministerie van BZK, 2013). Subsequently, the Dutch government demands more commitment from its citizens. Citizens' efforts are an attractive alternative for municipal policies aimed at improving the neighbourhood liveability while simultaneously building responsible citizenship. At the same time, citizens have new expectations of and critique on democracy and want to have a say in policy making and the design of their living environment.

The changing society influences both the position and role of the government, and the position and role of citizens. A transition can be seen from "hierarchical and well-institutionalized forms of government towards less formalized, bottom-up forms of governance in which state authority makes way for an appreciation of mutual interdependence with different stakeholders" (Edelenbos, 2005, p. 111). In this article the term governance refers to a rather non-hierarchical form of governing with more space for interaction with those being governed. Governments have been moving away from the more traditional 'one-way traffic' pattern toward 'two-way traffic': a more interactive steering paradigm (Edelenbos, 2005; Kooiman, 1993). This interactive way of governing was introduced in the Dutch governments in the early 1990s but simultaneously took place in countries outside the Netherlands under the names of "participatory policy making", "interactive decision making" and "community governance" (Edelenbos, 2005). This change of steering paradigm and the need for financial cutbacks evoked a decentralized way of governing the Netherlands. More and more tasks and responsibilities are decentralized to the local governments, who face tighter budgets and an increasing workload.

The societal changes as described above and the changing position of the government impact the role of citizens as a consequence. An increasingly more active role for citizens is demanded by the government, and sometimes citizens have solutions for problems where the government cannot or will not undertake action. Additionally, Salverda, Pleijte, and van Dam (2014) state that citizens themselves feel the need for a bigger say in designing their living environment. Assertive citizens

come into action in so-called citizen initiatives. Following the definition of Bakker et al. (2012), in this study citizen initiatives are defined as the "collective activities by citizens aimed at providing local 'public goods or services' (e.g. regarding the liveability and safety) in their street, neighbourhood or town, in which citizens decide themselves both about the aims and means of their project and in which local authorities have a supporting or facilitating role" (p. 397). This definition implies a bottom-up approach, in which a group of citizens comes up with an idea and undertakes collective action which is self-organized and independent of the government or professional organizations.

The emerging citizen initiatives receive increasing attention from policy makers because, as said, the citizen initiatives can be attractive alternatives for existing (and often costly) government interventions. It also attracts considerable attention from scholars because little is known on the exact nature of processes in citizen initiatives and the role these processes play in achieving the goals of the initiatives. A research project was established by Wageningen University and Alterra with the aim to gain more understanding about and improving the role of knowledge, information processes, and communication in the establishment and development of green urban initiatives (van Dam, et al., 2014).

The Green Urban Initiatives Project (G.U.I. Project) focuses on the development of social and institutional trust within green urban citizen initiatives and between these initiatives and their policy environment. The project started in 2013 with an explorative literature review on green urban initiatives and informational governance. In addition, nine in-depth interviews were conducted with key actors of green urban initiatives. In the interviews the role of information, communication and knowledge in the initiatives was discussed, just as the relation and cooperation with other actors. From the interviews four recurring themes were identified playing an important role in the processes within the initiatives: (1) relationship with local government, (2) imaging and framing, (3) use of communication tools such as social media, and (4) social capital. In Figure 1 the results of the literature review and in-depth interviews are brought together. It shows the communication and information processes that are involved when the initiators of the citizen initiatives act in order to achieve realization of the set goals.

In the process of realizing the goals of the initiatives, two types of capital appeared important: informational capital and social capital. The informational capital is the knowledge and information the initiators possess, obtain and share for the benefit of the initiative. To gain and share this informational capital with the environment, the social capital of the actors is used. Three different forms of social capital can be distinguished: bonding, bridging and linking social capital. Bonding social capital refers to relations between members of a network who are like-minded and have an equal power relationship. Bridging social capital are the relations between people that do not share the

same social identity but have an equal power position. Linking social capital occurs when people differ in social identity and are connecting across power boundaries (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004).

The processes as depicted in the model are not linear but circular or iterative. It is assumed that when the initiators are able to strategically use their social capital they can gather more informational capital and mobilise others through their social capital to realize their goals.
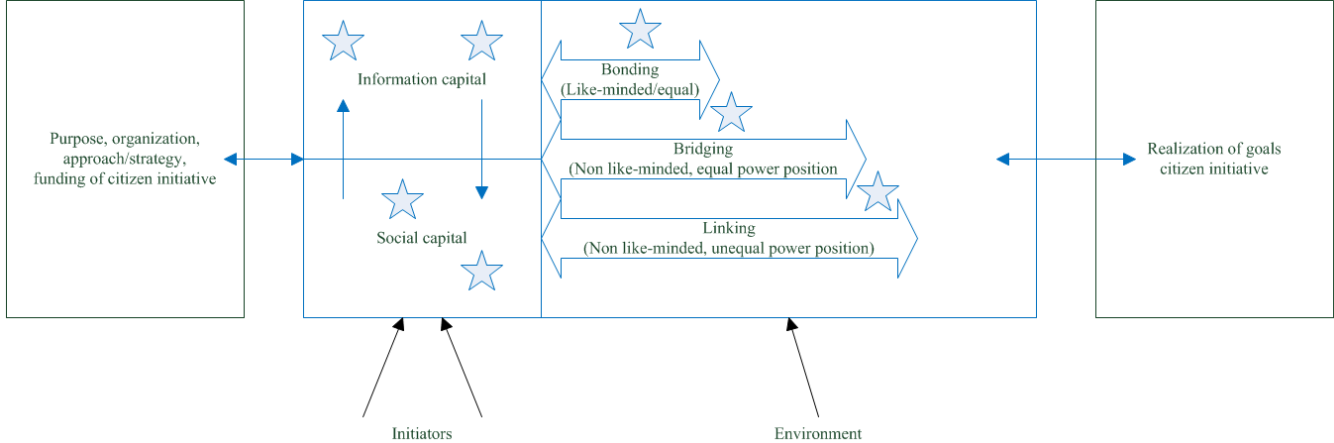

Figure 1: Preliminary model of the (assumed) information and communication processes in green urban citizen initiatives (van Dam, Hassink, Salverda, Vaandrager, & Wentink, 2014)

1.2 Problem statement and research question

Social capital has become a widespread and well-known term in social science since its introduction by Putnam in 1993. The theoretical framework in the next chapter will operationalize the concept of social capital. Here, the knowledge gap that seems to exist despite the available body of literature about social capital is addressed.

Previous studies have further developed social theory in a variety of fields like economic development, public health and criminal activity (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). As a result, in the past social capital has been linked to concepts such as sense of community (Pooley, Cohen, & Pike, 2005), indicators of social capital in philanthropy are formulated (Brown & Ferris, 2007; Paxton, 1999), it is examined how social capital can be used to inform and enhance community development (Shan, Muhajarine, Loptson, & Jeffery, 2014; Wakefield & Poland, 2005), and social capital has been connected to health outcomes (see Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). These are some examples of the wide range of available scientific literature about social capital. In general, the academic work focuses on social capital at community- or regional-level analysis (Brown & Ferris, 2007). It appears that there is still paucity of knowledge about the mechanisms that construct social capital in specific groups like citizen initiatives.

Therefore, the overarching purpose of this study is to explore social capital in green urban citizen initiatives, and to better understand the mechanisms of the concepts that constitute social capital in green citizen initiatives. The research question that is to be answered with the current study is: *What is the role of social capital in green urban citizen initiatives and what are the underlying mechanisms of social capital?*

1.3 Thesis overview

In Chapter 2 the concept of social capital is conceptualized to demarcate the scope of the current study and specific research questions are posed. The methodological aspects of this study are discussed in Chapter 3. Subsequently the results of the analysis of the data are presented in Chapter 4, which proceeds with the introduction of the empirical model based on the analysis. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and methodology of the study and concludes with recommendations for further research. As a last, the research questions are answered and a conclusion is drawn.

2   Theoretical framework

In this chapter the theoretical assumptions and the conceptual framework for this research are described. The concept social capital is operationalized and specific research questions are presented as the starting point of the current study.

2.1 Social capital and its abundant definitions

Providing an unambiguous definition of social capital is problematic because it is composed of different elements that sometimes are contradicting (Kritsotakis & Gamarnikow, 2004). At this point the aim is not to provide an exhaustive conceptualization of social capital, but rather to operationalize this elusive concept.

The current use of the concept social capital originates from early work of Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (1993). Based on his work about economic capital, Bourdieu approaches social capital as "the actual or potential resources linked to networks of relationships" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). Putnam described social capital as: "features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam, 1993, p. 169). These rather brief definitions include the concepts that later would be the basis for many more definitions for the term social capital.

