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# Exit, voice and loyalty: Residents' responses to neighbourhood decline

European Urban Research Association (EURA), 12-14 September, Glasgow, Scotland

***FIRST DRAFT: NOT TO BE QUOTED!!!***

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**Abstract**
Within urban studies there are many articles on participation, and many articles on residential mobility. However, both options have rarely been combined, whereas policies clearly aim to influence both residential mobility and participation, especially in deprived neighbourhoods. The governments pursue both a social mixing policy and a participation policy. There is a small body of literature that builds on Hirschman's construct of 'exit, voice and loyalty' to explain the reaction of residents to perceived neighbourhood decline. Will they leave, take action, or wait and do nothing? The primary aim of this paper is to generate insight into the conditions for voice, as opposed to exit, as a response to perceived declining neighbourhood quality. Second, we want to gain insight into the impact of neighbourhood characteristics on the expressed behaviour. The answers to our questions are based on data from the Dutch city of Utrecht sample *Nieuw Utrechts Peil* 2006 [Utrecht Residents Monitor]. These data enable us to analyse the opinion of residents within different types of neighbourhoods.

Key words: participation, neighbourhood satisfaction, residential mobility, 'Exit, voice and loyalty', urban policy

**Introduction**
In many urban neighbourhoods a multitude of problems can be found (Dekker and Van Kempen, 2004). These problems can lead to dissatisfied residents who aim to leave the neighbourhood as soon as they can, leaving behind those without the option to do so, generally the low-income households. These concentrations of low-income households do not have a positive effect on the problems in the neighbourhoods. Many of the governments in Western Europe therefore concentrate their policies in neighbourhoods with a concentration of low income households and aim to increase the level of middle income households (Andersson and Musterd, 2005). Although empirical academic studies have shown that social mixing policies do not significantly affect the degree of poverty of individual households (Ostendorf et al., 2001) and that they should be applied with caution (Van Kempen and Priemus, 1999), governments in Western Europe still pursue this rhetoric.

For several years now the social mixing strategy has been combined with a growing focus on the participation of the non-profit sector and residents in neighbourhood regeneration. In the Netherlands, for example, *"The central government, cities, housing corporations, businesses, police, social workers and schools will cooperate with the residents to tackle the problems. The purpose is to offer the residents a better perspective and enhance the quality of the neighbourhood."* (VROM, 2007).

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We will study the effects of this policy discourse in the Netherlands, building on Albert O. Hirschman´s influential book *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States* (1970). Hirschman suggests that there are two alternative categories of reaction to deteriorating satisfaction: exit, which means that one leaves; and voice, which means that one actively and constructively attempts to improve the conditions (Hirschman, 1970). Loyalty, the third concept in Hirschman's framework, helps to explain why people choose either an exit or a voice response. Loyalty can be understood as an attachment to a product or organisation. The exit, voice, and loyalty (EVL) framework can be especially illuminating in the context of residential neighbourhoods. Apart from a few exceptions voice and exit are studied separately (Permentier et al., 2007), despite the fact that both responses are interrelated. People who choose the voice option are not likely to choose to exit the neighbourhood, as it would make their 'investments' of no avail. Next to that, there may be circumstances (like a declining quality of the neighbourhood) which may provoke a voice, as well as an exit response. The aim of this article is to gain more insight into he factors that explain why people choose either the voice or the exit option (or the combination of both).

Despite the many citations to Hirschman's (1970) concept, there is surprisingly little empirical work that tests the analytical framework within an urban context. However, there are a few exceptions. Nearly simultaneously with Hirschman, John Orbell and Toru Uno developed a *Theory of Neighborhood Problem Solving: Political Action vs. Residential Mobility* (1972). Based on US data they show how the choice between exit (propensity to move) and voice (political activism) as a reaction to neighbourhood decline is influenced by the believed capacities of the individual, as well as the available choice on the housing market (cf. Cox, 1983). Elaine B. Sharp (1984) builds on the work of Orbell and Uno and studies exit and voice as potential reactions to problems involving urban government itself, again within a US context. Lyons and Lowery (1986, 1989) further explored the EVL framework, adding a fourth dimension to it: *Neglect* as the destructive mirror image of the more constructive *loyalty* to the neighbourhood. The first attempt to translate Hirschman's framework into a European context is by Dowding, John, Mergoupis and Van Vugt (2000). They do not adopt the fourth dimension - neglect-, but discern different degrees of loyalty, depending on the identification with the object, and the amount one has invested in the object. However, testing the theoretical framework empirically clearly requires some simplifications as in 2003 Van Vugt, Dowding, John and Van Dijk focus only on the conditions under which exit versus voice strategies are likely to be used within a residential context. The focus is now on the restricting *dependency* instead on the more positive annotation of *loyalty* as an intervening variable. The more dependent the resident on the community, the higher the chances for voice and the lower the chances for exit.

