

## WINDOW ON THE NETHERLANDS

# NEIGHBOUR RELATIONS IN THE NETHERLANDS: NEW DEVELOPMENTS

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### ABSTRACT

Because people can cover long distances either online or by travelling to keep in touch with associates relatively easily, some believe that the local has lost its significance. Others argue that community and neighbourhood contacts are still important, for example, as a source of social support. According to Mollenhorst and colleagues, neighbours became more important in Dutch personal networks between 2000 and 2007. I assess how this developed between 2007–2008 and 2013. Next-door neighbours have (again) become more important. Neighbours are predominantly mentioned as associates who are visited and, increasingly, as associates who are asked for practical help. In contrast to Mollenhorst and colleagues, I find that the extent to which the Dutch like and trust neighbours in their network increased while contact frequency (further) declined. For highly educated residents, people without paid work, homeowners, and people with initially small local networks, the size of neighbour networks increased.

**Key words:** Neighbour relationships, change, personal networks, the Netherlands, panel data analysis

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### INTRODUCTION

Modern technology enables most people in Western societies to cover long distances to keep in touch with their associates. Friends and relatives who live far away from one another can visit one another by car or by using public transportation, such as trains and airplanes. With the widespread use of mobile phones and the Internet, many people also stay in touch with their associates via social media sites, such as Facebook and Instagram, and messaging services, such as Skype, Twitter, WhatsApp and Telegram. In this era, it is interesting and important to assess and follow the role of local contacts and particularly of neighbours in personal networks. Has the globalisation of networks and the widespread use of online communication tools led to the decline of the

local community and the superfluity of contacts with neighbours, or do personal contacts with neighbours remain important in peoples' everyday life?

According to the 'decline of community' thesis, densely connected networks, containing strong and personal relationships, would have degenerated over recent decades into sparsely connected networks containing more superficial relationships (cf. Fischer 1982; Wellman 1999; Pescosolido & Rubin 2000). According to Wellman and Leighton (1979), who proposed three perspectives on the development of local community (cf. Van Kempen & Bolt 2012), there are two potential implications of such a development for local community and neighbour relationships: the 'lost community' perspective asserts the absence of local solidarities, and the 'liberated community' perspective

denies any local basis to solidarities (Wellman & Leighton 1979; cf. Guest & Wierzbicki 1999; Putnam 2000). In contrast, the 'saved community' perspective asserts the persistence of local communities and networks, assuming that neighbour relations and neighbourhood communities remain important sources of support and sociability (Wellman & Leighton 1979, cf. Volker *et al.* 2007a).

Data allowing for an inquiry into changes in neighbourhood relationships over time or into differences between countries are scarce (but see Guest & Wierzbicki 1999; Mollenhorst *et al.* 2009). In line with the 'lost community' and 'liberated community' perspectives, Guest and Wierzbicki (1999) showed a trend towards less socialising within neighbourhoods in the US between 1974 and 1996. Mollenhorst *et al.* (2009) examined Dutch personal networks, the role of neighbours in these networks, and how that had changed between 2000 and 2007–08. They concluded that in line with the 'saved community' perspective, neighbourhood relationships had become more important in the Netherlands during these years, especially for occasional visits and for help with odd jobs in and around the house (cf. Forrest & Kearns 2001). In addition, for highly educated residents, homeowners, non-movers, the elderly, and people with initially small local networks, the size of neighbour networks increased substantially (Mollenhorst *et al.* 2009).

The aim of the current study is to discern and describe new developments in the number and role of neighbours in Dutch personal networks between 2007–08 and 2013. By providing a longitudinal perspective on neighbour relationships and their role in the broader personal network, this study is a relevant contribution to the existing knowledge of neighbour relationships as previous studies were primarily based on cross-sectional and/or qualitative data and often collected in a limited selection of urban neighbourhoods (for Dutch examples, see: Dekker & Bolt 2005; Pinkster 2007, 2009; Vermeij & Mollenhorst 2008; Van Eijk 2010, 2012; Lancee & Dronkers 2011).

In the following, I first discuss previous studies on characteristics of neighbour relationships. Second, I describe the data, measurements and analytic strategy. Third, I present my findings for the period from 2007 and 2008

through 2013 while comparing them to previous findings for the period from 1999 and 2000 through 2007 (Mollenhorst *et al.* 2009). Finally, I draw conclusions about these developments over time, discuss them in relation to earlier findings, and propose some potential explanations for and implications of these developments, which call for future longitudinal research on neighbourhood relationships.

## CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF NEIGHBOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Although conclusive statements about characteristics of neighbourhood relationships are difficult due to wide variation in research designs, definitions and methods used (see Marsden 1990; Van Eijk 2010), previous studies have indicated that neighbourhood relationships are relatively weak and clearly different from friendship or family relationships. Volker and Flap (2007), for instance, showed that relationships among neighbours are among the weakest relationships people have. In the words of Henning and Lieberg (1996, p. 6), neighbourhood relationships are 'unpretentious everyday contacts'. However, that does not necessarily imply that modern neighbourhood relationships are like 'familiar stranger' relationships, that is, people who repeatedly meet but do not interact and have a mutual agreement that their relationship is not hostile but friendly (Milgram 1977).

In terms of their quantity, neighbours constitute seven to 19 per cent of a person's network (Fischer 1982; Wellman *et al.* 1988; Van der Poel 1993; Mollenhorst *et al.* 2009), but their presence in the 'inner circle' of the network is smaller, ranging between approximately seven and nine per cent (Fischer 1982; Marsden 1987). Regarding relationship strength, as just mentioned, neighbourhood relationships are relatively weak relationships (Fischer 1982; Campbell & Lee 1992; Van der Poel 1993), but differences exist between social groups (Dunn 1998; Lee & Campbell 1999; Bolt *et al.* 2009; Lancee & Dronkers 2011). In terms of relationship content, it is recurrently shown that people tend to turn to neighbours if they need some type of practical support, such as exchanging small items, helping with odd jobs in or around the house, or keeping an eye on each other's

properties during vacations (Fischer 1982; Thomése 1998; Mollenhorst *et al.* 2009). In contrast, relatively few people discuss job-related issues or important personal matters with their neighbours (Mollenhorst *et al.* 2009).

## DATA AND MEASUREMENT

**Panel data from the Survey on the Social Networks of the Dutch (SSND)** – The data on neighbour relationships were gathered in the second and third wave of a large panel study, the Survey on the Social Networks of the Dutch (SSND). This dataset contains representative information on personal networks and neighbourhood communities in the Netherlands. In 1999–2000, at the start of this survey, 40 of the approximate 500 Dutch municipalities were sampled. These municipalities represent the different Dutch provinces and regions and take into account differences in the number of inhabitants per municipality. Subsequently, in each municipality, four neighbourhoods were randomly sampled.<sup>1</sup> A neighbourhood was defined by a postal code of five positions.<sup>2</sup> Such an area includes 230 addresses on average and corresponds to the route of a postman, that is, this area is usually without great physical barriers. In each neighbourhood we randomly sampled 25 addresses for an interview with one household member (aged 18–65). In 1999–2000, the total dataset consisted of 1,007 individual respondents in 161 neighbourhoods (Volker & Flap 2002).

In 2007, we contacted the respondents of the first wave for a second interview. Over 70 per cent of those whom we were able to contact agreed to participate for a second time, even when they had moved to another neighbourhood (Volker *et al.* 2007b). This resulted in 604 individuals for whom we have information on personal relationships in 1999–2000 and in 2007. In early 2008, to avoid a drain of respondents caused by elusiveness and non-response, we supplemented the SSND panel with a random sample of 394 new respondents (aged 18–65) from the initial 161 SSND neighbourhoods.

In 2013, we contacted the respondents of the second wave, who were living in one of the initial 161 SSND neighbourhoods in 2008, for another interview. Approximately 83 per cent

of those whom we were able to contact, agreed to participate again (Volker *et al.* 2013). This resulted in 578 individuals for whom we have information on personal relationships in 2007 or 2008 and in 2013. This set of individuals differs somewhat from the national average with regard to socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. age, level of education and job status), which we control for in our regression models. In addition, we control for participation in all three waves to avoid potential selection effects.

**Personal network delineation** – In all waves of the SSND, the personal networks of the respondents were delineated through a list of ‘name-generating’ questions. Five questions generate the names of those with whom respondents have an informal, voluntary relationship:<sup>3</sup> (i) If you have a problem at work, whom do you ask for advice?; (ii) Are there people who come to you for advice when they have problems at work?; (iii) If you are doing an odd job at home and need someone to help, for example, to carry furniture or hold a ladder, whom do you ask for help?; (iv) Many people visit others in their leisure time; whom do you visit?; and (v) With whom have you discussed important personal matters during the past six months? For each of these questions, the respondents could name network members they had already mentioned in response to previous questions and add a maximum of five new names. Additional questions (the ‘name-interpreters’) focused on the relationship between the respondent and the network member. For example, on the question ‘How are you connected to this person?’ respondents could name a maximum of three types of 15 relationships (ranging from ‘partner’ to ‘colleague’ to ‘next-door neighbour’ to ‘someone from the neighbourhood’ to ‘acquaintance’). This allows me to determine the share of neighbours in each person’s personal network. That is, those whom the respondent mentioned as ‘next-door neighbours’ are considered next-door neighbours in the analyses. Likewise, those who were mentioned as ‘someone from the neighbourhood’ are considered ‘other neighbours’, and all other network members are considered non-neighbourhood contacts. Implications are that not all relationships with those whom I consider ‘neighbours’ in this study originated in