Lochner, Kawachi, and Kennedy (1999) summarize the definitions of the principal theorists by saying that social capital "consists of those features of social organization such as networks of secondary associations, high levels of interpersonal trust and norms of mutual aid and reciprocity which act as resources for individuals and facilitate collective action" (p. 260).

Wakefield and Poland (2005) addressed different constructions of social capital, and mention the criticism those constructions received. Summarized, they state that social capital is a resource that can benefit individuals, groups, and even entire communities, yet, supportive institutions are vital. Their main criticism is that negative impacts of social capital are hardly considered and that the relationships between states and communities need more attention.

Shan et al. (2014) give an extensive description of the concept social capital: "it is a multilevel, and multi-component concept generally defined as a relational resource, such as personal and community networks, sense of belonging, civic engagement, norms of reciprocity and trust, which determines the quality of life, including our well-being and good health" (p. 245). This elaboration of the concept social capital allows for a broader scope when it comes to researching social capital. Not only limiting to shared values and norms, Shan, et al. (2014) also point out the social and economic privileges and the role that social institutions can play in mediating the distribution and production of social capital. Also, they assume that there is a relation between increased social capital and quality of life, well-being and good health.

2.2 Central aspects of social capital

The various definitions discussed above set the stage to explore the concept of social capital in green urban citizen initiatives. First, further conceptualization of social capital is needed to set the boundaries for the current study.

Pretty and Ward (2001) summarized the published work of various scholars by identifying four central aspects that together construct social capital: (1) relations of trust, (2) reciprocity and exchanges, (3) common rules, norms and sanctions and (4) connectedness, networks and groups. No specific definitions of the concepts are given in the article, therefore the provided argumentation formed the basis for the following operationalizations. Also, to enhance comprehensibility the four central aspects will be named respectively: trust, reciprocity and exchanges, internal morality, and connectedness.

Trust:	Trust in individuals whom we know and those who we do not know, confidence in social structure, and societal trust.
Reciprocity and exchanges:	Exchanging items for mutual benefit and continuing relationships of exchanges.
Internal morality:	The mutually agreed or handed-down norms of behaviour that place group interests above those of individuals.
Connectedness:	The number and nature of relationships and connections.

2.3 Specific research questions

These four central concepts and corresponding operationalization provide the knowledge base for exploring the role of social capital in green urban citizen initiatives. The overarching purpose of this study is to better understand the underlying mechanisms of social capital within green citizen initiatives. The main objectives are to get insight in how the central concepts of social capital occur in green citizen initiatives, and to unravel the mechanisms of these concepts that constitute social capital. The following specific questions will help answering the previously mentioned main research question: *What is the role of social capital in green urban citizen initiatives and what are underlying mechanisms of social capital?*

· What are the roles of each of the four central concepts (trust, reciprocity and exchanges, internal morality and connectedness) of social capital in the green citizen initiatives?

· How do the central concepts of social capital relate to each other in green citizen initiatives?

3   Methodology

3.1 Research design

As described above, the aim of the current research is to better understand the underlying mechanisms of social capital in citizen initiatives. Because of the explorative and descriptive nature of the study, an in-depth research strategy with a qualitative approach is most appropriate to gain better understanding of the mechanisms of social capital within citizen initiatives. The qualitative approach allows to see the phenomenon through the eyes of the population being studied and how they experience it (Taylor, 1999).

3.2 Sample

For this study, a total of 15 participants from seven citizen initiatives in the Netherlands were recruited. The initiatives were found through convenience sampling in 2013 as the research project initially started then. The researchers of the G.U.I. Project consulted their professional network and searched the Internet for citizen initiatives that were concerned with 'green' issues. Initiatives were eligible when their purpose was related to the local living environment, and green (e.g. introducing new public green spaces, community gardening, collectively investing in sustainable products, etc.). Participants were eligible when they volunteered for the initiative and self-identified as initiator or key actor within the initiative. The first four initiatives were contacted in 2013. Invitations for the final three interviews were sent in September 2014 by e-mail to the initiatives, inviting them for participating in the research.

3.3 Data collection

The seven duo-interviews were conducted between December 2013 and September 2014. The first four interviews were held by Carlijn Wentink. In September 2014 the last three interviews were done by the author of this thesis. Prior to these last three interviews the participants signed the informed consent form (see Appendix I). The duo-interviews lasted for approximately 45-90 minutes. By conducting the interviews with two persons of the same initiative together, answers from one participant may draw forth responses from the other. Also, ideas or experiences might be stimulated that otherwise would not have been recognized or remembered (Morgan, Ataie, Carder, & Hoffman, 2013). All semi-structured interviews were conducted in Dutch using an interview guide (see Appendix II) consisting of broad, open-ended questions. In semi-structured interviews, the participant has the opportunity to address topics which are perceived as important while the researcher maintains control using an interview guide consisting of topics that are considered important for answering the research questions (Bowling & Ebrahim, 2005). The four central concepts of social capital of Pretty and Ward (2001), as discussed in chapter 2, formed the basis for the interview topics. After seven

interviews it was decided not to hold more interviews since both researchers agreed that at that point data saturation was reached.

3.4 Data analysis

The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed (intelligent) verbatim afterwards. Participants' names or any information that could identify them or their organizations are replaced by pseudonyms to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. The four central aspects about social capital with corresponding elaboration formed the deductive list of codes. Using Atlas.ti (version 7.0) software, the transcripts were segmented into quotations that were labelled with the appropriate code(s). The transcripts were coded independently by two researchers, and then the coding was compared so differences in coding could be discussed, until consensus was reached. This has potentially improved the accuracy of the coding process and brought the analysis to a higher level of abstraction. Coding stopped when theoretical saturation was reached, which means that further coding no longer added anything substantial to the overall analysis (Fade & Swift, 2011). Per code all the selected quotations were analysed and recurring themes were identified and grouped together.

The interpretation of the findings was mainly done by the author of the thesis. The level of experience and expertise on the topic has potentially influenced this process, therefore feedback was sought with the second researcher in order to minimize possible bias. The obtained insights of the central concepts, relationships and mechanisms between the concepts of social capital in green urban citizen initiatives are displayed in the empirical model as presented in Chapter 4.

4   Results

In this chapter, the results after analysing the seven interviews are described. First, the emergent themes from the interviews are presented according the four central concepts of social capital as discussed in chapter 2. In the last section, the identified relations between the concepts are discussed. An overview of the initiatives and corresponding participants can be found in Table 1.

Initiative	Participants	Description of the initiative	Estimated no. of volunteers
#1	P1 + P2	Community vegetable garden	20-25 active volunteers
#2	P3 + P4	Re-defining an empty plot with an urban organic vegetable garden	30 volunteers of which approx. 10 actively involved
#3	P5 + P6	Association for promoting sustainability and liveability of the neighbourhood	200 members (financial membership), of which approx. 50-55 active volunteers
#4	P7 + P8 + P9	Urban garden – recreational meeting place for the neighbourhood	50 active volunteers
#5	P10 + P11	Urban organic vegetable garden	10 active volunteers
#6	P12 + P13	Organic vegetable garden for bringing people together, selling harvest to cover the costs	15 active volunteers
#7	P14 + P15	Organic vegetable garden as a means for bringing people together	5 active volunteers

Table 1 Overview initiatives and corresponding participating

The results are presented according the four central concepts as discussed before, but in a different order than Pretty and Ward (2001) did. This 'new' sequence is chosen because of readability purposes and to create a more coherent narrative.

4.1 Connectedness

How people get connected and stay connected to the citizen initiatives is discussed here. Also, what these connections bring to the initiatives as well as the purpose of these connections became apparent in the interviews.

'It spreads like a wildfire'
In the very beginning of establishing the initiatives, most initiators gathered two or three people that supported the idea to set up an initiative. It was mentioned that launching the idea for the initiative in a community they were already part of (for example a Facebook group about gardening or a women's league) helped to find people that wanted to start up the initiative. Hence, in most cases the initiators already knew each other before starting the initiative. From there on, the majority of the new volunteers found their way to the initiatives through 'word of mouth marketing' in the social networks of volunteers that are already involved.

> *"Zo hebben we de mensen aan het andere einde van de straat ook goed leren kennen. Het heeft zich uitgebreid als een olievlek. We zijn steeds meer mensen in de straat goedendag gaan zeggen. Dat heeft zich een beetje uitbreid over de hele buurt." (P8; #4)*

As was brought up by several participants, the volunteers involved in the initiatives do not always contribute equally. A recurring phenomenon is the distribution of workload in the initiatives. There is a strong core group consisting of the initiators or leaders and the most active volunteers. Other volunteers of the initiative often rely on this relatively small group that in general consists of about five persons. Then there is the group of active followers that contribute to the initiative regularly and the initiators know they can count on this group. The last group are the followers that contribute occasionally, or only do so in a financial manner.