The present paper extends this earlier work in three ways. *First*, by studying the exit, voice and loyalty patterns among residential communities in a large Dutch city in the Netherlands (Utrecht), our study can add to the understanding of these mechanisms in a context with fewer differences in service provision per area than in an US or UK context. The difference in the level of service provision by the government is much lower in the Netherlands than in the US and the UK. Earlier urban studies using Hirschman's framework focus on the ability of households to chose a neighbourhood or local government which offers the best tax-service packages. Residents can 'move with their feet' if they are not happy with the provided quality of the services by the local government, and move elsewhere (Tiebout, 1956; Sharp, 1984). However, these studies do not give insight into the process in neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, tax differences are not so large, but governments do have the steering mechanism of social rented housing, and hence the possibility to influence the choice between exit and voice through social mixing policies. *Second*, unlike previous work we will focus on the effect of satisfaction with the neighbourhood. This will generate insight in the effectiveness of area based policies, which are more encompassing than simple service delivery by the local council (cf Sharp 1984; Van Vught et al., 2003). *Third,* and probably most important contribution of this study, is that by using concepts from social capital theory (social networks, trust) and attachment we provide a theoretical basis for

specifying the conditions under which the need for action results in either voice or exit within an urban neighbourhood context.

The structure of the article is as follows. First, we explain Hirschman's original notion of EVL and then look at the way this argument may need to be altered for our study. We will identify different aspects of exit, voice and loyalty in order to produce testable empirical hypotheses about their relationships. This is followed by a description of the data collection and methods used. The hypothesis are tested using data from a 2006 local sample survey *Nieuw Utrechts Peil* [Utrecht Residents Monitor] with 6553 respondents (among over 270,000 residents). Then the outcome of the analyses is presented. Finally, the conclusions give an evaluation of the usefulness of the EVL model in housing research.

**Exit, voice and loyalty in a neighbourhood context**

Hirschman's book "Exit, voice and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states" (1970) states that there are basically two consumer reactions to a decline in product quality: exit and voice. Hirschman posits that consumers will exit when the price of a product is too high, and when the quality declines. If consumers have the choice to move to another product they may choose to do so (exit) or they may become active (voice) with the intention to force a change in management, or through various types of actions and protests, including those that are meant to mobilize public opinion (Hirschman, 1970). If companies do not respond to complaints, consumers may decide to exit after all.

This line of thought can be applied across different products. If we see residents as consumers, local governments as producers, and neighbourhood satisfaction as the product, the basic proposition is that residents will respond with either voice or exit if they are not satisfied with the quality of the neighbourhood. Exit in this case means that one moves out of a bad neighbourhood, the *voting with your feet* option of Tiebout (1956). Voice is:

> "an attempt to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs whether through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority with the intention of forcing a change in management, or through various types of actions and protests, including those that are meant to mobilize pubic opinion" (Hirschman 1970, p. 30).

Within a neighbourhood context voice means that residents, who are not satisfied with the state of the neighbourhood, will try to improve the neighbourhood either through contacting the local authorities or through individual or collective action. Examples of voice are: solving problems, attending meetings, belonging to a neighbourhood organisation, contacting officials, signing or circulating petitions or talking to neighbours (Lyons and Lowery, 1989).

Both exit and voice are a reaction to dissatisfaction with the situation in the neighbourhood, but the effect for the neighbourhood will be very different. The effect of voice will probably be positive for the neighbourhood, since residents aim to improve the situation. However, the effect for the neighbourhood of exit will depend on who leaves and who stays. If only those that have no choice (low income households) and those who don't care stay behind, the neighbourhood will be left with people that suffer in silence (Orbell and Uno, 1972; Dowding et al., 2000). Moreover, high turnover rates in neighbourhoods badly influence the feeling of community, and will diminish the number of residents that express voice. Clearly, the type of strategy that residents opt for as a reaction to dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood bears great implications for the quality of the neighbourhood itself.

**The analytical framework**

The main assumption is that the residential use of the exit/voice strategies in response to a decline in neighbourhood satisfaction is shaped by two separate aspects of the relationship between residents and their local community: degree of dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood, and loyalty towards the neighbourhood. According to the model, dissatisfaction predicts whether residents will come into action, as compared to doing nothing, whereas loyalty predicts whether residents will decide to use an exit or voice strategy.

