



SUSTAINABLE AGING AS A COMMUNITY GOAL

How the Community-Based Blue Zones Project strives for a
Healthier Society in Cedar Falls, Iowa

Florian Albronda

Vincent Walstra

CEDAR
FALLS

BLUE
ZONES
PROJECT

Photograph front page: A Blue Zones Project sign at Big Woods Lake in Cedar Falls, Iowa
Photographer: Vincent Walstra
Date: 12-04-2016

Sustainable Aging as a Community Goal

How the Community-Based Blue Zones Project Strives for a Healthier Society
in Cedar Falls, Iowa

Bachelor Thesis 2015-2016

Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Social Science

Florian Albronda, 3743616, F.T.Albronda@students.uu.nl

Vincent Walstra, 4007492, V.R.Walstra@students.uu.nl

Supervisor: Geert Mommersteeg



Utrecht University

Table of contents

Acknowledgments	6
Introduction	9
Literature study	15
Introduction	15
1. Aging	15
2. A sustainable lifestyle	17
3. Lifestyle modification	18
4. Community-based lifestyle modification	20
Summary	24
Context	25
1. Introducing the Blue Zones	25
2. The Blue Zones Project	26
3. Healthcare context of the United States	27
4. Cedar Falls, Iowa	28
Empirical chapters	30
1. Organizational structure of the Blue Zones Project in Cedar Falls, Iowa	30
2. Organizations in Cedar Falls	36
3. Creating a healthy lifestyle	43
4. Practicing the Power 9 Principles	47
5. Community identity	53
Conclusion & Discussion	58
Bibliography	65

Acknowledgments

During the ten weeks we stayed in Cedar Falls we have learned many things about the American culture, Iowa and Midwest, and most of all of the Cedar Falls community. Our limited ways to travel made us stay in the community for the entire ten weeks – except for when we were taken to Iowa City for the great experience of a basketball game – which made us feel as if we were part of these great and open-minded people. Conversations with new persons were always very enjoyable, having a similar set up that would easily get us into a conversation. We would be greeted warmly and after chatting a bit we would be asked where we got our accent from. We have been said we should say ‘Minnesota’ but in the end we would reveal the truth of being ‘the Dutch boys’. This would be answered with an excitement and enthusiasm because of the many people with roots and travel stories in Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark. Also people would feel proud that there were Dutch student-researchers who have come all the way to Cedar Falls to study them. It made it easy for us to get to know many amazing people and we were invited to everything that was going on in the community. Having only our bikes, even in the cold winter months of January and February gave them something to laugh about but was always met with the offer to pick us up and drive us anywhere, anytime. Dozens of people have been so kind to us for inviting us to activities, having us for dinner, taking us for a drink, or just share their story with us, therefore we want to thank all of whom we have met during our stay in Cedar Falls for their great contribution to our research and their warm and welcoming attitude towards both of us. Still we do feel the need to name a couple of people without whom our research and stay would not have been the same.

First of all, Sue Beach, with whom we had established contact in November 2015, has guided us through the community and the Blue Zones Project. Besides that she has been a great person, and supported us anywhere we needed help, making sure we felt at home in Cedar Falls. She picked us up the day we arrived, and dropped us off the day we left, which symbolizes the importance she had during our stay. It did not take long, luckily, to meet Luann Costa Alemao-Johnson, and sometime later her husband Gary. Our almost-neighbors have shared their kindness and (life)knowledge with us in many conversations and activities

we had together. Introducing us to their snowshoe Moai was an experience we will never forget, and Luann's knowledge about the Blue Zones was a huge benefit for our research. Our thesis would be incomplete without thanking Jonathan Taiber. It took him ten minutes of talking with us to rescue us from our hours of walking by offering two of his bikes during our stay. But that was only the material part of his contribution. Jon took us to a basketball game of the Hawkeyes, gave us a demonstration of how to play racket ball, and showed us the way through the woods around Cedar Falls, but most of all proved to be an amazing companion for a beer, conversation and hanging out. His home felt as ours, and we had the luck to meet his family. Lastly, we want to thank Jodie Heugerich for supporting our research with her inside knowledge about the Blue Zones Project, driving us to many places and being very informative and welcoming to us.

Cedar Falls has proven to be a community that is very inclusive to newcomers and highly interested in foreigners. All people we met had their own opinion they wanted to share with us and we could and would have had many more interviews and activities if not for our limited time of research. Thanks to all of you.

Closer to home, we want to thank our supervisor Geert Mommersteeg, who has guided us through our research with his experience and knowledge. His ever critical attitude towards what we produced was the ideal way of staying focused and being motivated to keep improving what we already had.

Florian and Vincent

‘‘We need to become aware of the influence of the environment: that radius of 20 miles or so from our homes where we shop, work, walk or drive, attend school, eat at restaurants, and spend most of our lives. Here, within this zone, is where we’re constantly nudged into healthy or unhealthy choices, based on the norms and habits of the people around us, the laws and ordinance of our community, and the decisions that have been made, conscious or not, about all the feature that make it a healthy place to live – or not.’’

Dan Buettner – The Blue Zones Solution (2015, 84)

Introduction

“Hey, were you that guys I saw walking down the road?” It was our second day in Cedar Falls, Iowa and we had just went to the nearest grocery store to get some food for the coming days, as we were used to doing from back home. We had thought that this thirty minute walk would be a good way to explore the city a bit, but ended up fighting our way through the freezing cold and snow- and ice-covered sidewalks. In the grocery store this guy came up to us, he had recognized us and he seemed to both admire our courage and take us for fools after seeing us walking to the grocery store. In the next ten weeks we found out that such small habits, as the value of taking a walk, are relative to local culture. It consists of habits, constructed through the experiences of living in a particular city (Cedar Falls), within a specific area (Iowa, Midwest), under the structures of certain country (United States). When leaving Cedar Falls at the end of April 2016, we left a city and its people whom had taken us into their community and shared with us their community’s life. In this community the lifestyle that has been created through the past is being modified towards a different lifestyle that is going to determine their future. This community is chosen to strive for a healthy lifestyle based on knowledge derived from foreign cultures, but “change has to come from the bottom up” (Buettner 2015, 137).

In this day and age medical technology has made it possible for humans to live through health issues which could be fatal if not for advanced medicine, thus making it possible for humans to become older than they normally would. The effect is that we are dealing with an aging world population, therefore creating new circumstances for the economy, politics and health sectors. It also creates new possibilities for individuals on how to treat their aging body and mind. Because of this, there has been an increasing interest in the aging world population by the academic world. Aging studies is one of the areas where theories on aging have rapidly changed in the last decade. Studies on aging have led to the development of new theories and practices on how aging can become a more sustainable process. One of these studies has led to the establishment of the Blue Zones Project. The Blue Zones Project was founded in 2009 by Dan Buettner, a National Geographic journalist. Together with a group of researchers he pointed out the five so-called Blue Zones. These are small areas in Italy, Greece, the United States, Costa Rica and Japan where a significantly

large amount of people reach the age of ninety or above and are still healthy and vital. The cause of their longer lifespan is the result of their lifestyle. Their lifestyle is based on cultural habits that have been carried out by the entire community over multiple generations. The Blue Zones' inhabitant's exceptional longevity encouraged Buettner to start the Blue Zones Project in the United States. The project aims to teach people in the United States how to live a longer and healthier life based on the Power 9 Principles, which are derived from the original Blue Zones. Instead of implementing these principles into a community, the project wants the community to use the Blue Zones formula and establish their own Blue Zones area.

The Blue Zones Project is not on its own in its effort to work on the health problems in the United States. The concern about health problems comes from the expanded life expectancy of people in the U.S., which has led to cognitive and physical health problems due to an unhealthy lifestyle (Green and Fieldling 2011, 455). Together with these health problems, there are also economic consequences to this development. The baby-boom generation, which is the major affected group, are now coming of an age where they are experiencing the negative consequences of their lifestyle. The burden of financing the care they need rests on the shoulders of the younger U.S. generations (O'Neill 2009, 319). Health problems and economic consequences together urge the U.S. society to pay attention to their lifestyle, which is why initiatives such as the Blue Zones Project can manifest themselves. We will use the concept of sustainable aging that Nilsson (2015, 495) uses and add our own interpretation to it to use the term for living conscious throughout life in order to benefit from it in later life stages. Sustainable aging is what is central to the Blue Zones Project and therefore also central to this thesis. One of the major questions of this thesis is what motivates people to change their current lifestyle to a more sustainable lifestyle. This process of lifestyle modification to attain sustainable aging will be approached from the argument that aging is a process shaped by local environments, social relations, and access to resources (Buch 2015, 278; Bülow and Soderqvist 2014, 145). These factors influence both the motivation, practicing and empowerment of the individual. The actors that shape the local environments will be another major focus of this thesis. The Blue Zones Project focuses on a common effort within the community to strive for a common goal, and aims to change the lifestyle of the entire community, therefore acting as a community-based project. With this bottom-up

approach the project is dependent on the community's sense of responsibility to make the project work. The concept of a community of practice (Wenger 2015) is central to this community-based realization of lifestyle modification. A community of practice is formed when a group of people together share a collective interest which is practiced together (Wenger 2015, 1). This thesis therefore focuses on the social structure of the community of Cedar Falls by defining the position different organizations have within the community, and how people and organizations relate to one another.

The Blue Zones Project offers local organizations and inhabitants that are interested in the Blue Zones values the opportunity to participate. By now there are different states and cities in the United States that have aligned themselves to the Blue Zones Project. This thesis has only conducted research in Cedar Falls, Iowa, which today is one of the Blue Zones certified communities in the United States. The Blue Zones Project in Cedar Falls has been running since 2012. Cedar Falls is a town with over 30.000 people and is located in the state of Iowa, in the center of the northern United States which is primarily known for its agriculture. Cedar Falls is one of the towns that was nominated and elected for the Blue Zones Project's program after Iowa started its *Healthiest State Initiative*, which wants to make Iowa the healthiest state in 2016¹.

One of us (Florian Albronda) has focused on the role the Blue Zones Project in Cedar Falls and the organizations connected to it have in the community, and the other (Vincent Walstra) has focused on the motivation and participation of the people that are part of the community of Cedar Falls. The fieldwork part of the research took place over a period of ten weeks, running from the eighth of February until the eighteenth of April 2016. This research wants to explore the ways in which people as individuals and as communities act in changing their lifestyle within the context of trying to attain sustainable aging. By combining contemporary theories on aging, lifestyle modification through community-based projects, and fieldwork this research aims to add to the current debate on how to cope with the reality of an aging population. The main question of this research is formulated as follows:

How does the community of Cedar Falls, Iowa, try to attain sustainable aging through a community-based lifestyle modification project based on the Blue Zones principles?

¹ <http://www.iowahealthieststate.com/> accessed at 16-6-2016

We have approached this question through a ten week field research using qualitative methods. Explaining qualitative research to our informants and conducting it in the field made us realize the value and potential it has to add to scientific research. We would not have been able to get the inside information and tacit knowledge we now have without using the qualitative approach. The value of getting to know people in order to understand them is something you can only experience by doing it, and our research has shown us why knowing is different from understanding, seeing gives another experience than doing, and first impressions often have to be adjusted after a while.

De Walt and De Walt (2011, 1) state that ‘participant observation is a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people’. During our stay in Cedar Falls participant observation has been the key to grasp the experience of living in a Blue Zones certified community. It gave us the opportunity to see how the Power 9 Principles are translated into practice within the community. We have observed how organizations convey the Blue Zones ideology and how the inhabitants conceive the Blue Zones concepts and do or do not practice them. Because our population entailed the entire community, we have established many contacts and conversations by ‘going into the field’, meaning mostly going anywhere within the community and talk to people. For example, going out with the Blue Zones team to stand on a health fair at the local sports complex got us in contact with people and gave us the opportunity to speak with inhabitants who had different backgrounds, opinions, and lifestyles. We also went to public places such as the University or various churches to get into contact with non-Blue Zones Project related inhabitants. Such activities got us into informal conversations that we would continue later on when meeting with those people in private for a semi-structured interview.

Boeije (2010, 63) states that interviewing is about seeing ‘a slice of the social world from the informant’s perspective’. Our goal with informal conversations and semi-structured interviewing has been to understand the way that the people of Cedar Falls view the Blue Zones Project. The conversations gave us a broader view on the community’s perspective as a whole, where the interviews gave people the opportunity to openly speak on their opinion about the Project and give more inside information. Also, we believe this type of interviewing gave the informant the opportunity of reflecting upon their own participation in the project

and the impact it has on their daily life. Part of our research data consists of these semi-structured interviews, of which we have had several with about thirty informants. We have transcribed and coded these interviews with NVivo 11. Through the Blue Zones Project's leaders we got in contact with organizational leaders in the community and inhabitants that have meant a lot for the Project. We ended up in a network of people who connected us to one another, the well-known snowball effect, and established relations with different organizational and communal groups and networks. These leaders also shared many of their documentation that related to the Blue Zones Project and community of Cedar Falls which we used to put our own experiences into a broader timeframe and to get 'behind the scene' of different organizations. The informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, participation, observation, and document analysis together were registered through voice recording, jot notes in our notebooks which were elaborated to field notes later on, vignettes, and in our daily updated logs. The examples and quotes we used throughout the thesis have been anonymized to secure our informants' privacy.

In the following chapters the theoretical framework will be explained. We will start by analyzing the process of sustainable aging. By focusing on the role of the individual and its environment in the aging process, a theoretical foundation will be laid for the aging world population and its rising importance. Thereafter we will focus on the construction of lifestyles. What components do lifestyles of people contain? We will focus on how to modify lifestyle, not just of an individual, but of an entire community. The concept community of practice will explain the possibility of modifying the lifestyle of an entire community by changing its environment. After the theoretical framework the situation in the state of Iowa will be explained and conclude with an introduction of Cedar Falls and the local Blue Zones Project. The thesis will then move on to the empirical chapters that exist out of a detailed description of the organizational structure of the Blue Zones Project in Cedar Falls. We will then describe the role of the organizations and the Blue Zones Project in creating the lifestyle of the inhabitants of Cedar Falls. The last empirical chapters will elaborate on how individuals construct their lifestyle around the Blue Zones principles. We will then go to our concluding remarks on how the Blue Zones Project fits into the concepts of community-based and community of practice in its own way and where the project succeeds in modifying the

lifestyle of the inhabitants in Cedar Falls and where it does not. The thesis will finish of with discussion on how the inhabitants in Cedar Falls theoretically are empowered to modify their lifestyle towards a sustainable lifestyle, but why the practical reality is different than the ideal theoretical scenario.