> *"Dan heb je een beetje de vaste kern, stabiele volgers en de wat lossere volgers" (P1; #1)*

Bonding within the initiative
Among the initiators there was a sense that it is important to have strong connections in the initiatives, fostering the cooperation between the volunteers. The initiatives have their own ways of reinforcing the connectedness within the group: in the form of a schedule of fixed time for coming together (at least once a week is often pursued) or engaging in team building activities (e.g. having dinner together from own grown harvest). Also, in some cases there are special days or activities to express gratitude and give extra attention to the volunteers. These bonding activities are valued as a lot of fun and useful for getting to know each other in a different setting.

> *"Dat is leuk voor de vrijwilligers voor het groepsproces het is ook leuk om elkaar eens te zien in een andere setting dan hier in de tuin" (P13; #6)*

A participant from initiative #2 mentioned that the more and stronger the connections within the group are, the more resilient the group probably will be to events or changes. Whilst acknowledging that bonding is important, some initiators mention time is a restraining factor for investing in bonding activities. In contrast, others argue that the volunteers do not express the desire to do undertake more activities together for strengthening the connections.

> *P11: "Vorig jaar hadden we een gezamenlijke avond van allerlei dingen uit de tuin heeft ieder wat gemaakt en zijn we met elkaar een avond gekomen dan ergens bij iemand zitten.. gezellig gezeten .. niet heel veel"*
> *P10: "Dat zou mij ook teveel worden dan"*
> *P11: "Dat moet ook niet teveel zijn dan .. één keer per jaar is leuk .. zo een gezamenlijk iets" (#5)*

In initiative #7, the initiator said they never realized how important the group bonding process was and that they had blamed the weak ties within the initiatives on issues going on in the community:

> *P14: "Waar de knelpunten in het team zelf zitten dat heb ik nog nooit bedacht.. ik heb het de hele tijd op het dorp geprojecteerd"*

P15: *"Heb ik ook niet bij stil gestaan hoor.. dat je ook aan het team moet denken"* (#7)

To what extent the bonding should go, is not discussed explicitly. In one interview the initiator perceived the volunteers as a new social network or acquaintances but not as new (close) friends.

Capacity through connectedness

In the initiatives people unite coming from a wide variety of backgrounds. The volunteers bring different qualities and skills into the group that can be beneficial for the initiative. The network of connections within, and external, of the initiatives allow access to many resources like knowledge, capacities, experiences, material, social support and an extensive social and professional network. This variety is perceived as positive and important asset for the initiatives, since they tend to complement each other.

> *"Want we hebben aan [persoon] toen ook heel veel gehad toen in het begin als fiscaal jurist en [persoon]. Ja, met de statuten en die heeft toen een notaris opgezocht, die wist dan allemaal hoe dat het moest als je een vereniging werd. […] De deuren gingen heel makkelijk open"* (P3; #2)

A recurring theme was that most volunteers feel they have in common that they are outspoken or strong personalities. The initiators of initiative #4 state that they are a blended group of people with a diversity of backgrounds, professions and outlooks. Regardless of one's background, when people identify themselves with the internal morality of the group, they can join.

> *"Dan komen mensen in hun ouwe kloffie en Jantje zit naast Klaasje en die zit naast Josine. En zo komt het met elkaar in aanraking zonder al die status symbolen, druk of ingewikkeld of deftig lopen doen. Allemaal mensen met elkaar aan de praat. (P8; #4)*

Similarly, initiative #2 addressed that the volunteers represent a variety of groups in society:

> P3: *"Maar goed aan de andere kant zijn er ook mensen bij die niet hoogopgeleid zijn"*
> P4: *"Ja er is wel een grote variatie. Er zijn inderdaad mensen, net zoals uit het kamp, dus dat gaat heel goed samen"* (#2)

Connectedness as a means or goal

The initiatives at stake differ in the goals they strive for and depending on this, the social connections that are established through the projects are either a means or an end in itself. For example, the garden as meeting point in the neighbourhood from initiative #4 aims at connecting people whereas the organic vegetable garden of initiative #5 is mainly aimed at producing food and through that people get connected.

Most of the initiatives that do not have increased social cohesion or connecting people as a prime goal find it at least a positive side-effect of their efforts. In several cases the volunteers report changes in their neighbourhood with increased social cohesion and higher feelings of safety caused by the

initiatives. Also, initiators noticed that they appreciate their neighbourhood more as a consequence of the successful initiative.

> *"Ik ontdekte ook dat de wijk, de plek waar je woont, meer waard wordt als je meer mensen kent. […] Je kunt binnen een redelijke straal als burger veel bereiken. […] Dat maakt voor mij het woonplezier in mijn directe omgeving leuker. Ik geloof dat je met [initiatief #3] ook werkt aan een veiligere omgeving ook voor andere mensen"* (P6; #3)

In other cases connecting the people in the neighbourhood and creating a new social network was mentioned as the most important goal of the initiatives.

> *"Dat is wel echt waar het met de tuin of dit hele project omgaat. Allemaal soorten mensen met elkaar in aanraking komen"* (P8; #4)

Despite their efforts to connect people, in two cases the neighbourhood was experienced as an impeding factor. Initiating the new projects turned out to be difficult due to conflicting ideals or disagreement on locating the initiative in the particular neighbourhood.

> *"Met eigen handen en verder eigenlijk geen hulp van de gemeente zijn we dus met een hele club opgestart maar de buurt was het er dus niet mee eens. We hebben wel eens avonden georganiseerd zodat de buurtbewoners mee konden praten mee konden denken maar het was gelijk heel agressief"* (P10; #5)

Summarized: connectedness
Bonded by the ideal of the initiative, volunteers connect themselves to initiatives. Through existing social networks, the initiators and volunteers involve new volunteers with the initiatives. The volunteers that are connected bring resources like knowledge, skills, and social networks which can be very beneficial for the projects. The ability to seize this available human capital is an important asset for the initiatives. Also, strong connectedness within the initiative fosters cooperation amongst the volunteers. Depending on the collective ideal of the initiatives, the established connections can be a means to achieve the goals or an end in itself.

4.2 Internal morality

In the previous paragraph it was discussed how people get connected and what these (new) connections imply for the initiatives and the volunteers. In this section it will become clear what it is that binds the citizen initiatives and how the norms and values of the initiatives influence the operations and composition of the initiatives.

Collective ideal
The need for changing or influencing the living environment and the proposed solutions to this situation form the common ground of most of the initiatives. These ideals have formed the basis and

starting point for the initiatives, bringing the initiators together in the first place. Examples from the interviews of these collective ideals are: creating a community organic vegetable garden, repurposing an empty plot, and creating a platform for sustainable action in the neighbourhood. These ideals are the reason for volunteers to get engaged. They work in unison and have a mutual affinity with the ideal, which is considered as the thing that binds them as a group.

> *"We hebben die droom. In feite heb je die droom gemeenschappelijk met een groep mensen. Dat voel je gewoon" (P1; #1)*

To keep the group cohesive, committed, and confident, initiators emphasize that it is important, especially in an early stage, that the collective ideal is widely supported by the volunteers.