Voice and exit are responses to a degree of dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood. The degree to which residents are dissatisfied with the neighbourhood will depend on the characteristics of the neighbourhood, the characteristics of the household, and the expectations of the quality of the neighbourhood. Permentier et al. (forthcoming) show that the satisfaction with the neighbourhood is especially strongly related to the social composition of the neighbourhood, more specifically the affluence of the area and the proportion of nonwestern minorities (cf. Feijten and Van Ham, forthcoming). The positive effect of the socio-economic status may be attributed to the higher quality of affluent neighbourhood and to status-considerations. People tend to prefer living in an area with a high status (Parkes et al., 2002). The negative effect of the ethnic concentration in neighbourhood may be attributable to a prejudice against ethnic minorities (Bobo & Zubrinsky, 1996). An alternative explanation, the racial proxy theory, is that ethnic neighbourhoods are associated with unsafety, poverty, and low-quality services (Harris, 2001). Our hypothesis is: *The affluence of a neighbourhood has a positive effect on the residential satisfaction of its residents, while the proportion of members of minority ethnic groups has a negative effect.*

**The choice between exit, voice and no action**

If a resident is dissatisfied with the neighbourhood, will he or she decide to leave the neighbourhood (exit), decide to become active to improve the situation (voice), or do nothing? Hirschman's assumption is that a person decides whether to exit, to voice, or do nothing by weighing the costs of the action against possible benefits. The resident's evaluation of the relative costs and benefits will vary with the chances they have of generating change when they opt for voice versus the relative costs of moving to another neighbourhood. Hirschman's theory starts from the principle of the rational decision maker in which an individual does that which offers him the greatest benefits for the least costs. If the greatest benefits for the least costs can be obtained from expressing voice, this is what the resident will prefer to exit, and vice versa.

The likelihood that a resident chooses the exit option is partly influenced by its socio-demographic characteristics. People with a low income are less likely to consider a move than people with a high income, because moving house is costly (Deurloo et al., 1994). For renters moving is a smaller step than for owner occupiers due to lower transaction costs. Moreover, owner occupiers living in deprived areas may have limited options to move due to a fall in the marketability of their property (Kearns & Parkes, 2003). Next to that, age and household composition are important determinants of mobility propensity, even if residential satisfaction is taken into account. Particularly young singles and young two-person households are eager to move. They are socially mobile and likely to make progress in their household and labour-market careers (Campbell and Lee, 1992).

The probability that a resident chooses voice also differs among types of people. The participation literature (Verba and Nie, 1972; Gerson et al., 1977; Stheahili and Clarke 2003) shows how socioeconomic status (low-income, low-educated and unemployed people participation less), ethnicity (Blacks tend to participate less) and sociodemographic characteristics (people with children, women and elderly participate more) affect people's propensity to express voice. As the discussion on social capital points out (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993; Portes; 1998) also social networks and trust in the authorities will enhance the capacity of residents to get things done. *Social networks* provide individuals with the possibilities to generate communal action, which is more effective than individual action. Also networks between groups

within one neighbourhood can more easily generate change. Social networks are thus helpful in facilitating voice by bundling individual needs and capacities, and thereby enhance the chances for success and limit the time and money an individual will have to put into expressing voice.