Literature study

Introduction

This research focuses on the implementation of a community-based lifestyle modification project. The theoretical framework therefore is build up to form a better understanding of the concepts that form a community-based project which aims to modify the lifestyle of a community towards a sustainable, healthy lifestyle which as goal has longevity. The process of aging and how it has been defined over the years is the starting point of this framework. We will place aging within the context of longevity and the ultimate goal of these projects. From there on out we will explain lifestyle and what it takes to modify it on an individual and community level based on existing theories. Finally, we will explain community-based projects with a focus on communities of practice and end by combining these with the modification of lifestyles.

1. Aging (Florian)

Aging studies has been a focus of research for decades and the attention has been growing ever since. Through the years' methodologies of aging research have been challenged and reworked to find the key to 'successful aging' (Bülow and Soderqvist 2014, 139). Traditionally aging research focused on binary categories: 'normal' which translates into all elders with no consideration to what condition they are in, and deceased. (Bülow and Soderqvist 2014, 141). This means there were only two categories the aging population could be assigned to. These methodologies were challenged however by the argument of Rowe and Kahn (1987, quoted in Bülow and Soderqvist 2014, 141). Their critique on the binary categories was that it neglected the heterogeneity among older people. They implied that the effects of the aging process have been exaggerated and the modifying effects of diet, exercise, personal habits, and psychosocial factors have been underestimated. This argument was combined with the life-course perspective. The life-course perspective showed the relation between individual lives and social structures. This perspective defines aging as 'the optimization of human development over the life course' and measures it by criteria in categories like: physical, cognitive, creative functioning, and social relations. The process should be evaluated within the socio-cultural context of the individual (Bülow and Soderqvist

2014, 145). This shows that aging is a process shaped by local environments, social relations, and access to resources (Buch 2015, 278; Bülow and Soderqvist 2014, 145).

At the center of Rowe and Kahn's argument (see Bülow and Soderqvist 2014, 141) is an empowered population. Factors as diet, exercise and personal habits, are experienced as controllable and modifiable, thereby placing more responsibility and power on the individual. The concept of an empowered population has been embraced for example by health promotion and marketing discourses (Katz and Marshall 2003, 4) which means the individual is being held, partly, responsible for its own aging process. Though these discourses focus primarily on seniors (Katz and Marshall 2003, 5), in the past years an increasing focus on 'self-organization' of the individual has been a factor for the quality of life at all life stages (Sander et al. 2015, 187).

The focus on self-organization and the individual characterizes a specific culture which Gilleard and Higgs (2000, quoted in Katz and Marshall 2003, 5) have coined as the 'post-traditional culture', which stems from the proliferation of contingent life strategies. The concept of post-traditional culture emphasizes cultural processes like aging extending itself throughout the entirety of the human life course. Timelessness, impermanence and simultaneity are central assets in post-traditional culture, because all activities, including aging, have become personal, and lifelong experiences (Katz and Marshall 2003, 5). These factors of post-traditional culture overlap with the empowered self-organizing population and the life-course perspective. It reinforces the notion that aging is not something that can be assigned to a single life stage, that the responsibility for aging is focused on the individual and implies that the aging process is shaped by the socio-cultural context of the individual. This context is controllable and modifiable, and so the population is empowered to influence their aging process.

The elements described above are part of the development towards successful aging. This research however, focuses on a community-based project that has 'sustainable aging' as goal and we therefore use this term instead of successful aging. It is important to take several points into account. There is some controversy around the term 'successful aging' on which the concept of sustainable aging partly leans. Especially the word 'success' is highly relative and culturally constructed (Willcox et. al. 2007, 138). It is therefore important to again point

out the influence of the local cultural and social context (Willcox et. al. 2007, 138; Buch 2015, 278; Bülow and Soderqvist 2014, 145) on the aging process. We use the term sustainability, not only because it is a more objective term, but also because it fits within our research. The theoretical concept of sustainable aging has been used in other research. Nilsson (2015) has used the concept sustainable aging with mindfulness as an addition. Nilson's concept of mindful sustainable aging focuses on cognitive and physical well-being, but only has seniors as its target population. Also it is mainly focused on the health of the mind, where this research holds the body and the mind of equal value. We broaden the population to all ages and constructed the concept with the location and goal of this research in mind, therefore the outcome might not be generally applicable to the aging process of every human life.

2. A sustainable lifestyle (Vincent)

In this research sustainability is means the maintenance of a functioning body and mind of the individual. Based on Rowe and Kahn's (see Bülow and Söderqvist 2014, 141) concept of successful aging, sustainability in aging can be explained by not losing cognitive and physical functions over time. In a time of increasing disease risks such as obesity and cardiovascular diseases (Chan et al. 2009, 224) a healthy life in the present is fundamental for a healthy life in the future. In order to avoid disease risks, both the individual and environmental aspects have to be focused on sustainability (Panter-Brick 2014, 438). At the individual level this expresses itself by paying attention to weight management, diet and physical activity (Chan et al. 2009, 225). The environment then, is formed by hegemonic structures and social agents which are crucial in spreading ideas and beliefs about risks (Panter-Brick 2014, 437). Besides that, policy makers have the power to influence the needs and interests of people by marketing and program funding (Bone and Shediak-Rizkallah 1998, 105). Through this environment and the actors that shape it, a lifestyle is formed which is imposed on the individual. These environmental influences, together with choices made by individuals, construct the lifestyle of the people.

The way of creating a sustainable lifestyle is the normalization of a healthy lifestyle so that the maintenance of cognitive and physical functionality can be attained. An example of this is the way in which the role of sexual intercourse in people's lives has changed during the

20th century. Where a prudent sexual life used to be the norm, study showed that sexual activity was healthy and a necessary component of successful aging. This knowledge made people change their norms which resulted in widely accepted, more active, sexual habits (Katz and Marshal 2003, 7). A healthy lifestyle itself is not by definition sustainable, for it to be sustainable it has to be based on long-term maintenance (Chan et al. 2009, 91-92). That is why normalization is crucial to sustainability, as normalization is the shift of conscious behavior to natural behavior. The ultimate goal is thus to normalize a healthy way of living in the daily life. Then a healthy lifestyle is a sustainable lifestyle. Sustainability can thus be seen as a normalized healthy lifestyle. It is focused on taking care of the body and mind while being aware of the long-term consequences of the daily way of life.

As mentioned above, aging is a process that spans the entire human life course and is greatly affected by the social and cultural context one lives in. It not only encompasses the biological process of aging, but foremost the process of human development. Though the individual can influence this process it is important to note that this does not mean that one has complete control. The extent of empowerment is greatly influenced by local environments, access to resources, and social relations (Buch 2015, 278).

3. Lifestyle modification (Florian)

An important part of the definition of sustainable lifestyle has been described above as a normalized lifestyle. But what is lifestyle? Lifestyle is a construct that is formed by multiple factors. Giddens (1991, quoted in Lorenzen 2012, 97) states that lifestyles assist people in organizing self-identity and self-expression. They are routines and include the presentation of self, consumption, interaction, and settings. But lifestyle is more than routines. It embodies the patterns that develop and emerge from the dynamics of living in a society. Therefore, lifestyle is a process that develops and that a person coexists with through their entire life (Lee et al. 2014, 209). In this sense lifestyle coexists with the process of aging, which is also a lifelong process as mentioned above.

The foundation of lifestyle patterns is Bourdieu's concept of habitus. The strength of habitus lies in the reproduction of everyday practices, everyday patterns (Lorenzen 2012, 98). Habitus is the framework, a building block, for lifestyle. It reminds us of the structural

circumstances in which lifestyles exist. Habitus is a structure that is constructed. It leans on the active presence of past experiences (Lee et al. 2014, 209). These past experiences build a certain expectation among agents endowed with the same experiences. Practices are formed within a certain framework that is constructed by past experiences, and therefore judged as 'correct' practices (Bourdieu 1977, 73). By having common past experiences certain reactions and behavior can be expected from the people in your surroundings. This expectation creates patterns that are developed and emerge from the dynamics of living in a society (Lee et al. 2014, 209). As described by Lee et al., (2014:209) habitus is more reliable than formal rules and explicit norms because of the constancy it guarantees. Habitus thus creates rules of behavior that are tacit knowledge for people that share the same surroundings. This tacit knowledge is an aspect people rely on and expect from those around them. Yet sustainable aging aims on creating new lifestyles by normalizing practices. Habitus relies on past experiences that already exist. Though habitus plays a role in lifestyle patterns, creating new lifestyle patterns adds to the original concept of habitus and pushes it onto new terrain.

To strive for sustainable aging means to modify the lifestyle of the population in certain ways. Lifestyles are constrained by individual context, but they are not solely defined by it (Lorenzen 2012, 98). Research done on the original Blue Zones shows that communities that share a lifestyle that is based solely on the local environment have a higher chance to acquire exceptional longevity (Poulain, Herm and Pes 2013, 89). In most Western societies the contemporary globalization context determines diets. Most of these diets are high energy dense and low in fibre (Giampiccoli and Kalis 2012, 102-103). Modifying the lifestyle and striving for sustainable aging means that diets need to be modified as well. But the influence of the local environment entails more than just diet. As mentioned before, hegemonic structures and social agents are crucial in spreading ideas and beliefs about risks (Panter-Brick 2014, 437). In a risk based society everyday life is increasingly reflexive. People make conscious and unconscious choices based off of their environment (Lorenzen 2012, 98). If a lifestyle is to be modified the local population needs to be involved and engaged in the decision making of their individual lifestyle (Lee et al. 2014, 210). Also the local environment, mainly the advertising industry, needs to portray the modified lifestyle and

promote it (Katz and Marshall 2003, 5). If the local population is to be encouraged to modify their lifestyle, the local environment is a defining factor for success.

4. Community-based lifestyle modification (Vincent)

An empowered population could modify their lifestyle if they are involved and dedicated to a process of change. This bottom-up approach of modifying community lifestyle depends on different dynamics and connectedness within a community, which is why the meaning of community has to be clarified before anything can be said about its potential. A community is a space or place where a common issue or interest is shared between a group of people that are bound to each other by social or demographic grounds (Walter and Hyde 2012, 79). Although the people do not entirely know the rest of the community, the fact that they know their interests are shared, gives them the feeling of being part of a larger whole. This feeling of comradeship created within a community is based on Anderson's (1991, quoted in Kottak 2011, 141) term of an 'imagined' bond between people. In line with Gruzd et al. (2011, 1297-1298), this research states that although Anderson's imagined community is about nation-states, it can also be used for other types of communities. The idea that members of a community will never know the entire community they are in is central to the type of community this research is about. This form of community exists of a social construct, formed by different factors that influence and shape the way in which their common issue or interests is translated in a common being. The communication between social, economic, political and cultural entities within the community define how people in the community are related to their environment (Walter and Hyde 2012, 81).

The social aspect is the main determiner for creating a common being when looking at community building from a bottom-up approach. Wenger's (2015) concept of a 'community of practice' explains how a social bond of people is the basis for creating a community that is more than a geographical association. A community of practice is a group of people who share a collective interest which they practice together by interacting regularly. This is a way of learning and doing which aims at the inner drive of people to do so, by interacting with same minded individuals or groups. The community of practice is a result of human endeavor to practice and develop their shared passion (Wenger 2015, 1). Wenger's concept of

community of practice is based on small groups of people who most likely know their entire group. However, this research will be about communities of practice on a larger scale. A scale on which the community does not know all of its members, which is why a community of practice in this research must be interpreted as an imagined community of practice.

Within the context of sustainable aging and lifestyle, bottom-up community building is about changing and developing someone's own lifestyle to move towards sustainable aging. The bottom-up approach means that the modification of lifestyle must be a community-based initiative. A common passion for sustainable aging is a starting point in forming a community of practice. But the practicing of shared social interests is influenced by economic, political and cultural factors. Devotion to the common being depends on organizational structures, people's lifestyles, and (economic) resources (Wenger, McDermontt and Snyder 2002, 1-2). The necessity of having all these factors on one track is well noted by Walter and Hyde (2012, 83) who state that an overall shared consciousness is fundamental for the shift of merely living in a community to a feeling of community. Consciousness is what is achieved when the community is a community of practice, because then the members of the community are aware of their common being and shared interests. They together strive to develop their lifestyle in order to cultivate their community (Wenger 2015, 2). If this cultivation is to be sustainable, a strong imagination of common feeling must be built. In a community-based society such a sustainable community is built on own choices instead of implementation from greater parties. A community based on a shared lifestyle is more sustainable in modern society than the traditional organization of the past with less space for individual moral choices (Olssen 2002, 483-484). Because of that, the economic, political, and cultural factors have to adjust to the social fundament of the community.

As mentioned above, lifestyle was said to be assisting in organizing self-identity and self-expression. When self-identity is similar to that of other people's self-identity, it becomes a shared identity. Herein lies the social fundament of a sustainable built community. Self-identity is created by an individual choice of lifestyle. When one chooses a certain lifestyle this creates differences towards other people's lifestyles. Foucault (1972, quoted in Olssen 2002, 499) explains that this difference entails the creation of identity by connections and relations between people, instead of having the relation first and then fitting an identity within

it. Thus instead of being part of a community which one has to adjust its identity to, one can also first construct an identity, and then connect to others. Olssen (2002, 501) argues that difference goes together with otherness. Otherness itself creates a feeling of 'us' versus 'them', whereby the feeling of 'us' forms unity and identity by the similarities that are shared. This means that differences are only one side of the coin as similarities are the other. It is these similarities that are created by individual choices that are the basis of forming a sustainable community. The fact that these identities are individual choices make them contribute to the forming of a community of practice, in which a community-based formation of lifestyle connects people to each other and creates unity.

