

## Place attractiveness

Citation for published version (APA):

Hooijen, I. (2021). *Place attractiveness: A study of the determinants playing a role in residential settlement behaviour*. [Doctoral Thesis, Maastricht University]. ROA. <https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20210205ih>

### Document status and date:

Published: 01/01/2021

### DOI:

[10.26481/dis.20210205ih](https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20210205ih)

### Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

### Please check the document version of this publication:

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[Link to publication](#)

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7

**Valorisation**

## 7.1 Introduction

This dissertation intends to create more insight into the various factors involved in better understanding the attractiveness of places and the ability of places to attract and retain (new) residents. The research findings of this dissertation can be used as inspiration for policymakers concerned with the spatial and economic development in a region, human resources (HR) departments aiming to attract (international) personnel, and higher education institutions and policymakers in regions that would like to retain and/or attract (prospective) graduates. The research findings should offer a relevant contribution to the ongoing discussions on the (regional) competition for attracting and retaining (new) residents. Using scientific evidence as a contribution in policy design is not self-evident, and vice versa. The integration of scientific evidence, policy, and practice with each another will support a more holistic perspective. I wanted to address topics that are societally relevant by focusing on issues that are high in regional, national, and European policy agenda priorities. In doing so, my colleagues and I have also been involved in activities beyond the scientific domain. This section discusses several recommendations resulting from this dissertation for regional policymakers (Chapters 2 to 5), HR departments (Chapter 2), and higher education institutions (Chapters 3 to 5) and gives an overview of its contributions to policy and practice.

## 7.2 Living preferences of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workers in a peripheral region (chapter 2)

The research findings of chapter 2 show that the living preferences of STEM workers are often characterized by a suburban lifestyle in contrast to what much of the (spatial) policies imply.

The urban milieu has become a dominant area of policy and the mainstream approaches to spatial planning are based on growth-oriented paradigms, leading, for example, to social and spatial inequality. For the Netherlands, for example, there is, on the one hand, an economic policy introduced in 2011 (*Top Sectoren*) that stimulates R&D activities across nine key sectors (e.g. chemistry and creative industry), with these sectors being unequally spread throughout the country. On the other hand, the government wants to maintain the liveability in places that face demographic shrinkage or in places that are expected to decline (e.g. *Actieplan Bevolkingsdaling* introduced in 2009). This may make growth-oriented approaches inherently disruptive (Bock et al., 2019; Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2016). It is advisable to create synergies between growth and inclusion and to focus on alternatives to growth-oriented (economic) approaches (e.g. people-based approaches). In addition to the

dominant focus on the urban milieu, I furthermore encourage to take into account the attractiveness and demographic composition of different geographical clusters (i.e. rural, suburban and urban areas) and for different (sub)-groups.

Different companies and businesses, real estate parties, universities, and (local) governments should continue working together to create an attractive living environment, a well-functioning housing market, and a stronger and sustainable knowledge economy. The collaboration with different stakeholders in Chapter 2 is a good example. I recommend involving different stakeholders, from idea generation to project preparation, development, implementation, and evaluation. Working towards a common goal can be challenging, since stakeholders tend to have multiple priorities, their own objectives, and different perspectives. Clear project expectations and effective communications (listening, asking questions, reflecting, giving and receiving feedback) are key to keeping everyone in the loop.

I recommend that HR departments, local governments and institutions (e.g. the Expat Centre Maastricht Region) guide and welcome newly recruited (international) personnel in offering and arranging issues such as registering to a municipality, cross-border living, tax payments, health care insurance, toddler pre-school, day care for children, facilities such as sports and supermarkets and employment opportunities for partners. It is important that one is aware of one's own perception and reference point in advising others as one tends to be predisposed to attributes one values him or herself. There are many opportunities to guide and welcome newcomers, such as 1) creating a survey for new employees which can directly suggest places of residences, neighbourhoods and dwellings to live in based on their preferences or 2) creating a guide or app for newcomers with relevant information regarding working and living in the respective municipality (see for example [mymaastricht.nl](http://mymaastricht.nl)).