Table 1. *Number and contents of informal personal relationships in 2007–08 and 2013 (averages).<sup>a</sup>*

	2007–08	2013	Difference
Network size	7.68 (3.96)	7.49 (3.24)	–0.19
Number of persons for... <sup>b</sup>			
Job-related advice	1.61 (2.10)	1.51 (1.97)	–0.10
Help with odd jobs	2.20 (1.40)	2.10 (1.16)	–0.10
Visiting	4.20 (2.48)	3.98 (2.24)	–0.21
Discussion	2.25 (1.97)	2.45 (2.00)	0.20†
Proportion of persons for... <sup>b</sup>			
Job-related advice	0.18 (0.21)	0.16 (0.20)	–0.01†
Help with odd jobs	0.30 (0.19)	0.30 (0.18)	0.00
Visiting	0.55 (0.26)	0.53 (0.24)	–0.01
Discussion	0.29 (0.22)	0.33 (0.23)	0.03***
Frequency of contact (per year)	122.29 (77.69)	120.38 (75.36)	–1.73
Relationship duration (years)	23.60 (10.51)	25.73 (10.77)	2.13***
Liking each other	4.33 (0.42)	4.41 (0.35)	0.07***
Level of trust	4.28 (0.44)	4.40 (0.38)	0.11***

Notes: †  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . <sup>a</sup> Standard deviation in brackets. <sup>b</sup> Note that one person can fulfil multiple network functions.

Source: Volker *et al.* (2007b, 2013).

Table 2. *Number and share of neighbourhood relationships in informal personal networks in 2007–08 and 2013 (averages).<sup>a</sup>*

	2007–08	2013	Difference
Total number of neighbours	1.18 (1.28)	1.34 (1.31)	0.16*
number of next-door neighbours	0.72 (0.89)	0.93 (0.99)	0.20***
number of other neighbours	0.45 (0.87)	0.41 (0.89)	–0.03
Proportion of neighbours in the network	0.16 (0.20)	0.19 (0.19)	0.02**
proportion of next-door neighbours	0.10 (0.15)	0.13 (0.15)	0.02***
proportion of other neighbours	0.06 (0.13)	0.05 (0.12)	–0.00

Notes: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . <sup>a</sup> Standard deviation in brackets.

Source: Volker *et al.* (2007b, 2013).

the neighbourhood, but also that a substantial number of relationships that did originate in the neighbourhood are not considered ‘neighbours’ because the respondent did not label them as such (cf. Van Eijk 2010).<sup>4</sup> I use this operationalisation, following Mollenhorst *et al.* (2009), to (i) enable comparisons and (ii) because I aim to assess the role of relationships for which the local context and/or a small geographical distance is relevant. Additional name-interpreting questions addressed the frequency of contact, the duration of the relationship, the extent to which one likes the other, and the extent to which one trusts the other.<sup>5</sup>

**Analytic strategy** – To enable assessment of developments over time, I employ the exact same analytical strategy as Mollenhorst *et al.* (2009). Tables 1–3 provide descriptive information on informal personal relationships and the share and content of neighbour relationships in 2007–08 and 2013. T-tests in these tables indicate whether these figures significantly changed in this period.