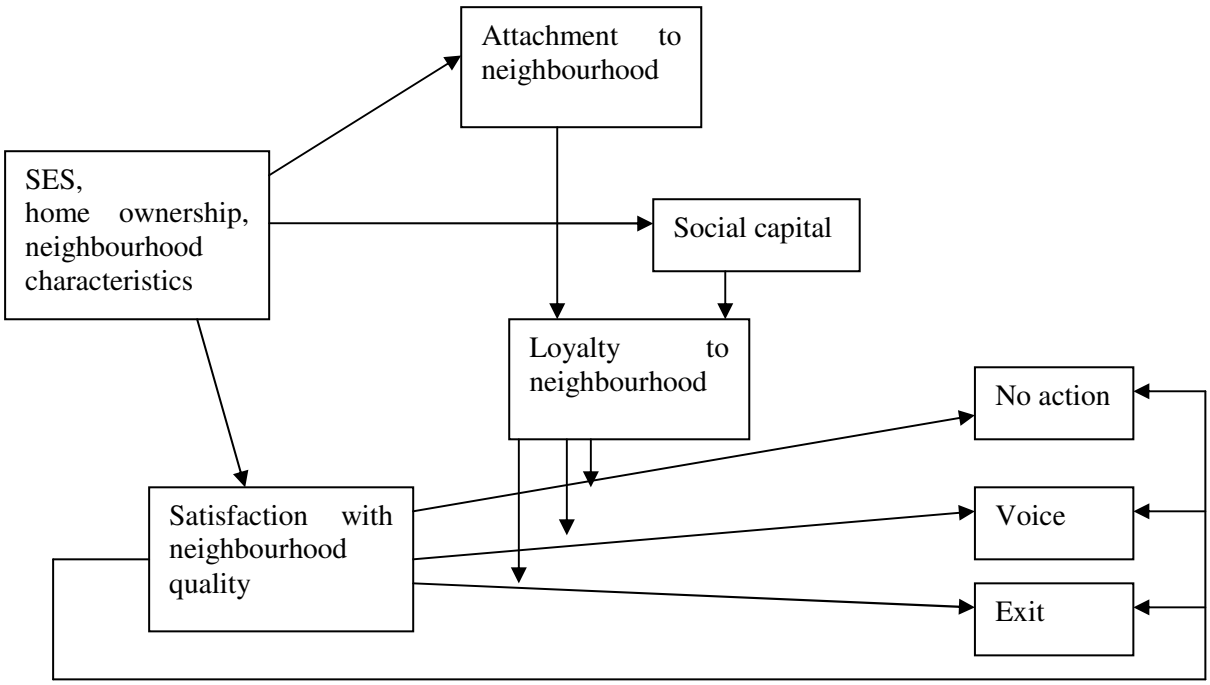
Social networks alone do not fully explain why one person opts for voice, while another chooses exit. The literature increasingly focuses on *trust* as a second element of social capital that may help to explain who expresses voice. The social networks mentioned above are often based on feelings of trust in other people and commonalities that generate the capability to act (Gittell et al., 2000). Residents with large degrees of trust will have the feeling that they are taken seriously in their demands and needs, whereas a lack of trust can generate feelings of being excluded purposefully. A lack of trust between individuals or groups in communities can lead to difficulties in generating communal action (Purdue, 2001). The hypothesis that is derived from the above is: *the higher the estimation of the chances of positively influencing the quality of the neighbourhood, the higher the probability for voice. Or: the more social capital, the higher the probability for voice and the lower the propensity to move.*

Hirschman states that the choice between exit and voice is influenced by A) the extent to which a customer is willing to trade off the certainty of exit against the uncertainty of an improvement in the deteriorated product; and B) the estimate the customer has of the ability to influence the organization (Hirschman, 1970, p. 77). The second factor is often referred to as social capital, and is explained above. The second factor often interacts with the first factor. We will call this first factor *attachment* which implies that a customer (resident) has considerable attachment to the neighbourhood and will search for ways to make himself influential, especially when the neighbourhood moves into what he believes is the wrong direction. Attachment to the neighbourhood has been frequently researched to influence voice, because attachment leads to feelings of security, build self-esteem and self-image, give a bond to people, cultures and experience, and maintain group identity (Taylor, 1988; Altman and Low, 1992; Crow, 1994). The idea is that people do not only have ties with each other but also identify with their immediate living environment. As a result, people become empowered and willing to change their social and political environment to improve the quality of the lives they live there (Minkler and Wallerstein, 2003). Our hypothesis is: *the higher the feeling of attachment to the neighbourhood, the higher the probability for voice and the lower the propensity to move.*

An interesting question is whether objective neighbourhood characteristics have a direct effect on voice and exit, over and above the effects of individual variables. As mentioned above, satisfaction with the neighbourhood is in the housing literature strongly associated with the social composition of the neighbourhood. Next to that, classical ecological variables, like population density and population turnover (residential stability) are associated with voice in the literature on participation (Guest et al., 2006; Kang & Kwak, 2003). Our expectation is that satisfaction and loyalty fully mediate the relation between objective neighbourhood characteristics on the one hand and exit and voice on the other hand. In other words, our hypothesis is: *neighbourhood characteristics do not have an effect on voice and exit, once satisfaction and loyalty are controlled for*.

Taken together, we first predict that dissatisfaction is higher in neighbourhoods with larger numbers of residents with a low socio-economic status and more members of minority ethnic groups. The dissatisfaction will lead to both an increase in the use of exit and voice strategies. Furthermore, residents with high scores on attachment and social capital indicators are, overall, more likely to be more loyal to the neighbourhood and hence use voice as a strategy to cope with dissatisfaction whereas residents with low scores on attachment and social capital will use exit more often. These relations are explained in figure 1.