> *P11:"Als we dat op zijn beloop laten dan komt het niet goed."*
> *P10: "Nee dan komt het niet goed dat geloof ik niet"*
> *P11: "Dan wordt het los zand en is het geen groep meer dus er moet ergens een gezamenlijkheid komen" (#5)*

It happened that volunteers deviated from the collective ideal or had conflicting ideas which has led to conflict situations within the initiatives. When a volunteers' idea does not align with the collective internal morality, in practice this resulted in the individual's interest making room for the groups' interest. Consequently, in some cases people had left initiatives:

> *P12:"We hebben ooit een keer , dat was ook een beetje een aparte mevrouw, een beetje wat stoorzender gehad nou zij stopte op een gegeven moment zelf en toen zeiden we ach eigenlijk heel goed dat gaf alleen maar onnodige ruis en irritatie bij anderen".*
> *P13: "Het selecteert zichzelf" (#6)*

More specifically, in initiative #7 it became clear that the ideals of the initiator(s) and the volunteers did not completely match. For the initiators, bringing people together by means of the garden was the ideology, whereas for some of the volunteers the practical work in the garden was the main purpose of joining the initiative. In the following quote the initiator explains that initially this was not a problem, but at a certain stage the situation required for them to collaborate more and become a stronger team. It shows how the mismatch in the collective ideal causes a divide in the group:

> *"Dat we allemaal heel erg als individualisten erin gestapt zijn en om een tuin op te zetten is dat ook prima want dan heb je mensen die gewoon op eigen kracht ram en gaan.. maar op een gegeven moment moet je inderdaad gaan samenwerken en dat werkte niet […] dan moet je met elkaar gaan praten en overleggen en dan blijkt dat je uit hele verschillende culturen komt met hele andere referentiekaders en dat werkte gewoon niet en ook met degene die de tuin ontworpen heeft die kwam echt voor de tuin terwijl voor mij was het nee dit is een initiatief voor het dorp en ze had echt niks met het*

dorp het kon haar niks schelen […] zij kwam echt voor de permacultuur en echt voor
een plek te hebben waar ze de permacultuur kon hebben en dat was fantastisch voor ons
in het begin maar als je dan niet de stap kunt maken naar een team worden .. […] voor
mij is de tuin een middel het gaat niet over de tuin het gaat over mens zijn met elkaar..
en daarin sta ik denk ik alleen." (P14; #7)

'Our rules of the game'

The internal morality of an initiative also encompasses the norms and rules within the group, so what could be described as 'the rules of the game'. The volunteers in the initiatives have experienced that these norms and rules develop over time when they become more acquainted with each other, often resulting in a characteristic culture. The following quote illustrates this:

"Ja dat krijgt een beetje ook een eigen cultuurtje en dat bedoel ik niet onaardig maar we
kunnen elkaar af en toe plagen of er worden grapjes gemaakt of er wordt iemand.. ja
gewoon kleine dingetjes dat weet je nooit hoe een ander dat ervaart want een van onze
vrijwilligers is een man van 70 die plagen we af en toe heerlijk […] dus die zitten we af
en toe te plagen maar dat is omdat wij weten dat hij daar zich niet door gekwetst hoeft te
voelen maar ik kan me voorstellen dat een buitenstaander als die ons zo bezig hoort
tegen elkaar.. dat die dan zegt van nou doe je dat wel tegen zo'n wat oudere man want
dat is het natuurlijk wel.. maar wij hebben natuurlijk een beetje met elkaar een bepaalde
gezelligheid gevonden" (P13; #6)

According to the initiators most of the volunteers enjoy that within the initiatives other manners apply than one is accustomed to in a normal work setting. This ethos becomes an important norm for many groups. Related to this 'work ethos' is the leadership style of the initiators or leading actors of the initiatives. In the initiatives there is no formal power-relation between initiators and volunteers, hence a flat organizational structure is most desirable according to most interviewees. In general, the initiators say they do not like to have a too formal role within the initiative. One participant explicitly addressed that it requires experience with leadership skills in formal settings to compensate when the organizational structure of the initiative becomes too informal or casual. A variety of perspectives was expressed about the desired leadership-style, ranging from very loose or little organization to controlled steering of the volunteers. As described by one participant it is always a search for balance:

"Een beetje meer georganiseerd maar ik vind dat het altijd toch ook nog wel een beetje
chaotisch moet blijven. Niet over-georganiseerd" (P7; #4)

The search for the appropriate leadership style is an issue for other initiatives as well. In one case the initiator experienced it as if the group projected leadership on her, without her wanting to be the leader. Two other initiators explain they try to simplify the decision-making process by narrowing down to a few alternatives and presenting those to the rest of the group. In this way the whole group is

involved in the process, but reaching consensus is not a time consuming process. This strategy could be seen by several initiatives, and was evaluated as very efficient.

> *"Ja we proberen dat er niet te veel discussies ontstaan en wel zo gericht mogelijk een vraag voor te leggen. Dat je meer een keuze krijgt van A of B. […] Qua besluitvorming, niet dat er een probleem in het midden wordt gelegd. Het wordt wel een beetje voorgekookt. Het is niet dat we met een ondoordacht iets op de vergadering komen."*
> *(P3; #2)*

The leading actors of in the initiatives try to avoid too many formal moments to discuss the 'rules of the game', and therefore they think the system of norms and values can merely be transmitted and through spending time together. The initiatives have experienced that working together or doing activities together is paramount for establishing common ground for the internal morality and thus keeping the group together. When the initiatives succeed in this, the volunteers feel equally important and there is space to learn and grow, and experiment with innovative ideas.

Composition of the initiatives

During the interviews, it became clear that the initiatives' internal morality not only binds the group, but also influences who becomes and remains involved in the initiatives. Interestingly, in contrast to the expressed perception of being a group of volunteers with blended backgrounds, in interview #4 it also became clear that the initiative did not reach all the different groups in the community. So, despite the sense among the initiators that their initiative brings people together from all strata of society and without being aware of it, their internal morality appears to affect who becomes involved:

> *"Zoals de hindoestaanse gemeenschap, die is in [Plaats 2] sowieso heel groot. 10% van de hele bevolking. Hier, in deze wijk nog wel meer dan dat. Daar hebben we echt gericht iets voor georganiseerd vorig jaar […] van horen zeggen is het wel zo, heel anders dan normaal de sfeer in onze tuin is. Veel meer op eten, drinken en lawaai. Heel anders, sfeer heel anders. De conclusie was, het moet er wel inpassen. Anders moeten we dat niet doen." (p8; #4)*

The initiators of initiative #3 faced similar problems regarding the inclusion of all residents of their neighbourhood:

> *P5: "Het blijft binnen de wijk nog wel eens een struggeling van hoe bereiken we de inwoners van [Plaats]. Wat wij zijn, blijft ook nog een beetje een probleem een de huurders. Maar op den duur, we zitten nu ook met woningcorporaties om de tafel, dus dan dragen we er in die zin wel aan bij."*
>
> *P6: "Het is ook wat je ontdekt he, dus na twee drie jaar ontdekten we eigenlijk zijn al onze leden eigenaar van een woning. We vonden het jammer dat we niet iedereen bereikten." (#3)*

For two other cases, a similar situation occurred, but on a larger scale. The initiatives' internal morality (or collective dream) appeared not to match the local community's internal morality. In the case of initiative #5 the neighbourhood did not agree with locating the community garden in their neighbourhood. This resulted in conflicts with the neighbourhood and as a consequence they had to reallocate their project:

> P10: "Maar puntje bij paaltje schijnt het heel moeilijk te zijn om toch een plek te vinden in een wijk waar iedereen het mee eens is en waar iedereen achter staat en de buurt omarmt het en nou [Plaats 1] was daar nog lang niet klaar voor en is daar nog lang niet klaar voor. En heel grof gezegd zeggen ze wel eens [Plaats 1] is de Disneywijk van [Plaats 2]. Dus met glad gemaaide plaatsjes en laantjes"
> P11: "Dus als je er naast een moestuin hebt is je huis minder waard" (#5)

Initiative #7 did find a location in the community but is facing a decline in volunteers. The initiators say they have come to realize that perhaps the ideal of the initiative does not align with the internal morality of the local community.

> "Je wil een dorpstuin zijn en als mensen in je dorp het nou zo willen en dat is echt een punt waar ik ontzettend mee aan het knokken ben want ik denk nee ik had juist de droom om een ander verhaal te vertellen maar als het nou zo afstoot.. komt je verhaal dan over.. nee ook niet" (P14; #7)

Summarized: internal morality

The internal morality encompasses the collective ideal, the norms and values within the initiative and it influences the composition of the group of volunteers. The collective ideal can be seen as the starting point of the initiatives and is the central theme that binds the group. It is important for the citizen initiatives that the collective ideal is supported by the volunteers to keep the group cohesive and committed. The internal morality determines what persons (do not) join the initiative. Despite the possible different backgrounds, the volunteers share a common interest in the collective ideal which makes the group rather homogenous. Also, the internal morality influences the set of norms and values within the initiative: 'how we work together'. It requires time to develop this and spending time together is paramount, guided by initiators with a casual leadership-style.

