



Regional cooperation to deal with housing shortages

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A study on regional cooperation within the Regio Amersfoort in order to solve
the housing shortage

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Preface

This document forms the master thesis for the Spatial Planning master at the University of Utrecht. This master thesis is the last research conducted for the master's programme. In September 2017 the master's programme started. During the first periods, 5 courses have been successfully finished. This master thesis will, hopefully, be the last project for me at the University of Utrecht. I have learned a lot during the master's programme. During the last couple of months I have had the opportunity to show the knowledge and skills obtained by writing my master thesis. This process has been an educational experience, but not without difficulties. Therefore I want to thank my supervisor Abigail Friendly for her support, feedback and guidance. Because of her supervision and critical thinking, my thesis was continuously improved.

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Summary

Housing shortages in the Netherlands are increasing and expected to peak in 2020 partly due to demographic developments and decreased housing production because of the financial crisis of 2008. Although the financial crisis is over, the economy flourishes again and housing production has increased, this recovery of the housing market is not yet sufficient enough to deal with and tackle the suffered shortages. Measures and solutions have to be taken in order to deal with current and future housing shortages. Regional cooperation is becoming increasingly important in these processes.

This research therefore reviews regional cooperation within the Regio Amersfoort. The region deals with large housing shortages and the Regio Amersfoort is one of the most rapidly developing regions in the Netherlands. The Regio Amersfoort consists of 9 municipalities that regionally cooperate on regional strategies concerning, for example, the housing market, mobility and tourism. This research focusses on the aspect of the housing market and examines the extent to which municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort manage to cooperate in order to solve housing shortages.

Shortage and cooperation in the Regio Amersfoort

From the interviews and document analysis it has become clear that the Regio Amersfoort faces an increasing pressures in the housing market and resulting regional housing shortages. There is a shortage in planning capacity of 12,100 houses in the entire Regio Amersfoort for the period to 2040. Most of this shortage is situated in the municipality of Amersfoort, but Baarn, Nijkerk and Soest, for instance, also face shortages. In order to balance the regional housing stock 9 municipalities cooperate voluntarily in the Regio Amersfoort. Through civil servant and aldermen meetings municipalities are able to exchange information and pool knowledge. Strategies are also developed, such as the regional spatial vision which was published by the city-region and accepted by each municipal council. The role of the Regio Amersfoort within regional cooperation is facilitating and coordinating. Therefore municipalities stay, in the end, responsible for their decisions and implemented policies. Regionally collaborating within the Regio Amersfoort is therefore voluntary and actors are not obliged to participate in every subject and theme.

Obstacles

However, when regionally cooperating and dealing with housing shortages, participants face several obstacles. Due to compartmentalisation of municipal organisations and long processes of realising planning capacity there is a slow pace of housing production. Current housing production is not sufficient to deal with the increasing demand. Additionally, political barriers work against regional cooperation. Since the latest municipal elections, local sentiments have gained more attention as more conservative political parties won terrain. Several municipal councils expressed desires to build for local demands rather than for city-regional demands. Such standpoints are not beneficial for tackling housing shortages regionally. Furthermore political fragmentation is regarded as an obstacle. The Regio Amersfoort consists of municipalities that belong to both the province of Utrecht and the province of Gelderland. Some municipalities, such as the municipalities of Eemnes, Nijkerk and Barneveld, also collaborate with municipalities in other regions and provinces. When implementing policies municipalities and the Regio Amersfoort need to adhere to multiple collaborations and strategies. This political fragmentation makes regional cooperation harder to accomplish. Heterogeneity amongst the municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort is herein also regarded as an obstacle. Municipalities have distinct characteristics and identities. On the one hand this is beneficial as the city-region can offer a wide range of living environments, However, on the other hand, the differences lead to a certain lack of coherence.

Regional approach

In order to tackle housing shortages and overcome the experienced obstacles measures have been taken. A regional distribution system for social housing has been established, for instance, that creates and enhances more uniformity, transparency and efficiency for households, municipalities and housing associations. Furthermore, so-called *acceleration teams* are set up to help municipalities accelerate housing production by providing knowledge and skills that are not available at the municipality. More flexible usage of norms and regulations by municipalities concerning the development of planning capacity would also lead to an accelerated housing production. However, several municipal councils show withdrawing movements due to local sentiments and a focus on the space claimed by new housing development. It is therefore of importance to inform municipal councils about the positive societal and economic benefits of housing development. Withdrawing movements of municipal councils and standpoints that prefer local sentiments over regional ones are not encouraging regional cooperation. When municipal councils think from a regional perspective, this will also make it easier to qualitatively adjust the housing stock in the Regio Amersfoort. This means that not only enough houses are built, but also the right type of housing in a wide variety of living environments in the separate municipalities.

Despite the obstacles, municipalities are positive about the regional cooperation. Every participant acknowledges benefits of cooperating regionally. The regional spatial vision functions as a clear foundation for future collaboration and dealing with housing shortages. The extent to which cooperation will eventually take place and its rate of success is highly dependent on the willingness to cooperate and room for movement that local politics will provide. Therefore it is of vital importance to create more uniformity and homogeneity by implementing regional regulations and inform about and convince municipal councils of the necessity to regionally cooperate and tackle housing shortages. This is particularly relevant since the shortage in planning capacity rapidly increases after 2030. As realising new planning capacity usually takes around 8 to 10 years, municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort need to start thinking now about the period after 2030.

1. Introduction

“The predicted housing shortage is materialising and will increase even further. For 2018, the housing shortage in the Netherlands is estimated at 2.7% (205,000 dwellings). Where it was previously assumed that the shortage would stabilise in 2018/2019 and then slowly decline, it is now expected that the low point will be reached only in 2020 or 2021, and will exceed 3% (235,000). This is due to the high population growth and the fact that the housing production continues to be coming on stream at a slow pace”.

(Capital Value, p. 4, 2018)

This quote from a research conducted by Capital Value clearly illustrates the problems in the housing market the Netherlands deals with. Although housing production is increasing since the financial crisis of 2008 has ended, housing shortages are expected to peak in a few years. The housing market is recovering from a tough period. Suffered losses and (demographic) developments are not easily overcome. Multiple research has been done on the current state of the Dutch housing market by both private and public actors (Capital Value, 2018; Hekwolter of Hekhuis, Nijskens & Heeringa, 2017; Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties [MBZK], 2017). From such research it becomes clear that housing shortages in the Netherlands are largest in regions as the Randstad and parts of the provinces of Gelderland and Noord-Brabant.

1.1 Research questions

Shortages in housing are expected to peak in the Netherlands in 2020 or 2021 (Capital Value, 2018). This is especially the case for the COROP regions¹ of Greater Amsterdam and Utrecht which will have to deal with greatest shortages and highest household growth of the Netherlands (Capital Value, 2018). Growth of the number of households in the COROP regions of Greater Amsterdam and Utrecht will vary between 11% to 14%. Being part of the COROP region of Utrecht (figure 1), the municipality of Amersfoort will also have to deal with housing shortages.

Focusing on Amersfoort, Statistics Netherlands recently published a report on developing regions in the Netherlands. Regions other than the Randstad have been investigated. In this report, the region of Amersfoort is regarded as one of the most rapidly developing regions in the Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS], 2018a). The growth of the population in the region of Amersfoort between 1996 and 2016 was higher than the national average growth (respectively 18,5% and 9,6%). This growth has consequences for the housing market in the city-region. The expected peak in housing shortage in the COROP region of Utrecht, together with the large population growth in the city-region of Amersfoort, illustrate that the city-region of Amersfoort has to deal with problems in the housing market which are hard to solve (Capital Value, 2018; CBS, 2018a).

In order to solve strategic issues such as housing shortages, regional cooperation is becoming increasingly important (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). Especially after the last financial crisis in the Netherlands from 2008, new discussions came up concerning regional cooperation between municipalities to tackle issues of municipal involvement in the delivery of houses

¹ COROP regions are assigned in 1970 by the Coordination Commission Regional Research Programme. This regional division is used for research purposes and divides the Netherlands in 40 separate COROP regions (see figure 1) (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2018b).

in the Netherlands (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). Regional planning and cooperation between municipalities seems to be emerging as a way to approach the striking housing shortages of Dutch municipalities. Regional cooperation provides more opportunities on a larger scale on which municipalities can seek for solutions to their housing shortages. Cooperation and adjustment of plans can also lead to benefitting from so-called *borrowed size* effects (Burger, Meijers, Hoogerbrugge & Tresserra, 2014). This effect states that “due to the presence of spatial interdependencies, smaller places can “borrow size” and host functions that they could not have hosted in isolation” (Burger et al., 2014, p. 1092). Through regional planning, municipalities can create complementary relationships and spatial integration which can be useful in tackling housing issues. There are, however, also obstacles in regional planning which hinder smooth cooperation between municipalities within a region (Basolo & Hastings, 2003; Frisken & Norris, 2001; Kantor, 2006). Although regional planning can play an important role in tackling housing shortages, both economic and political barriers make cooperation not taken-for-granted within regional planning. Therefore, as the city-region of Amersfoort will face one of the largest housing shortages (Capital Value, 2018; CBS, 2018a), the question within this master thesis is:

Figure 1: COROP regions in the Netherlands



To what extent do municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort manage to cooperate in order to solve their housing shortages?

To come to an answer to the main question, several sub-questions will be discussed:

1. How are the municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort experiencing housing shortages?

By answering this question, it becomes clear if the housing shortage in the Regio Amersfoort is evenly distributed or concentrated around a few municipalities. Additionally, it is important to investigate in which segment the housing shortage is the largest. Solving housing shortages concerning apartments has different spatial implications than family housing. Not only has this got to do with the type of household, but also with, for instance, income. This question discusses both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the housing shortage.

2. What measures are taken to encourage regional cooperation within the Regio Amersfoort?

Focus in this question is on how municipalities strive to reach regional cooperation. Municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort do not work solely with themselves but also act on a regional scale. This question discusses the measures which have been taken in order to enhance regional cooperation.

3. Which obstacles do the municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort come across when approaching the housing shortages on a regional scale?

While trying to solve the housing shortage on a regional scale, there are obstacles which a region can come across. These obstacles affect the housing production as well

as the way regional cooperation is realised and how effective it is in solving the housing shortage. It is therefore relevant to recognise the obstacles that the Regio Amersfoort comes across in order to assess to what extent municipalities manage to cooperate and deal with the housing shortage on a regional scale.

4. What regional solutions do the municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort use in order to solve housing shortages?

This question focuses on solutions municipalities within the region come up with in order to solve the housing shortage as well as organisational obstacles. There are various ways to reduce housing shortages and encourage regional cooperation. This question explores the solutions that the Regio Amersfoort implements. Such solutions can either be implemented individually as well as regionally.

By answering these questions, this thesis investigates to what extent municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort manage to deal with their housing shortages while obstacles potentially affect the process of regional cooperation and dealing with the shortage. The Regio Amersfoort is a partnership which consists of 9 municipalities (figure 2). These municipalities work together in a pact to collaborate on sustainable and effective solutions to regional issues. This includes issues on the housing market, but also subjects regarding the economy, tourism and sustainability. The Regio Amersfoort therefore strives for a balanced and decently adjusted regional development concerning housing, employment, amenities, infrastructure and the environment (Regio Amersfoort, 2018). The following municipalities are part of the Regio Amersfoort:

- Amersfoort
- Baarn
- Barneveld
- Bunschoten
- Eemnes
- Leusden
- Nijkerk
- Soest
- Woudenberg

Figure 2: Regio Amersfoort



1.2 Scientific relevance

The Netherlands copes with housing shortages. Municipalities are facing major shortages at this time and in the near future mainly as a consequence of the financial crisis and demographic changes (Haase, Kabisch & Haase, 2013; Van der Heijden, Dol & Oxley, 2011). Municipalities do not have to cope with the housing shortages individually. Kang and Groetelaers (2017), Rodríguez-Pose (2008) and Scott (2001) have mentioned that regional cooperation within a city-region has become more important to tackle housing issues. During the financial crisis, the realisation of housing development stagnated, while the growth of the number of households continued to increase (Haase et al., 2013). Additionally, several measures have been taken by the Dutch national government during the crisis which negatively influenced the room for housing investments (Van der Heijden et al., 2011; Hoekstra, 2017). Housing shortages have increased as a consequence.