Companies and local governments can invest in newcomers for the long term (i.e. regardless of the length and type of the employment contract, keep track on how they are doing during different periods). For example, HR practitioners could plan regular meetings, and local governments could invite newcomers to such meetings to reflect upon their experiences living in the respective municipality and to meet other newcomers (i.e. encourage personal attachments to the region). Note that the creation of such a welcoming culture does not necessarily guarantee that newcomers will continue to live in the area in the long run. It should rather be seen as the creation of a positive experience, which is marketing in itself. In addition, HR practitioners can explain the work culture (work–life balance) in the company and involve current employees in welcoming their new colleagues (e.g. encourage them to be open to meeting newcomers after working hours as well, i.e. encouraging personal networks).

### **7.3 (Prospective) graduate (im)mobility intentions and subsequent behaviour in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (chapter 3 and 4)**

Chapter 3 and chapter 4 suggest that (im)mobility intentions and their realisation are caused by a combination of different factors.

(Im)mobility intentions and the realisation of it is caused by the interplay of different factors (e.g. hard and soft locational factors, social factors, individual factors, unexpected events etc.). It is advisable that policies to attract and/or retain recent graduates also focus on factors other than hard locational factors (e.g. employment opportunities).

(Im)mobility intentions which are formed while studying are a good predictor of actual (im)mobility behaviour. It is therefore advisable to inform students about opportunities (e.g. career, social and cultural opportunities) in the region already at earlier stages. I see this as a collective task for higher education institutions, policymakers and companies.

Prospective students and graduates can be encouraged to settle down in the study region. One suggestion is to provide attractive and affordable housing for students. Furthermore, higher education institutions can encourage their Bachelor's students to continue studying at the same university. The longer they live and study in the region, the greater their 'regional familiarity' becomes and the more likely they are to stay after finishing education. In addition, higher education institutions and employers can take a pro-active role in encouraging and offering (prospective) graduates (including PhD candidates) an internship, traineeship, student jobs or employment after graduation. From this perspective, (prospective) graduates gain access to networks and information about employment opportunities in the study region which increases the probability to remain living in the study region.

(Prospective) graduates do not always consider living and/or working across the border. It is important to invest in cross-border events to create platforms where people meet, interact and share their knowledge, ideas and culture. Institutions of the European Union have placed a great deal of importance on cross-border cooperation (see Hooijen et al., 2017, p. 2213). I encourage that higher education institutions, partner regions in the EMR and other stakeholder should cooperate and support future research on (im)mobility behaviour of (prospective) graduates.

### **7.4 Personality traits and their interaction with environmental factors (chapter 5)**

In addition to the role of economic factors in explaining location choice among recent graduates of Dutch universities of applied sciences, Chapter 5 finds that

personality affects the perceived attractiveness of environmental factors and therefore also influences location choice. If people settle down in places that also fit their personalities, the strategies for attracting certain types of people to places should additionally focus on the alignment between psychological traits and environmental characteristics. Further research on this topic has the potential to inform policymakers and employers concerned with developing programs to attract and retain different groups of people. For example, it is important to not attempt to attract people scoring high on introversion through policies that promote a vibrant, busy, and social atmosphere.

## 7.5 Sharing of overall knowledge

The results of this dissertation are instructive for policymakers, companies and higher education institutions who aim to better understand the attractiveness of places in terms of attracting and retaining (new) residents, as it clarifies how different groups of individuals reason and act when making (im)mobility decisions and location choices.

I encourage a holistic perspective in a place-based approach that responds to the specific needs of the individual (or family) and local labour market, taking into account the national policy framework. I advise cooperation among different stakeholders and support longitudinal research projects so that their approaches and potential implementation can be more effectively analysed.

Note that the dissemination activities from other stakeholders who are involved in the projects discussed in this dissertation, are also listed below, to give a better overall overview of the societal contribution.