In Table 4, I use OLS regression models to examine the effects of personal and household characteristics on changes in the number of neighbours in informal personal networks. I look at the effects of age, sex, level of education,

Table 3. *Number and contents of neighbourhood relationships in informal personal networks in 2007–08 and 2013 (averages).*<sup>a</sup>

	2007–08	2013	Difference
Number of persons for. . . <sup>b</sup>			
Job-related advice	0.00 (0.07)	0.01 (0.16)	0.01
Help with odd jobs	0.77 (1.02)	0.97 (1.06)	0.19***
Visiting	0.76 (1.11)	0.70 (1.13)	-0.06
Discussion	0.13 (0.46)	0.13 (0.50)	0.00
Proportion of persons for. . . <sup>b</sup>			
Job-related advice	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.05)	0.00
Help with odd jobs	0.39 (0.45)	0.49 (0.46)	0.10***
Visiting	0.37 (0.46)	0.32 (0.44)	-0.04†
Discussion	0.05 (0.19)	0.06 (0.20)	0.00
Frequency of contact (per year)	104.39 (120.39)	88.77 (106.94)	-15.04**
Relationship duration (years)	15.93 (10.97)	17.53 (11.73)	2.34***
Liking each other	3.95 (0.60)	4.08 (0.55)	0.13***
Level of trust	3.90 (0.62)	4.10 (0.55)	0.20***

†  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . <sup>a</sup> Standard deviation in brackets. <sup>b</sup> Note that one person can fulfil multiple network functions.

Source: Volker *et al.* (2007b, 2013).

Table 4. *OLS regression models of changes between 2007–08 and 2013 in the number of neighbourhood relationships in informal personal networks.*

	model 1	model 2	model 3	model 4
# Neighbours mentioned in 2007–08		-0.722***	-0.744***	-0.751***
Age <sup>a</sup>			-0.001	-0.002
Sex (0 = male, 1 = female)			0.035	-0.009
Marital status				
Single, divorced, widowed			ref.	ref.
Married or cohabiting			0.163	0.108
Presence of children in household				
No			ref.	ref.
Only in 2007–08			0.036	0.014
Only in 2013			0.112	0.089
In 2007–08 and in 2013			-0.015	-0.065
Level of education <sup>b</sup>			0.084***	0.070**
Having paid work			-0.314*	-0.353*
Homeownership (0 = renter, 1 = owner)				0.401**
New dwelling <sup>c</sup>				-0.235
Part of initial sample				-0.192†
Constant	0.174***	1.023***	0.630**	0.646**
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.000	0.349	0.360	0.372
Number of respondents	578	578	578	578

Notes: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . <sup>a</sup> Variable is centred on the mean. <sup>b</sup> Measured on an eight-point scale, with categories '1 – primary education', '2 – lower vocational education', '3 – lower general secondary education', '4 – higher general secondary education', '5 – pre-university education', '6 – intermediate vocational training', '7 – higher vocational training', and '8 – university'. <sup>c</sup> This indicates that the respondent moved into his/her current home during the past six years.

Source: Volker *et al.* (2007b, 2013).

having paid work, marital status, home-ownership, number of children in the household, and whether the respondent had moved to another house since 2007–08 because previous research indicated that these individual and household characteristics are associated with the composition of personal networks in general and with the inclusion of neighbourhood contacts in particular (see, e.g. Wellman 1979; Fischer 1982; Campbell & Lee 1990; Henning & Lieberg 1996; Ellen & Turner 1997; Guest & Wierzbicki 1999; Van Eijk 2010; cf. Mollenhorst *et al.* 2009). I include age, not only because older people are somewhat over-represented in the data set but also because the use of longitudinal data might disguise a cohort effect: changes in personal relationships over time may not be caused by the changing role of the neighbourhood but may simply reflect the changing needs of people and their families along the life course (Forrest & Kearns 2001: 2129). In addition, I include a variable that indicates participation in all three waves to control for selection effects, which allows for the generalisation of our findings to the broader Dutch population. In additional analyses, I also estimated the effect of length of residence to examine whether a changing number of neighbour relationships in one's network would be a consequence of living longer in the neighbourhood. These analyses did not yield significant effects of length of residence and consequently did not improve the models.

Figures in columns that present findings in 2007 or 2008 sometimes (slightly) differ from the 2007 figures as presented in Mollenhorst *et al.* (2009). This is because the study by Mollenhorst *et al.* (2009) was based on information from respondents who participated in 1999–2000 and in 2007, but the current study is based on information from respondents who participated in 2007 or 2008 and 2013.<sup>6</sup>

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows that in both 2007–08 and 2013, the Dutch reported having on average approximately seven and a half persons with whom they discuss job-related problems or important personal matters, from whom they ask for help with odd jobs in or around the house, and/or

whom they pay a visit from time to time (7.68 in 2007–08, 7.49 in 2013). More than half of these personal contacts are visited (4.20 in 2007–08, 3.98 in 2013), and the group of contacts with whom job-related problems are discussed is the smallest. This latter finding is different from previous findings in Mollenhorst *et al.* (2009). Approximately a decade ago, the smallest group comprised those who help with odd jobs, but Mollenhorst *et al.* (2009) already noted that the number and percentage of contacts who are asked for help with odd jobs increased significantly between 2000 and 2007. This development persisted, while the number of persons with whom job-related problems are discussed decreased slightly (but not significantly between 2007–08 and 2013).