Planning for new housing developments to tackle these shortages can be investigated regionally and municipalities can cooperate to create a more balanced and regionally adjusted housing stock (Basolo & Hastings, 2003; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). Throughout years, the way regional planning has been organised changed. Regional planning was formerly directed from above, according to hierarchical structures and rather static (Bafarasat, 2016; Frisken & Norris, 2001). However, due to globalisation and privatisation processes regions have become more dynamic and unbounded (Harrison, 2006; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). Cities have thereby become spaces of counteracting flows and processes, acting regionally. City-regions have therefore become more relevant in an increasingly globalised world instead of cities alone (Harrison & Growe, 2014; Parr, 2005; Scott, 2001).

But, according to multiple studies on other cases, various obstacles hinder regional cooperation and opportunities of investing in new housing (Basolo & Hastings, 2003; Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014; Frisken & Norris, 2001; Hoekstra, 2017; Kantor, 2006; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). These obstacles affect the extent to which municipalities in a region manage to cooperate to collectively handle spatial issues. It is questionable whether the potential benefits of regional cooperation eventually outweigh the risks and obstacles (Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). Since the regional scale is playing an increasingly relevant role in tackling housing shortages (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008), it is important to investigate to what extent the Regio Amersfoort manages to cooperate in order to solve the housing shortage. As regional cooperation within a city-region is becoming increasingly important and housing shortages in the Netherlands are expected to peak in the near future, it is relevant to further explore this topic.

1.3 Societal relevance

In the near future housing shortages in the Netherlands will peak mainly due to population growth and the increase in the number of households (Haase et al., 2013). During the financial crisis of 2008 production of new housing has decreased in size and the housing stock did not grow equivalent to the household growth (Van der Heijden et al., 2011; Hoekstra, 2017). This means there is a gap between the supply of housing and the demand. Households might therefore find difficulties searching for a new dwelling. When people are not able to find a new home, they are at risk of getting stuck in a dwelling which does not fit their demands. Additionally, when demand is higher than the supply of housing, prices rise. This negatively affects affordability of the housing stock in the Netherlands. It is thus of societal relevance to analyse what role regional cooperation plays in the field of housing and solving housing shortages. Getting more insight into obstacles faced when regionally cooperating, the processes of regional cooperation can be improved. This eventually leads to a more effective regional approach on housing shortages.

For municipalities, regional organisations and other governments it is also of importance to analyse the role of regional cooperation in the housing market. These actors play a relevant role in regional planning. They face the obstacles and need to come up with solutions in order to solve housing shortages and organisational obstacles. Therefore, insights into these obstacles and solutions can prepare municipalities and other organisations to execute regional planning optimally.

1.4 Reading guide

To begin with, chapter 2 discusses relevant theories and ideas regarding the subject. It discusses a debate on urban sprawl and urban densification, regional planning and the new regionalism approach as well as the concept of the city-region. After that, the methodology is described in chapter 3. In this chapter the choices for qualitative research and the case of the Regio Amersfoort are explained. Chapter 4 provides contextual information on the housing market in the Netherlands and how the current housing shortages have emerged. This chapter also discusses provincial and regional policies and strategies as well as some basic characteristics of the Regio Amersfoort. When this context is discussed, chapter 5 deals with the results from the interviews. In this chapter answers are given on the research questions. Lastly, the conclusion and discussion chapter (chapter 6) makes a connection between the results and literature and gives recommendations for further research.

2. Theoretical approach

Regional cooperation in the housing market, and regionalism in general, has gained more attention lately (Bafarasat, 2016; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008; Scott, 2001). As housing shortages are expected to peak in the near future, municipalities look for ways to deal with them. Throughout time, national governments have become less able to help cities and local governmental institutions as globalisation forces have transformed the world. Due to a post-Fordist, service-based economy, economic activity is less bounded to territorial borders and thus more flexible (Kearns & Paddison, 2000; Kantor, 2008). National governments are less capable of dealing with strategic issues and policy needs of individual regions and municipalities. The local and regional level have become more important in order to deal with globalised strategic issues. Harvey (1989) has mentioned this shift in economic activity through globalisation. In this light, he also mentioned that the role of governmental institutions has changed from a managerial form to an entrepreneurial one. This means there is a greater emphasis on local action to maximise attractiveness for investments (Harvey, 1989; Kearns & Paddison, 2000). Through globalisation and new economic activities, competitiveness amongst cities and urban regions for economic gains has thus increased (Kearns & Paddison, 2000).

It seems, however, that regional collaboration rather than competition can provide development advantages (Kearns & Paddison, 2000). As Kang and Groetelaers (2017, p. 6) explain, “the aftermath of the last credit crisis has led to a new round of discussions about regional cooperation to tackle issues of municipal involvement in housing delivery”. Provision of housing is not always based on regional dynamics. This lack of regional scope may negatively affect the functionality of the housing market (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). As Ye, Mandpe & Meyer (2005, p. 307) have noted, “good comprehensive planning for both land use and economic development requires regional coordination among urban, suburban, and rural communities”. The call for more regional coordination has moved the institutional focus from the national to a more regional and local scale, starting processes of decentralisation (Harrison, 2006; Kantor, 2006). To be able to deal with globalised, strategic issues, the subnational level has been given more attention and responsibilities. The flexibility that inter-municipal coordination provides within a region is beneficial for spatial planning. According to Kang and Groetelaers (2017) and Rodríguez-Pose (2008), the role of the region in spatial planning has become more pivotal and the concept of the city-region is rising. Regions and cooperative governance structures play a more prominent role in policy-making (Rodríguez-Pose, 2008).

But before discussing regional planning in this theoretical approach, the debate on urban sprawl and densification is discussed. Although this debate was most prominent in the 1990s and early 2000s (Burton, 2000; Gordon & Richardson, 1997; Neuman, 2005; Ye et al., 2005), it is important to take notice of it. New housing development in order to tackle housing shortages can both densify existing urban areas as well as expand current urban boundaries. Discussions around densification and expansion are prominently present in Dutch spatial planning, as the Dutch State introduced the *Ladder of Sustainable Urbanisation* in 2012 (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Ruimte [MIM], 2012). This instrument promotes sustainable use of space and encourages urban development within existing urban boundaries, thereby densifying urban space and realising more compact cities. Therefore, it is important to get an understanding of the debate and the critique on both strategies. After that, paragraph 2.2 pays attention to regionalism and the emergence of it. Several developments, such as globalisation, deregulation and decentralisation, have led to the necessity and rise of regional planning (Basolo & Hastings, 2003; Frisken & Norris, 2001; Kantor, 2008; Kearns & Paddison, 2000). This part also discusses the new regionalism approach, an approach which functions as the foundation of current regional planning where regions are regarded as dynamic and unbounded social constructs (Harrison, 2006; Kantor, 2006; Parr, 2005). Finally, city-regionalism is dealt

with, which has been mentioned by Harrison & Grove (2014) as *new regionalism version 2.0*. The city-region entails two distinct but interrelated elements with on the one hand the city and on the other hand the surrounding region (Harrison & Grove, 2014; Parr, 2005). Regional cooperation within the city-region has been mentioned to become more important in order to deal with strategic issues (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Parr, 2005; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008; Scott, 2001).

2.1 Debate on urban sprawl and densification

The focus on sustainable use of space in spatial planning and resulting restrictive policies have reduced possibilities of municipalities to expand their urban boundaries (Hekwolter of Hekhuis et al., 2017; Levkovich, Rouwendal & Brugman, 2018). Restrictive policies have put more emphasis on densification of existing urban areas rather than expanding urban boundaries. This poses challenges for cities, particularly since the urban population is growing worldwide (Lin, Meyers & Barnett, 2015). Houses have to be built in order to tackle the shortages and accommodate the growing urban population. The way in which urban areas grow can be distinguished in two variations: cities can either expand their urban boundaries or cities can increase density within existing urban areas (Neuman, 2005). Currently, with the focus on sustainable use of space, densification seems to be favourable. This has put more emphasis on a debate which was present in spatial planning in the 1990s and early 2000s on urban sprawl and urban densification. Although this debate on both strategies is currently not very present, it is important to take notice of the advantages and disadvantages of both development strategies (Burton, 2000; Daneshpour & Shakibamanesh, 2011; Gordon & Richardson, 1997; Neuman, 2005).

2.1.1 Urban sprawl

Expansion of urban boundaries, also called urban sprawl, is partly a result of suburbanisation processes. This has been specifically dominant in decades of industrialisation of economies (Gordon & Richardson, 1997). People wanted to live in suburban areas as these were the places where industries were situated. Congestion of cities was thereby reduced and new areas were claimed by cities expanding their existing urban boundaries (Broitman & Koomen, 2015; Gordon & Richardson, 1997). Urban sprawl is therefore characterised by low-density, scattered building patterns with an unlimited outward extension of new urban development, with different types of land use spatially segregated through zoning (Gordon & Richardson, 1997; Neuman, 2005). Residents live in low-density neighbourhoods, where the car is the main form of transportation. Urban sprawl thus entails high energy consumption as many trips are made by car instead of public transport or other means of transportation (Daneshpour & Shakibamanesh, 2011).

Due to low density building and the large area that is covered, both residential and destination places are poorly accessible (Daneshpour & Shakibamanesh, 2011). Dependency on the car as a means of transportation is high, which causes high infrastructure costs. Urban settlements are allocated along the roads. Open land is thereby transformed to urban land causing a decrease in functional open spaces. The high demand for land causes land to be used in an in-efficient way (Haaland & Konijnendijk van den Bosch, 2015). One of the main reasons why the open, rural land is that popular for developing housing, is because land outside the city is cheap. Both municipalities and real estate developers earn money by selling and developing (rural) land. Also, single-family housing in green areas is attractive to families, who are willing to trade a central location for a peripheral one (Daneshpour & Shakibamanesh, 2011; Gordon & Richardson, 1997). However, transforming green areas for the sake of housing development challenges the environmental sustainability. According to Daneshpour and Shakibamanesh (2011) a planner must try to balance social sustainability, environmental sustainability, and economic sustainability. By sacrificing open, green spaces, environmental sustainability is endangered and the balance between the three dimensions becomes disrupted. Therefore, high-

density building and compact cities are a reaction to the critiques on urban sprawl and its outward expansion of existing urban boundaries (Daneshpour & Shakibamanesh, 2011; Neuman, 2005).

2.1.2 Densification of cities

The compact city and higher density building has been a result of both processes of reurbanisation as well as an answer to urban sprawl and its ineffective land use (Broitman & Koomen, 2015; Haase et al., 2013). Many city centres in Europe have regained attractiveness and residents have found renewed interest in living in the urban area. This attractiveness has mainly been driven by young and small households moving to the city (Haase et al., 2013). Densification is regarded as the opposite of urban sprawl, being more compact and dense. It thereby seeks more sustainable ways of developing towns and cities (Burton, 2000; Neuman, 2005). The compact city counteracts urban sprawl by densifying the urban area and making use of high density building. Urban expansion is discouraged as there is a wish to preserve open and green space outside existing urban boundaries. The compact city thereby tries to balance growth of the city on the one hand, while protecting the environment on the other (Neuman, 2005; Ye et al., 2005), keeping the three dimensions Daneshpour & Shakibamanesh (2011) mention more in balance. Land uses are mixed and the accessibility of amenities is high. Not only are everyday utilities like supermarkets highly accessible, but also places where people meet can easily be visited (Bramley et al., 2009; Koomen et al., 2008). This enhances the chance of social and economic interaction and creates a greater sense of community (Bramley et al., 2009; Neuman, 2005). Due to the mixed land uses and the close proximity of various kinds of amenities, inhabitants are given the opportunity to use other means of transportation than the car. People are less dependent on the automobile as more amenities are accessible on walking- or cycling distance (Ye et al., 2005). A decreased dependency on the automobile means that less fuel energy is consumed and emissions are lower. Additionally, the public transport system is well-functioning in compact cities due to the mixed land uses and short travel distances. Places of both residential and commercial purposes are highly accessible (Bramley et al., 2009; Burton, 2000; Haaland & Konijnendijk van den Bosch, 2015; Jepson & Edwards, 2010; Neuman, 2005).