Figure 1: conceptual model of how 'loyalty, exit and voice' can help to explain residents' reaction to changing satisfaction with neighbourhood quality




## Data and analytical strategy

The analyses in this paper are based on a 2006 local sample survey *Nieuw Utrechts Peil* [Utrecht Residents Monitor]. 6553 residents of Utrecht (270,000 residents) participated in the research (a response of 40 per cent). One of the variables in the data file that the municipality of Utrecht put at our disposal is the neighbourhood of residence. This enabled us to add objective neighbourhood characteristics (obtained from the municipality and Statistics Netherlands) to the dataset. Excluding non-residential areas, Utrecht is subdivided into 85 neighbourhoods.

The questionnaire that was applied in the Utrecht Resident Monitor contained questions related to exit as well as voice. Those who do consider a move within the next two years *and* are not planning to move within their neighbourhood are classified as people who choose the exit option. Voice is defined as being active in the neighbourhood in one of more ways (organising a street party, maintaining the (semi-)public spaces, working as a volunteer at schools, sports clubs or community centres). Exit and voice are not mutually exclusive responses, but they are negatively associated with each other. As expected, people who choose the voice option are less likely than others to consider the exit-option (table 1)

*Table 1: Propensity to move (exit) by being active in the neighbourhood (%)*

| | | **Voice** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | Yes | Total |
| **Exit** | No | 67.6 | 74.1 | 69.8 |
| | Yes | 32.4 | 25.9 | 30.2 |
| | Total | 65.6 | 34.4 | 100 |

Chi2= 29.4; p=0.000: Cramer's V = 0.067

The dependent variable in this paper is formed by the four possible combinations of voice and exit. With nearly half of the respondents, the passive category (voice, nor exit) is the largest (table 2). The combination of both voice and exit ('noisy exit') is least common, while the other two possible combinations (voice, no action; action, no voice) take an intermediate position. As the dependent variable is a nominal categorical variable, we carried out a multinomial logistic regression analysis.

*Table 2: Descriptive statistics for variables used in regression model*

| | Mean | *Std. Deviation* |
|---|---|---|
| ***Dependent Variable*** | | |
| No Voice, no exit | 0.44 | |
| Exit, no voice | 0.21 | |
| Voice, no exit | 0.26 | |
| Voice and exit | 0.09 | |
| | | |
| ***Individual + household characteristics*** | | |
| Age | 43.08 | 16.7 |
| Age square | 2132.96 | 1635.4 |
| Male | 0.38 | |
| *Household composition* | | |
| Single | 0.23 | |
| Couple | 0.35 | |
| Couple with children | 0.27 | |
| Single with children | 0.02 | |
| Other household | 0.14 | |
| *Ethnic group* | | |
| Non western BME | 0.09 | |
| Western BME | 0.08 | |
| Native Dutch | 0.84 | |
| Owner Occupier | 0.57 | |
| *Level of education* | | |
| Having a job (or attending school) | 0,70 | |
| low | 0.23 | |
| intermediate | 0.24 | |
| high | 0.54 | |
| *Net montly income (in euro)* | | |
| = < 1500) | 0.28 | |
| 1500-2500 euro | 0.22 | |
| 2500-3500 euro | 0.16 | |
| > 3500 euro | 0.24 | |
| not known | 0.10 | |
| **Level of satisfaction** | | |
| Satisfaction dwelling (scale 1-10) | 7.52 | 1.2 |
| Satisfaction neighbourhood (scale 1-5) | 4.00 | 0.8 |
| Satisfaction cleanliness neighbourhood (scale 1-10) | 6.09 | 1.8 |
| Not feeling safe in neigh | 0.31 | |
| *Perceived nh change* | | |
| Neighbourhood improved | 0.17 | |
| No change in neigh quality | 0.66 | |
| Neighbourhood declined | 0.17 | |
| *Expectations neigh future* | | |
| Neighbourhood will improve | 0.26 | |
| Neigh will not change | 0.58 | |
| Neigh quality will decline | 0.16 | |
| **Attachment + social capital** | | |
| Attachment | 3.23 | 0.7 |
| Social embeddedness (factor) | 0.00 | 1.0 |
| Distrust (factor) | 0.00 | 1.0 |
| **Neighbourhood characteristics** | | |
| % ethnic minorities | 22.01 | 15.4 |
| population turnover | 212.17 | 312.3 |
| population density | 7796.23 | 4329.8 |
| % owner occupied dwellings | 50.96 | 23.5 |
| Average income | 13.22 | 2.2 |