The bottom part of Table 1 shows that the frequency of contact with informal network members remained stable at an average of approximately 2.3 times a week. The average relationship duration increased by approximately 2 years, which implies that some of the existing and long-lasting relationships were replaced by new relationships. In contrast to Mollenhorst *et al.* (2009), who observed a decline between 2000 and 2007 in the extent to which the Dutch trusted and liked their informal network members, I now find an increase in the extent to which these network members are liked and trusted, which brings these figures back to their levels in 2000.

In Table 2, I depict the average share of neighbourhood relationships in informal personal networks in 2007–08 and 2013. Neighbourhood relationships have, as between 2000 and 2007, become more important: although the average number of neighbours in informal personal networks was 1.18 in 2007–08, the same respondents mentioned 1.34 neighbours approximately six years later. Because the average number of informal network members remained stable (see Table 1), the percentage of neighbours in informal networks increased significantly from 16 to 19 per cent. More specifically, whereas between 2000 and 2007 the number of next-door neighbours and other neighbours (who live somewhat further away in the neighbourhood) both increased (Mollenhorst *et al.* 2009), I now only find that the number and proportion of next-door neighbours

significantly increased between 2007–08 and 2013.

In Table 3, I present that hardly anyone still discusses either job-related or personal matters with a neighbour. Instead, neighbours are paid a visit from time to time and/or are asked for help with odd jobs in or around the house. More specifically, whereas the proportion of neighbours who are paid a visit slightly decreased, I find a significant increase in the number and proportion of neighbours who are asked for help with odd jobs. Whereas the number of neighbours who are asked to provide this type of help already increased from an average of 0.49 to 0.84 between 2000 and 2007 (Mollenhorst *et al.* 2009), it further increased to 0.97 in 2013.

Furthermore, although frequency of contact is stable for informal relationships in general (Table 1), I do find that frequency of contact with neighbours among these informal contacts (further) decreased between 2007–08 and 2013 (Table 3). Frequency of contact with neighbours decreased from an average of approximately 2.7 times per week in 2000 (Mollenhorst *et al.* 2009) to approximately two times per week in 2007–08 and to approximately 1.7 times per week in 2013.

In line with the total informal personal network (see Table 1), relationship duration, as well as the extent to which neighbours are liked and trusted, increased from 2007–08 to 2013 and are now back to or higher than the 2000 level. Although all these figures regarding neighbours (Table 3) are lower than corresponding figures for informal network members in general (Table 1), the increase is larger for neighbourhood relationships.

Finally, Table 4 indicates the extent to which personal and household characteristics relate to the increased number of neighbours in informal personal networks. First, the strong and negative effect of the initial local network size shows that the more neighbours one already included in the personal network in 2007–08, the smaller the increase in number of neighbourhood contacts between 2007–08 and 2013.

Second, I show that some basic socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent (their age and their sex) and their household (being married or cohabiting and the presence

of children) and whether the respondent moved to another house<sup>7</sup> are not significantly associated with a change in the number of neighbours in one's informal personal network. Level of education, having paid work, and homeownership, however, are significantly associated with changes in the number of neighbours mentioned. Those with paid work witnessed a decreasing number of neighbours in informal personal networks, while higher educated people and homeowners (as compared to renters) witnessed an increasing number of neighbourhood relationships.

## CONCLUSIONS

My conclusions from this re-exploration of changes in Dutch neighbour relationships are threefold. I first conclude that in the Netherlands, the local has still not lost relevance for its residents. On the contrary, findings in this study suggest a trend towards a still and increasingly prominent role for neighbours in informal personal networks. These findings are in line with the 'community saved' perspective (Wellman & Leighton 1979) and the proposition that locality, namely, a safe and familiar living environment, is valued even higher than before by many people, especially under increasingly external influences such as globalisation (Forrest & Kearns 2001). In the current study, I show that this larger role particularly applies to next-door neighbours who are more often mentioned for help with odd jobs in or around the house. The finding that (next-door) neighbours are important sources of practical help with odd jobs in or around the house suggests that a short geographical distance is an important precondition for being asked for practical support.