As Broitman and Koomen (2015, p. 33) mention, “in planning literature, residential densification is discussed extensively as a possible way to achieve compact cities, combat sprawl and create urban sustainability”. Such ambitions are in the US context often referred to as smart growth policies (Ye et al., 2005). Prescribing high densities is thereby related to more sustainable urban environments, but also to sustainable development of the community. Reaching dense neighbourhoods and adhering to smart growth policies is often achieved by implementing various variables. These are the encouragement of infill development and brownfield redevelopment (Broitman & Koomen, 2015; Haaland & Konijnendijk van den Bosch, 2015; Ye et al., 2005). Infill development refers to developing vacant, open or abandoned parcels within the urban area for residential uses, in order to increase urban densities and avoid spatial expansion (Broitman & Koomen, Ye et al., 2005). By using these vacant plots, open green space outside the urban area is preserved. Brownfield development is in line with infill development in a way that promotes higher densities within existing urban areas, but is about the conversion of plots of land. Underutilised or vacant locations within the city, for example former industrial or commercial sites, are converted to residential uses. The land use thus changes in favour of residential purposes (Broitman & Koomen, 2015). Another opportunity of gaining higher densities within existing urban areas is by “the addition of extra housing units to existing residential areas by building new residences in low-density neighbourhoods, splitting existing (large) residences in smaller units or adding extra layers on top of existing residential buildings” (Broitman & Koomen, 2015, p. 41). Building in higher densities means that housing lots become smaller. But since compact strategies also strive for sustainable communities, housing policies generally encompass offering various options. Households of all income levels should

have opportunities on the housing market to live in a home that meets their needs. Also households with special needs are to be served in sustainable communities (Ye et al., 2005).

2.1.3 Critiques of densification

However, there are some critiques on the compact city idea and densification of the urban area. One of them relates to issues of liveability (Burton, 2000; Neuman, 2005). Liveability and the quality of urban life is challenged as open, green spaces within the city are lost for reasons of densification (Koomen et al., 2008; Lin et al., 2015). Urban green land is frequently used to develop housing. It is argued that residents of a high density city need to travel larger distances to the open countryside in order to find places for natural recreation. The urban quality of life and green infrastructure within the urban area are thus endangered by development forces (Lin et al., 2015). With greater dwelling density, both public and private green space decrease in their coverage. The urban green infrastructure has, however, an important function in cities. According to Lin et al. (2015, p. 952), the “urban green infrastructure provides microclimate regulation of the urban heat island through the cooling benefits of vegetation”. Green space has a cooling effect which reduces heat-related health risks to both humans and other organisms. Urban green space can also add to the quality of life as it provides citizens opportunities to experience nature, which is beneficial to their psychological well-being (Lin et al., 2015). Overcrowded neighbourhoods have shown to be associated with mental health issues and an increase in depression (Burton, 2000).

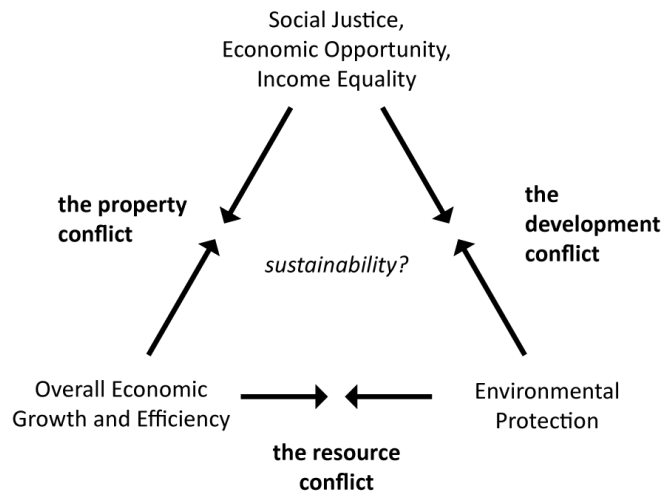
Another point of criticism on densification of the urban area is that housing prices in dense cities are higher than in low density cities (Ball, Cigdem, Taylor & Wood, 2014; Burton, 2000; Dawkins & Nelson, 2002; Koomen et al., 2008). Urban containment strategies resulting in higher density building contributes to housing prices inflation. As a result of compact building, expansion and the supply of land is limited. Land becomes scarce and more valuable, which influences the affordability of housing in a negative way. Besides that, the available land often has to be treated as it is contaminated due to former industrial uses. Such costs are often recharged in the housing prices (Ball et al., 2014; Burton; 2000; Dawkins & Nelson, 2002). Not only are costs involved in treating and reclaiming contaminated or derelict land, but densification is time-consuming as well (Broitman & Koomen, 2015; Burton, 2000). In cases of building within existing urban areas, various stakeholders are involved. Housing projects are planned in neighbourhoods which are already inhabited. Therefore, infill and brownfield developments usually meet local and neighbourhood opposition of inhabitants who are not in favour of such developments in their direct living environment. It makes processes more complex, consuming more time and capital in order to be accepted and implemented (Broitman & Koomen, 2015).

2.1.4 The position in the planners' triangle

One of the main points of discussion in the debate on whether to expand existing urban boundaries – or not – has to do with environmental issues. While on the one hand cities try to grow and enhance economic activities by expanding their urban area, governments strive on the other hand to maintain their green areas. For the sake of sustainable development, Daneshpour & Shakibamanesh (2011) argue that municipalities try to balance three separate dimensions: social sustainability, environmental sustainability, and economic sustainability. These three dimensions relate to the planner's triangle introduced by Campbell (1996), which incorporates three conflicting interests that planners have to reconcile. These are “to ‘grow’ the economy, distribute this growth fairly, and in the process not

degrade the ecosystem” (Campbell, 1996, p. 297). The ideal situation is achieved when the three conflicting interests are equally balanced (figure 3).

Figure 3: The planners' triangle (adapted from Campbell, 1996)



When dealing with housing shortages and planning new housing developments, governmental institutions need to consider both economic growth as well as environmental protection (Campbell, 1996). On the one hand, municipalities must add houses to their supply to tackle housing shortages. In order to grow economically and give households opportunities to settle themselves in a city, the housing stock has to be enlarged. Enlarging the housing stock means new houses have to be built which is likely at the expense of green space. Although there are possibilities of brownfield redevelopment and transforming former office buildings into houses within existing urban boundaries, such opportunities do exhaust at some point (Broitman & Koomen, 2015; Haaland & Konijnendijk van den Bosch, 2015). Consequently, urban boundaries have to be expanded. Losing green, open space for the sake of new housing development therefore seems unavoidable.

However, on the other hand, while new housing development is necessary, municipalities and spatial planners must also keep environmental issues in mind (Campbell, 1996; Daneshpour & Shakibamanesh, 2011). Protection of the environment is necessary as neglecting the conservation of natural resources endangers present and future demands and the ecosystem (Campbell, 1996). By outward expansion of new urban development, open and green land outside the city is transformed. This means less functional open space is available and cities and towns are developed in a less environmentally sustainable way (Burton, 2000; Neuman, 2005). Housing development therefore poses a threat to natural resources.

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The goals of overall economic growth and developing new housing on the one hand, and environmental protection on the other are thus conflicting. This leads to a so-called resource conflict (Campbell, 1996). Finding a balance between these two components is difficult. While the growth of residential areas by increasing the volume of the housing stock is necessary to tackle housing shortages, it is not desirable that this is achieved at the expense of natural resources (Campbell, 1996; Ye et al., 2005). In this way, planning for new housing development has to deal with the resource conflict. How this conflict is being handled, differs for every country. What seems to have an increasingly important role in tackling housing shortages and dealing with the resulting resource conflict is spatial planning at the regional scale (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008; Scott, 2001). Regional planning is regarded as beneficial as it makes inter-municipal cooperation more available and flexible, which provides opportunities for a more balanced housing stock. By balancing the regional housing stock and spreading new housing development across multiple municipalities, scenarios are avoided where, for example, one municipality transforms all of its open space while its neighbouring municipality does not realise new housing at all. The resource conflict can be dealt with in cooperation with multiple municipalities and stakeholders all together. Especially in times where spatial planning goes through processes of decentralisation, deregulation and privatisation, the regional scale becomes more relevant in coping with housing shortages (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). Times of urban management with governmental institutions able to direct events has changed. Governments are less frequently able to control urban activities and strategic

issues on an individual basis. The idea of the welfare state has been challenged by neoliberal reforms which has led to political decentralisation being championed to be responsive to local needs (Kearns Paddison, 2000).

2.2 Regionalism

Policies during the last decades have put particular emphasis on deregulation, decentralisation and self-sufficiency (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014; Kearns & Paddison, 2000). Responsibilities of the state have been transferred to local authorities and provinces. Privatisation and deregulation also gave opportunities for private parties to enter the housing market. During the last two decades, the monopoly position of municipalities in the housing market has therefore been challenged by private actors (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). But decentralisation processes also gave more responsibilities to lower levels of the government rather than the national level. The aim of political decentralisation is to be more responsive to local and regional needs and to be able to adapt to differences in political demand-making between localities (Kearns & Paddison, 2000).

2.2.1 Emergence of regionalism

Regionalism and the study of the region has not always been given attention within spatial planning. In former times, regionalism in Europe and the United States was quite formal and institutionalised (Bafarasat, 2016; Frisken & Norris, 2001). According to old regionalism, rooted in spatial planning in the 1960s and 1970s, regions were directed from above. States promoted a regional government that was vertically governed according to hierarchical structures. Such regional governmental institutions in European countries were given responsibilities and powers formerly owned by the state (Bafarasat, 2016; Sagan, 2009). The higher hierarchical institution could impose requirements from above and could thereby regulate certain activities by using its authority. Behaviour was directed and policies imposed by the higher level were meant to be implemented by lower authorities. Accountability and responsibility lines were clear in these situations of old regionalism (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017).

Borders within old regionalism were fixed and “have been regarded for a long time as an almost self-evident component of the sovereignty and power associated with state territoriality” (Paasi, 2009, p. 216). Borders divided the world, allowing administrative power over the area which entails sovereignty. It was believed that identities and territories were fixed within this territory. This so-called ‘old regionalism’ often made use of boundaries to mark free trade arrangements and security alliances (Hettne & Söderbaum, 1998). Such regions were directly ruled from above by hegemonic structures and the composition of members within these regions was strict. It was thought that regions could be separated by borders without its members having relations with members in other regions. Boundaries in old regionalism were thus bounded, static, neutral lines (Johnson, Jones, Paasi, Amoore, Mountz, Salter & Rumford, 2011).

However, from the 1990s on scholars such as Frisken and Norris (2001), Hettne and Söderbaum (1998) and Wheeler (2002) began to recognise that there are no ‘given’ regions and that this old regionalist approach neglects the context in which regions operate. They realised that strategic issues cannot be divided by strict boundaries but that they occur beyond them. What is being seen as a region in economic terms, may not be relevant from a political perspective or in social terms. Issues governments have to deal with thus do not stick to boundaries, but they rather overlap. Counsell, Hart, Jonas and Kettle (2007) illustrate this by talking about the intersecting relationship of the housing market, economic development and education. They note that “perceptions about the quality of schools in certain local authorities, especially at the secondary level, feed into subregional housing market demand, which in turn influences economic development in terms of attracting skilled workers” (Counsell et al., 2007, p. 398). Issues therefore more often occur beyond the strategic scope

of formally empowered governmental institutions, raising the need for issues to be examined from a regional rather than from a local perspective (Counsell et al., 2007).

Globalisation, deregulation and decentralisation

That issues more often occur beyond static boundaries is partly due to globalisation processes of finance, trade, production and technology in the 1990s and 2000s (Kantor, 2008; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008; Scott, 2001). Parts of the world, for instance Europe and the United States, have moved from an industrial economic phase to the current post-Fordist, service-based economy (Friskén & Norris, 2001; Kantor, 2008; Kearns & Paddison, 2000). This involves, as Kearns and Paddison (2000, p. 845) mention, a shift towards “mobile capital investments, the emergence of world-wide economic sectors, international institutions and the emergence of global spectacle”. National governments are faced with a diminished capacity to deal with the policy needs of each of the individual regions and municipalities within their borders. Cities and municipalities compete with each other, trying to lure investments and to be attractive. Regions have been facing intensified spatial competition as regional boundaries become increasingly porous in terms of capital as well as labour. In order to distinguish themselves, there is inter-regional competition rather than inter-municipal competition for service-dominated enterprises (Friskén & Norris, 2001; Harrison, 2006). Municipalities of both urban and rural character must regionally collaborate, as their economies are becoming increasingly intertwined (Kantor, 2006). The global pressures consequently lead to the need for greater political cooperation to enhance regional competitiveness. Regions hereby compete for service-based businesses, acting on a national and international scale (Friskén & Norris, 2001; Kantor, 2008; Kearns & Paddison, 2000). One of the major issues which regions have to deal with in this respect is “the need to consider the region in relation to its interconnectedness with other scales and other sites of economic organisation” (Harrison, 2006, p. 42).