In order to make a lifestyle sustainable, normalization has to be achieved. Habitus is past experiences turned into natural behavior (Bourdieu 1977, 78) and the shift of conscious to unconscious (or natural) behavior is what normalization entails. Thus habitus can be said to be the normalized lifestyle at a certain moment of a certain group. The focus here is the group aspect, because habitus is about shared experiences that create a framework for expected behavior in the present (Bourdieu 1977, 73). The shifting of the habitus of a whole group is what a community-based lifestyle modification requires. But to do so people need to change lifestyle on an individual level first. By making conscious choices for certain practices in daily life, a different lifestyle is created by bringing together old and new habits to serve a new purpose (Lorenzen 2012, 95-96). As stated above, differences presuppose similarities, which is the fundament of communal identification (Olssen 2002, 501). Therefore, when this different lifestyle is shared with others, a community of practice emerges (Wenger, 2015, p. 1). Over time this can result in a normalization of these practices and shared experiences which will lead to a framework for expected behavior based on individual motives, and thus create a group with a modified habitus.

A change in habitus is a long-term, social process (Lorenzen 2012, 106; Wenger 2015, 1). Although the basis for a community-based lifestyle modification lie in social processes, there are other factors that ultimately will have to shift to accomplish lifestyle modification. The political, economic, and cultural factors influence social processes, and this local environment has to stimulate the lifestyle modification to make it work (Katz and Marshal 2003, 5; Wenger, McDermonntt, and Snyder 2002, 2). When this happens, a community as a

whole creates a new lifestyle based on the communal shared individual choices. Such a community-based lifestyle modification is a solid and sustainable method for eventually attaining a lifestyle of, for example, sustainable aging.

An example of how a community-based project influences community lifestyle is given by Stronza (2005), who conducted anthropological research on an ecotourism project in Peru. In the village Infierno, the project of creating a lodge called Posada Amazonas has changed the lifestyle of the people living in the community. Posada Amazonas is a community-based project whereby a lodge is created in a joint business venture between the local community and a private company that is active in tourism (Stronza 2005, 3). The community of Infierno and the company together strive to attract tourists to come to their lodge. Because the contract states that the community as a whole is involved in the organization of the project (although in reality there are for example gender inequality issues on this matter) lots of households are experiencing changes in lifestyles. Husbands or elder sons, for example, are spending time at the lodge with tourists or doing other business instead of farming at home. As a result of less farming activity, combined with financial profits, the people of Infierno no longer have to produce their own food, but can purchase it from elsewhere instead. Also there is enough income to purchase clothes and medicines (Stronza 2005, 13). Another example of changed culture was the fact that younger inhabitants of the Infierno community were looking at their Ese'jeja cultural roots in means of showing it to tourists, as a source of profit, instead of the traditional meanings it had to the people. One young inhabitant who had been involved in tourism from the beginning, showed Stronza how the tourism had changed his perception of his own community's culture. When confronting him with a picture of an older community member in traditional tunic, the youngster immediately saw marketing prospects in it (Stronza 2005, 14-15). The research done by Stronza is an example of how a community-based project can influence daily life on short term and change a community's lifestyle on long term. The common shared passion of building and maintaining the lodge has created a community of practice and a strong social fundament to make the project work. This community-based project turned out to be strong enough to modify people's lifestyle in order to make the project work.

Summary

We first focused on aging as a process that continues throughout one's entire life which is shaped by the social, political, economical and cultural environment one lives in and by individuals themselves. At the core of the argument Rowe and Kahn (see Bülow and Soderqvist 2014) made, is the empowerment of individuals to modify their aging process. By modifying the lifestyle it is possible through normalization of actions to attain a more sustainable lifestyle. Within this process towards normalization the environment has a crucial role. Attaining a sustainable lifestyle cannot be achieved if the environment does not get modified as well. Community-based initiatives have tried to modify their lifestyle, as we saw in Posada Amazonas, through a bottom-up approach and in some cases formed a community of practice, where the community strives for a common goal. These theoretical concepts describe the most desirable ways of lifestyle modification through a community-based project. The case study of this research, the Blue Zones Project, uses a community-by-community² approach itself, which will be explained in the following chapters about the context. After that, this research will move to the analysis of how the Blue Zones Project fits in the context of a community-based lifestyle modification towards a process of sustainable aging, as has been presented in the theoretical framework above.

² <http://www.iowahealthieststate.com/blue-zones> accessed on 20-06-16

Context

1. Introducing the Blue Zones (Vincent)

At this moment there are five places in the world that are identified as Blue Zones. These are Okinawa in Japan, Loma Linda in California, the Barbagia region of Sardinia in Italy, the Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica and the island of Ikaria in Greece. These places are limited regions in which the residents share a common lifestyle and environment. This results in an exceptional longevity for the people living in these places. Geographical isolation has protected these places from exposure to the rest of the world. Because of that, the Blue Zones communities maintained their traditional way of living for a long time, resulting in their longevity (Poulain, Herm and Pes, 2013). Dan Buettner, a journalist of National Geographic, was the person to define these areas as Blue Zones. He set up a team of scientists to do research in these areas, resulting in Buettner's first book on the Blue Zones with lessons for how to live longer. He based his lessons on the way they live in the Blue Zones (Buettner 2008). These lessons build on the so-called 'Power 9 Principles' (see figure 1) which are denominators that are commonly shared between the five zones. The nine denominators that are shown in figure 1 are clarified on the website of the Blue Zones³. The first is about *moving naturally*. Moving has to be integrated in daily activities such as gardening or cycling. A *purpose in life* is the second denominator. It is translated to answering the question "why I wake up in the morning". The *downshift*, number three, is about routines that shed stress. Everyone experiences stress, the question is how you deal with it. Fourth is the *80 % rule*, which says that you should stop eating when you are eighty percent full. The remaining twenty percent are said to be the difference between losing weight and gaining it. *Plant slant* is the fifth of the Power 9. This one focuses on eating healthy food,



Figure 1: Power 9 Principles of the Blue Zones Project

³ <http://www.bluezones.com/2014/04/power-9> accessed at 21-5-2016

which mostly exists of a plant based diet, limiting the amount of meat. *Wine @ 5*, the sixth denominator, states that you should drink a glass (or two) of red wine each day. Number seven, *family first*, is about the importance of having grandparents nearby, commitment to a life partner and investing time in one's own children. The eighth denominator stresses the *belonging* to a faith-based community as an important part of expanding life expectancy. Finally, the ninth lesson is about living in the *right tribe*. This means one has to be surrounded by people who support healthy behavior, because bad behavior is contagious. Having people with a healthy lifestyle around you protects one from unhealthy habits. Buettner believes these Power 9 to be the basis for living a longer and healthier life.

2. The Blue Zones Project (Vincent & Florian)

Out of the research on the Blue Zones and the lessons learnt from them, the Blue Zones Project started in 2009. This Project aims to bring the lessons learned from the Blue Zones into communities in the United States that have signed up to participate in this Project. The Blue Zones Project is explained as a community-by-community well-being improvement initiative to make healthy choices easier through permanent changes to environment, policy, and social networks. It uses the Power 9 Principles as a blueprint for how people within communities in the Blue Zones Project should live their lives (Carter 2015, 376). Up until today communities in nine different states have joined the Blue Zones Project where Iowa alone has fifteen communities⁴. The goal of the Project is to build a 'social environment to facilitate personal practices of healthy living' (Carter 2015, 380). It focuses on community-based strategies to promote health and foregrounds holistic ideas of well-being (Carter 2015, 375). The Project hopes to achieve these holistic ideas by applying a so called 'Life Radius Approach'. Buettner came up with the term 'life radius'. He describes it as the environment where people spend eighty percent of their time (Wizemann 2014, 10). The idea behind the Life Radius Approach is that numerous yet slight changes to the environment can nudge people towards healthy, responsible, and productive behaviors (Carter 2015, 375).

⁴ <https://communities.bluezonesproject.com/> accessed at 21-5-16

The Life Radius Approach is crucial within the Blue Zones Project and therefore a central theme within this research. The Blue Zones Project aims to make “healthy choices the easy choices” (Wizemann 2014, 22) by influencing the life radius. The life radius of people in Blue Zones Communities should be an area in which they are encouraged to make healthy life choices, which are concretized as non-smoking, eating vegetables, biking to work, volunteering, socializing and many more examples. This approach influences people without them necessarily noticing it. It is an alternative to people’s consciously made choices to change their lifestyle by going on a diet or going to the gym. Buettner found that those are good intentions but generally lose strength after a couple of months resulting in short term effects. The Life Radius Approach offers a solution for turning the short term effects of lifestyle changes into long term effects by making structural changes in people’s lives. The Blue Zones Project creates this stimulating environment by focusing on twelve “pillars”: the built environment, food policy, tobacco policy, employers, schools, restaurants, grocery stores, faith organizations, home, social network, volunteering, and finding purpose (Wizemann 2014, 11).

3. Healthcare context of the United States (Florian & Vincent)

The topic of sustainable aging discussed in the first section joins the contemporary intensified focus within the United States on awareness of an unhealthy lifestyle and aging populations (O’Neill 2009, 318). The U.S., for example, lacks behind in longevity when compared to other Western countries (Green and Fieldling 2011, 455). O’Neill (2009, 318) points out that health care reform should focus more on prevention of disease. One of the things that is part of this prevention is the psycho-social-behavioral basis for health and disease. This psycho-social-behavioral basis points at the individual lifestyle of people in the U.S.. The problem of the aging baby-boom generation right now in the U.S. is that they generally will need much health attention due to an increased life expectancy which gives more space for chronic diseases to emerge (O’Neill 2009, 319). According to Green and Fieldling (2011, 455) these chronic diseases are the result of the irresponsibility and inability of the poorly prepared U.S. people, who now have to take the consequences of an unhealthy lifestyle. This burden will have to be carried by the rest of the nation (O’Neill 2009, 319). So prevention of these

problems is what the contemporary U.S. health care is trying to achieve by shifting partially to a community-based healthcare system (O’Neill 2009, 319). With that context in mind Buettner set out in association with National Geographic to “reverse engineer longevity” (Wizemann 2014, 5). He licensed the Blue Zones Project and all of its associated trademarks to Healthways, a company that “provides wellness and disease prevention services for patients via health plans, hospitals, government programs and others” (Carter 2015, 378).

4. Cedar Falls, Iowa (Florian)

The fieldwork of this research took place in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Cedar Falls is located in Black Hawk County and their population is estimated at 39,260⁵. Their sister-city Waterloo directly borders the city on the north-east side and is almost twice as big. Together with some smaller towns in the area they are referred by the inhabitants as the ‘Cedar Valley’. Cedar Falls is home to the University of Northern Iowa and attracts a lot of young adults because of this. The community mostly practices Christian faith traditions and most inhabitants have a Caucasian roots. Cedar Falls was one of the first certified Blue Zones Communities in the world⁶. It started when in 2011 the Iowa Governor launched the statewide Blue Zones initiative, and right now Iowa has fifteen certified Blue Zones Communities⁷.

On a local level there has been put work in grounding the Blue Zones Project in the community of Cedar Falls. To become a certified Blue Zones Community, the Cedar Falls community had to show they are willing to commit to the Blue Zones Project. This means that the people living in Cedar Falls have to support the entering of the Project in their life environment. For the organizations in Cedar Falls this means a certain percentage of restaurants, companies, schools, and grocery stores have to join the Blue Zones Project⁸. On January 22 2014 Cedar Falls reached these requirements and became a certified Blue Zones Community⁹. As of today Cedar Falls is still actively committed to the Blue Zones Project by organizing several activities. In the next chapters this study will elaborate on details about the

⁵ http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml accessed at 21-5-16

⁶ <https://www.bluezonesproject.com/communities/iowa/news/1444> accessed at 21-5-16

⁷ <https://www.bluezones.com/community/iowa/> accessed at 21-5-16

⁸ <https://www.bluezones.com/services/our-approach/> accessed at 21-5-16

⁹ <https://www.bluezonesproject.com/communities/iowa/news/1444> accessed at 21-5-16

certification process and specification of the part that the community, being individuals and organizations, has played in bringing the Blue Zones Project to Cedar Falls. Further there will be an analysis of how the community of Cedar Falls is nowadays still implementing and executing the Blue Zones Blueprint in their community's environment and lifestyle.

Empirical chapters

1. Organizational structure of the Blue Zones Project in Cedar Falls, Iowa (Florian)

Cedar Falls has been a Blue Zones Community since 2012. Since then, the Blue Zones Project has tried to modify the lifestyle of the people in Cedar Falls by rooting itself in different facets of the community. To analyze the practices of the Blue Zones Project we first need to unravel the layers of the Blue Zones Project as an organization in itself. This chapter aims on giving an overview of the organizational structure from a macro to micro level and thereby contributes to the question in which ways the Blue Zones Project is a community-based project and if it is a community of practice (Wenger 2015).

As was mentioned in the context, after his research on the original Blue Zones, Dan Buettner wanted to bring the principles he found to the American communities. He started Blue Zones, LLC (Limited Liability Company) as the organization that controls the ideology of the Blue Zones, the Power 9, but he needed a partner to bring the Project to the American communities. To achieve this, he started a partnership with the health organization Healthways. Healthways is the leader of all of the Blue Zones Communities in the United States and is the owner of the Blue Zones Project brand and everything connected to it. Buettner is now head of Blue Zones, LLC which exists out of Buettner and a small team of people mainly to help him in his research. On an organizational level Blue Zones, LLC has nothing to do anymore with the Blue Zones Project. Healthways together with the health corporation Blue Cross Blue Shield, funds and organizes the Blue Zones Project in most areas. Blue Cross Blue Shield takes care of most of the funding on local levels and Healthways is the organizational head that structures the projects on the ground.