*Independent variables*
The independent variables in the regression analysis can be subdivided into four broad categories (see table 2 for descriptive statistics):

- Personal and household characteristics
- Level of satisfaction with the dwelling and (several aspects of) the neighbourhood. This block of variables also includes the perception of past and future changes in neighbourhood quality.
- Attachment and social capital.
- Objective neighbourhood characteristics[3]

While the interpretation of most independent variables is straightforward, the operationalisation of attachment and social capital needs further explanation. Attachment is the composite score (Cronbach's alpha=0,80) of four statements (on a 1-5 scale):
*- People in this neighbourhood do not know each other well (score inverted)*
*- People in this neighbourhood treat each other in a nice way*
*- I live in a cosy neighbourhood in which people frequently associate with each other*
*- I feel at home amongst the people in this neighbourhood*

Social capital is measured by constructing two variables on the basis of 7 statements by means of principal components analysis (PCA). Table 3 gives an overview of the original statements and their loadings on the two components that were identified. The first component can be interpreted as *social embeddedness* and the second as *distrust.*

*Table 3: Principal components analysis (with Varimax rotation) of statements related to social capital*

| | *Component loadings* | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 |
| I am of no importance in this society | -0.124 | **0.834** |
| People like me are treated unfairly in the Netherlands | -0.197 | **0.840** |
| There are people with whom I can have a fine conversation | **0.818** | -0.168 |
| I feel like I am isolated from other people | -0.320 | **0.743** |
| There are people to whom I can appeal to | **0.895** | -0.192 |
| There are people who understand me | **0.895** | -0.203 |
| I belong to a group of friends | **0.705** | -0.275 |

**Findings**

We expected a relationship between neighbourhood characteristics and satisfaction with the neighbourhood. As expected, a higher share of ethnic minorities in the neighbourhood goes hand in hand with a lower degree of satisfaction with the neighbourhood (table 4). Furthermore, the affluence of a neighbourhood has a positive impact on satisfaction. Contrary to the expectations, population turnover has a (slight) positive effect on satisfaction, while population density is not related to neighbourhood satisfaction at all. Some high-density neighbourhoods are typical 'yuppie' areas with industrial heritage converted into expensive apartments. Probably it is not density, but ownership that matters: residents who live in neighbourhoods with higher shares of owner occupied dwellings are more satisfied.
Now that we know in which types of neighbourhoods the residents are less satisfied, we want to find out what factors have an impact on the likelihood to consider to leave the neighbourhood and/or to invest in the neighbourhood. Table 5 shows a multinomial logistic regression model, explaining the choice between exit and voice of the residents.

[3] We are aware of the fact that the effects of neighbourhood characteristics are overestimated due to the nested nature of the data. In de next version of this paper, we will apply a multilevel model.

Our analyses show that neighbourhood characteristics don't matter so much in explaining the choice between voice and exit. Apparently, most neighbourhood characteristics only indirectly influence voice and exit, through their impact on neighbourhood satisfaction. There are, however, two exceptions. A large proportion of owner occupied dwellings decreases the likelihood to choose the exit option. Next to that, population turnover has an unexpected negative influence on the likelihood of a 'noisy exit'.

*Table 4: Association between neighbourhood satisfaction and objective neighbourhood characteristics (correlation coefficients)*

| | r | p |
|---|---|---|
| % ethnic minorities | -0,378 | 0,000 |
| Average income | 0,332 | 0,000 |
| Population turnover | 0,027 | 0,031 |
| Population density | -0,015 | 0,235 |
| % owner occupied dwellings | 0,322 | 0,000 |

The model clearly shows that individual and household characteristics influence the choice between exit and voice. Generally, those that are most inclined to use voice are: the elderly, couples (with or without children), singles with children, non-Western immigrants, home-owners, higher educated residents. Men and higher educated residents are more inclined to simply leave without further actions to improve the neighbourhood. The elderly, couples with children, and higher educated residents relatively often chose to take a 'noisy exit', which means that they have aimed to improve the neighbourhood, but are planning to leave simultaneously.