Furthermore, deregulation and decentralisation processes encourage focussing on the regional scale in spatial planning and housing development (Kantor, 2006; Kearns & Paddison, 2000). Political decentralisation has been emphasised in order to be responsive to local needs and differences between localities. Responsibilities are distributed to governmental institutions on the subnational and local level. This decentralisation, together with deregulation and privatisation of the public sector, gives room for informal regional governance structures, involving private and non-governmental institutions as well (Kantor, 2006). Through decentralisation, national governments have transferred part of their legal power to lower-level governments. In this way, they rely more on local cooperation. Consequently, the private sector has also been involved in developing commercial areas and providing housing. By giving more responsibilities to lower-level governments and regional cooperation, the national state strives to be more responsive to regional and local needs (Kantor, 2006; Kantor, 2008). Thus, because of globalisation, deregulation and decentralisation processes, territorial boundaries are less static. Boundaries have become more fuzzy and regional territories are dynamic as involvement of actors is continuously changing (Basolo & Hastings, 2003; Kasala & Sifta, 2017). Old regionalism with its static and bounded character was replaced by the so-called ‘new regionalism approach’ around the start of this century and the early 2000s (Harrison, 2006; Hettne & Söderbaum, 1998).

2.2.2 New regionalism approach

Under new regionalism, regions are seen as dynamic and unbounded social constructs where both governmental and non-governmental institutions and parties act to solve issues beyond the local level (Harrison, 2006; Kantor, 2006). Processes of globalisation, deregulation and decentralisation have put more emphasis on the regional scale in dealing with strategic issues (Friskén & Norris, 2001; Harrison, 2006; Kasala & Sifta, 2017). Introducing new actors in regional planning on various scales consequently involves interactive networking between the local, regional and provincial level. New regionalism

thereby relies on voluntary collaboration. Actors decide for themselves whether they have an interest in participating in regional cooperation. The cooperation takes place in interactive networks. Such networks operate around a bundle of both private and public sector institutions. Instead of competing, these institutions share information and collaborate to form regional innovative and competitive networks (Harrison, 2006). Rather than creating tight vertical relations on the governmental level, regionalism has thereby become horizontal and flexible. Relations are informal and, as Bafarasat (2016) mentions, agreements are looser and less confined to boundaries, leaning towards governance strategies. What is in line with the more dynamic and territorially unbounded character of the new regionalism approach, are horizontal governance structures (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). Horizontal governance structures allow a network of actors to exercise influence on various targeted policy goals. Acknowledging that regions are less frequently territorially bounded and more dynamic, notions of accountability have become more dynamic as well. Participants negotiate in actor-networks on accountability and means of appraisal and judgement. The actor-networks have an influence on decision-making through mutually constructed understanding and common notions and agreements (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Semain, 2016). Rather than competing with each other, municipalities can thus collaborate regionally, as this can be beneficial in multiple ways.

Relevant in order to be able to cooperate and come to mutually constructed understandings in regional planning is, according to Harrison (2006) and Kantor (2008), not so much the *hard institutionalism* through the presence of institutions, but rather *soft institutionalism* and the build-up of social capital and mutual trust. New regionalism is not about exercising territorial power but focuses more on aligning stakeholders' interests and actors voluntarily participating in planning processes (Frisken & Norris, 2001). Because boundaries are not strictly drawn and interests are often scattered across administrative boundaries, various stakeholders can participate (Bafarasat, 2016; Counsell et al., 2007; Harrison & Groewe, 2014). Relationships between actors define the potential to tackle regional issues. Bafarasat (2016) explains that in regional planning, the balance between the influence of different stakeholders affects the potential in producing sustainable and successful strategies.

The fluid and often voluntary basis on which parties join regional planning processes, leads to horizontally linked organisations. According to Kang and Groetelaers (2017, p. 4), horizontal networks help "public authorities to focus on certain problems, share views on them, discuss feasible solutions and implement them jointly". Instead of a legal power imposing requirements and activities from above by using its authority, parties interact, participate and co-work. This regional cooperation has several benefits for the municipalities who are participating.

2.2.3 Benefits of regional planning

By forming a region, municipalities experience a considerable degree of spatial integration. From this perspective, municipalities can complement each other which enables them to profit from neighbouring facilities (Burger et al., 2014). Municipalities "borrow size" from each other due to the presence of spatial interdependencies. This means that smaller municipalities are capable of hosting urban functions that are normally only found in larger cities. On the other hand, larger places can also host fewer functions than it could support on a regular basis. This, for instance, also means that households living in municipality A, make use of the urban functions such as theatres and supermarkets of municipality B. Although the households do not live in municipality B, this municipality thus still profits from the presence of households in their close proximity. This borrowed size effect encourages regional cooperation instead of intermunicipal competition (Burger et al., 2014).

Furthermore, municipalities within a region often strengthen their self-organising capacities in the market as a consequence of the governance strategies (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). Municipalities are flexible in their collaboration as formal accountability and authority lines are less obvious than in more hierarchical government strategies. The participants must thus coordinate their steps which will

eventually lead to a more balanced housing stock. During discussions municipalities are made aware of the effects of their individual decisions. When such effects are negative for the rest of the region, other municipalities will make this clear. Decisions being made are therefore based on mutual coordination and, according to Kang and Groetelaers (2017, p. 12), “the benefits of working together clearly outweighed those of withdrawing from the regional platform”. So-called “free-riders” who neglect the regional platform more often face difficulties in getting their land use plans accepted. Coordination through the region encourages vertical synchronisation of policies across the local, regional and national. When local policies clash because they have been implemented at different scales without taking notice of each other’s plans, the potential benefits of local policies are challenged (Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). Collectively established land use plans by the region and housing development plans that adhere to regional agreements find greater chance of getting accepted and implemented (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017).

Municipalities adjusting their housing policies to demands of the whole region results in a properly balanced housing stock and less shortages within the region. Especially in current times when housing shortages in the Netherlands are peaking (Capital Value, 2018), the region offers more opportunities of tackling these shortages than individual municipalities (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). By cooperating and working together, the housing stock becomes more balanced. It is not necessary for municipalities to compete for wealthier households in order to economically profit the most. The borrowed size effect has shown that municipality A still benefits from households which live in close proximity in municipality B, as these households can make use of amenities and the urban functions of municipality A (Burger et al., 2014). Households make use of services and amenities offered by other, nearby municipalities, thereby stimulating its economy. For a region it is important to recognise such dependencies as it encourages closer regional cooperation (Burger et al., 2014; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). Adjusting housing policies to demands of the whole region is, as Feijel, Ten Have and Van den Bouwhuijsen (2013) mention, only cooperation to a certain degree. There are also more elaborate and radical ways of cooperating.

2.2.4 Degrees of regionalism

The most accessible approach to regional cooperation is characterised by municipalities within the same region sharing information on their housing plans. Municipalities receive information on the existing housing development plans and demographic changes of municipalities within the region. According to that information, separate municipalities can match supply and demand, without collectively developing a strategic policy (Feijel et al., 2013; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). Secondly, municipalities can jointly coordinate and adjust their housing projects to the regional demands. This eliminates the risk of intermunicipal competition and municipalities collaborate to achieve collective goals. The outcome of the coordination can, for instance, be a regional strategic housing policy which describes future developments and related issues. Taking it a step further, municipalities arrange regional equalisation of the financial results of land and housing development between projects and municipalities within the region (Feijel et al., 2013; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). On the housing market this seems to be quite difficult to realise as issues concerning housing developments are often regarded as the problem of an individual municipality. Collectively paying for the financial deficits of a single municipality is therefore not popular. However, contributing financially to a regional fund which realises transformations and regional spatial developments is more frequently regarded as being of regional importance (Feijel et al., 2013). This third degree in regional cooperation already has financial and political consequences. The fourth degree, realisation of a regional development company with the municipalities as the shareholders, is even more advanced. Municipalities thereby give the regional development company the responsibility of realising housing development (Feijel et al., 2013; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). Introducing a regional development company is not done very often as

municipalities are reluctant to give up their autonomy and want to stay in charge of the housing development in their own municipality (Feijel et al., 2013).

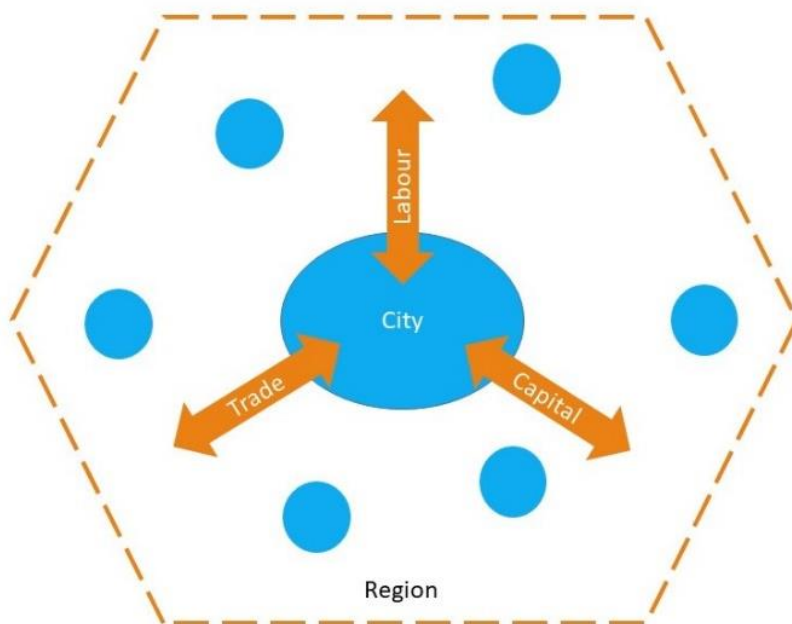
2.3 City-regionalism

Through the rise of new regionalism, less usual or standard regions are formed. Regions formed according to new regionalist standards do not relate to administrative, territorial boundaries. This results, as Harrison and Groue (2014, p. 22) state, “in an ever-expanding assemblage of new inter-regional, intercity and transnational collaborative initiatives in economic development and spatial planning”. New regionalism has thereby reshaped the regional map. Relationally networked city-regions, cross-border regions, European metropolitan regions and mega city-regions have replaced traditional administrative regions. World systems in the new regionalist era are therefore more often defined in terms of territorially loose regions rather than administrative static nation-states (Harrison & Groue, 2014; Hettne & Söderbaum, 1998). The concept of the city-region is discussed in the following section.

2.3.1 Characteristics of the city-region

Despite improvements in communication and technology and globalisation processes have helped to destruct barriers of space by bringing individual parts of the world in closer contact with each other, cities continually increase in size and importance (Scott, 2001). Although new regionalism and globalisation processes have turned the world more into spaces of flows, cities increasingly become

Figure 4: The city-region



spaces of counteracting flows and processes, acting on a regional scale. It is for this reason that Harrison and Groue (2014) have observed a *new regionalism version 2.0* in current regional planning. This revised version of the new regionalist approach puts more emphasis on city-regions forming the scale replacing regions and cities as the pivotal formation in times of globalisation (Harrison & Groue, 2014; Scott, 2001). According to Parr (2005) the city with its boundaries has lost significance with respect to the functioning of the housing market. The city alone does not reflect housing structures in an increasingly globalised world (Harrison & Groue, 2014; Parr, 2005).

The city-region is based on a relational approach between the city and its surrounding region and is recognised as being key to economic and social (re)development (Harrison, 2014). The city-region is characterised as entailing two distinct but interrelated elements (figure 4). On the one hand, there is the city acting as a centre of economic activity, services and is an important transportation and communication node. On the other hand, a city-region comprises the region, a surrounding area of networked towns in the hinterland (Harrison & Groue, 2014; Parr, 2005). Within the city-region there is thus a central city which has functional ties to its surrounding hinterland.

