



WAGENINGENUR

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wetenschapswinkel



## **Samen leven in het dorp**

'Sociale cohesie: voor wat het waard is'

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November 2009

Rapport 261

## Summary

### Living together in the village: What to make of social cohesion?

Based on research in two Dutch villages, this report aims to answer the question how feelings of community are experienced in daily life. Furthermore, its goal is to give insight in why people are involved in the social life of the community and how new forms of community life can be supported. The results are based on interviews, surveys and meetings with villagers. The main results are as follows. First, social cohesion is visible in symbols, which show the collective energy and the identity of the village as a united community. For example, in both villages, collective action to set up defibrillators in the village and surroundings, turned into symbols of social cohesion. Second, social cohesion is unevenly distributed among the villagers. Women more often recognize symbols of social cohesion and the longer people live in the villages, the higher educated and the more clubs or associations they are a member of, the more likely they recognize these symbols. Also, elderly people seem to withdraw from village life, and not just because of physical impairments. Third, while a majority of the villagers maintain their most important personal contacts with people who live outside the village and even though most of them work outside the village, this does not seem to affect community life negatively. Fourth, a very large part of the villagers subscribe to a 'moral obligation' to be active in the community life of the village. While young and older inhabitants do not differ in this respect, men are more convinced of this moral obligation than women. Finally, while women play an important, albeit often less visible role in connecting the various networks in the villages, they feel clearly less appreciated by their fellow villagers than men. This project was initiated by the Catholic Centre for Welfare Work Overijssel and funded by the Science Shop of Wageningen University.