## 7.6 Distribution and dissemination of own and directly related research results:

### Chapter 2: Living preferences of STEM workers in a peripheral region

Bussel van, M., Denissen, C., Muskens, B., & Kuijpers, A. (2016). *Je zal er maar wonen. Ontwerpend onderzoek naar huisvesting van kenniswerkers in een krimpregio*. Stein: buroStUB. Retrieved from [http://kenniswerkersinlimburg.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Rapport\\_KenniswerkersinLimburg\\_BuroSTUB.pdf](http://kenniswerkersinlimburg.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Rapport_KenniswerkersinLimburg_BuroSTUB.pdf)

Hooijen, I. (2015). De aantrekkingskracht van Zuid-Limburg. Retrieved from <http://www.vanmeernaarbeter.nl/blog/de-aantrekkingskracht-van-zuid-limburg>

Hooijen, I., & Cörvers, F. (2015). Het aantrekken van kenniswerkers in een krimpgebied. *Rooilijn*, 48(4), 288-295. Retrieved from <http://archieff.rooilijn.nl/download?type=document&identifier=586511>

Hooijen, I., & Cörvers, F. (2020). *Living preferences of STEM workers in a high-tech business park of a peripheral region*. Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market. ROA Research Memoranda, No. 007 doi:10.26481/umaror.2020007

Autonomy. (2015). Knappe Kop. Kans voor Krimpregio. *Dagblad De Limburger / Limburgs Dagblad*.

Autonomy. (2015). Ook enquête Océ. *Dagblad De Limburger / Limburgs Dagblad*.

Province of Limburg. (2016). *Structuurvisie Wonen Zuid-Limburg*. Maastricht: Province of Limburg.

### **Chapter 3 and 4: (Prospective) graduate (im)mobility and subsequent behaviour in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine**

Hooijen, I., Meng, C., Reinold, J. (2020). Be prepared for the unexpected: The gap between (im)mobility intentions and subsequent behaviour of recent higher education graduates. *Population Space and Place*. doi:10.1002/psp.2313

Hooijen, I., Meng, C., Reinold, J., & Siegel, M. (2017). Competition for talent: retaining graduates in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine. *European Planning Studies*, 25(12), 2212-2231 . doi:10.1080/09654313.2017.1354976

Hooijen, I. (2019, July 3). Het Maastricht Syndroom. Retrieved from <https://www.neimed.nl/nl/blog/het-maastricht-syndroom>

Hooijen, I., & Cörvers, F. (2019). *Vestiging en vertrek in gemeente Maastricht: Studenten en afgestudeerden*. Maastricht: Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market. Retrieved from <https://cris.maastrichtuniversity.nl/en/publications/vestiging-en-vertrek-in-gemeente-maastricht-studenten-en-afgestud>

NEIMED. (2018, September 14). NEIMED presenteert tijdens eerste eureschool. Retrieved from <https://www.neimed.nl/nl/nieuws/neimed-presenteert-tijdens-eerste-eureschool>

Planthof, S., & Thewissen, P. (2019, March 10). Studenten ook na studie in Maastricht houden. *De Limburger*. Retrieved from [https://www.limburger.nl/cnt/dmf20190310\\_00095800/studenten-ook-na-studie-in-maastricht-houden](https://www.limburger.nl/cnt/dmf20190310_00095800/studenten-ook-na-studie-in-maastricht-houden)

### Workshops and presentations (chapter 3 and 4)

Settlement and mobility in the municipality of Maastricht. Students and recent graduates (Maastricht City Council meeting about the student city and student housing, March 2019).

Demographic composition in the EMR (Summer School for higher educated students in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine, Maastricht, the Netherlands, Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross border cooperation and Mobility (ITEM), September 2018). Together with Maja Ročak.