There is a complementarity between the city and its hinterland which forms the basis for the interdependence. The interdependence within a city-region results in flows of trade, labour and capital between the city and its more rural surroundings (Parr, 2005). Trade flows are apparent since the city provides a wide range of services, retailing and distribution for the surrounding territory, while the surrounding area is more involved in production and industrial activities. Labour-market flows are present because people commute from their house to work within the city-region. Through their everyday life, households within the city-region consume products and services which results in capital flows between the city and its surrounding area (Parr, 2005). These interdependencies show that markets of separate municipalities are interrelated which is, according to Parr (2005), particularly the case for the labour market and housing market.

City-regions consist of dense areas with accumulated capital, labour and social life. Looking at them from a political perspective, city-regions are characterised by a strategic political level (Rodríguez-Pose, 2008; Scott, 2001). They act beyond the level of the individual urban government authority as it also includes the more semi-urban hinterlands. Despite the fact that the urban and rural governmental units within a city-region are separate institutions, the city-region is functionally inter-related forming a horizontal governance network of an urban centre with its semi-rural hinterlands (Harrison & Growe, 2014; Scott, 2001). Boundaries of a city-region do, because of their dynamic character, not necessarily match with existing administrative boundaries. As Rodríguez-Pose (2008, p. 1029) mentions “the boundaries of a city-region tend not to be fixed in time and change as a result of transformations in the functional interconnections that link the core city to its hinterland”. As national governments face weakened capabilities to manage economic forces due to globalisation, the city-region and regional scale provide opportunities as the strategic scale to enhance economic benefits (Friskén & Norris, 2001; Scott, 2001).

Homogeneity

In former times, regions were polycentric with several centres in the same region competing with each other for economic gains and advantages. This led to economic fragmentation within regions, as Kantor (2006) has mentioned to be the case in the Randstad. In the Randstad, the northern part is dominated by the service sector, while the southern part of the Randstad is more popular for manufacturing and distribution activities. Therefore, interdependence of the economy varies across the region. Fragmentation and heterogeneity in regions thereby create difficult contexts for regional cooperation. This is particularly the case in the new regionalist approach, where participation is based on a voluntary basis and a wide range of institutions participate (Bafarasat, 2016; Feiock, 2009; Kantor, 2006). That is also a reason why the city-region as a concept has gained increased attention in regional planning.

City-regions regularly comprise a city with its surrounding semi-urban territory. Because city-regions are more monocentric than polycentric, there is a certain extent of homogeneity within the city-region (Feiock, 2009; Scott, 2001). Homogeneity of preferences amongst the multiple units within the city-region is relevant. The process of developing a partnership is eased when preferences regarding policy development of the individual units are similar. When differences are too large and prevalent, officials have to negotiate longer to decide on regional agreements (Feiock, 2009; Scott, 2001). City-regions are therefore not areas brought together by plain borders, but they are rather bound by common interests. Spatial coalitions formed by local governments to deal with the threats and opportunities of globalisation benefit from homogeneity and common interests amongst the participants (Rodríguez-Pose, 2008; Scott, 2001).

2.3.2 Horizontal structure

The participation of multiple local governmental units call for a horizontal rather than a hierarchical and vertical form of cooperation. Relational networks apparent in city-regions amongst the various

municipalities tend to override the purely political boundaries (Harrison, 2007). In horizontal structures a network of actors exercises influence on targeted policy goals and benefits from the network they form (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). By working together, municipalities more effectively focus on issues, share their knowledge and discuss possible solutions for the region as a whole. Horizontal governance is, however, in opposition to sectoral thinking and vertical governmental organisation of activities in centralised governments (Sagan, 2009). But as Europe, including the Netherlands, has been through phases of decentralisation and still is decentralising, horizontal governance structures to enhance city-regionalism are encouraged (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014; Kearns & Paddison, 2000).

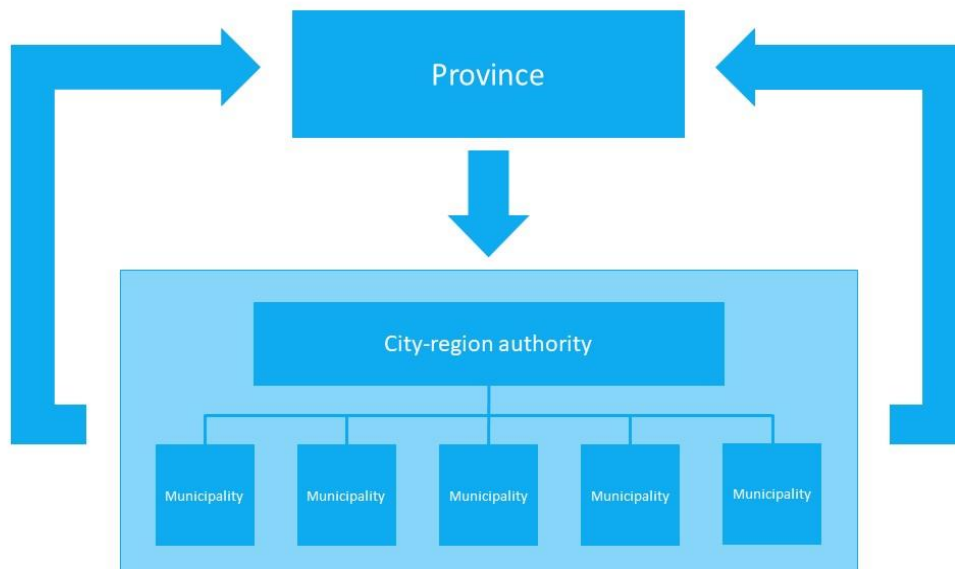
What can, however, result from horizontal cooperation is fragmentation of authority among the local governmental institutions participating as well as vertical fragmentation through overlapping governmental agencies and administrative boundaries (Feiock, 2009; Sagan, 2009). So-called 'institutional collective action problems' arise when responsibilities are delegated to lower level governmental institutions (Feiock, 2009). And although city-regions are more homogeneous than whole nation-states, policy-making is still fragmented as participation is based on a voluntary basis of self-interest. Harrison (2006), for instance, mentions that the soft-institutionalism and social capital new regionalism and city-regions depend on, form an inadequate foundation. Depending only on voluntary participation based on mutual interests and trust is not strong enough for regions to grow and effectively tackle strategic issues. In the absence of a regional government, the institutional context is loose and legitimacy and politics are fragmented (Bafarasat, 2016; Harrison, 2006). The potential of producing sustainable strategies within a city-region is therefore highly depend on the balance and willingness to cooperate within the field of actors (Bafarasat, 2016). Although city-regions are becoming more relevant in spatial planning, this rise is not necessarily at the expense of the national state. National states must be able to operate in an increasingly complex multi-scalar institutional setting and has to use its power to orchestrate rather than intervene (Feiock, 2009; Harrison & Growe, 2014).

2.3.3 The role of political leadership

In order to resolve issues of fragmentation in horizontal city-regions, territorial coalitions can be constructed where the various local governments join together. Through the heightened regional capacity, administrative and policy problems at the regional scale can be dealt with more easily (Rodríguez-Pose, 2008; Scott, 2001). The presence of a regional authority and political leadership is thus of importance. Regional authorities are able to balance interests and make sure everyone is heard, from both the public as well as the private sector (Sagan, 2009). In the absence of regional leadership, horizontal coordination on policy priorities but also on the financial contribution of each participant is less effective and made more difficult (Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). Such leadership is therefore, as Lambregts, Janssen-Jansen and Haran (2008) have mentioned, crucial for maintaining regional governance. Because of existing balances of power and administrative structures regional politics are fragmented. This makes it hard to gain participants' loyalties. Lambregts et al. (2008) have shown that, because of these difficulties and a lack of leadership, institutional capacity-building in the Randstad faced challenges. This eventually led to a certain extent of failure. In order to deal with these institutional difficulties, regional leadership is relevant to negotiate between the multiple authorities at both the municipal and the provincial levels (figure 5). Interests are to be balanced for the sake of regional sustainable development of policy (Lambregts et al., 2008; Sagan, 2009). Local governments maintain their independence and autonomy in these cases, as they must approve the regional authority's activities (Feiock, 2009). Despite being a separate organisation, regional authorities are not capable of forcing municipalities to do what they want. Municipalities are still capable of making their own decisions, but these decisions are to a larger extent balanced with local governments in the city-region. However, although political leadership does, to some extent, resolve issues of fragmentation,

there are several other obstacles which make regional planning and cooperation within city-regions hard to accomplish.

Figure 5: Horizontal governance structure including regional authority (adapted from Kang & Groetelaers, 2017)



2.3.4 Obstacles to regional planning

Accountability

One of the obstacles hindering smooth cooperation in city-regions has to deal with accountability and responsibility. While flexible accountability and authority lines in horizontal governance structures have been mentioned as a positive feature, these can serve as an obstacle as well (Kantor, 2006; Mashaw, 2006). In traditional constructions, top-level bureaucrats, for example, are responsible or accountable to an elected official, being a president or minister, for executing functions which comply with superior policies (Mashaw, 2006). However, with the interference of market parties in the regional housing market and as a consequence of city-region authorities being introduced, accountability is considerably more fluid. In the market it is not the company charter deciding on what products and services are offered, as is more the case in the public sector. Consumers themselves select their products and services. In regional planning, accountability is thus more dynamic, making it harder to assess who is accountable to whom for which action (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Mashaw, 2006). Besides that, the dynamic character of regional planning and territorial unboundedness make it easier for municipalities to participate in housing development plans. However, this has also proved problematic (Kantor, 2006; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). Due to the voluntary arrangement city-regions are based on, adequate financing and granting financial support can prove to be problematic. The financial resources of a city-region are therefore often fewer than available at the national or provincial level (Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). The voluntary basis on which municipalities participate in regional planning and the resulting fuzzy character of the boundaries have in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area led to several municipalities leaving the region during its existence (Kantor, 2006).

Political barriers

According to Kantor (2008), one of the biggest obstacles to overcome in regional planning is the entrenched bureaucratic power relationship in Dutch spatial planning. In the Netherlands there are,

due to its long history of state interference, tight national-local bureaucratic policy networks. These networks are organised to maintain their authority, especially if efforts from the regional level try to threaten their power (Kantor, 2006). The networks are tight because many officials have been active on both the national and local level. Career paths have taken them back and forth between the various governmental levels. The consequence of these tight networks is that communication lines are frequently fairly informal and officials have intimate knowledge and access to key bureaucrats. Investing in regional cooperation is thereby made difficult as bureaucrats are more in favour of maintaining existing vertical power relations (Kantor, 2006). Implementing a regional authority means that local officials partly have to give up some authorities to achieve regional cooperation (Feiock, 2009). Bureaucratic powers are reluctant to change existing patterns of interaction. Changing these patterns is unavoidable when adhering to regional planning (Frissen & Norris, 2001; Kantor, 2006).

NIMBY attitudes

What is particularly difficult to deal with in tackling housing issues on a regional scale is the typical rejection of a type of land use or housing type by an individual municipality (Basolo & Hastings, 2003). Such objections are known as NIMBY – Not In My BackYard. Municipal decision makers could think, for instance, that affordable or cheaper housing in their municipality has negative effects on its surroundings. Social structures might change negatively, there is an unwanted increase in housing density or property values might decrease because of the added houses for lower-incomes (Basolo & Hastings, 2003). Municipalities are perhaps not in favour of expanding their urban boundaries for housing development and want to relocate these developments towards neighbouring municipalities. Although the article by Basolo and Hastings (2003) studied the American context, NIMBY objections can also play a role in the European and, more specifically, the Dutch case. This is possibly, however, less severe as social and economic polarisation and segregation is more prominent in American cities than in European cities (Basolo & Hastings, 2003; Häußermann & Haila, 2005).

NIMBY objections are, regardless of the context, not supporting the approach to tackle housing shortages. Due to the great housing shortages in the Netherlands, houses have to be built for various households and incomes at multiple locations. Smooth collaboration in order to tackle housing shortages on a regional scale in the Netherlands does not benefit from municipalities rejecting certain types of housing at specific locations. In order to achieve a balanced, regional approach to housing, local jurisdictions have to accept housing which they are not particularly in favour of as well (Basolo & Hastings, 2003).