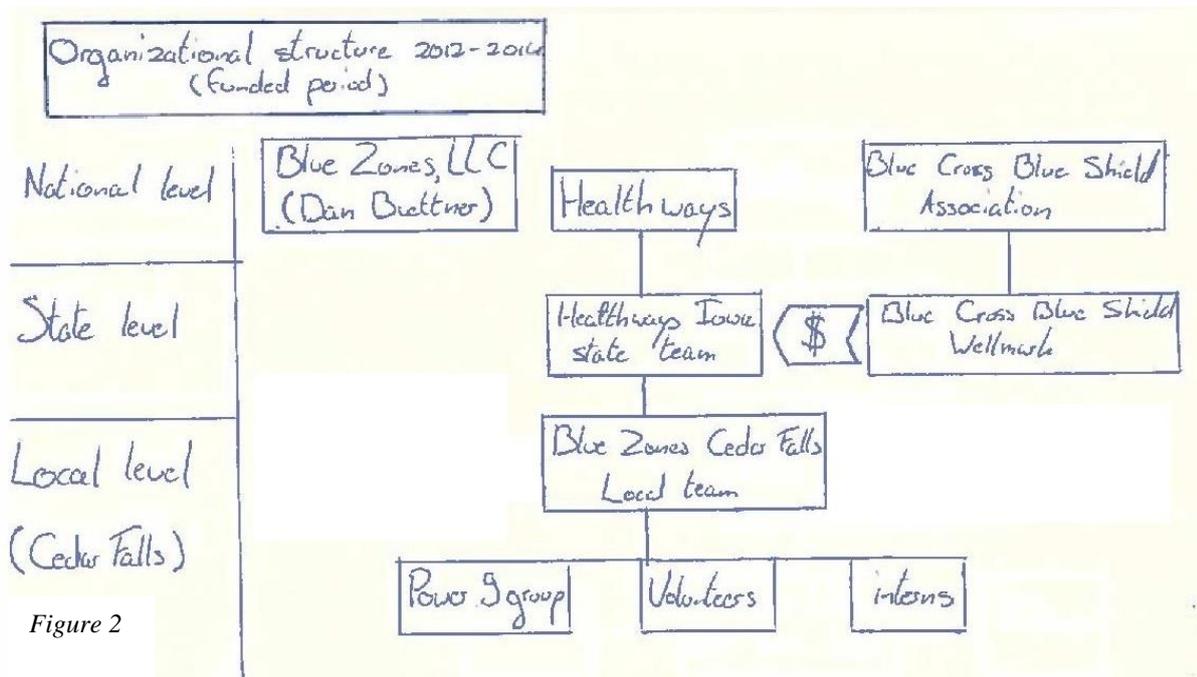


Figure 2

Most states have their own branch of Blue Cross Blue Shield that funds the Blue Zones Communities. Iowa was one of the states that picked up the Blue Zones Project partly because it was in line with the Healthiest State Initiative that governor Branstad launched in 2011. In the case of Iowa, the local Blue Cross Blue Shield branch is Wellmark. Wellmark funded the Blue Zones Project in Iowa throughout the period of 2012-2014. For further references this will be referred to as the ‘funded period’. The initial program allowed ten big cities (population 10,000 or above) and ten small cities (population below 10,000) to become designated as Blue Zones Communities. The funding for these twenty potential Blue Zones Communities was a shared fund of roughly 22 million dollars. Healthways and Wellmark decided to do the designation process in three waves. The first wave, of which Cedar Falls was a part, was entitled to two years of funding consisting of a part of that shared fund. Cedar Falls entered the designation process in 2012 and together with Healthways multiple teams were put into place to organize the Cedar Falls Blue Zones Project. The organizational structure that followed is displayed in figure 2. As stated above, Healthways makes sure the projects run well on the ground. To make sure this happens every state gets assigned a team by Healthways. As Jenny Fisher stated: “*There’s a state Iowa team and they’re a resource for us. The state team is in Des Moines and are from Healthways.*”¹⁰ The state teams are a resource, not the organizers, for the local Blue Zones teams and in the funded period the Iowa state team had four full-time employees, a vice president of the Blue Zones Project, organizational leader, engagement leader, and a project manager. Through collaboration the local teams can indicate what kind of subjects play on the local levels and communicate this to the Healthways state team. The Cedar Falls Blue Zones team existed out of six full-time paid employees. Besides those six people there was a ‘Power 9 group’ that existed out of nine unpaid members that were connected to important institutions in the community like the volunteer center, ten interns, and several volunteers. Throughout the funded period the Cedar Falls Blue Zones team held thirty members of which nine members were full-time paid staff.

¹⁰ Semi-structured interview Jenny Fisher, 24-03-16

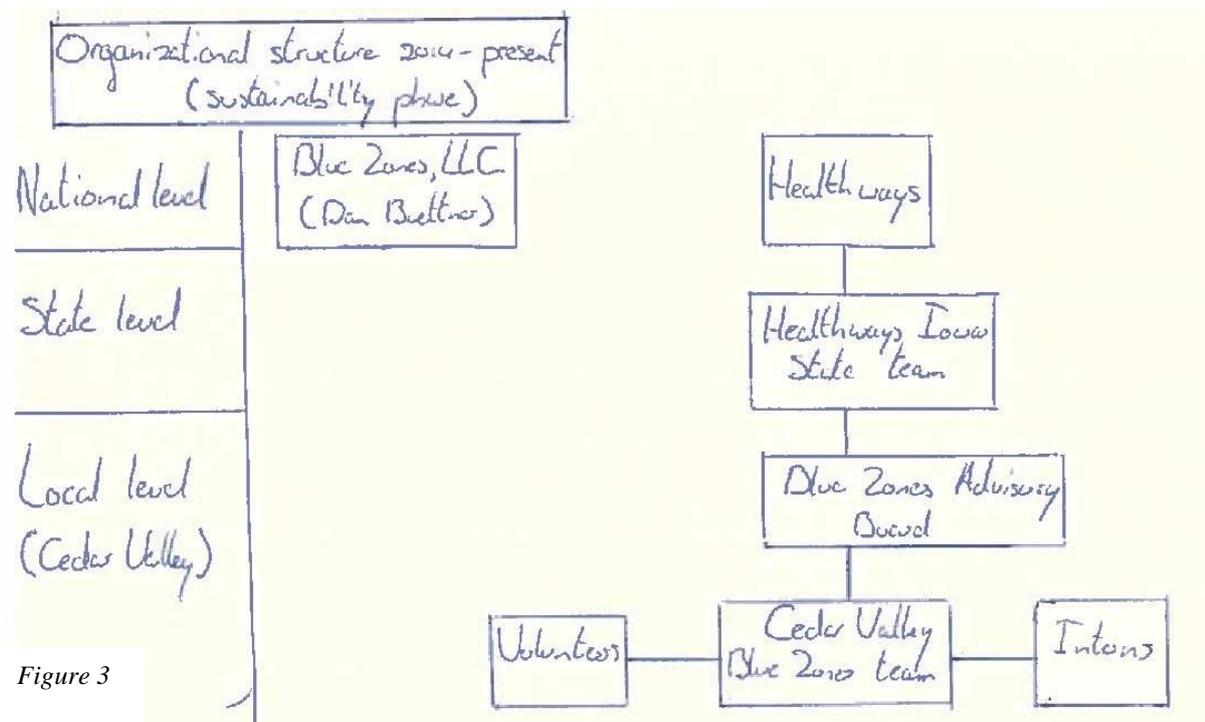


Figure 3

As of May 2014 the funding from Wellmark stopped and the Cedar Falls Blue Zones Project entered what they call the ‘sustainability phase’. The organizational structure was reduced to what was present in Cedar Falls when we were there through January and April 2016 as illustrated in figure 3. Immediately noticeable is that Wellmark no longer funds the Project. This meant drastic changes in the employee numbers. The Cedar Falls Blue Zones team is now reduced to two part-time paid employees that have to share twenty hours a week. Also the Cedar Falls Blue Zones Project merged with the Blue Zones Project that is taking place in sister city Waterloo. The two projects together now form the Cedar Valley Blue Zones Project. The Power 9 group is reformed into a Blue Zones Advisory Board consisting of fifteen people. This advisory board leads the Cedar Valley Blue Zones Project as of 2014 and gets together quarterly. The local Blue Zones team are now just the employees in the community that do the groundwork and try to push the community further towards happier and healthier lifestyles.

The two part-time paid employees in Cedar Valley both have their own responsibilities. Jenny Fisher is the main contact person for the Cedar Valley Blue Zones Project and takes care of official business, consisting mainly out of writing grants to try to get money for supplies. Nancy Wenner takes care of the worksites, restaurants, and schools that are connected to the Blue Zones Project or want to become part of it. Besides Jenny and Nancy, there was an intern, Ruth Tanner, that worked full-time for a year on the Blue Zones

Project in Cedar Valley. Because Ruth was a full-time intern, she could devote a lot of time to all facets of the Blue Zones Project and was therefore invested in all Blue Zones Project matters. As of our arrival Ruth was leaving the Blue Zones local team. According to many of our informants the transition from the funded period to the sustainability phase took a toll on the Blue Zones Project. One of the worksite leaders stated the following about the funded period:

“There was more push back then and more talking about it. Something that would let people consider to go to activities. I know they had a lot of students as volunteer. I think like [Stephanie] was saying in those two years there was a big push and a lot more people.”¹¹

In the funded period the bigger group of paid employees allowed the Blue Zones Project to be more present in Cedar Falls and achieve more goals. This does not mean that the Project in the sustainability phase no longer sets and achieves goals, but the biggest goal in the sustainability phase is to maintain what has been built over the course of those two funded years. Goals for the Blue Zones Project are put down in the Blue Zones Blueprint at the beginning of the year. The Cedar Valley Blue Zones Project does however still try to expand the Blue Zones network throughout Cedar Falls by approaching new organizations, worksites, churches, schools, restaurants, and grocery stores. If we now take a close look at the organizational structure of the Blue Zones Project, we see that the Project is not truly a community-based project. The community of Cedar Falls does all of the work on a local level, but Healthways is still higher up the chain, though their function is more facilitating than organizing. The Blue Zones Project does fit more into Wenger’s (2015) concept of the community of practice. The section below we will elaborate on this.

When we arrived in Cedar Falls the Blue Zones Project was already established within the community and had many organizations that were connected to the Project. Organizations that are connected to the Blue Zones Project are ‘designated’. This means that they have gone through the designation process of becoming a Blue Zones Worksite, Church, Grocery Store, etcetera. This process begins by an organization indicating that they want to become a

¹¹ Semi-structured interview Stephanie Parker and Joyce Clark, 29-03-16

designated site or if an organization is approached by a Blue Zones team member. The next step is that one of the Blue Zones team members helps assess the site how many criteria they fulfill to become a designated site. This is done by going through a list of items that differs for each type of organization. All items they check off need some kind of prove, photographs or documentation, to send to the Healthways state team for review. The Blue Zones team collects this prove and sends it to the state team as soon as the site has done enough items to accumulate the points that are necessary for them to become designated. Once the state team approves the application, the site becomes Blue Zones designated and receives a plaque or sticker to put on their door, and also receives free marketing done by the Blue Zones Project through Facebook, Twitter, and at Blue Zones stands. Throughout this designation process the team always keeps close tabs on the site that wants to become designated, as Nancy explains:

“(…) we do help them with healthy items, we basically persuade them by doing as much of the work for them as possible. There’s only so much you can do and I can’t get their policies and procedures without them giving them to me, but persuading them by making it as easy as possible.”¹²

Besides these benefits offered by the Blue Zones Project there are other motivations for organizations to become a designated Blue Zones site. You become part of the Blue Zones circle in Cedar Falls and get recognition for that by the community, you decrease your health insurance rates, and as an employer you set up wellness policies that attract new employees. Nancy, part-time employee for the Blue Zones local team, explains the benefits of becoming a designated worksite, putting wellness policies into place, and how companies confirm that they changed their policies:

“(…) if you can become a designated worksite you are providing more benefits for your employees, because you have put some of the checklist items into policy. You can’t get around some good wellness policies (…). For an employer if I have a large enough company and enough employees then policies and procedures would show that I am more committed (…). They need to show us prove that they have that policy and procedure. In some cases, you have to take photographs of things. In some cases, I

¹² Semi-structured interview Nancy Wenner, 09-03-16

have to copy documents or they have to send in documents or things like that. It takes hours to do on our end but on their end as well.”¹³

Once policies are in place they become rules that need to be followed. These are hard to remove and in many cases make sure that a true effort is being made to becoming a healthier organization. Despite these many benefits, there are various problems with becoming a designated worksite that crop up throughout the process. According to our informants the size of the organization plays a big role. Large organizations have more resources to put into these kind of projects and some smaller shops or churches don't even have policies, which makes accumulating the needed set of points impossible. For these kind of small organizations, the Cedar Valley Blue Zones Project came up with the option of becoming a Blue Zones supporter. This removes the need to acquire a certain amount of points, but still allows organizations to show they are committed to healthy lifestyles. Another problem that came up throughout our interviews is that some organizations get through the designation process, but after they get designated are no longer prioritizing wellness and health in their organization. One of the items on the check-lists for designation was having a walking path in the vicinity on which one of our informants that works for the Blue Zones Project gave an example about:

*“None that stand out that did a horrible job but definitely some that were just ‘check the box’. ‘Oh yeah we have a walking path’, and then just check it. Everyone has a sidewalk outside. Indications that they didn’t really truly capture the meaning of why they were doing it. They were literally just trying to get through the designation process.”*¹⁴

This captures organizations that merely go through the motions to get the plaque and not grasp the mentality of the Blue Zones Project. There are however many organizations who have gone to great lengths to improve their wellness policies and the lifestyles that employees or customers get into contact with through their organization. The key difference that informants told us between these organizations is the people that support the Project: *“The biggest difference, that’s going to be the difference no matter what organization or what type*

¹³ Semi-structured interview Nancy Wenner, 07-03-16

¹⁴ Semi-structured interview Stephanie Parker and Joyce Clark, 29-03-16

of organization you're working with. The people, how passionate they are about it."¹⁵ Organizations that actively changed and modified their lifestyle through the Blue Zones Project always have leaders that know the meaning why they are doing it. The Blue Zones Project calls these leaders 'champions'. Stephanie, who is a worksite leader for the Blue Zones local team, gave a good example of how these champions can drive an organization:

*"Their HR manager really took the initiative to a new level there (...) She truly did care and believe in the Blue Zones concept. She made this huge sign five foot by four foot, just about Blue Zones in general, the nine principles so it was a big sign as employees walked into their work area, boom, right there. Just as an awareness reminder piece. She hosted one of our worksite lunch and learns for various employers to come to their worksite. So she really took initiative. She went above and beyond for what needed to be done, because she really cared about it and believed in it for their employees. She wanted to make sure that they made the educated decisions."*¹⁶

According to our informants' awareness and education are where the true success of the Blue Zones Project has been noticed. People living in Cedar Falls that participate in the Project are more aware of their lifestyle choices and know more about why some things are healthy and others are unhealthy. By creating awareness and educating people, the Blue Zones Project creates a group of people that strive towards the same goals. This is in line with Wenger's (2015) concept of a community of practice. In the following chapter we will look to the role Blue Zones designated organizations play in creating awareness, educating the community of Cedar Falls, and look deeper into what kind of community of practice the Blue Zones Project creates.