4.3 Reciprocity and exchange

After having discussed who gets connected to the initiatives, and what brings the volunteers together, now it is discussed what motivates the volunteers. The following quote captures what many of the initiators describe as what is received in exchange for being involved in the initiatives:

> "Wat het mij geeft is ontspanning en heel veel inspiratie en energie. Dat met elkaar bezig zijn heeft me heel erg verrast. Het klinkt misschien wat hoogdravend, maar je

ontmoet mensen op een andere manier als in je werk. Waar je omdat je collega's bent je
iets gegund wordt, je ook wel bevriend bent, maar er wordt zoveel gegeven aan elkaar.
Die neemt koekjes mee, ik de koffie en soms zelfs brood. Maakt mij het wat uit. Dat
krijg je ook terug. Ook [Persoon 12] die eigenlijk geen cent te makken heeft komt toch
met koekjes aan. Dat is veel waard. Bij de een zit het in iets wat hij mee neemt, maar het
kan ook een recept zijn of een luisterend oor. En dat wat me deden met zijn allen is
letterlijk daar op een bankje zitten genieten. Dat merk ik, en denk ik voor de rest ook, is
dat een tevreden gevoel." (P2; #1)

Returns for the invested
The volunteers of the initiatives invest their free time and energy unpaid into the projects. When asked
what they get in return for their effort the first answer often is: 'it is just fun'. The initiators describe
that it is a great experience to learn from and with the other volunteers during the activities. In general
the initiators argue that as long as they get positive energy in return they will continue the
commitment.

Out of many, the social role that the initiatives fulfil engenders a substantial part of what is described
as what people get in return from the initiative. Volunteers connect to new people in their
neighbourhood and the social networks within the community are strengthened. Bringing people
together to work on something as a group is one of the rewards for the initiators and volunteers:
achieving something together, experiencing the synergy of working as a team, sharing the benefits
with others and having a good time.

The volunteers do not only appreciate the mutual benefits of being part of the group, also as an
individual they experience beneficial feelings. Engaging in a group and having the feeling that the
initiative benefits from one's contribution gives the initiator an empowered feeling. Also, inspiring
fellow volunteers, or sharing insights might change one's view on the world. Some initiators
discovered they possess certain assets or skills they were not aware of before. Through the activities in
the initiative they have learned how to enable those resources and make use of it. This personal
development was addressed in several interviews as an important reward for the invested time and
energy.

> *"Dat je hier voor je zelf en een ander iets doet voor de leefbaarheid in de wijk en*
> *daardoor zelf weer een beetje groeit. Met terugwerkende kracht zie ik het ook wel als*
> *een stukje persoonlijkheid ontwikkeling. Je komt mensen tegen en krijgt soms ook een*
> *taak waarvan ik nooit had gedacht dat te doen." (P6; #3)*

For some initiatives, the harvest of the vegetable garden is also what is being received as return for the
volunteers. How the harvest is distributed amongst the volunteers differs per initiative, but in most
cases the volunteers will take their share according to their contribution over the season. In other cases

there are specific benefits of being engaged in an initiative such as savings on the energy bill because of the introduction of solar panels.

How do the volunteers stay motivated?

Intangible, long-term returns are important motivating factors for the initiators to maintain active in the initiatives. This is in contrast with what the initiators think is important for attracting new volunteers. For potential volunteers, initiators think that it is key to have a clear image of their envisioned goal, what is expected and what volunteers get in return for their efforts. The need for a feasible plan is also mentioned as important in the initial phase of an initiative. Hence, it is helpful when the initiators know how they envision the future of the project so they know what targets they aim for.

> P8: "Er zaten, er is een enorme creativiteit en positiviteit. Dat trekt mensen, mensen willen gewoon doen aan iets wat positief is. […] Wat mij altijd opvalt, het was altijd - wij gaan daar een tuin creëren. […] Dat vond ik echt heel erg opvallend. Dat sprak mij enorm aan. Ik dacht nee, we gaan daar een tuin neerzetten. Dat is leuk, je gaat iets bouwen wat je allemaal graag wil hebben."
>
> […]
>
> P9: "Ja, zichtbaar, tastbaar. Andere initiatieven, weet je die haal ik er dan bij -om de wijk te verduurzamen, dat is veel lastiger. Dat is niet sexy, dat is geen concreet resultaat, kun je niet meten. Dit is gewoon heel makkelijk en leuk." (#4)

The appreciation that is expressed by the volunteers within the initiative or people living in the neighbourhood is one of the motivating factors for the initiators as mentioned in one interview. Being successful and achieving positive results for the community is perceived as the confirmation for investing time and energy and increases trust within the initiative.

> "Het is ook allemaal heel leuk om al die positieve reacties te horen, als er iets georganiseerd is of je hoort mensen in de tuin tegen elkaar vertellen over de tuin. Mooi hé? Dat is echt heel erg leuk. Mensen zijn er trots op, zijn er blij mee" (P7; #4)

However, virtually all initiators point out there is a limit to their investments of time and energy. The initiative and its objectives to be achieved are done in leisure time. Would the rewarding feeling of getting energized by the initiative and its volunteers stay away, then initiators would not remain as active in the initiatives. For one participant the situation has emerged in which she feels that there is an imbalance between her effort and how much energy she gets back from the rest of the group:

> "…in het niet gezien worden in het dragen van de visie daar verlies ik nu echt alle energie dus ik kan het op het moment ook niet goed dragen.. weet je dat voel ik.. het vult niet meer aan omdat ik me een soort schietschijf ben gaan voelen.." (P14; #7)

Some of the initiators struggle with the fact that there is no formal power-relation within the initiative and that nobody is being paid for the commitment. To keep the volunteers motivated, the initiators think the norm should be a balance between too much discussion and an unorganized group. When pushing the volunteers too much they feel that they run the risk of resistance from the volunteers. Several strategies are brought up in the interviews for keeping volunteers motivated: giving the volunteers the space and freedom to come up with own ideas and suggestions, deliberately asking who would normally not be that active to take responsibility for a task, facilitate instead of taking over control.

> *"Als mensen een keer gezien hebben hoe het concreet kan worden voelen ze zich ineens*
> *wel aangesproken om het te gaan doen. Als je vraagt zet het op dan schrikken ze ervoor*
> *terug" (P8; #4)*

Initiatives #5 and #6 with vegetable gardens have regular 'working days'. Other initiators value the freedom of attendance and do not make agreements on it, since they think people have to come for leisure. These initiators search a balance between obligatory attendance and unbridled schedules. It remains topic of discussion in some initiatives what commitment may be expected from the volunteers, as becomes clear in the following fragment:

> *"Dat behoeft ook wel bespreking natuurlijk dat soort dingen en het is gewoon heel*
> *moeilijk voor de ander te zeggen wat voor de ander van waarde is op dat moment en*
> *daar moet je heel erg mee uitkijken vind ik dat wat voor jou dan zeg maar werk is*
> *wat dan de prioriteit heeft maar voor een ander is dat kind gewoon die prioriteit en ja*
> *we moeten gewoon kijken hoe we daar mee omgaan." (P10; #5)*

According to the initiators everyone brings something to the initiative: it being coffee or cookies, a good conversation, hard work, professional knowledge, or a sense of humour. When there are strong ties within the initiative, people trust that their contribution is being reciprocated in the future. In the case someone takes more (or makes more use of something) compared to his input or effort, this behaviour is disapproved by the others. There is some social pressure experienced by the people that they are supposed to contribute to the initiative.

> *"Dat zijn dan ook weer net de mensen die nooit iets komen brengen en als eerste klaar*
> *staan om te halen. Dat is ook wel waar we met zijn allen een hekel aan hebben*
> *gekregen" (P8; #4)*

Summarized: reciprocity and exchanges
The initiators and the volunteers invest unpaid time and energy into the initiatives. What they get in return for this keeps them motivated. Tangible returns or a clear vision for the future motivates in the beginning, whereas volunteers that have been committed for longer time express more intangible returns like personal development, increased feeling of social security and a satisfied feeling of doing

something meaningful. These intangible returns are based on trust amongst the volunteers that has developed over time.

4.4 Trust

One of the findings is that the code 'trust' had the lowest number of quotations, thus was assigned less than the other concepts. This does not reflect the importance of the concept, but it should be mentioned that 'trust' was not often discussed very explicitly. How trust develops within the initiatives and what the lack or presence of trust induces is presented here.

Developing mutual trust in the citizen initiatives
The internal morality have brought the volunteers together. The initiators often knew each other, but most of the volunteers that joined are relatively new to one another. As is experienced by some groups, time is needed to get to know each other and for trust to grow. The initiators from initiative #4 feel that over the course mutual trust has grown:

> "Dat vertrouwen is ook wel gegroeid, als je daar na al die jaren op terugkijkt. Dat was er
> vast en zeker niet aan het begin. Toen moesten we elkaar nog leren kennen echt. Het zat
> ook niet meteen op zo'n hoog niveau zoals het geëindigd is.." (P8; #4)

Building trust seems to be related with building connectedness, and this came across as an iterative process for the initiatives. Over time and through earlier experiences they know who they can rely on and the better people know each other within the initiative, the more they trust one another. Initiators from initiative #2 state there is not much trust among the volunteers in the group, but they feel it is probably just a matter of time because they do not feel like a group yet.