Intermunicipal competition

Despite the fact that city-regions are more homogeneous than larger, polycentric regions, intermunicipal competition remains present and an obstacle to regional planning within the city-region (Kantor, 2006). This is mostly the result of the fact that local governments must raise part of their own revenues. Options of generating own revenues are, however, scarce. Selling and leasing municipally owned land is the method most popular for generating municipal revenues. And as Kantor (2006, p. 816) notes, “because government ownership of land is widespread as a social policy, local governments compete to increase land values and lure developers and businesses into their jurisdictions in the hopes of generating income through land leasing or sale”. If there is a chance of containing housing developments, new offices buildings or constructions of retail within own jurisdictions, municipalities will take it. When one municipality is, however, effective in attracting new housing developments, this municipality possibly takes away such developments from neighbouring municipalities. The result is that the attractive municipality succeeds in tackling its housing shortage, while other municipalities face increasing shortages. But not only do municipalities compete for such real estate developments and investments; municipalities also compete for higher income households. These more affluent

households have a positive economic effect on the municipality as a whole, as they generate tax revenues and spend money on a daily basis. Although municipalities can benefit from the borrowed size effect, municipalities still compete for real estate development and the most affluent households (Basolo & Hastings, 2003; Kantor, 2006; Kearns & Paddison, 2000).

2.4 Conclusion

Regional planning within a city-region thus has some benefits for tackling housing shortages in the Netherlands. When done right, cooperation on a regional scale can result in more balanced and adjusted housing stocks (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008; Scott, 2001). Especially in current times when housing shortages are expected to peak, regional planning on the city-region scale becomes more relevant. In contrast to old regionalism, current city-regions are dynamic and territorial boundaries are not fixed (Bafarasat, 2016; Harrison & Growe, 2014; Hettne & Söderbaum, 1998). This gives municipalities the chance to participate on subjects they have an interest in, on a voluntary basis. By cooperating in the housing field to balance housing stocks, sustainable use of space is encouraged. It is not desirable for one municipality to endlessly expand its urban boundaries for the sake of housing, while surrounding municipalities do not develop housing within their borders. By adjusting supply and demand with surrounding municipalities, a wider range of development possibilities are at hand (Harrison, 2006; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Kantor, 2006). New housing development can thereby be spread amongst the multiple participants. In this way, the resource conflict, as described by Campbell (1996), can be made less severe and prevalent. City-regional cooperation can result in a more evenly spread and balanced housing development. Rather than housing development being realised mainly in one municipality, the region receives this as a whole. Properly balanced housing stocks and more evenly spread new housing development can, as Basolo and Hastings (2003) have mentioned, reduce urban sprawl. If a more properly balanced housing stock can be achieved by regional cooperation, the resource conflict between housing development on the one hand and protection of natural resources on the other hand, will be less of an issue.

The presence of a political authority is of importance when regionally approaching strategic issues such as housing shortages (Lambregts et al., 2008; Scott, 2001). When local governmental institutions cooperate on a voluntary basis, politics are at risk of becoming fragmented (Bafarasat, 2016; Harrison, 2006). Regional authorities are in such cases able to balance interests of the multiple local municipalities participating and make sure everyone is heard. Without a regional authority, cooperation and decision-making in horizontal governance structures is less effective. A regional authority can resolve such fragmentation issues, but there are still several other obstacles present which hinder smooth regional cooperation (Basolo & Hastings, 2003; Frisken & Norris, 2001; Kantor, 2006).

Despite the necessity of cooperation in order to tackle housing shortages, there still is intermunicipal competition (Kantor, 2006). Municipalities compete with each other for new developments as this generates financial revenues. Furthermore, unclear lines of accountability and responsibility and the entrenched bureaucratic political relationships in Dutch spatial planning lead to difficulties realising city-regional cooperation (Kantor, 2008; Mashaw, 2006). When these obstacles predominantly decide how cooperation processes develop, regional planning for tackling housing shortages will not be less successful (Basolo & Hastings, 2003; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Kantor, 2006). Especially in current times when the possibilities of extending urban boundaries are limited by densification strategies (Haase et al., 2013; Hekwolter of Hekhuis et al., 2017; Levkovich et al., 2018), regional planning can serve to tackle the housing problem. The housing shortages are, however, of such an amount that not a single solution exists. Regions must therefore look for multiple possibilities of reducing housing shortages in order to provide enough houses for the increased number of

households (Haase et al., 2013). These solutions can partly be found within existing urban boundaries, but building beyond them seems unavoidable.

3. Methodology

3.1 Qualitative research

For this thesis qualitative methods are used. Qualitative research is used to describe, interpret and explain behaviour, experiences and actions of research units (Boeije, 't Hart & Hox, 2009). As it serves explorative purposes qualitative research can lead to new insights when not much is known yet. Execution of this qualitative research is not completely scheduled; new insights might lead to adjustments to topics of the interviews or to new actors in the field. When conducting interviews, especially semi-structured ones, the researcher is flexible and free to react to answers of respondents. This makes it possible to explore unexpected subjects during the interviews. Exploring unexpected subjects is not possible when conducting inquiries as all questions are fixed and settled beforehand (Boeije et al., 2009).

Since the subject is explorative, qualitative research suits this thesis. Research has been done on the debate on urban sprawl and densification, regional cooperation and its role in spatial planning. As housing shortages are expected to peak in the near future, it is useful to explore the way municipalities within a region cooperate in order to tackle housing issues. The flexible method of semi-structured qualitative interviewing offers opportunities to adapt to unexpected turns of events during the interview. This support the explorative character of the thesis.

3.2 Document analysis

This research will be conducted using document analysis and (expert)interviewing. Document analysis is about “finding, selecting, appraising (making sense of), and synthesising data contained in documents” (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). The documents that are analysed include, for instance, policy documents of the various municipalities and the Regio Amersfoort. These documents are analysed and interpreted in order to gain understanding of the regional collaboration and subjects concerning the local and regional housing market.

The document analysis should provide contextual information on the subject. These documents can give background information as well as it is supplementary and adds to the knowledge base (Bowen, 2009). Information gathered from the document analysis will partly be presented in the context chapter as well as in the results chapter. The context chapter provides information on the Dutch housing market, the housing shortages and the regional situation. This chapter therefore serves as an introduction to the Regio Amersfoort and the regional relations before the results chapter goes into more detail and gives answers on the main- and sub questions. Additionally, knowledge obtained from the document analysis serves as a source of inspiration for the interviews. The type of documents needed for the analysis are primarily publicly available from the internet, which is one of the advantages of doing document analysis (Bowen, 2009). Data presented within these documents has already been gathered. Document analysis thus requires data selection instead of data collection. This makes document analysis an efficient and cost-effective research method (Bowen, 2009). However, one of the limitations of doing document analysis is that the documents which are being analysed lack sufficient detail (Bowen, 2009). As Bowen (2009) states “documents are produced for some purpose other than research; they are created independent of a research agenda” (p. 31). These documents will thus most likely not completely answer the research question posed within this research. Therefore, (expert)interviews are conducted to fill the gap.

3.3 Interviewing

In addition to the document analysis (expert)interviews will be conducted. These interviews are semi-structured, organised around various predetermined questions. During the interview there is room for other questions emerging from the dialogue. Especially with explorative research, interviewees can come up with unexpected comments. Semi-structured interviews leave room to adapt to these unexpected comments. They allow to explore a topic and go more deeply into the subject in order to gain a better understanding (Boeije et al., 2009; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Table 1: Overview respondents

Type	Organisation	Name	Date of the interview
Public	Municipality of Amersfoort	Respondent 1	18 May
	Municipality of Baarn	Respondent 2	23 May
	Municipality of Barneveld	Respondent 3	30 May
	Municipality of Bunschoten	Respondent 4	17 May
	Municipality of Eemnes (<i>BEL Combinatie</i>) ²	Respondent 5	26 April
	Municipality of Leusden	Respondent 6	5 June
	Municipality of Nijkerk	Respondent 7	3 May
	Municipality of Soest	Respondent 8	15 May
	Municipality of Woudenberg	Respondent 9	28 May
	Regio Amersfoort	Respondent 10	8 May
	Province of Utrecht	Respondent 11	7 May
Private	Housing association De Alliantie	Respondent 12	14 June
	Developer Schipper Bosch	Respondent 13	31 May
Other	Real estate expert University of Utrecht and Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL)	Respondent 14	9 May

Selection of respondents

The interviews are held with several involved actors (table 1). This involves officials of the 9 participating municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort, as well as the Regio Amersfoort itself. The 9 municipalities play a role in the regional cooperation and in tackling the regional housing issue. The decision has been made to conduct interviews with each of the participating municipalities. This decision has been made as, during the interviews, it became clear that the municipalities have distinct characteristics. They differ from each other to such an extent that interviews with all of the 9 municipalities are necessary to gain a complete image of the region. The municipality of Eemnes, for instance, collaborates intensively with municipalities in the province of Noord-Holland, namely the municipalities of Laren and Blaricum. Together they form the BEL Combinatie. The municipal organisations of the three separate entities has been merged into the BEL Combinatie, which is responsible for executing and implementing municipal policies. On the other side of the Regio Amersfoort, the municipalities of Nijkerk and Barneveld have a special position. Both municipalities are part of the Regio Amersfoort as well as the Food Valley region. This situation leads to a position where the municipalities have to take notice of and cohere to policies and rules implemented by both regions. These examples show that the municipalities differ to a certain extent.

² An employee of the BEL Combinatie has been interviewed. Since employees of the municipality of Eemnes, Laren and Blaricum are brought together under the same roof, the employee of the BEL Combinatie is most suitable to get insights into the situation of Eemnes.

Furthermore, the province of Utrecht plays a role in the field since the Regio Amersfoort is part of this province. Also private parties such as housing associations and private developers play a relevant role in the housing market in the Regio Amersfoort. These parties develop social rental housing as well as private rental and owner-occupied housing. Conducting interviews with these stakeholders, both public and private actors, gives a broad view on the housing shortages in the city-region and how municipalities and other actors manage to cooperate to tackle these shortages. The majority of the interviews were face-to-face interviews; only 1 interview was conducted by phone.

Respondents have been approached by mail and phone. Respondents have been found by going through own networks as well as by purposeful sampling. By looking at (policy) documents and on websites, names of potential respondents have been found. These respondents have been contacted. Once the first few interviews were conducted, other respondents have been approached by snowball sampling. By using networks of respondents, it was possible to get in touch with other interviewees.

Processing interviews

The interviews are recorded and transcribed. Respondents have been asked for permission to record the interviews. Since the transcripts entail large amounts of information, these texts are coded. Transcripts are analysed and words, or a combination of words, are attached to parts of the text to better understand the meaning of them (Baarda, Bakker, Fischer, Julsing, De Goede, Peters & Van der Velden, 2013). Coding makes the transcripts more accessible and makes it easier to organise the information. The codes and categories are based on the question lists of the interviews and on the theoretical approach. The transcripts are used to answer the main- and sub questions. Quotes used in the results chapter are translated from Dutch to English as interviews were conducted in Dutch.

3.4 Case selection

The research is conducted using a *case study*. Within this research, the *case study* is used to see how municipalities and the city-region tackle housing shortages. The Regio Amersfoort has been chosen as *case study* in this research. The Regio Amersfoort consists of the following municipalities:

- Amersfoort
- Baarn
- Barneveld
- Bunschoten
- Eemnes
- Leusden
- Nijkerk
- Soest
- Woudenberg

These municipalities work together in a partnership to collaborate on sustainable and effective solutions to regional issues. This form enhances flexibility within the collaboration (Regio Amersfoort, 2018b). The Regio Amersfoort collectively strives for a balanced and decently adjusted regional development concerning housing, employment, amenities, infrastructure and the environment (Regio Amersfoort, 2018b). Municipalities are not obliged to participate on every subject; participation is based on their own interest. This flexibility makes cooperation in the Regio Amersfoort custom fit (Regio Amersfoort, 2018b). The aim of the agreement is to intensify cooperation on strategical themes by offering opportunities to reflect, arrange and implement strategical agendas for the Regio Amersfoort and collectively handle policy themes (Regio Amersfoort, 2018b).