Second, I conclude that neighbour relationships did not become more superficial. Although frequency of contact with neighbours who are mentioned as informal personal contacts declined between 2007–08 and 2013 (a development that has continued from 2000), the extent to which neighbours in the network are liked and trusted increased between 2007–08 and 2013 and is now back to or higher than the 2000 level for trust and liking, respectively.

My third conclusion concerns the associations between personal and household characteristics of residents and the change in neighbourhood contacts over time. Taking into account that individuals with only a few initial neighbourhood contacts are more likely to add new local relationships to their network than those who already had many neighbourhood contacts, I show that higher educated residents, people without paid work and homeowners are increasingly focused on neighbours in their personal networks. These results for homeowners and those without paid work are in line with the argument that greater local attachment and more local meeting opportunities support investments in neighbourhood contacts. The finding that highly educated people have increased their contacts with neighbours, even when taking homeownership and family situation into account, may be because they know more neighbours, but it could also be a result of residential segregation, such that neighbours with similar levels of education become personal contacts. The latter option may be linked to segregation tendencies at a higher spatial level, which enables highly educated people to realise their preference for associations with other highly educated people in their neighbourhood (cf. Chan & Goldthorpe 2004; Atkinson 2006). This calls for further and thorough empirical investigation.

This study reaffirms the importance of investigating developments of neighbour relationships over time. At least two findings are distinctive for the Dutch case. First, whereas between 2000 and 2007 both the number of next-door neighbours and the number of other neighbours in the network increased, after 2007–08 only the number of next-door neighbours further increased, particularly the number of those being asked for help with odd jobs in or around the house. Second, although trust in neighbourhood contacts declined between 2000 and 2007, it increased between 2007–08 and 2013, getting back to its 2000 level.

Finally, findings in this study are relevant because it is recurrently found that neighbourhoods are important contexts that affect many facets of individual life and wellbeing (Ellen & Turner 1997; cf. Galster 2012), such as career prospects (Wilson 1996), health (e.g. Kawachi

& Berkman 2003; Mohnen *et al.* 2012), teenage pregnancy (Mayer & Jencks 1989), and life satisfaction in general (Sirgy & Cornwell 2002). Moreover, neighbourhood community and cohesion are shown to be associated with social control and collective efficacy, which in turn prevent many types of disorder in neighbourhoods (Bellair & Browning 2010; Sampson *et al.* 1997). However, the findings also call for more comparative studies on this issue, both conceptual and empirical, to grasp contingencies in the relevance of and the change in neighbour relationships. Such future studies should endeavour to place changes in context and test explanations for why neighbourhood relationships have become more important, at least in the Netherlands, in an era in which large distances to (other) network members are covered relatively easily by travelling or by using online communication tools (cf. Wellman & Gulia).

#### Notes

1. If too few addresses were available, five neighbourhoods were sampled.
2. The postal code system in the Netherlands uses four numbers and two letters for every address. The more identical positions in a postal code, the closer the addresses are to each other (e.g. 3512EW is closer to 3512EX than to 3584CS). Each six-position postal code has 20 addresses on average. We chose to define a neighbourhood by the addresses within a postal code area of four numbers plus one letter (e.g. 3512E).
3. I combined the first two name-generating questions regarding 'asking for advice with job-related problems' and 'giving advice with job-related problems' into one category, 'job-related advice'.
4. Approximately 58 per cent of all neighbour relations mentioned in wave 3 originated in the neighbourhood.
5. Frequency of contact was measured by asking 'How often do you usually have contact with person x?', with answer categories 'every day', 'every week', 'every month', 'every three months', 'once or a few times a year', and 'even less frequently'. Duration of the relationship is measured by the number of years they have already known each other. Liking each other is measured by asking 'Could you indicate, on a five-point-scale, to what extent you like person x?', with answer categories 'not', 'not much', 'somewhat', 'much',



and 'very much'. Trust is measured by asking 'Could you indicate, on a five-point scale, to what extent you trust person x?', where 5 means that you trust this person very much and 1 means that you do not trust this person.

6. Approximately 58.9 per cent of the respondents whose information was used in Mollenhorst *et al.* (2009) also participated in wave 3.
7. The finding that moving to another house does not significantly affect changes in the number of neighbourhood relationships indicates that the increased importance of neighbour relations in personal networks is not significantly different for those who stayed in the neighbourhood than for those who moved to another neighbourhood between 2007–08 and 2013. Additional analyses (not presented here) in which I included length of residence (in years) did not yield significant effects of length of residence. Both findings suggest that the increased importance of neighbour relations in informal personal networks cannot be explained by living longer in the same neighbourhood.

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