2. Organizations in Cedar Falls (Florian)

The Blue Zones Project tries to modify the lifestyles of people living in Cedar Falls by 'making the healthy choice, the easier choice'. The Blue Zones Project tries to spread this motto as much as they can. The Project focuses itself on the entirety of the community and is

¹⁵ Semi-structured interview Nancy Wenner, 09-03-16

¹⁶ Semi-structured interview Stephanie Parker and Joyce Clark, 29-03-16

therefore present not just in one place, but tries to be present in all environments of the Cedar Falls community, especially the environments in which we make daily choices on how we live. This means that as mentioned earlier, the Blue Zones Project can be found at all levels of education, grocery stores, restaurants, churches, worksites, but also outdoors on the streets that people use daily.

Cedar Falls as a community is not segregated. Multiple informants stated that there are only small differences between the social classes and the majority of people living in Cedar Falls are Caucasian. People living in Cedar Falls take pride in saying they live there. At the same time local organizations also take pride in being established in Cedar Falls. Many organizations see it as their job to contribute to the community. Pastor Richard of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, describes its role as creating a place where people can meet. By organizing activities not just for the congregation of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, but for everyone who wants to attend, they add to the feeling of community in Cedar Falls. There are potluck's, bicycle and sport activities organized by the church. Another example is the chain grocery store Hy-Vee that tries to focus on healthy products and educating her customers. By organizing a lot of side activities like cooking classes, and nutrition classes they try to inform customers and make the community of Cedar Falls healthier. Both of these examples are also Blue Zones designated sites and form an example not only of the role designated sites have in educating the community and creating awareness about healthy lifestyle choices, but also how together these organizations are part of an imagined community of practice.

As mentioned earlier Blue Zones designated organizations are present in every type of sector and every sector has its own role within society. The Blue Zones Project adjusts their designation check-lists for every sector and in doing so reaffirms some of the roles sectors have. There are though, many similarities in lifestyle changes that the Project tries to make. Common changes that can be found in every sector are mostly food and exercise driven. Replacing or removing unhealthy snacks, serving water instead of soda, and encouraging physical activity. These similarities translate themselves in different ways. Bethlehem Lutheran Church for example, holds potluck's where different home cooked meals are brought to the church for a lunch after the service. Pastor Richard of Bethlehem Lutheran Church indicated that before the Blue Zones Project they had more unhealthy snacks and

foods at these activities, but since they aligned themselves with the Power 9 Principles they have more healthy substitutes available. The unhealthy snacks are not gone though, and this is the rule for other organizations as well. As pastor Richard explained:

“If you walk out you’ll see that we have a little clear plastic canister full of almonds, that used to be full of M&M’s. So we changed our eating habits, and not that if someone that has a special occasion and brings a cake we won’t eat it or anything but the stuff that you just eat out of habit, if we make healthier choices available, people eat more healthy and they don’t miss the chocolate all that much.”¹⁷

By taking these smaller snack moments and modifying them to provide healthier options, Bethlehem Lutheran Church contributes to changing eating habits of its congregation. Another example comes from one of the elementary schools that is located in Waterloo. Here they struggled with removing snack habits, because they were integrated into the celebration of birthdays for children. The staff at Orange Elementary at first could not see why the children could not get a snack at their birthday, but as physical activities teacher Linda explained:

“(…) they also get it at when there’s twenty-one some kids in the class, plus then you go home and if they have split families they have mom and they have dad, so how many times do they have this birthday thing. Can you still celebrate it, absolutely, but can you celebrate it around healthy things or just you know, honoring them for their birthday (…) something that doesn’t have to be around food.”¹⁸

This way Orange Elementary School tries to modify the eating habits of the children, just like Bethlehem Lutheran Church tries to modify the eating habits of its congregation. These changes underline the argument made about normalizing choices. Through these modifications that organizations make they contribute to the process of normalizing a new and healthier lifestyle which would lead to a more sustainable lifestyle (Chan et al. 2009).

Orange Elementary also shows how important Blue Zones champions are in achieving lifestyle modification. According to informants, for the Blue Zones principles to take root in

¹⁷ Semi-structured interview pastor Richard Harper, 02-03-16

¹⁸ Semi-structured interview Kimberley Vann and Linda Parsons, 09-03-16

an organization, the leadership needs to be behind it as well. We experienced that the North American people in Cedar Falls we talked to have a different work ethic than we are used to, and therefore constantly have a lot of workload. This means that initiatives like the Blue Zones Project can fall into a category where organizations don't want to devote time to. According to informants though, the more passionate the people behind the Project, the more success it will have. At Orange Elementary the principal and physical activities teacher were passionate about the Project and they devoted a lot of time to make changes in their school to make the healthier choice the easier choice, not only for children, but also for the staff. They take the same approach to convincing their staff as Nancy takes on convincing organizations to join the Project, by doing all the work for them so they just need to get on board with the idea:

“(...) we don't want to make it difficult, we don't want to make it more work. So we provided all the information and here's the why, here's the information we're going to give to parents (...) So let's give them the routine of it and then it's easier to adopt when we officially go over (...) we went from encourage, strongly encourage, to required.”¹⁹

The results of this approach are evident at Orange Elementary. Because the principal puts so much effort in setting up rules and policies that uphold the Power 9 Principles, the school staff got healthier. According to principal Kimberley Vann, the pounds shed in total at Orange Elementary School is noticeable and multiple staff members pointed towards the Blue Zones Project as the catalyzer for their loss of pounds and healthier lifestyles. At Orange Elementary School the Blue Zones Project raised awareness, educated the staff, and made significant behavioral changes for people. This shows the Project on its best and also how effective leadership is in modifying lifestyles. Yet there are also many problems with the execution of the Blue Zones Project. We have visited multiple restaurants and grocery stores that are Blue Zones designated sites. We asked employees about the Blue Zones Project, what they knew about it, what it meant for the organization, and how it changed the worksite itself. Many times we encountered employees that did not know that they were a designated site, or even

¹⁹ Semi-structured interview Kimberley Vann and Linda Parsons, 09-03-16

what the Blue Zones Project was. One employee working at the grocery store Hy-Vee told us it was a government organized project. A Blue Zones designated site cannot represent the principles if its employees do not know what the Project is. This is a problem the Blue Zones local team constantly struggles with. They want employees to be aware and educated of the Project so they can spread the ideas and represent the Project. However, many employees at grocery stores and restaurants are college students that go to school at the University of Northern Iowa located in Cedar Falls. Yet, many employees are students. Therefore, grocery stores, restaurants, and local shops who rely on those students have high turnovers and do not have the resources to educate their employees about the Blue Zones Project. Though many organizations in Cedar Falls know the Blue Zones Project, even the designated sites prioritize other topics above promoting the Blue Zones name among their employees. If the employees don't know what the Blue Zones Project is, why should the customer then care? This is a major hurdle for the Blue Zones Project, because Americans eat out of house quite often because of their busy schedules, and the restaurant sector is a place where the Project could really make a lot of change towards healthier lifestyles.

This problem emphasizes the importance of local shops, restaurants, and other commercial organizations in Cedar Falls. These locally owned organizations are a big part of the community of Cedar Falls. Most of them are located on Main Street in Cedar Falls and therefore create a place where all people of Cedar Falls come to. Besides restaurants there are a plethora of shops here as well which includes thrift shops, clothing stores, and multiple art and decoration shops. The local theatre and children's clothing shop are also Blue Zones supporters. The importance of locally owned shops is best described by one of our informants:

“Without the locally owned establishments I don't think it [Blue Zones Project] could have been done. And I don't think we would have the great things we have in this community without the locally owned businesses whether it would be a restaurant or a sporting store, bike shop, they lead everything in terms of healthy lifestyles and the chains and the super stores really don't contribute at all. If anything they suck money out of the community where locally owned stores (...) they got more resources to

reinvest in the community and that reinvestment can come in many forms. It can be support a bike or run club or support the trails."²⁰

A lot of shops and restaurants also function as meeting points for walking groups, bike groups, and community gatherings like the Cedar Falls Rotary Club. These shops and restaurants all influence the lifestyle of the community and it is therefore necessary that the Blue Zones Project puts a focus on these locally owned businesses, but designated sites are irregular in which of the items they pledged to do, they actually do. The high turnover rate contributes to this, but especially restaurants have other problems that hold back promoting the Blue Zones principles. First of all, the Blue Zones designation process asks restaurants to change their menu's to have at least three healthy options wherein salads do not count. This means the restaurant has to buy new ingredients, give their recipes to the Blue Zones team, and most of them have to redo their menu. These all add up to costs that most restaurants cannot always pay. The solution to this problem is to have a side menu which holds the Blue Zones items. Yet these side menus are not always effective. When I once went out to dinner at a local designated restaurant and asked for the Blue Zones menu, the employee did not know what I meant so I just got handed the normal menu. I took extra time to try to identify the Blue Zones items on the menu, but I could not find a good indication. Eventually I ordered what I thought had to be a Blue Zones item. When I was waiting for my food I played around with the items on the table and noticed an extra menu holder. I flipped it over a couple of times and there I found the Blue Zones menu. This could have been prevented if the employee knew what the Blue Zones menu was. Take in regard also that I knew that the restaurant was designated, customers that do not know it is will have a harder time finding the healthier options on the menu.

The Blue Zones Project has now been active for four years in Cedar Falls. The local team is trying hard to make sure the Project stays in the public space by being present in the community with booths at grocery stores, health fairs, and by making sure the designated sites do what they pledged to do on their check-lists. This all has to be done mainly by the two part-time employees, Nancy and Jenny, that the local team has. By making sure the Project

²⁰ Semi-structured interview Robert Nelson, 10-03-16

stays active at organizations, people in the community get into contact with it more often and ensures that they stay engaged with the Project. However, the level of engagement is determined by the interaction between the people and organizations. When organizations do not get feedback on what they do from the community, they think the Blue Zones Project is not worth their time, which leads to less visibility for the community, which on their turn have nothing to feedback upon. The Blue Zones Project tries to attend this interaction by focusing on success stories. One example is a woman that through the Blue Zones Project lost over 100 pounds and now attends cooking classes related to the Blue Zones Project every week. Another success story is of a woman that through purpose workshops offered by the Blue Zones Project, found out what she really wanted to do in her life and switched careers. These stories are spread throughout the community and directly link happier and healthier lifestyles to the Blue Zones Project. Still upholding engagement is hard for the Blue Zones team, organizations, and eventually the entire community. The Blue Zones team is spread thin with only two part-time employees, organizations eventually move on to supporting other projects, and without the presence of the Blue Zones Project in the community as it used to be, the message the Project tries to spread fades. Joyce, a student at the local university who was also an intern at the Blue Zones Project, compares how the Blue Zones Project used to be promoted and how it is promoted now:

“There’s not as much talk about Blue Zones or as much engagement in the social networks like Facebook and Twitter and stuff. So it kind of dissipated a little bit, where initially it was a big push.”²¹

The change the Blue Zones Project aimed for always was a long term goal. With low funding, a small team, and fading interest, the Blue Zones Project might not have had enough time to make lasting changes. There are however organizations like Orange Elementary School, that picked up the Project as best they could and made long lasting changes. Another last good example comes from the retirement community Western Homes where Alicia Janson provides the work out classes for residents:

²¹ Semi-structured interview Stephanie Parker and Joyce Clark, 29-03-16

“I was happy to get one person to a class, now I get five till ten, sometimes I have in my residents’ classes thirty people. It’s going to grow and it will continue to grow, like I said before, with this wellness center being built it is really focusing on wellbeing improving people’s lives in any way shape or form.”²²

The Blue Zones Project in Cedar Falls has put into motion some changes towards healthier lifestyles in organizations big and small, but also in people’s personal lifestyles. The following chapters will delve into the influence of the Blue Zones Project at a more individual level in the community of Cedar Falls.

3. Creating a healthy lifestyle (Vincent)

With the arrival of the Blue Zones Project the community of Cedar Falls has shown their interest in creating a healthy lifestyle. Besides the focus on organizational actors in the community, the Project aims to get the inhabitants of Cedar Falls to change their habits as well. Before the Blue Zones Project arrived in 2012 the inhabitants of Cedar Falls had to show their willingness to do so by signing the Blue Zones Pledge that opted for lifestyle changes. Up until today, 13.415²³ inhabitants of the city have signed this pledge. By presenting people this pledge, the Blue Zones Project made its entrance into the community and people’s minds. Nowadays there is a group of motivated people who are actively practicing and promoting the Blue Zones principles. But not all people of Cedar Falls necessarily do so, at least not consciously, which points out an important part of the Blue Zones Project in Cedar Falls. There are two levels of participation that we can distinguish from each other. First, there are the group of people that consciously strive for sustainable aging by living according to (some of the) the Blue Zones principles. This group of people is part of the imagined community of practice as presented in the literature study. Second, there is the majority of Cedar Falls who probably know the Blue Zones Project (a lot of them will have signed a pledge at least once), but have not consciously made lifestyle changes towards the Blue Zones principles. By means of the Life Radius Approach that we presented in the context the Blue Zones Project aims to

²² Semi-structured interview Alicia Janson, 22-03-16

²³ Cedar Valley Blue Zones Project databank 7-3-2016

modify these people's environment in order to (unconsciously) make them move towards a healthier lifestyle. The two groups will be discussed more detailed below.