> "Dat moet nog groeien denk ik. Er zijn wat mensen die je minder vaak ziet. […] Dan zit
> ik even te denken hoe dat nou zit. Een aantal leden vinden het leuk, maar hebben geen
> tijd en die zie je niet zo veel. […] Het merendeel is benaderbaar en ook bereid om te
> komen. Ik denk dat het meer een tijdskwestie is. Mensen verontschuldigen zich ook
> telkens omdat ze minder komen dan ze willen en dan moeten wij weer geruststellende
> mailtjes terug sturen van dat het niet erg is. Je ziet elkaar natuurlijk niet zo veel." (P3;
> #2)

In contrast, in initiative #7 trust within the initiative has faded over time as a result of conflicting internal moralities. This has resulted in a decrease in trust, both amongst the volunteers and in the future of the initiative.

> "Als ik het niet doe doet niemand het dat je daar dan op een verkeerde manier mee
> omgaat dat je daardoor ook heel erg nog meer de neiging hebt om het nog meer bij
> jezelf te houden" (P15; #7)

In several interviews, the influence of achievements on internal trust was discussed. Accomplishing a goal induced a growing trust in the ability of the group of volunteers, both within the initiative as from external parties. Also, other external parties like the local community, the private sector companies or the municipality taking the initiatives serious is experienced as boosting the confidence. Some of the initiatives have become iconic projects and serve as inspiration for other similar initiatives or local governments. This acknowledgement makes the respective volunteers feel more confident and determined to continue with the activities.

> *"Misschien had je die paar successen ook wel nodig om wat vertrouwen te krijgen bij de*
> *buurt, de gemeente en elkaar. Dat mensen zoiets hebben van die kan wel wat het is geen*
> *eendagsvlinder. Een beetje kabaal maken en dan weer weg. Je hebt toch een beetje tijd*
> *en succes nodig om goed wortel te schieten" (P6; #3)*

Trust as building block for continuity of the initiative
Especially in the early stage of development of an initiative, some participants explain, the group as a whole needs a pioneer figure or group of leaders they can rely on and trust. A lack of or little trust amongst the volunteers makes it difficult for the initiators to let go of control. Therefore during the initial phase it demands more time and energy from the pioneers to get things going. Nurtured by experience and time spent together, mutual trust and confidence in each other's capabilities grows. Eventually trust within the group makes processes more efficient and less time-consuming because there is trust in what others do. The following paragraph illustrates this:

> *"Ik vind het grappig dat je dat zo zegt, want ik denk dat er wel een verschil is van hoe*
> *we dat nu zouden doen en in de beginfase. Nu hebben we zoiets van nou dat klinkt goed*
> *en als bestuur hoeven we daar niet veel energie in te stoppen om het op gang te helpen.*
> *Het zijn ook bekende mensen, maar in het begin zouden we het nog net niet met een*
> *hamer stuk geslagen hebben en er toch wel een of twee avonden over moeten*
> *brainstormen" (P5; #3)*

The initiators appreciate the volunteers that contribute to the initiative, but in most interviews it is acknowledged that no one is really irreplaceable. If one of the volunteers would be absent for a while or decides to quit, most of the initiators are confident that others will step up to help the initiative out. In general the initiators think their group is big and capable enough to compensate for this. It would become more complicated when one of the initiators or leading persons would drop out, but there is a divide between the groups here. Some think the initiative relies much on the initiators or core group, and other participants think even they are replaceable. Initiative #1 and #7 think it might become problematic if they or one of the other initiators would no longer be able to fulfil their role:

> *"Ja, maar daar doet […] eerlijk gezegd wel echt het meest van. Ja, want ik vraag me af*
> *als […] weg zou vallen, dan weet ik het niet hoor. Ik weet niet wie dat op zou vangen.*

> *Maar het is natuurlijk zo, dat mensen er op een gegeven moment op gaan rekenen." (P3; #2)*

Related to this is the potential pitfall that a participant expressed: the group of volunteers that rely too much on the initiators who might become overwhelmed. The participants of initiative #7 experienced this:

> *"Jij bent echt de drijvende kracht achter de tuin en dat is voor veel mensen heel prettig van [P14] trekt wel de kar en die heeft de grote lijnen en de visie wel in beeld en ik hoef er alleen maar achter aan te hobbelen en dat kan inderdaad dat is heel positief om iets van de grond te krijgen maar het kan tegelijkertijd ook je valkuil worden dat je er eigenlijk een beetje in verdrinkt" (P15; #7)*

In contrast, the initiators in the following quote express their trust in the other volunteers and how they should be able to continue the initiative, would the initiators stop:

> *P13: "Weet je ik denk het wel dat klinkt heel raar maar niemand is onmisbaar dus […] de praktijk gaat gewoon door en dat zal ook zijn als ik er niet meer ben of geen zin meer heb of [P12] die heeft er geen zin meer in dan is er wel iemand anders die zegt van laat mij het dan maar eens uitproberen.. en het gaat altijd anders dan dat je het zelf doet"*
> *P12: "Maar er is een soort systeem en daar kun je op door borduren" (#6)*

Summarized: trust

Although in early stage of the initiatives most initiators knew each other already, the mutual trust among the new group of volunteers was relatively low. The initiators only have the confidence in their collective ideal or long-term goal to rely on. Over time when the connections between them become stronger and nurtured by experiences, this trust in each other and in the initiatives grows. In the long run increased trust makes the processes within the initiatives more efficient because the initiators can let go of control and volunteers know that others will stand up in case extra help is needed. Also, successful achievements confirm the capabilities of the initiatives and its volunteers fuel mutual trust.

4.5 Relationships between the central concepts

In the previous section the findings about the roles of the four central concepts of social capital are described. In this section the relations and mechanisms between the concepts derived from the results are presented. In figure 3 the empirical model depicts the central concepts of social capital and the relationships between them.

Before going into detail, the broader context of this rather precarious model deserves some attention. The model mimics reality and shows a simplified and rather static representation of reality. The pathway from the formation of an initiative towards achieving its goals is more complex than is presented here, and more processes are involved than only 'social capital'. This model is an attempt to provide insight in the linkages and relationships between the different concepts of social capital as observed in this study. Mapping the connections and interaction with aspects outside social capital is beyond the scope of this study, but they should be taken into account when interpreting this model. The dashed outlining of 'social capital' represents this interaction with external parties, influence of available human capital and successful or negative experiences.
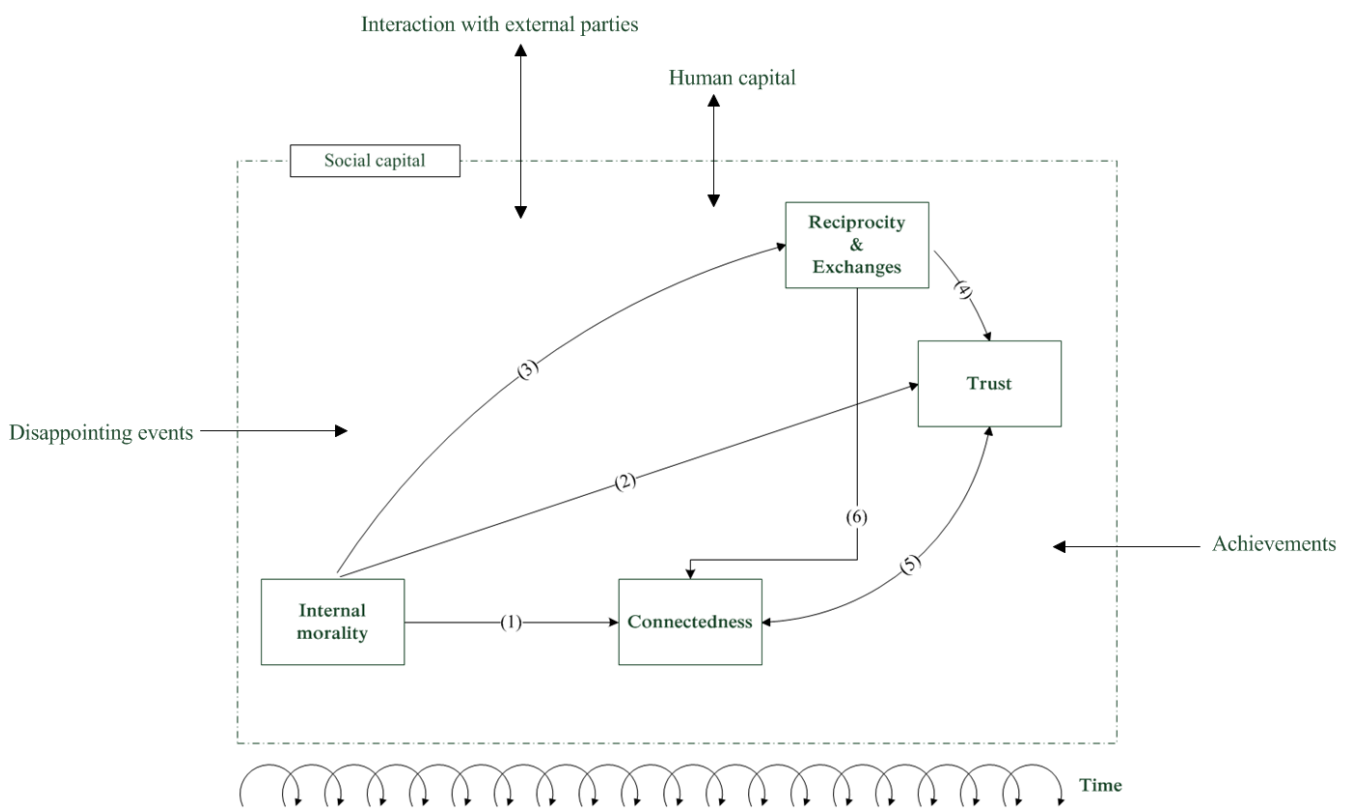