Students and border regions (Student Think Tank on “Opportunities for Students and Young Professionals Living in Border Regions”, Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross border cooperation and Mobility (ITEM) in cooperation with the Municipality of Heerlen, Heerlen, the Netherlands, May 2018). Together with Julia Reinold and Dionne van Oppen.

Students in the EMR (Annual meeting, Female in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine, Vaals, the Netherlands, March, 2017). Together with Julia Reinold and Inez Roosen.

### Chapter 5: Personality traits and their interaction with environmental factors

Hooijen, I. (2020, April 9). Hou bij gebiedsontwikkeling ook rekening met persoonlijkheid. Retrieved from gebiedsontwikkeling.nu: <https://www.gebiedsontwikkeling.nu/artikelen/hou-bij-gebiedsontwikkeling-ook-rekening-met-persoonlijkheid/>

Hooijen, I., Bijlsma, I., Cörvers, F., & Poulissen, D. (2020). *The geographical psychology of recent graduates in the Netherlands: Relating environmental factors and personality traits to location choice*. Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market. ROA Research Memoranda, No. 001 doi:10.26481/umaror.2020001

Lukkezen, J. (2020, February 28). Wonen tussen geestverwanten. Het Financieele Dagblad. Retrieved from <https://fd.nl/futures/1335784/wonen-tussen-geestverwanten>

### Sharing of overall knowledge:

Cörvers, F., & Hooijen, I. (2017). *Notitie voor de provincie limburg naar aanleiding van de workshop 'human capital and regional development'*. Maastricht: Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market. Retrieved from <https://cris>.



maastrichtuniversity.nl/en/publications/notitie-voor-de-provincie-limburg-naar-aanleiding-van-de-workshop

Didderen, W., & Mathissen, M. (2016). *Krimp floreert Neimed Jaarrapportage 2016*. Heerlen: NEIMED. Retrieved from <https://www.neimed.nl/sites/neimed.nl/files/documents/Neimed%20-%20Jaarrapportage%202016%20digitaal.pdf>

Didderen, W., Reverda, N., & Mathissen, M. (2015). *Krimpscheuten Neimed Jaarrapportage 2015*. Heerlen: NEIMED. Retrieved from <https://www.neimed.nl/sites/neimed.nl/files/documents/21.06.16%20-%20Neimed%20jaarrapportage%202015%20digitaal.pdf>

Hooijen, I., & Reinold, J. (2018, June 28). Home and away Inge Hooijen and colleagues are looking at Limburg its labour market and its natives and newcomers. (K. Shook, Interviewer) SBE Maastricht University. Retrieved from [www.mysbe.nl/2018/06/home-and-away-inge-hooijen-and-colleagues-are-looking-at-limburg-its-labour-market-and-its-natives-and-newcomers/](http://www.mysbe.nl/2018/06/home-and-away-inge-hooijen-and-colleagues-are-looking-at-limburg-its-labour-market-and-its-natives-and-newcomers/)

Hooijen, I., & Reinold, J. (2018, October 16). Why not stay for another coffee and career? (F. Raith, Interviewer) Maastricht University. Retrieved from <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/news/why-not-stay-another-coffee-and-career>

Went, E. (2018, May 24). Duurzaam aantrekken en inzetten van nieuwe Limburgers. Magazine on the spot. Retrieved from <http://magazine-on-the-spot.nl/limburgsearbeidsmarktdag/5-duurzaam-nieuwe-limburgers/>

### **Workshops and presentations (sharing of overall knowledge):**

The attractiveness and DNA of Limburg (The Province of Limburg and the labour market, Roermond, the Netherlands, May 2018). Together with Julia Reinold.

Human capital in the region (Scientists day at Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Hague, the Netherlands, October, 2017).

Human capital and regional development (Workshop for academics and policymakers, Maastricht, the Netherlands, June, 2017).

The role of universities and researchers in shrinking regions (Symbios project, a transnational working programme funded by the European Social Fund and the Spanish region Galicia. Santiago de Compostela, Spain, May 2015).