The first level of participation is the group that consciously tries to implement the Power 9 Principles in their daily life. Their motivation comes from their confidence that living according to the Blue Zones principles will give them benefits later in life. This group is motivated by their common goal for living healthy and sustainable aging. Reasons for them to modify their lifestyle are mainly that they are driven by the ideology of Buettner and the Blue Zones Project, motivated through (former) personal illness, dedication to their family (mostly children), or having a personal interest in habits that match the Power 9 Principles. All these reasons are backed by the knowledge that their lifestyle is or was unhealthy. And even within this group, the Blue Zones Project plays two different roles. For some people the Blue Zones Project was an eye-opener and a motivator to start living differently, as an informant described:

'So my days were completely scheduled out, and so college was the most unhealthy I have ever been in my life. And then towards the end of college I slowed down a little. But I really started to pay attention to my health and I started working with Blue Zones, and over the summer I would fall in and adopted these principles',²⁴

So for some people the Blue Zones Project was a way to start living healthier. Other people already did so, and for them the Blue Zones Project helped in making living healthy more tangible, accessible, and gave them a handle to push it further. For example, for the people who were already using their bikes the influence of the Project made biking more accessible and acceptable in the community. One informant, who has been opting for a more walk- and bike friendly community for years, pointed out:

'I wouldn't say it changed my behavior at all, because I was already doing things. If anything, I think the benefit was it got more people to participate and accept these

²⁴ Semi-structured interview Ruth Tanner, 22-2-2016

concepts, Blue Zones concepts, which is good for the community. (...) Blue Zones helped with that discussion to change a little bit of the bike culture’’²⁵

These quotes illustrate the part of the community that want to see Cedar Falls turn into a healthier community. They are actively involved in promoting and establishing a healthier environment, mindset and lifestyle, and are part of the community of practice because of their human endeavor to practice and develop their shared passion (Wenger 2015, 1). Their endeavor is present in Cedar Falls through volunteering directly for the Blue Zones Project, teaching in gardening, and presenting Blue Zones principles through their job in the church, school, retirement community home, as volunteer or as entrepreneur. There are also people who have a personal dedication to, for example, make the community more bike- and walkable by participating in and launching local initiatives that help the community towards that. The community of Cedar Falls is a community where such community-based initiatives are welcomed. An example of such an initiative is the Local Food Coop which is an initiative started by inhabitants who wanted a grocery store in downtown Cedar Falls that would only sell local food. It is funded through investments by local inhabitants and they expect to be able to realize their project in a couple of years.

This group of dedicated people represent the Blue Zones lifestyle. However, there is a majority among the inhabitants of Cedar Falls that does not necessarily follow the principles presented by the Blue Zones. This is where the Life Radius Approach of the Blue Zones Project shows its value. Because people make conscious and unconscious choices based off of their environment (Lorenzen 2012, 98), the Project aims to influence people’s lifestyles by creating a healthy environment. The Project’s slogan ‘‘making the healthy choice the easy choice’’ points at their focus on creating an area in which living healthy is the most common lifestyle. So although these people may not say ‘‘I will start eating more vegetables’’ or ‘‘I will ride my bike to work’’, their environment should encourage them to do so. The former Mayor Siler, who resigned last year, told about how Buettner had presented his ideas about this to him, he said:

²⁵ Semi-structured interview Robert Nelson, 10-3-2016

‘‘To me he was trying to make a change in behavior. Like it affects individuals, but he was trying to make the community make the right choice the easier choice. Less French fries, more vegetables and fruits, working with school cafeterias and launching more walking and biking. So city policies trying to make the government to put in more sidewalks and bike trails.’’²⁶

This is where the group of people who are actively helping to change the environment of the community can influence their fellow inhabitants’ habits. For example, the previously mentioned Health and Wellness employer of the retirement community home is basing her program on the Blue Zones principles, making the inhabitants practice them without knowing it necessarily. The examples given before about Bethlehem Lutheran Church and Orange Elementary School show how such organizations guide people towards the Blue Zones lifestyle. Also the community of Cedar Falls is proud about their biking trail, there is many promotion and usage of them, and they are constantly being extended. The rise of interest in local growers resulted in having Farmers Markets twice a week from May to October, which are very popular and are only attracting more inhabitants. Even the grocery stores parade with their ‘‘Buy Fresh, Buy Local’’ program. These are all examples of local dynamics that push the community lifestyle towards the Blue Zones principles. Two quotes illustrate the importance of unconscious and conscious choices:

‘‘(...) it is a habit. It is like that coffee, I got coffee with cream and milk and fat in it. Everywhere you look... look at their desserts or the things they have for breakfast and snacks here. Most of it is muffins and cookies and cakes. We aren’t given all choices in a lot of places where we go.’’²⁷

‘‘I mean there is lots of good options of great restaurants and places to eat, where I can take my family and still promote my own choices. In my last community I would not have been able to do that, there weren’t those choices’’²⁸

²⁶ Semi-structured interview Jeffrey Siler, 3-3-2016

²⁷ Semi-structured interview Jana Fortin, 28-2-2016

²⁸ Semi-structured interview Paul Paille, 29-3-2016

The first quote demonstrates how the environment unconsciously stimulates people to make the unhealthy choice. The second one shows the importance of having different options for making a conscious healthy choice. These examples show how the environment influences people's lifestyle, especially when considering the fact that eating out in Cedar Falls is very common during breakfast, lunch and dinner. Where this is an example of how the life radius encourages lifestyle modification through restaurants, the Blue Zones Project strives to influence all parts of daily life. In Cedar Falls church, work and family are the most influential factors in people's daily life, so influencing these is crucial to a modification of lifestyle. How the Blue Zones Project interferes in this social environment, and how the Project's principles are practiced by the inhabitants of Cedar Falls will be the focus of the coming chapters.

4. Practicing the Power 9 Principles (Vincent)

The Power 9 Principles are the nine focal points of the Blue Zones Communities in the United States. It is those nine denominators that can tell us where the community of Cedar Falls is in integrating the Blue Zones values in daily life, and where it is going to. This chapter will elaborate on how the Power 9 are practiced in Cedar Falls.

First, *moving naturally*, is an issue when looking at the car culture of the United States. In Cedar Falls as well, the car is the main vehicle for transportation. Not walking, biking or even public transport (which would enhance more walking than the use of a car). This is a very important topic for the Blue Zones Project, as well as for some inhabitants of Cedar Falls. The arrival of the Blue Zones Project has been a big push towards making the city more bike friendly. Sharon, a student born and raised in Cedar Falls, has experienced this push:

“There have been pushes for more bike lanes, that is definitely something that has been pushed in the past five years, they have gotten a lot more bike trails and bike lanes. A lot of the really wide streets are adding in the white strips for bikes. So it is definitely something that is growing and I think people are utilizing it, I think people really like it. And I know that a lot of people I work with ride to work. There are at

least three or four that I know that try to on a somewhat regular basis. So it is getting more popular. And I think it had a great push. ²⁹

Biking is a popular recreational activity. There are about 100 miles of bike trails around the woods and lakes that encircle the city. Other activities include kayaking, skating, snowshoeing, and running. Also the University of Northern Iowa provides the city with several sporting facilities and activities. One of the things the Blue Zones Project achieved is the starting of different walking, biking and kayaking groups. The community of Cedar Falls takes a lot of value out of its outdoors activities, meaning a lot of people do work-out, running, biking and all other sports. Still it is not *moving naturally* such as the Blue Zones Project is aiming for. Where in the original Blue Zones “movement is engineered into their daily lives” by for example going out on foot or cooking without conveniences (Wizemann 2014, 7), in Cedar Falls (and probably the United States) convenience is high valued making *moving naturally* a struggle. Convenience is materialized through the use of tools that reduce the need of physical effort, such as using electric cooking utensils instead of hand-operated tools, using a car instead of a bike, using an electric lawnmower instead of one that needs to be pushed, and so on. The Blue Zones Project encourages people to modify their habits in this, but these conveniences seem to be strongly integrated into people’s lifestyles. Going out for a bike ride for example can mean putting the bike in the trunk of the car and go for a five minute drive to take the bikes out on the bike trails. However, it must be said that the inhabitants do see some progress in the usage of bike lanes throughout the city. On the other hand, one thing the Blue Zones Project does is encourage people to have a dog, which would take them out at least twice a day to walk the dog. When walking through the community you see that dogs are very common, and this is the *moving naturally* as it is supposed to be according to the Blue Zones principles.

Walking that same dog serves another principle at the same time. More than once people explained that being forced to walk their dog allows them to *downshift*. The overlapping principle *right outlook* includes taking time to reflect upon certain things (*downshift*) and know why you do what you do (*purpose*). The previously mentioned North

²⁹ Semi-structured interview Sharon Rayburn and Kevin Venture, 17-3-16

American work ethic makes people feel pushed to do a lot of work and always have to push for more, making it hard to *downshift*. In general people will not take more vacation than one or two weeks a year, where they are officially allowed to have more. Thereby, most of the inhabitants will have volunteering work and networking groups next to their jobs. Statements like “*I just feel like I’m always on the go and don’t really take the time to just relax*”³⁰ and “*it is like constant... go go go go go*”³¹ show how working hard is normalized in Cedar Falls. It is not that people do not want to slow down, but as long as no one says they should, they will not do it. That is why the Blue Zones Project makes a difference with this principle. It makes the inhabitants and, maybe more important, their employers, realize that slowing down is beneficial for all parties because it makes people healthier and happier:

*“(...) if Blue Zones does one thing I think it is also one of the Blue Zones principles is relationships, engaging and sitting and slowing down a little bit because happiness is more than just making money and getting from one accomplishment to the next and next and next, part of it is taking back.”*³²

The principle of *knowing your purpose* proved difficult to practice. One’s purpose can actually be anything, it is what you feel you are waking up for in the morning. The most important part of this principle is *knowing* what you wake up for, realizing it. Similar to the *downshift*, it is mainly the awareness of this principle that the Blue Zones Project brings to the inhabitants’ attention. Most of the informants we spoke to said they had a hard time filling in this principle. A volunteer for the Blue Zones Project told us that:

“(...) if you went up to someone that is signed up with Blue Zones and pledge, like if you ask them what is their purpose in life, over half of them like 85 % wouldn’t even know (...) I think a lot of people struggle with (...) [w]hy they do what they do, why are you at college, why do you do this job, what do you want to get out of it. But I just

³⁰ Semi-structured interview Kim Mathews, 30-3-2016

³¹ Semi-structured interview Barbara Heard and Harland Prewett, 26-3-2016

³² Semi-structured interview Robert Nelson, 10-3-2016

*think a lot of people don't even take time to think about it, why they are doing the things they are doing.'*³³

And indeed most people did not know an answer to what their purpose was. Although for one it was being a mother, and for another motor racing, most people would fall short on an answer in the first place. On a second thought the majority of the people we spoke to would say giving back to the community might be seen as their purpose, which translates itself to volunteering jobs in helping individuals or community projects. Ann Manzi, who has set up classes in Cedar Falls for learning to know your purpose, says the Blue Zones Project brought the discussion on this topic to the city, which makes people more aware of the importance of the principle of *knowing your purpose*.

The next three principles all fall under the umbrella of *eating wisely*. This part of the Blue Zones principles is probably the most tangible for the people in Cedar Falls. There is a big movement on eating habits shifting towards the local food industry. The two main grocery stores in Cedar Falls each have an extensive fruits and vegetables section in which they promote the "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" campaign. Next to that there are two Farmers Markets throughout the week from May to October which are well visited and said to be ever increasing in popularity. This awareness of and interest in local grown, fresh products is in line with the Blue Zones principle *plant slant* which is all about living on a plant-based diet. Referring back to the importance of "having a choice", the Blue Zones designated restaurants, schools, churches and worksites offer the inhabitants of Cedar Falls the opportunity to eat healthy. This is for example the case at probably the largest employer in Cedar Falls, machinery manufacturer John Deere. Their wellness coordinator, Vivienne, told us:

*'We have now posted caloric and nutritional content, they have got options for eating healthier and lighter, fresh foods. If you want to come down and snack they have got fresh foods. I think they took and they raised the price of soda and dropped the price of a bottle of water.'*³⁴

³³ Semi-structured interview Kim Mathews, 30-3-2016

³⁴ Semi-structured interview Vivienne Way, 23-3-2016

Still a lot of progress can be made on *eating wisely*, mostly on the part of education. Eating out is very common and it is an easy thing to do. You can call ahead to any restaurant and order, drive your car up to three meters in front of the door, pick up your dish and move on. This is what many people do for their dinner. Having breakfast and lunch mostly happens at school or work. Most students who live on campus do not even have access to a kitchen but eat at the cafeteria three times a day. So if parents do not teach their children how to cook, many people will grow up without knowing how to prepare a decent meal. Considering the issue of a lack of time, many parents prefer picking up a prepared meal over cooking themselves, to be able to get their children to their activities in time. It is a vicious circle that takes a lot of time and education to break through.

A more direct modification can be made with the *80% rule*, which is about eating no more than when one feels eighty percent full. This does not seem to be a big problem, considering the fact that when eating out it is normal to stop eating when you are done and take away the left-overs in a take-away-box. However, the people that spoke about this thought the portion sizes that are served to be ‘*outrageous*’,³⁵ and they agreed that most of the time people do not stop eating when they are full, they tend to overeat themselves. The reason this is happening is hard to tell, but the solutions the Blue Zones Project offers seem to be practicable. An example is the university that has replaced their food trays for food plates, which makes the students put less food on their plates. Another concrete example is one inhabitant and her husband asking each other ‘*are you really hungry or do you just need to wait five minutes to see if you are hungry*’,³⁶ before going for a second serving. So the Blue Zones Project does get this into people’s minds and habits.