The reason why the Regio Amersfoort has been chosen as a *case study* is because studies show that the COROP regions of Greater Amsterdam and Utrecht will face the greatest housing shortages in the near future (Capital Value, 2018; Vastgoed, 2017). As part of the COROP region of Utrecht, the Regio Amersfoort will thus also face a peak in the housing shortages. Furthermore, Statistics Netherlands recently published a report on regional development concerning demography, economy and employment (CBS, 2018a). Areas other than the Randstad have been examined. Traditionally, the Randstad has been the major area in the Netherlands when it comes to development in general, more specifically economic development. It is the place where the economy flourishes, where young people move to for study and where plenty of employment is available (CBS, 2018a). However, this report acknowledges that not only in the Randstad the population grows and opportunities on the labour market increase. There are several regions in the Netherlands that went through an overall development which was above average during the period 1996-2016. One of them was the Regio Amersfoort (CBS, 2018a). In the period 1996-2016 the employment in the Amersfoort Region increased with 22.3% while the national increase was 17.3%. The population grew as well during this period of time. While in the Netherlands as a whole the population grew with 9.6% in the period 1996-2016, the population of the Amersfoort region grew with 18.5% (table 2).

Table 2: % increase 2016 compared to 1996, CBS (2018a)

	GDP	Employment	Population
Regio Amersfoort	+59.7	+22.2	+18.5
Netherlands	+49.7	+17.3	+9.6

Since the COROP region of Utrecht will face one of the greatest housing shortages in the country and the Regio Amersfoort is one of the most rapidly developing regions outside the Randstad, the Regio Amersfoort has been selected to investigate.

3.5 Ethics

To enhance the quality of research, it has to be verifiable. Repetition of research at a different time by different researchers must lead to the same results (Boeije et al., 2009). Notions of validity and reliability have to be taken into account.

Validity

The validity of research is determined by the correct interpretation of data and whether collecting data has not been influenced by systematic mistakes (Boeije et al., 2009; Yin, 2009). Collected data has to cover reality and may not be influenced by subjective perspectives or interpretations. Researchers must be aware of their position during the research and during the interviews. Besides their theoretical perspective, researchers' personal perspective might influence the interview (Boeije et al., 2009). When a researcher directs the interview according to his own personal perspective, validity of data is arguable. Continuous reflection of the own role is therefore of vital importance. Influencing and directing the respondents' answers is thereby minimized.

To further enhance the validity, multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 2009). By using multiple sources of evidence, the issue is looked at from various perspectives. Different sides of the story are heard which gives the opportunity to detect contrary opinions and interests. Interpretations through multiple interviews eventually enhance the intersubjectivity and helps finding the most subjective reality of the problem (Boeije et al., 2009).

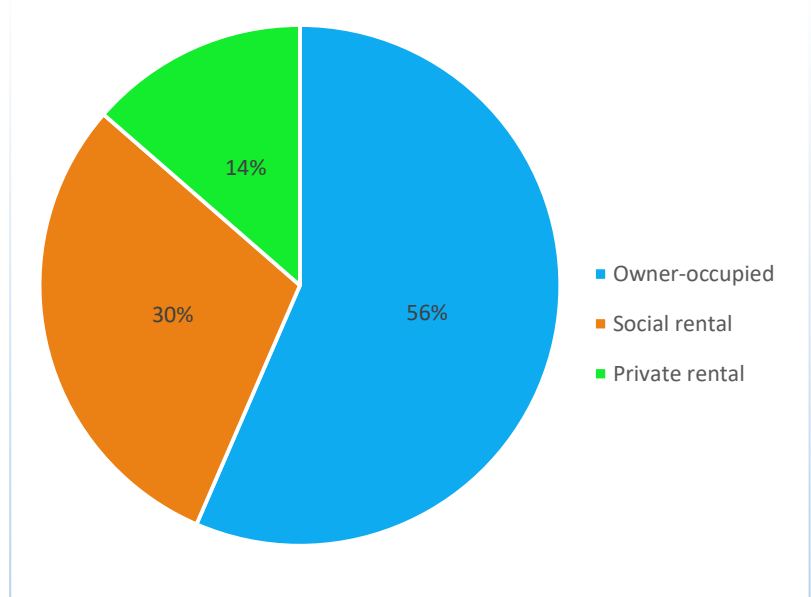
Reliability

As Yin (2009) states, reliability is “to be sure that, if a later investigator followed exactly the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator and conducted the same study all over again, the later investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusions” (p. 36). The collection of data and the methods should therefore be influenced by errors and biases to a minimal extent. Standardisation of the method of data collection contributes to the reliability of research. Therefore, this research is conducted using semi-structured (expert)interviews. This type of interview is based on theoretical notions as described in the theoretical approach (Boeije et al., 2009). Questions and topics have partly been noted in preparation of the interviews. The question lists of the interviews are included in attachment A and B. Separate question lists have been prepared for both public and private actors. As these actors have different roles in the Regio Amersfoort, distinct question lists are used. A certain extent of standardisation has thereby been achieved. The semi-structured character of the interviews provides possibilities of going deeper into specific topics and adapt to the respondents’ answer. Semi-structured interviewing thereby contributes to the reliability of the research. Another way of enhancing the quality of the data, is by so-called *member checks*. During research, transcripts and results are submitted to the respondents. The respondents have the opportunity to check what they have said and whether their statements have been interpreted correctly (Baarda et al., 2013; Boeije et al., 2009).

4. Context

This chapter gives an overview of the housing market in the Netherlands, the current housing shortages and provides contextual information on the Regio Amersfoort. First, some characteristics of the Dutch housing market are given. This part describes the various types of housing as well as the *Ladder of Sustainable Urbanisation*. Afterwards, causes of the current housing shortages are described, which include demographic changes and the financial crisis of several years ago. After this context, this chapter narrows down to spatial ambitions and trends of the province of Utrecht and the Regio Amersfoort. This context chapter therefore provide some basic ideas on housing and spatial development before going into more detail in the chapter in results.

Figure 6: Housing stock by housing type in the Netherlands, 2016 (ABF Research, 2018)



4.1 The Dutch housing market

Traditionally, the role and commitment of governmental institutions in the housing market in the Netherlands is large (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014). National and provincial governmental institutions are responsible for strategic spatial planning in the Netherlands. Municipalities are, however, a key player in the housing market as they have market power within their jurisdiction (Levkovich et al., 2018). Within the hierarchical planning system, municipalities are capable of implementing binding land use plans and are one of the main suppliers of land for development.

Such plans have to comply with the provincial spatial plan, which in turn has to be consistent with national strategic policies (Koomen et al., 2008). The Dutch housing market consists of roughly three types of housing: owner-occupied housing, private rental housing and social rental housing.

4.1.1 Types of housing

Homeownership market

In 2016, 56.50% of the total housing stock in the Netherlands consisted of owner-occupied dwellings (figure 6). Of the total of 7.6 million houses in the Netherlands, 4.3 million are owner-occupied. The fact that the lion's share of the housing stock is owner-occupied illustrates the importance of that segment for the Dutch housing market. The homeownership market in the Netherlands has become a cornerstone in a more individualistic economic policy agenda (Elsinga & Hoekstra, 2017). Houses are seen as a future investment. The idea is that "rather than relying on state-managed social transfers to counter the risks of poverty, individuals accept greater responsibility for their own welfare needs by investing in financial products and property assets which augment in value over time" (Elsinga & Hoekstra, 2017, p. 34). Assets gained from increasing property values can be used in a later stage in life when income is reduced due to, for instance, retirement (Aalbers & Christophers, 2014). The homeownership market is therefore important for the Dutch economy.

Private rental market

Private rental housing only made up around 14% of the total housing stock in the Netherlands in 2016 (figure 6). According to Aalbers and Christophers (2014), the private rental market is, although vulnerable to exploitation and not largely represented, “seen as a crucial part of the housing stock that potentially offers greater flexibility for tenants when both social-rented housing and homeownership are inaccessible/unattractive” (p. 382). Waiting lists and income limits might be obstacles to entering the social rental market and mortgage lenders’ requirements could be a barrier for households to the owner-occupied market. Private rental dwellings are, however, not concerned with such limiting conditions. Therefore, it is often the only segment accessible to starters and middle-income households in the housing market, like young couples (Aalbers & Christophers, 2014; Hoekstra & Boelhouwer, 2014). The private rental market is, although not largely represented in the Dutch housing stock, of importance for a considerable share of the population (Aalbers & Christophers, 2014; Hoekstra & Boelhouwer, 2014). During the last couple of years the number of private rental houses has increased relatively more than the number of owner-occupied dwellings and social rental dwellings (table 3).

Table 3: Development housing stock by housing type in the Netherlands (ABF Research, 2018)

	2012	2016	% change 2012-2016
<i>Owner-occupied</i>	4,191,208	4,319,447	+3,06
<i>Social rental</i>	2,283,646	2,283,507	-0,01
<i>Private rental</i>	895,495	1,038,369	+15,95
Total	7,370,349	7,641,323	+3,68

Social rental market

30% of the total housing stock in the Netherlands is social rental housing (figure 6). The social rental market is well-regulated due to interventions of the state (Elsinga & Hoekstra, 2017; Piljic & Stegeman, 2013). Main providers of social rental housing are housing associations, which have close connections with governmental organisations. The first associations were set up a long time ago, between 1850-1860 as an initiative of the civil society (Hoekstra, 2017). However, associations soon came under governmental influence. After WWII the housing associations played a large role in fighting housing shortages caused by the war. The share of the social rental market consequently increased in the period between 1950 and 1990 from 10% to more than 40% of the total housing stock (Hoekstra, 2017). This share has decreased during the last couple of decades. But still, due to governmental interferences, the total share of social rental housing is fairly large.

That governmental influence is large in the social rental market can be seen from imposed rules. One of them is a housing allocation rule. A housing allocation rule is imposed in order to make sure that social housing is allocated to target groups of socially and economically less advantaged people. Therefore, 90% of the vacant housing with a regulated rent³ has to be allocated to households of the target group (Hoekstra, 2017).

4.1.2 Housing shortages

A growing economy and increased employment among the Dutch population contribute to a strong increase in the demand of housing. In 2016 the annual production of newly built dwellings rose to approximately 55,000 houses, the highest production since 2011 (MBZK, 2017). However, despite this increase in the number of newly built houses, the housing market has to deal with increasing tensions

³ The maximum rent for a house in the social rental sector is €710,68 in 2018 (Rijksoverheid, 2018).

and shortages. These tensions are present on both the rental and homeownership market due to a number of reasons which are of demographic, financial and political nature.

Demographic changes

Processes of demographic change have an important impact on urbanisation and growth of cities (Haase et al., 2013). Population growth rates have partly stabilised in European countries compared to the last couple of years. Although population growth rates have rather stabilised, the increase in the number of households in Europe is significant. Whereas the population in the Netherlands grows 4.4% in the period 2017-2030, the number of households grows with 7.0% in that same period (Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving [PBL], 2018). This increase means that, in total, there will be 8.4 million households in the Netherlands in 2030 compared to 7.8 million nowadays. An ageing population and increasing share of single-person households are the main causes of this growth in the number of households (Haase et al., 2013; MBZK, 2015; MIM, 2012).

Financial crisis

The Dutch housing market, as many markets around the globe, was hit by the financial crisis in 2008. Particularly the market for newly-built houses was negatively affected by the crisis (Van der Heijden et al., 2011). Due to declining incomes, the Dutch population did not move quickly and stayed at their current dwelling. Taken together with the financial uncertainty of housing developers, the production of newly-built houses dropped (Hekwolter of Hekhuis et al., 2017; MBZK, 2016). While in 2009, at the start of the financial crisis, annual housing production was approximately 82,900, this number fell to a low of 45,200 in 2014 (MBZK, 2016). Currently, the Dutch economy flourishes again and production of newly-built houses is regaining attention. However, deficits caused by the financial crisis not easily overcome (Van der Heijden et al., 2011; MBZK, 2016).

Restrictive policies

Due to governmental ambitions of sustainable development a new decision-making framework was implemented in 2012 called the *Ladder of Sustainable Urbanisation* [the *Ladder*] (MIM, 2012). This decision-making framework is “promoted by the state to underpin quantitative and qualitative realism of new development and prioritise in-fill over greenfield development” (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017, p. 9). The aim of the *Ladder* is to encourage careful and sustainable use of space and stresses consideration of available space within existing urban boundaries before looking at locations in green, open areas outside urban space (Rijkswaterstaat, 2018). Every decision concerning spatial developments has to be assessed and motivated on its needs by implementing the *Ladder*.