The choice between exit and voice is also related to the object of dissatisfaction, what is one (dis)satisfied with? Satisfaction with the neighbourhood in general is the most influential independent variable, except for attachment, but has only the expected negative effect on exit and noisy exit. Interestingly, feeling not safe in the neighbourhood has an impact on the likelihood to choose exit, but not on the likelihood to choose voice, while the reverse is true for the impact of the satisfaction with the cleanliness of the neighbourhood. This can probably be explained because voice is believed to be influential in the field of neighbourhood management. Also Sharp (1984) and Van Vugt et al. (2003) focus on dissatisfaction with the service level of the local authorities and they have similar outcomes. In contrast to voice and exit, all satisfaction variables have a significant impact on the combination of choice and exit ('noisy exit').

Not just present satisfaction, but also the past en expected future of the neighbourhood quality matter. Especially the exit option is favourite among those that negatively perceived the past development of the neighbourhood, or expect no improvements in the future. Residents that feel positive about either the past or the future of the neighbourhood are less likely to exit the neighbourhood. Voice, however, is hardly influenced by the past and expected future of the neighbourhood quality.

We also want to know the reasons for the choice between voice and exit. Is it so that residents with more neighbourhood attachment feel more loyal, and hence prefer voice over exit? Indeed, the regression analysis revealed that attachment is the strongest predictor of the choice between voice and exit. Those that feel attached to the neighbourhood prefer voice over exit and are not likely to make a noisy exit. Clearly, the positive feelings of a resident towards the neighbourhood makes people want to take care of it (Brodsky et al., 1999; Minkler and Wallerstein, 2003), rather than leave it there.

And has the expectation that residents with high scores on the indicators of social capital rather opt for voice than for exit, proven to be true? We can partially confirm this, but some enunciations are needed. Yes, in line with our expectations we see that the indicators of social capital influence the choice between exit and voice. We discerned two indicators of social capital: social embeddedness and trust. Those residents that are socially embedded in the neighbourhood are less likely to leave. However, there is no influence on the chances to express voice. This means that socially embedded residents

*Table 5: Multinomial logistic regression on voice and exit (reference category= no exit, no voice)*

| | **Voice, no exit** | | **Exit, no voice** | | **Exit and voice** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Sig. | B | Sig. | B | Sig. |
| Intercept | -3.570 | 0.000 | 7.122 | 0.000 | 2.908 | 0.003 |
| ***Individual + hh characteristics*** | | | | | | |
| Age | 0.086 | 0.000 | -0.021 | 0.288 | 0.068 | 0.014 |
| Age square | -0.001 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.332 | -0.001 | 0.002 |
| Male | -0.010 | 0.901 | 0.223 | 0.011 | 0.176 | 0.128 |
| *Household composition (ref=single)* | | | | | | |
| couple | 0.318 | 0.006 | 0.138 | 0.233 | 0.067 | 0.686 |
| couple with children | 1.110 | 0.000 | 0.095 | 0.501 | 0.733 | 0.000 |
| single with children | 0.919 | 0.000 | -0.125 | 0.702 | 0.369 | 0.310 |
| other | -0.078 | 0.661 | 0.143 | 0.324 | -0.020 | 0.930 |
| Ethnicity (ref=non-western) | | | | | | |
| native Dutch | -0.430 | 0.006 | 0.323 | 0.069 | 0.243 | 0.318 |
| western member of min. eth group | -0.656 | 0.001 | 0.059 | 0.796 | 0.142 | 0.638 |
| Owner Occupier | 0.233 | 0.023 | -0.079 | 0.445 | 0.279 | 0.059 |
| Having a job | -0.157 | 0.165 | 0.142 | 0.320 | -0.187 | 0.272 |
| Level of education (ref = high) | | | | | | |
| low | -0.291 | 0.015 | -0.707 | 0.000 | -0.652 | 0.001 |
| intermediate | -0.150 | 0.127 | -0.593 | 0.000 | -0.257 | 0.064 |
| Net montly hh income (ref = < 1500) | | | | | | |
| 1500-2500 euro | 0.097 | 0.445 | 0.119 | 0.343 | 0.246 | 0.176 |
| 2500-3500 euro | 0.051 | 0.727 | 0.113 | 0.465 | 0.377 | 0.073 |
| > 3500 euro | 0.066 | 0.622 | 0.010 | 0.942 | 0.339 | 0.078 |
| not known | 0.058 | 0.702 | -0.001 | 0.994 | 0.027 | 0.906 |
| **Level of satisfaction** | | | | | | |
| Satisfaction dwelling | -0.003 | 0.937 | -0.296 | 0.000 | -0.266 | 0.000 |
| Satisfaction neighbourhood | -0.018 | 0.805 | -0.640 | 0.000 | -0.652 | 0.000 |
| Satisfaction cleanliness neigh | -0.088 | 0.000 | 0.044 | 0.099 | -0.097 | 0.003 |
| Not feeling safe in neigh | 0.143 | 0.122 | 0.295 | 0.002 | 0.575 | 0.000 |
| *Perceived nh change (ref=declline)* | | | | | | |
| Neighbourhood improved | -0.106 | 0.503 | -0.403 | 0.021 | -0.117 | 0.595 |
| No change in neigh quality | -0.370 | 0.005 | -0.519 | 0.000 | -0.369 | 0.029 |
| *Expectations neigh future (ref = decline)* | | | | | | |
| Neighbourhood will improve | -0.168 | 0.269 | -0.509 | 0.001 | -1.157 | 0.000 |
| Neigh will not change | -0.165 | 0.220 | -0.346 | 0.012 | -0.665 | 0.000 |
| **Attachment + social capital** | | | | | | |
| Attachment | 0.604 | 0.000 | -0.389 | 0.000 | 0.111 | 0.239 |
| Social embeddedness (factor) | -0.021 | 0.609 | -0.129 | 0.003 | -0.214 | 0.000 |
| Distrust (factor) | 0.068 | 0.123 | 0.096 | 0.042 | 0.134 | 0.030 |
| **Neighbourhood characteristics** | | | | | | |
| % ethnic minorities | -0.004 | 0.378 | -0.003 | 0.485 | -0.002 | 0.786 |
| population turnover | 0.000 | 0.139 | 0.000 | 0.406 | -0.001 | 0.002 |
| population density | 0.000 | 0.944 | 0.000 | 0.088 | 0.000 | 0.539 |
| % owner occupied dwellings | 0.000 | 0.855 | -0.006 | 0.038 | 0.005 | 0.211 |
| Average income | 0.000 | 0.995 | -0.006 | 0.811 | -0.034 | 0.343 |
| -2LL=12938.9; Model Chi-square=10867.5 Df=99; p=0,000; Nagelkerke's $R^2$=0.363 | | | | | | |