The third sub principle of *eating wisely* is the *wine @ 5* principle. This is a controversial principle because drinking alcohol is not considered healthy by most people in Cedar Falls. In this context the principle is mostly made fun about in a way that ‘drinking is never the problem’. However, in Cedar Falls there is a different view on consuming alcohol than in the original Blue Zones where people drink a modest glass or two. In Cedar Falls alcohol addiction and alcohol abuse make this principle controversial. Drunk driving is a

³⁵ Semi-structured interview Ruth Tanner, 22-2-2016

³⁶ Semi-structured interview Louise Taylor, 8-3-2016

problem in the city which makes that people would rather fight the use of alcohol than promote it as a good and healthy habit. This difference makes the *wine @ 5* principle inapplicable in the community of Cedar Falls

The last three principles of the Power 9 are part of the overlapping principle of *connecting or belonging*. The three principles within this social approach of healthy living are *family first*, *belong* in a religious way and finding the *right tribe*. The importance of family in Cedar Falls has two faces. On the one hand, family is very important for people. It is the reason many inhabitants of Cedar Falls tend to stay in their hometown area or return after some years when start having children. They believe Cedar Falls to be a very good place to live and raise children, next to the fact that they want their children to grow up within a close distance from their family. On the other hand, the ideal of *family first* is not necessarily the case, most of the time it is ‘*Jobs first, family second*’³⁷. Besides that, the importance of family, for example children, is not the same as in the Blue Zones, where children value the wisdom of their parents, and (grand)parents stay young because of their (grand)children’s presence. In Cedar Falls *family importance* is mostly shown by parents wanting their children to have a better life than they had. To do so they try to get them involved with a lot of sports, classes and other activities, instead of sitting down and spending time with family. So family may be very important, but this principle is not perceived in the way the Blue Zones Project would want it to. Although people do want their children to be around their grandparents, it is again the time issue that makes the practicing of this principle carried out differently than supposed according to the Blue Zones Project.

Belonging to a faith-based community is easily done in Cedar Falls. The community has many churches and most people you speak to belong to a congregation and attend church. Although this may not be a weekly activity for all of them, they do practice faith at least a couple of times a year and it shows up regularly around the dinner table. Most of the people who did not belong to any church said they were in some way spiritual and felt that this should also be part of the principle of *belonging*. Weekly potluck dinners for social bonding, the organization of so-called ‘small groups’ - a small group of people from the same church who regularly meet together - and the investment of different congregations in the community

³⁷ Semi-structured interview Jana Fortin, 28-2-2016

through volunteering show the influence that faith has on people's daily life. So faith is practiced and the church has an important position within the community that goes beyond their religious services, but this will be elaborated on more in the next chapter.

The last of the Power 9 Principles is the *right tribe*. The community of Cedar Falls adopted the idea of Moai's, the Okinawan custom of having a group of people with whom you spend your entire life. Although in Cedar Falls they will not spend their entire life together, the Moai is put in practice by forming groups of people who come together regularly. Here different principles are combined. There are Moai's that are walking, cycling or snowshoeing together, and the church communities have their small groups. People in Cedar Falls are easily organizing themselves to get together and interact. The city is small enough for the inhabitants to rapidly get to know people with whom they share their passions, which makes it easy to go along with the *right tribe*. If you look at the community of Cedar Falls, the principle of the *right tribe* is very applicable. It is a community that is open for improvements on any level and there is ground for new ideas and contacts. This makes it possible for the Blue Zones Project to be implemented in the community lifestyle, because there is an openness for such initiatives. In the next chapter there will be more focus on this community culture.

5. Community identity (Vincent)

As described in the context, the lifestyle the Blue Zones Project carries out to the people of Cedar Falls is derived from studies of five places all over the world. From a Cedar Falls perspective this means that the Blue Zones principles are based on a 'foreign' aging process. This chapter will focus on what cultural characteristics of Cedar Falls, the Midwest or the United States, have a positive or negative influence on the integration of this foreign aging process in the community of Cedar Falls.

The three major impeding factors to live a healthy lifestyle in Cedar Falls – and this most likely accounts for most of the United States – are infrastructure, time (or priority), and climate. First of all infrastructure, in the context of living healthy, is an issue. The infrastructure of Cedar Falls is built around the use of a car. It is normal for each person over sixteen years to have their own car, so everyone can transport itself independently.

Alternatives to the car would be walking, cycling or public transport, but those are not regularly used. Pedestrians and cyclists mostly encounter the same problems. First, the city is very much stretched out. Houses and buildings are built on wide properties which spreads out the city over an area that is not comfortably covered by foot or bike. Because the commercial center is built on the perimeter of the city, you will have to go all the way around the city to get to the grocery store, cinema, shopping malls or some churches. It is built that way because cars can more easily get around this way, they will not have to drive through the city but can go around it. For pedestrians and cyclists, it is obviously inconvenient. The downtown of Cedar Falls basically exists of restaurants, bars and some local stores. The public transport system is underdeveloped for the lack of use by the inhabitants who all have their own car to get around. The car is so integrated into their lifestyle that places like the post office, grocery store, restaurants, pharmacy, and ATMs have ‘drive-thru’ lanes so people can stay in their car. The importance of this convenience is pointed out by Robert:

‘I mean, people like me? Yeah. I think the minority wants it to change. I think the majority of people are comfortable driving everywhere, parking in front of their business, or parking in front of their commercial center, whatever they need to get. So I think the majority of people probably still would prefer the status quo, which is we like to drive.’³⁸

So it is stepping out of line to take your bike or walk some place, of course making *moving naturally* on this point hard to practice. It also contributes to the time or priority issue. People seem to rush all the time, driving their car from one place to the next. Having lunch or a conference call while driving is not unusual. Having children goes hand in hand with having to drive them everywhere all the time, from school to one sport on to the next, while having to go to a volunteer job or networking group in between. There is no time for a *downshift* or sitting down with *family* which, according to the pastor of one of the churches, is a result of the United States’ culture:

‘I think just American culture and society demands. I think we operate well beyond a life that is sustainable in the long run. (...) we should probably quit working after a

³⁸ Semi-structured interview Robert Nelson, 10-3-2016

healthy number of hours but we continue to work. It is just a challenge of American culture I think.'³⁹

The lifestyle is based around a full schedule where things as transportation and eating have to be as convenient as possible. This entails using the car and eating prepared meals instead of scheduling time for these practices. Such practices are enhanced by the lack of education on cooking, cycling or gardening. Practices such as using the car as transportation are formed within a certain framework that is constructed by past experiences. It is what people grew up with, what they saw and see their environment do, and it is therefore judged as 'correct' practices (Bourdieu 1977, 73). On top of that, a third factor that has a negative influence on a healthy lifestyle is the climate of Cedar Falls. The community has an inland climate with cold winters and hot summers. The weather is unpredictable and between November and April there is the ever possibility of snowfall. The uncertainty of the weather, having the possibility of hail and below 0 Celsius one day and over 20 degrees Celsius and heavy wind the next, makes getting into the car a guarantee of protection from it. It also makes things like farming and thus the prices of vegetables or fruits of the local growers fluctuate a lot during those 'winter months'. In Cedar Falls there exists the term 'snowbirds' for all the inhabitants that leave the city for the winter to stay in southern states, which symbolizes the influence of the winter months on the daily life of the inhabitants.

Besides those contextual influences that will need to be overcome or adjusted to, there is a socioeconomic environment in which the Blue Zones Project can thrive. Cedar Falls is a homogeneous community from different standpoints. First of all, the city houses the University of Iowa and with all the students and employees there will be over one-third of the population affiliated to the university. Besides that there is a John Deere factory based in the area which attracts high educated engineers. According to informants Cedar Falls is a white collar city, whereas its sister-city Waterloo houses the blue collar employees in the area. Cedar Falls in this way forms an educated community with its inhabitants being aware and proud of that. The high education goes along with a middle- to upper-class community based on economic resources. Besides the previously mentioned overall presence of the Christian

³⁹ Semi-structured interview pastor Michael Pirk, 3-3-2016

faith, the city's inhabitants mostly share Caucasian roots. The differences with Waterloo come up a lot in conversations in Cedar Falls, for example about their view on Waterloo as being a dangerous place. Waterloo is about twice as big as Cedar Falls and has a more diverse population with Burmese, Bosnian, African-American, Caucasian, and Latin-American inhabitants. As mentioned above, differences presuppose similarities, which is the fundament of communal identification (Olssen 2002, 501). Their common differences from Waterloo seem to bind the people from Cedar Falls and reduce in-group differences. In order to maintain their environment the way it is, the inhabitants devote their time to the community-well-being which makes Cedar Falls a close community.

As is said before, the people of Cedar Falls are invested in their community, some even see that as their *purpose*. Investing in the community reveals itself mostly through volunteering. Frequently people told us that it is expected from people to volunteer next to their jobs. The principle of an elementary school said that one time they had to repaint the halls in their school and instead of hiring painters a group of over forty parents and children voluntarily gave up three evenings to paint it. In this way the inhabitants are giving back to their community, and they expect other people to do the same. Volunteering also plays its part in getting different people in the community connected, for example through civic organizations. These networking and/or volunteering groups commit themselves to the community wellbeing. One of those groups is the Rotary club that gathers each Wednesday. They invite representatives of social initiatives who can find support for their initiative within this group. Anyone can join the networking group and the attendance can get up to forty people on a Wednesday night. They discuss what is happening in their area and what help they need, in order to offer their assistance with any of the upcoming events. Such groups, of which there are at least four more in the community, are the ideal basis to spread the word of an initiative like the Blue Zones Project. Lastly, when discussing social the role of the church has to be mentioned. With having the majority of the community attend church, these organizations have the position of influencing and organizing their congregation. From a Christian perspective people volunteer through church to give back to their community. Together, the socioeconomic environment and the value of and investment in the

community's well-being is something that connects the inhabitants of Cedar Falls and make the community strive for an ever better living environment.

Conclusion & Discussion

After presenting the theoretical framework and showing how the Blue Zones Project in Cedar Falls works in practice, we want to conclude by returning to our main question. *How does the community of Cedar Falls, Iowa, try to attain sustainable aging through a community-based lifestyle modification project based on the Blue Zones principles?* Throughout the empirical chapters we have shown examples of how the Blue Zones Project is executed in Cedar Falls, but also posed questions if the project truly achieves what it means to. The project itself claims to be a community-based project. We mentioned in the theoretical framework that Walter and Hyde (2012, 79) explain community as a space or place where a common issue or interest is shared between a group of people that are bound to each other by social or demographic grounds. It is true that the Blue Zones Project is a common interest of a lot of people in Cedar Falls, but not all inhabitants of Cedar Falls participate in the project and the Blue Zones Project is also bigger than just Cedar Falls. The project stems from Buettner's ideas and cooperation with Healthways. In this sense the project is not a community-based project, because it was not set up by the community itself, however Cedar Falls did shape the project to its local needs and runs it as a community-based project.

The fact that not all inhabitants participate in the Blue Zones Project in Cedar Falls makes it hard to call the entire city a community of practice. We do however see that the Blue Zones Project has created, through their Power 9 Principles and activities, a collective interest which a part of the community of Cedar Falls practices and interacts on regularly. This coincides with Wenger's (2015, 1) explanation of a community of practice. An example of these interactions are the Moai groups that are mostly held on a weekly basis. Therefore, the local organizations and inhabitants that do participate in the project create their own community of practice. However, the people that participate in the Blue Zones Project do not necessarily know each other and this lets us conclude that the Blue Zones Project in Cedar Falls has created an imagined community of practice. The examples of successes that the project has reached shows that for a community of practice to work, not all members need to know each other. These successes show how the Blue Zones Project, through the Blue Zones principles, has modified the lifestyles of people in Cedar Falls as illustrated in the chapter 'Practicing the Power 9 Principles'.

A lot of the successes that the Blue Zones Project has achieved over the years are mainly due to the Life Radius Approach that was established by Buettner (Wizemann 2014, 10). By making structural changes in people's lives and focusing on the short term effect of these changes, the Life Radius Approach aims on achieving long term success. As mentioned in the context, the Life Radius Approach focuses on the twelve pillars. These pillars, that emphasize the modification of organizational structures in the community, work in Cedar Falls. According to informants the holistic approach that the project takes, works in its benefit and makes it so that changes can be made more easily and are more visible in the community. We have given examples of these changes, where the local Blue Zones team puts the Blue Zones name out on the streets and spreads success stories of organizations that have become designated sites. Orange Elementary School is an example of where the Life Radius Approach shows in practice how it changed the environment of the school and by doing so altered the lifestyles of employers, employees, children, parents, and people living in the vicinity of the school. Because the Life Radius Approach also focuses on organizations, wellness policies are developed at multiple sites in the community where a lot of the inhabitants come regularly. Designated grocery stores, like Hy-Vee, and designated worksites, like John Deere, now have wellness policies in place that not only serve as success stories for the Blue Zones Project, but also make sure that the goals that the project tries to achieve on the long term are more attainable.

The focus on the twelve pillars as Buettner explained them also underlines our earlier conclusion about the community-based nature of the Blue Zones Project. The Life Radius Approach tries to modify the community through the organizations instead of aiming directly at the inhabitants. This shows the top-down mindset that this approach takes on lifestyle modification, instead of a bottom-up approach as presented in the literature study. The Blue Zones Project does however, try to reach the inhabitants directly through personal check-lists and the Power 9. This bottom-up and more personal approach aimed at the inhabitants of Cedar Falls is an example of a focus on an empowered population as Rowe and Kahn (1897, quoted in Bülow and Soderqvist 2014, 141) explain and self-organization that Gilleard and Higgs (2000, quoted in Katz and Marshall 2003, 5) emphasize. However, this bottom-up approach finds less support within the community of Cedar Falls, because of various reasons

which will be elaborated in the discussion. The local Blue Zones team is in place mainly to keep the project running as an organizational structure and to check up on designated worksites. For changes on an individual level the Blue Zones Project trusts on the empowerment and self-organization of the people. In the end the most notable successes the Blue Zones Project has achieved are through the designated organizations they focus on because of the Life Radius Approach that aims to achieve the Blue Zones goals through a top-down structure.