Figure 2 Empirical model of relations between central concepts of social capital in green urban citizen initiatives

(1) The collective ideal, as part of the internal morality, can be seen as the starting point of the initiatives and fundament that binds the group. Volunteers that recognize themselves in or are interested by the ideals of the initiative get involved. So it therefore influences who connects to the

initiatives. A level of agreement about the internal morality contributes to strong connections, whereas conflicting ideas hampers the connectedness.

(2) The degree to which the internal morality is supported amongst the volunteers also creates a feeling of trust and confidence. The envisioned future or the aim of the initiative is also embedded in the internal morality. When the goals are met and the volunteers feel confident about the ability to achieve or pursue the ideal, trust increases.

(3) The internal morality through the norms and values, also influences what is expected from the volunteers which is part of the reciprocity and exchange concept.

(4) As a consequence, this can influence the trust in the initiatives. Having the feeling that expectations are met and that investments are reciprocated increases trust.

(5) Over time, when the connections between the volunteers become stronger and nurtured by experiences, the trust in each other and in the initiatives grows. In opposite way, when trust is broken this can weaken the connectedness.

(6) The returns that volunteers receive for their invested time and energy, keeps them connected to the initiatives.

5   Discussion

In this chapter a critical reflection on the methodology of the study is presented, the research findings are discussed in context of the existing body of knowledge about social capital, and recommendations for further research are given. Finally the conclusions that can be drawn from this study are presented.

5.1 Reflection on methodology

In total, seven duo-interviews were held for data collection. The benefits of conducting interviews with two participants at the same time are discussed in chapter 3. However, there are also some potential disadvantages. Participants might have withheld information because of the presence of the other person from the same initiative. Also, in this setting of interviewing two persons at the same time there is a chance that the participants 'co-construct' their perception of the topic of study in their interaction (Morgan, et al., 2013). In the context of this study, in which relationships and interactions of the group are topic of research, the added value of the second person probably outweighs the possible threads.

As the first four interviews were done by another researcher than the last three interviews, it should be acknowledged that there are differences in interviewing style. The initial interviewer has a rich background in the topic which probably allows for more in-depth and targeted questions that may not have been asked by the second interviewer. However, the second interviewer has brought an own set of knowledge to the table, which also allows for focus and targeted questions. Interpretations of the research might become biased as a result of impressions and experiences during the interactions with the participants which is described as 'going native' (Patton, 1999). Having two different researchers conducting the interviews also created opportunity to explore and discuss the interpretations. Multiple researchers collected the data, often referred to as researcher triangulation, which can reduce a potential bias coming from a single person collecting all the data (Boeije, 2009).

The seven initiatives show some variation in their goals and the number of active volunteers (see table 1 in chapter 4), but it remains questionable whether more variation in the sample could have been possible. Convenience sampling does not guarantee that the sample is representative for the entire population of green urban citizen initiatives in the Netherlands. However, the exploratory nature of this study does not aim at generalizability of the findings to the entire population of 'green urban citizen initiatives'. After coding and analysing the seven interviews it was agreed through consensus that data saturation for the purpose of this research was reached. This means that in the different interviews similar mechanisms were identified and potentially no more variation in data could be found within the given timeframe.

5.2 Reflection on the findings

For the initiatives the internal morality has shown to be the fundament and of vital importance. Most of the initiatives welcome and are open to new members, but in practice merely individuals that recognize themselves in the internal morality of the initiative will actually join. There seems to be a discrepancy between the desire to connect people through the initiatives and the 'required' identification with the internal morality of the initiative. Wakefield and Poland (2005) also touch upon this by stating that despite the opportunities offered to join, "only individuals with specific habits, dispositions and self-perceived competency would feel at home" (p. 2826). As discussed in chapter 1, bringing people together that are not similar in terms of social identity but are of equal power is called 'bridging social capital'. Szreter and Woolcock (2004) address this challenge, although in the context of more extreme situations like fighting poverty and social exclusion, and warn for the difficulties of it. They even state that it is unrealistic to expect bridging social capital to happen spontaneously. Furthermore it became clear that the internal morality also influences who stays connected to the citizen initiatives. Shaped by the initiators, it brings the volunteers together and gives the group direction. It confirms what Pretty and Ward (2001) stated, that it "place[s] group interests above those of individuals" (p. 211). Indeed some volunteers left the initiatives because of conflicting ideas about the norms within the group.

The empirical model that was presented in section 4.5 was derived from the findings as presented. An attempt was made to assemble the central concepts and the identified mechanisms into a model. Some remarks should be made about the model:

Despite the notion that the concepts, especially trust and connectedness, develop over time, this is not a linear process. The factor 'time' is therefore depicted as iterative in the model, and internal morality has been placed on the left side since it is assumed to be the starting point of the initiatives. Putnam introduced the term 'path-dependence' in his work related to social capital, which means that what was yesterday affects the institutions of tomorrow (Putnam, 1993). This path-dependency manifests itself in social capital as being a self-reinforcing mechanism (Putnam, 1993), which is confirmed by the findings of this study.

Related to the concept of time is the meaning of the different concepts in different phases of the initiatives. Over time the position and role of the concepts change. For example 'trust': in the beginning the trust amongst the volunteers is relatively low and it will develop over time. However, trust in relation to the internal morality is rather high in the beginning since that is what has brought the group of volunteers together. By presenting the four concepts as solid concepts, the model does not reflect the different meanings of the concepts that might change over time.

The relationships with external parties and the influence of human capital on social capital are presented in the model but not extensively discussed in the result section. During the analysis of the interviews these two 'topics' emerged due to bottom-up coding and therefore should be acknowledged as influencing social capital in the citizen initiatives.

The initiatives connected with similar initiatives to share experience, other organisations to collaborate and also with the local government to discuss for example juridical issues. These connections seem important for the initiatives, but are left out of this study because the focus is on the role of social capital *within* the citizen initiatives.

Similarly, human capital in the form of leadership and networking skills, competence and experience of the initiators were discussed 'in between the lines', and seem of importance for (the development) of the initiatives. These are resources that are enabled through the social capital of the initiatives, and seem of considerable importance for the initiative. The ability of the initiators or volunteers to make use of these available resources seems of vital importance for the development of the initiatives. However, it was beyond the scope of this study to examine the role of human capital in social capital.

5.3 Recommendations for further research and practice

Future research could examine the connections with actors outside the citizen initiatives, and the ability of the initiatives to make use of these connections and their resources. The leadership and networking skills, competence and experience of the initiators were also discussed 'in between the lines', and seem of importance for (the development) of the initiatives. Exploring the role of human capital could give additional insights for the understanding of the processes in citizen initiatives. This can enhance the understanding of the networks and relationships with external actors.

In this study there is no distinction made between the social capital of the initiators and other active volunteers in the initiatives. It would be interesting to research possible differences between the motivating of initiators and volunteers. Also, further explorative research is needed to gain more understanding about how the initiatives mature over time. This can provide initiators and policy makers with insights on how initiatives learn and adapt, and how conditions can created to facilitate further development. Finally, the field of tension that arises when attempting to connect different strata of society and the self-selection of volunteers demands for further research.