will stay, but will not always take action to improve the situation. Those residents that feel distrust towards society are more inclined to be willing to exit, and they are not very likely to use voice as a strategy to cope with dissatisfaction.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this study was twofold. The primary aim was to generate insight into the conditions for voice, as opposed to exit, as a response to perceived declining neighbourhood quality. Second, we wanted to gain insight into the impact of neighbourhood characteristics on the expressed behaviour.

As expected the socialcomposition of the neighbourhood is strongly related to neighbourhood satisfaction. The bi-variate analyses show that residents in poor neighbourhoods, with high shares of ethnic minorities rented dwellings are less satisfied. Yet, these neighbourhood characteristics do not have a direct influence the choice between exit and voice.

Instead, and in line with our prediction, exit and voice tendencies were stronger the more dissatisfied residents reported that they were generally with their neighbourhood. Especially the intention to exit the neighbourhood was influenced by current satisfaction levels, but also those in the past and expectations of the future. Residents that have been, are or expect to be dissatisfied with the neighbourhood had higher chances of having the intention to move. Also their chances for the 'noisy exit' option (using both voice and exit) were higher for these residents. As expected, the chances for voice declined when residents did not see a decline in the quality of the neighbourhood, and if they were satisfied with the quality. Probably exit and voice responses are reinforced when people experience a sudden deterioration in the neighbourhood, as opposed to neighbourhoods in which the situation has been bad for a long time.

Inspired by social capital theory (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000) we proposed that the choice between exit and voice would be influenced by social embeddedness, and trust. We found that residents were, overall, more likely to intend to stay in the neighbourhood to the extent they were more socially embedded in the neighbourhood. Distrusting residents, on the other hand, have higher chances of desiring to move out of the neighbourhood. Yet, voice strategies are not explained by these indicators of social capital, because there is no difference in the likeliness of expressing voice for those who want to stay and those who want to leave.

The notion of neighbourhood attachment (Gerson et al., 1977; Altman and Low, 1992; Woolever, 1992) is very much related to the concept of loyalty, which inspired us to hypothesize that neighbourhood attachment would positively influence the choice for voice as opposed to exit in case of dissatisfaction. In fact, attachment is the strongest predictor for the choice between exit and voice. From these findings we may conclude that residents who identify with their neighbourhood have a higher probability than others of becoming active in the neighbourhood.

(….)

**Literature (to be complemented)**

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