After having shown that the Life Radius Approach helps the community to modify its lifestyle towards a more sustainable one we now turn to the general support of the Blue Zones Project within the community of Cedar Falls. In line with Bülow and Soderqvist (2014, 145) who state that the aging process has to be evaluated in a socio-cultural context, we have evaluated the socio-cultural context in which the Blue Zones Project in Cedar Falls takes place. Within the community there is an important position for local organizations. The community is very close and organizations such as schools, churches, restaurants, and local shops are invested in the community and the inhabitants of Cedar Falls are invested in these organizations. The necessity of such organizations to get on board of the Blue Zones Project is decisive, for they are social agents who influence the community lifestyle. According to Panter-Brick (2014, 437) social agents are crucial in spreading ideas and beliefs about risk, and by doing so form the environment. Within local organizations there are the so-called ‘champions’ who integrate the Blue Zones principles in their organizational structure. We have pointed at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Orange Elementary School, and Western Home Communities as examples of such organizations, each with their own ‘champion’ on board. However, where there are some local companies who intensively support the Blue Zones Project, there are others who just sign up to get the Blue Zones designation and thereafter profit from the benefits, but do not invest as much in carrying out the values. Among the inhabitants of Cedar Falls there can be found a duality as well. On one side there is a group of people who highly value the Blue Zones principles and who actively try to make the city healthier. The Blue Zones Project for them has given the opportunity to fill their need of living healthier, or has given them the opportunity to find a platform for pushing their own values. On the other side the majority of Cedar Falls is not actively involved in the practicing

of the Blue Zones principles, because it does not have their priority. It is this group of people that is the main focus of the Life Radius Approach described above.

Although there is no real opposition towards the Blue Zones Project's values, there are some socio-cultural factors that work against it. In the literature study the concept of habitus was used to point at the construction of lifestyle. Habitus consists of practices that are formed within a certain framework that is constructed by past experiences, which therefore makes them 'correct' practices (Bourdieu 1977, 73). There are some cultural practices that work against the Blue Zones Project and will need to be overcome in order to construct a habitus consisting of healthy practices. This mainly comes back to the high value of convenience in daily life. As described in the chapter 'Practicing the Power 9 Principles' multiple principles demand people to put more effort in their practices, meaning it could cost more money, time and physical effort. The economic position of the city's inhabitants does not hold them back in practicing the principles. The time aspect however makes things more complicated. It is morally expected that people use their time for their job, volunteering work, or other appointments, making many people feel they are in a constant rush. Considering that the practicing of the Blue Zones principles demands time, people will have to change their priorities. An example of this is the convenience of driving the car instead of going by foot or bike to do daily practices such as going to work, doing groceries or taking the kids to school. This goes in hand with the physical effort that many people consider to be inconvenient. In the end, many people still choose the convenient, short term, unhealthy options instead of the Blue Zones, long term, healthy options. On the other hand, there are socio-cultural factors that stimulate the Blue Zones Project as well. The inhabitants of Cedar Falls are invested in their community and through for example civic organizations, church congregations, and volunteering groups they together strive to push their community forward. It is a close community without real in-group differences which creates a social environment in which initiatives such as the Blue Zones Project are well received.

We have analyzed the lifestyle of the community of Cedar Falls and the way the lifestyle modification process of the Blue Zones Project is executed. The ultimate goal of the Blue Zones Project is modifying the existing lifestyle of the community towards a healthier one, so the inhabitants of the community can attain sustainable aging. In the literature study

we emphasized the importance of a long-term maintenance in order to make a healthy lifestyle a sustainable lifestyle (Chan et al. 2009, 91-92). We stated that sustainability can be achieved by normalizing, in this case, healthy practices. Examples of how the arrival of the Blue Zones Project helps in normalizing practices on an individual level, such as cycling as transportation, and on an organizational level, eating habits at Orange Elementary School, show how the community of Cedar Falls is pushed towards a more sustainable lifestyle. However, short term benefits derived from more convenient habits have proven to be the biggest obstacle in implementing the Power 9 Principles into daily life. Because of that the local Blue Zones team focuses on short term successes to motivate and stimulate the community. The Blue Zones Project's holistic approach of lifestyle modification shows their perspective on aging as a process that cannot be assigned to a single life stage. This connects to the focus in the literature study, in which we stated that aging has to be approached from a life-course perspective that focuses on the socio-cultural context in which aging takes place (Bülow and Soderqvist 2014, 145). From this perspective the practicing of the Blue Zones principles by the community of Cedar Falls aims at the normalization of healthy habits into their daily life. In the discussion below, we elaborate some more on this normalization process and the socio-cultural context it takes place in.

In addition to the conclusions we want to add to some of the arguments used in the theoretical framework. Rowe and Kahn's argument (1987, quoted in Bülow and Soderqvist 2014, 141) centered around an empowered population. The idea was that diets, exercise, and personal habits are controllable and modifiable. Therefore, the individual is empowered to change these processes essential to modifying its lifestyle. This argument was supported by the increasing focus on self-organization in all life stages (Sander et al. 2015, 187). Looking at the results of our fieldwork we tend to disagree with Rowe and Kahn on the ability of the individual to change its personal habits through empowerment. Above we mentioned how the Blue Zones Project has changed the Cedar Falls community, mainly by making sure the options to live a healthier lifestyle are present, and easily accessible. Examples are the restaurants that offer more healthy options and an improvement of the local infrastructure to encourage more walking and biking. Though all these options are available, the majority of

Cedar Falls still chooses for more unhealthy options. Through our observations we think Rowe and Kahn underestimated the influence the environment has on creating the lifestyle of people.

Buch (2015, 278) acknowledges the empowerment of the individual but states that this does not mean that one has complete control over the construction of lifestyle. Local environments, access to resources, and social relations still play a significant role. The Blue Zones Project seems to acknowledge the role of the environment as well by prioritizing a top-down structure through their Life Radius Approach. This raises the question in which ways the individuals in Cedar Falls are empowered. The concept of a community of practice in itself builds on an empowered population, where a small group strives for a goal together. As we have discussed before, Stronza's (2005) study of the community of Infierno gives an example of a community of practice that formed the basis for a lifestyle modification process. However, where Infierno is a community of a couple hundred people, the Blue Zones Project in Cedar Falls tries to implement its principles in a community of over 30.000 people. The scope of the project may prove to be too big for people to create a lasting connection.

Although the size of Cedar Falls might be a struggle for the Blue Zones Project, there have been larger initiatives of lifestyle modification that did succeed. We used Katz and Marshall's (2003) study of the normalization of a new perception of sexual intercourse in the 20th centuries to show how habits can be changed on a large scale. However, in Cedar Falls we observed that it is hard for people to stay engaged in a project that does not always show its effect on a short term basis. This was also supported by our informants in the local Blue Zones team who struggle with keeping people engaged without referring to short term effects. Unhealthy options remain available in the community and convenience is a leading argument for people to choose for unhealthy options in their daily life.

In our literature study we emphasized the importance of the advertising industry to portray and promote healthy options in order to modify lifestyle. Again we come back to Katz and Marshall (2003), who have shown in their study about sexuality and sexual 'function' how marketing can change habits on a long term basis. The successful marketing campaigns they name are a demonstration of how lifestyle modification is achieved with the use of marketing instruments. It also shows that it is debatable to what extent people are empowered

by themselves, or depend on environmental influences such as an investing marketing industry to get empowered. In theory, people are empowered as long as they can make their own choices, which in Katz and Marshall's example and our case they can. But in practice we could question to what extent this empowerment remains when hegemonic economic and political structures are taking part. In Cedar Falls the Blue Zones Project aims to use marketing strategies to get the Blue Zones lifestyle into people's minds and ultimately in their lives. In this local actors support them and with other initiatives such as the 'Buy Fresh, Buy Local' initiative the Blue Zones Project's values are carried out throughout the community. However, it is questionable if such initiatives can compete with large industries such as the fast food and car industry which intentions conflict with the Blue Zones lifestyle. Still, we can only speculate about how things will work out for the Blue Zones Project. The modification of habits on sexuality also encompassed an anti-smoking campaign, which successfully opposed the large tobacco industry. Because the environment, which in Cedar Falls is not yet completely set to serve a healthier lifestyle, plays such an important part in lifestyle, we need to consider whether the inhabitants are really empowered to modify their lifestyle. The Blue Zones Project has offered a lot of options to the community of Cedar Falls to live a 'longer, happier, and healthier lifestyle' and therefore makes it easier for people to make the individual healthier choice. However, the majority not yet chooses these options. But encouraged by the Blue Zones Project, the Blue Zones designated organizations, and a group of motivated inhabitants, Cedar Falls is currently in the process of becoming a place where people are stimulated to live a healthy lifestyle and are motivated to strive for sustainable aging.

Bibliography

- Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Bernard, H. Russel. 2006. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Boeije, H. 2010. *Analysis in Qualitative Research*. London (etc.): SAGE.
- Bone, L., and M. Shediak-Rizkallah. 1998. ‘‘Planning for the Sustainability of community-based health programs: conceptual frameworks and future directions for research, practice and policy.’’ *Health Education Research: Theory and Practice* 13 (1): 87-108.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Buettner, D. 2008. *The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer From the People Who’ve Lived the Longest*. Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society.
- Buettner, D. 2015. *The Blue Zones Solution: Eating and Living like the World’s healthiest People*. Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society.
- Bülow, M., and T. Söderqvist. 2014. ‘‘Successful aging: A historical overview and critical analysis of a successful concept.’’ *Journal of Aging Studies* 31: 139–149.
- Carter, E.D. 2015. ‘‘Making the Blue Zones: Neoliberalism and nudges in public health promotion.’’ *Social Science & Medicine* 133: 374-382.
- Chan, J., F. Magkos, C, Mantzoros, and M. Yannakoulia. 2009. ‘‘Management of the Metabolic Syndrom and Type 2 Diabetes Through Lifestyle Modification.’’ *Annual Review of Nutrition* 29: 223-256.
- Cromley, Ellen K. 1999. Mapping spatial data. In *Mapping Social Networks, Spatial Data and Hidden Populations*. Volume 4 of *The Ethnographers Toolkit*. J.J. Schensul, M.D. LeCompte, R.T. Trotter II, E.K. Cromley, and M. Singer, eds. 51-124. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

De Walt, B. and K. De Walt. 2011. *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. Lanham (etc.): Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, inc.

Fielding, J and L.W. Green. 2011. "The U.S. Healthy People Initiative: Its Genesis and Its Sustainability." *Annual Review of Public Health* 32: 451-470.

Foucault, M. 1972. *The archaeology of knowledge*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Giampiccoli, A., and J. H. Kalis. 2012. "Tourism, Food, and Culture: Community-Based Tourism, Local Food, and Community Development in Mpondoland." *Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment* 34 (2): 101-123.

Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Modern Age*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gilleard, C., & Higgs, P. 2000. *Cultures of ageing: self, citizen and the body*. Harlow: Prentice-Hall.

Gruzd, A., Y. Takhteyev, and B. Wellman. 2011. Imagining Twitter as an Imagined Community. *American Behavioral Scientist* 55 (10): 1294-1318.

Katz, S., and B. Marshal. 2003. "New sex for old: Lifestyle, consumerism, and ethics of aging well." *Journal of Aging Studies* 17: 3-16.

Kottak, C. 2011. *Cultural Anthropology: Appreciating Cultural Diversity*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Lee, K., N. Scott, and J. Packer. 2014. "Habitus and food lifestyle: In-destination activity participation of Slow Food members." *Annals of Tourism Research* 48: 207-220.

Lorenzen, J.A. 2012. "Going Green: The Process of Lifestyle Change." *Sociological Forum* 27(1): 94-116.

Nilsson, H., Bülow, P.H., and Kazemi, A. 2015. Mindful Sustainable Aging: Advancing a Comprehensive Approach to the Challenges and Opportunities of Old Age. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 11 (3): 494-508

- Olssen, M. 2002. "Michel Foucault as "Thin" Communitarian: Difference, Community, Democracy." *Cultural Studies and Critical Methodologies*, 2 (4): 483-513.
- O'Neill, E. 2009. "Four Factors That Guarantee Health Care Change." *Journal of Professional Nursing* 25: 317-321.
- Panter-Brick, C. 2014. "Health, Risk and Resilience: Interdisciplinary Concepts and Applications." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43: 431-448.
- Poulain, M., A. Herm, and G. Pes. 2013. "The Blue Zones: areas of exceptional longevity around the world." *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research* 11: 87-108.
- Rowe, J. W., & Kahn, R. 1987. Human aging: Usual and successful. *Science* 237:143–149.
- Sander, M., and B. Oxlund. 2015. "The challenges of human population ageing." *Age and Ageing* 44: 185-187.
- Stronza, A. 2005. Hosts and Hosts: The Anthropology of Community-Based Ecotourism in the Peruvian Amazon. *National Association for Practice of Anthropology Bulletin* 23: 170-190.
- Walter, C., and C. Hyde. 2012. "Community Organizing and Community Building for Health and Welfare" in *Community Building Practice: An Expanded Conceptual Framework*, edited by Minkler, 78-90. New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press.
- Wenger, E. 2015. *Communities of Practice: A Brief Introduction*. <http://wenger-trayner.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/07-Brief-introduction-to-communities-of-practice.pdf>
- Wenger, E., R. McDermontt, and W. Snyder. 2002. "Seven Principles for Cultivating Communities of Practice." Cambridge: Harvard Business School Working Knowledge. HBS Working Knowledge.
- Wizemann, T. 2014. "Business Engagement in Building Healthy Communities: Workshop Summary" *Roundtable on Population Health Improvement*. Washington D.C.: The National Academies Press.