The findings of this study are not supposed to be interpreted as a checklist of success factors, and it was never the intention to present it as such. However, it does provide useful insights in how social capital works in the practice of green citizen initiatives. It adds to the existing body of literature by providing empirical underpinning for exploring social capital in citizen initiatives. By giving insights in how the four different aspects 'operate' in citizen initiative, it can help (future) initiators of citizen initiatives to see how their group of volunteers develops and to identify potential bottlenecks

5.4 Conclusion

In this study the function of the central concepts of social capital and the underlying mechanisms are discussed. It can be concluded that the internal morality brings and keeps the volunteers connected, which engenders a degree of trust between and among the volunteers. The involved volunteers bring along skills, social networks and capacities which can enhance the effectiveness of the initiative. The feeling of trust grows over time, strengthened by returns for the invested time and energy, and a feeling of reciprocity. This exploratory study provides a basis for further research about social capital in green urban citizen initiatives. However, since the findings of this study are based on exploratory research with a questionable variation in the sample, the conclusions that are drawn should be interpreted with caution.

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Appendix I: Informed consent form

Geïnformeerde toestemming

Onderzoek Groene Burgerinitiatieven

Beste deelnemer,

U gaat deelnemen aan een onderzoek over sociaal kapitaal in groene burgerinitiatieven. Met sociaal kapitaal bedoelen we het netwerk van sociale relaties en de gedeelde normen en waarden binnen het initiatief. Het doel van het onderzoek is het in kaart brengen van dit sociaal kapitaal binnen groene burgerinitiatieven.

U gaat deelnemen aan een interview dat ongeveer een uur zal duren. Als u toestemt, wordt een geluidsopname van het interview gemaakt. De opname wordt gebruikt om het interview later uit te schrijven.

Uw naam en/of andere informatie waardoor u of het initiatief waarvan u deel uitmaakt te identificeren zijn zal **niet** uitgeschreven worden. De informatie die verkregen wordt tijdens dit interview, wordt volledig anoniem verwerkt en alleen gebruikt voor dit onderzoek en bijbehorende publicaties. Aan het eind van het onderzoek worden de geluidsopnames gewist.

Uw deelname is volledig vrijwillig. U mag op ieder moment beslissen om te stoppen of om een vraag niet te beantwoorden.

Vragen stellen mag op elk moment voor, tijdens of na het interview.

Ik, (naam) _____ heb alle informatie op deze pagina gelezen en heb de mogelijkheid gekregen om vragen te stellen. Ik begrijp het onderzoek en de rol die ik daarin speel.

Ik geef mijn toestemming om het interview op te nemen:

Ja/Nee

Ik geef mijn toestemming om anonieme citaten uit het interview op te nemen in het onderzoek:

Ja/Nee

Datum: Handtekening deelnemer: Handtekening interviewer:

Dit document wordt twee maal ingevuld: een exemplaar is voor de deelnemer, het ander exemplaar voor de interviewer.

Evelien Janssen
Student 'Health and Society'
Wageningen University

Appendix II: Interview guide

Introductie
- Interview is onderdeel van een onderzoek over de rol van sociaal kapitaal, dus het netwerk van sociale relaties en de gedeelde normen en waarden binnen het initiatief. We zijn benieuwd welke rol dit speelt het realiseren van doelen.
- Introductie onderzoeker
- Ik ben benieuwd naar jouw ideeën en ervaringen – er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden.

Beschrijving initiatief en rol initiatiefnemer
- Kunnen jullie iets over jezelf en je rol in het initiatief vertellen? Hoe is het initiatief begonnen, hoe is het ontwikkeld, waar staat het nu?

Regels, normen en sancties
- Welk idee bindt jullie als initiatief (visie)? *[normen, impliciete regels]*
- Wat gebeurt er als mensen niet in lijn met dit idee handelen binnen het initiatief? *[sancties]*
- Wat verwacht je van je collega's in dit initiatief? Wat verwachten zij van jou? *[gedeelde waarden]*
- Hebben jullie deze verwachtingen vastgelegd? *[expliciete regels, normen]*
- Wat gebeurt er/hoe wordt er gereageerd als mensen niet aan deze verwachtingen voldoen? *[sancties]*
- Hoeveel ben je bereid te investeren in het initiatief/ wat zou je allemaal over hebben voor het initiatief? Waarom wil je investeren in het initiatief? Wat verwacht je terug? *[diffuse reciprocity]*.
- Beschrijf situatie, bijvoorbeeld: er komt nieuws binnen bij jullie initiatief/ je loopt met een idee voor het initiatief waarvan je het gevoel hebt dat je er iets mee moet. Kun je omschrijven hoe je dit zou aanpakken? *[impliciete regels, normen]* Met wie zou je overleggen? Waarom? Hoe zouden betrokkenen reageren? Enz. *[situatiebeschrijving aanpassen op initiatief op basis van informatie uit inleiding verkregen]*

Verbindingen, netwerken en groepen
- Welke mensen/groepen zijn er betrokken bij het initiatief? *[vul tabel in] [verbindingen]*
- Wat is de reden voor de betrokkenheid van deze mensen? Wat voegen ze toe? Wat komen ze halen? *[reciprocity]*
- Welke vaardigheden/bronnen/kunde van andere mensen gebruik je binnen je initiatief? Wat krijgen zij daar voor terug/met welke reden zetten zij zich in? *[reciprocity]<kolom 2>*
- Hoe zou je de relatie omschrijven die je met deze actoren hebt? Eenzijdig/tweezijdig? Intensief/niet intensief?
- Zou je een indeling kunnen maken van actoren die meer of minder belangrijk zijn voor het initiatief om haar doelen te bereiken *[nummeren in tabel]*? Wat maakt deze actoren meer of minder belangrijk voor het initiatief?
- Doen jullie iets om bestaande verbindingen te versterken? *[intern]*
- Doen jullie iets om nieuwe verbindingen te leggen? *[bonding & bridging]*
- Zijn er groepen/actoren <u>buiten</u> je initiatief waarmee je contact hebt? Wat is de reden voor dat contact? Wat hebben jullie elkaar te bieden? *[externe relaties]*

Vertrouwen

- Heb je het gevoel dat mensen elkaar vertrouwen <u>binnen</u> jouw initiatief? Waaraan merk je dat? *[vertrouwen intern]*

- Heb je het gevoel dat je actoren/partners <u>buiten</u> je initiatief kunt vertrouwen? Wat maakt dat je het gevoel hebt dat je partners/andere actoren kunt vertrouwen? *[vertrouwen extern]*

- Als je jouw taak binnen het initiatief tijdelijk niet zou kunnen doen, zou er dan iemand anders binnen het initiatief zijn die jouw taken overneemt? *[vertrouwen intern]*

- Is er bepaalde informatie die je liever binnen het initiatief houdt? Waarom? Wie beslist dat? Lukt dat? *[informational governance]*

- Is er informatie die je juist wel wil delen met mensen buiten het initiatief? Wat voor informatie? Met wie? Waarom? *[informational governance]*

- Zet je informatie wel eens strategisch wel of niet in om een doel te bereiken? *[informational governance] Op welke manier?*

- Als jouw initiatief niet zou bestaan, een andere groep in de samenleving het 'issue' dan oppakken en er iets mee doen *[vertrouwen in de maatschappij]. [Vraag toespitsen op initiatief]*

Communicatiemiddelen

- Op welke manier heeft jullie initiatief sociale media gebruikt? Welke sociale media? Wat en wie wilden jullie daarmee bereiken?

- Wat heeft het gebruik van sociale media voor jullie initiatief opgeleverd?

- Op welke manier was er sprake van wisselwerking tussen het gebruik van sociale media en meer traditionele media, zoals kranten en (lokale) tv en radio? En tussen het gebruik van sociale media en offline interactie (zoals fysieke ontmoetingen/overleggen en het verspreiden van bv. flyers langs de deur)?

Hoe is de relatie/samenwerking met de gemeente?

- Ervaar je steun (financieel kennis, juridisch netwerk etc) ? Zo ja, kun je voorbeelden geven op welke wijze de gemeente jullie initiatief ondersteunt.

- Ervaar je ook zaken die problematisch zijn in de omgang met de gemeente; kun je voorbeelden geven?

Met welke andere gevestigde organisaties hebben jullie contact

- Hoe zou de relaties over het algemeen typeren (vertrouwen, erkenning van jullie initiatief of meer strijd en conflictueus) en kun je voorbeelden geven?

Beeldvorming/framing

- Is beeldvorming van je initiatief bij anderen belangrijk? Zo ja, waarom?

- Heeft jullie initiatief een bepaald imago of een bepaalde boodschap? Zo ja, wat is dat imago/die boodschap?

- Werken jullie aan de beeldvorming van jullie initiatief of aan de beeldvorming van specifieke activiteiten? Zo ja, waarom en hoe?

Afsluiting

- Is er nog iets dat je graag wil vertellen of toevoegen?