This focus on infill development and transformation makes construction more complicated and delays new housing developments (Hekwolter of Hekhuis et al., 2017). According to Hekwolter of Hekhuis et al. (2017) the “lack of planning and building capacity as well as zoning restrictions are impeding new-build development in and around cities” (p. 8). Introduction of the *Ladder* and restrictive policies have an impact on urbanisations processes and slows down the rate of urbanisation (Hekwolter of Hekhuis et al., 2017; Koomen et al., 2008). Therefore, the *Ladder* and consequent zoning restrictions are occasionally regarded as causing housing shortages to enlarge.

Landlord Levy

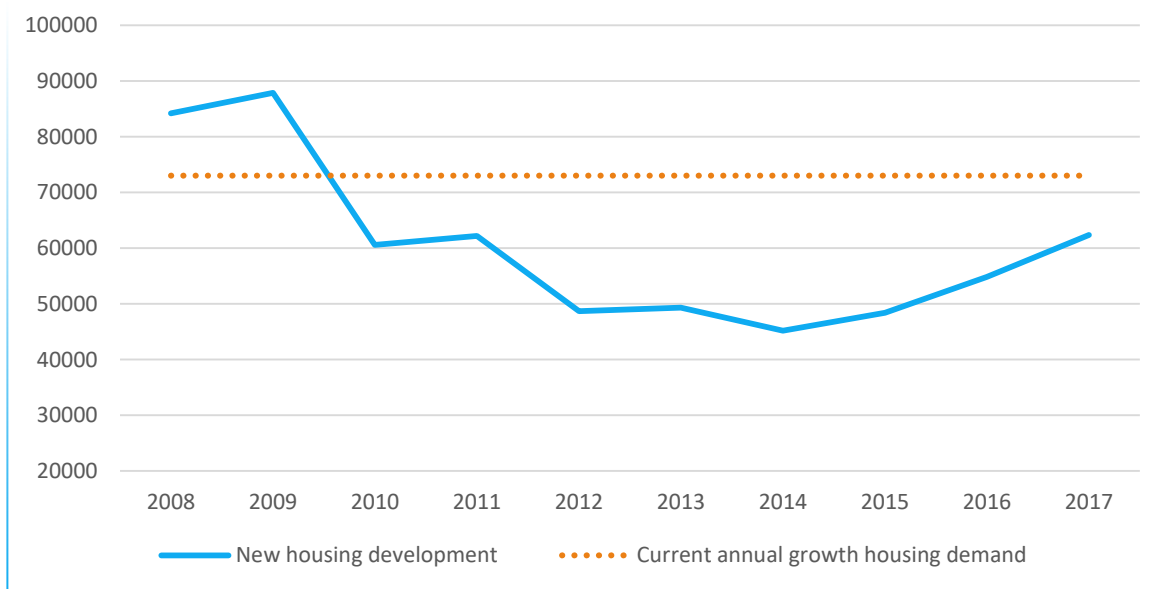
Because of the financial crisis, the Dutch government searched for ways to alleviate budgetary problems. One way of doing this was by implementing the Landlord Levy for landlords who own rental dwellings in the social rental sector (Hoekstra, 2017). Landlords owning a minimum of 50 dwellings in the regulated sector are obliged to pay a levy to the Dutch government. This levy is based on the

cadastral value of the building (Hoekstra, 2017). Housing associations in particular are affected by this measure as they are the major providers of social rental housing. These associations have to pay more levy which in turn undermines their capacity to invest in new social housing and contributes to shortages in the social rental sector (Hekwolter of Hekhuis et al., 2017; Hoekstra, 2017).

4.1.3 Dealing with housing shortages

During the financial crisis, new housing development stagnated and housing production decreased. Housing production hit a low in 2014 of 45,200. Since the financial crisis has ended, new housing development has increased in size. This increase is, however, not enough to cope with the shortages. For the next couple of years, the growth of the housing demand is approximately 73,000 houses per year (MBZK, 2017). To reach this number, new housing development has to increase rapidly, as can be seen in figure 7. This means more plots have to be made available for housing development. By optimising land usage by prioritising brownfield and infill (re)development, this can be achieved (Broitman & Koomen, 2015; Ye et al., 2005). With infill development vacant and abandoned urban areas and office buildings are used for development of new housing. Brownfield development concerns conversion of former industrial sites to residential uses. Both strategies avoid spatial expansion and encourages sustainable use of space, as aspired by implementing the *Ladder*.

Figure 7: New housing development in the Netherlands, 2008-2017 (CBS, 2018c)



Annual growth in housing demand is, however, so high that it is questionable whether or not all housing production can be realised within existing urban boundaries. Although the Minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands Kaja Ollongren encourages residential development within existing urban boundaries, Ollongren recognises that building outside these boundaries might be necessary to solve housing shortages (NOS, 2018). Municipalities and other parties thus need to look for more space to. The Regio Amersfoort also deals with these issues. The number of newly-built houses unavoidably has to increase. How this turns out in practice, will depend on provincial, regional and municipal ambitions.

4.2 The Regio Amersfoort

The Regio Amersfoort is a regional cooperation of 9 municipalities. The majority of the municipalities belongs to the province of Utrecht. Two municipalities, however, belong to the province of Gelderland: the municipality of Barneveld and Nijkerk. Within the Regio Amersfoort, the municipality of Amersfoort is the most urbanised municipality: the municipality has a population of 154,337 people and a population density of 2,417 citizens per km² (table 4).

Table 4: Characteristics municipalities Regio Amersfoort, 2017 (CBS, 2018c)

	Population	Households	Total surface area (km ²)	Population density (number of citizens per km ²)
<i>Amersfoort</i>	154,337	67,135	63.86	2,417
<i>Baarn</i>	24,529	11,046	33.01	743
<i>Barneveld</i>	56,376	21,104	176.66	319
<i>Bunschoten</i>	21,020	7,958	34.81	603
<i>Eemnes</i>	8,999	3,788	33.70	267
<i>Leusden</i>	29,677	12,687	58.89	503
<i>Nijkerk</i>	41,775	16,796	72.04	580
<i>Soest</i>	45,874	20,168	46.43	988
<i>Woudenberg</i>	12,701	4,883	36.82	344
Total	395,288	165,565	556,22	711

4.2.1 Provincial ambitions

Before discussing the regional vision in more detail, spatial ambitions of the province of Utrecht are discussed. These ambitions have recently been published in an action agenda for the provincial housing market (Provincie Utrecht, 2018). Within this document the province acknowledges there is pressure in the housing market. Together with involved actors, several measures and ambitions have been proposed in order to enlarge housing production, accelerate spatial processes and make sure the right type of housing is built to encourage the flow through on the provincial housing market. The main ambition of the province of Utrecht is to realise an annual housing production of 7,000 houses for the next three years (Provincie Utrecht, 2018). During the last couple of years, the average annual housing production in the province was approximately 4,000 to 5,000 houses. This number is, however, too low to be able to deal with provincial housing shortages. Therefore, housing production has to increase. The annual production of 7,000 houses is mainly planned within the so-called *rode contouren*⁴, adhering to notions of the *Ladder of Sustainable Urbanisation*. Furthermore the province has noted a few other ambitions for the period between 2018 and 2021 (Provincie Utrecht, 2018):

- Realise 1,750 houses each year through transformation and redevelopment of vacant (office)buildings. This housing development creates more support for local facilities.
- The supply of social rental housing has to increase. The time that households have to wait for a social rental house must consequently reduce.
- The supply of private rental housing in the middle segment (with rents between approximately €710 and €1,000 per month) has to increase with 7,000 houses between 2018 and 2028.

⁴ The province of Utrecht assigned so-called *rode contouren*. These *rode contouren* are the boundaries of the urban area of municipalities within the province where housing development is supposed to take place. Within these *rode contouren* both existing urban areas as well as locations for new housing development are included. Municipalities are free to develop housing within these boundaries. By assigning these *rode contouren* the province strives to maintain the quality of rural, green areas and encourages inner-city housing development (Utrecht, 2017).

Currently there is a lack of private rental houses in this segment while the target group – middle-income households – increases in size.

- A better flow through on the provincial housing market in 2021. Nowadays one-person households stay in their family housing and people tend to stay in their social rental housing even though their income has increased. By encouraging these groups to move, the housing market becomes more dynamic and a better flow through is created.

What is important in order to achieve these ambitions, is to create and share knowledge between all actors in the housing field. Therefore the province of Utrecht organises various meetings throughout the year where networking and knowledge exchange are central elements. Both public and private actors are invited. These meetings are not only beneficial for the exchange of knowledge and information. What is discussed as well, is which actor participates in which activity in the housing market (Provincie Utrecht, 2018).

4.2.2 Regional spatial vision

In cooperation with the 9 participating municipalities and multiple (societal) organisations, the Regio Amersfoort has published a regional spatial vision (Regio Amersfoort, 2018a). This vision discusses spatial trends in the region concerning the housing market, mobility, economy and sustainability. The regional spatial vision thereby provides a framework for spatial developments. Municipalities within the region acknowledge an increasing pressure. Regional cooperation is thereby of added value to avoid that the increasing spatial pressure is at the expense of the attractive landscape and accessibility of the regional housing market. The Regio Amersfoort also strives to avoid that municipalities realise identical developments. Identical spatial developments result in a homogeneous supply of housing and municipal competition. Through regional cooperation, more differentiation can be achieved (Regio Amersfoort, 2018a). Additionally, the region recognises a trend that large cities in the Netherlands are becoming increasingly important. Smaller cities face difficulties competing with larger cities on provincial and national scales. Through regional cooperation, cities and villages within the city-region collectively stand stronger.

Within the city-region, the municipality of Amersfoort can be regarded as the centre when looking at regional amenities. Amersfoort accommodates amenities in sectors such as health care, sports, education, culture and employment. Other municipalities are more known for their recreational and natural functions with living environments in more spacious, green surroundings. In this way, municipalities within the city-region complement each other, with Amersfoort being the big city and surrounding municipalities functioning as the region (Regio Amersfoort, 2018a).

Municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort have their own distinct characteristics. Based on their economic and demographic orientation, there is a rough divide between the western and eastern part of the city-region. The western part of the Regio Amersfoort, with municipalities such as Baarn, Eemnes and Soest, is oriented on the Randstad. Economically this is also the part with a high

Box 1: the Food Valley region

The Food Valley region is an adjacent region at the eastern border of the Regio Amersfoort. The region consists of 8 municipalities in the province of Gelderland and is developing as the centre of agrofood in Europe. Economically it concentrates on production, processing and distribution of food. The region is internationally known for these activities and its knowledge and innovation regarding healthy and sustainable food. Within the Food Valley, Barneveld and Nijkerk, which also belong to the Regio Amersfoort, accommodate a large share of the regional employment. Various towns in the municipalities of Barneveld, Woudenberg, Bunschoten, Leusden and Nijkerk are strongly connected with the Food Valley, both demographically and economically. The housing market in these centres entails similarities as there is a strong sense of community, which is characteristic for the Food Valley (Regio Amersfoort, 2018a)

concentration of, what the Regio Amersfoort calls, “thinkers” (Regio Amersfoort, 2018a). These “thinkers” are primarily employed in the service-based economy. Inhabitants of the eastern part of the region are referred to as “doers”. Municipalities within this part, for example Barneveld, Nijkerk and Woudenberg, mainly focus on agriculture, production and industrial economic activities (Regio Amersfoort, 2018a). Ties with the so-called Food Valley region are strong, economically and demographically (box 1). The mix of various types of knowledge and skills within the Regio Amersfoort is regarded as the strength of the region. In this way, companies benefit from both managerial knowledge among the population as well as practically oriented employees (Regio Amersfoort, 2018a).

Regional trends

The region has to deal with a couple of trends which are of influence on regional demographics and the housing market. One of these trends is an increasingly ageing society. In current times, one-sixth of the Dutch population is older than 65 years. However, in 2050 one in every four inhabitants will be older than 65. This has an influence on the size of households in the Regio Amersfoort; the average household size will decrease (Regio Amersfoort, 2018a).

Another demographic trend the Regio Amersfoort has to deal with is a continuous growth of urban regions. The population in urban areas is relatively young. Young couples tend to get more children than other population groups. Also people move more frequently to the Randstad and surrounding regions, such as the Regio Amersfoort. Compared to the Randstad, the Regio Amersfoort offers a more balanced ratio between price and quality. Therefore, the Regio Amersfoort offers an interesting site to settle nearby the larger cities of the Randstad. The increased demand for urban living means inner-city locations are (re)developed and transformed. Besides the attractiveness of urban living environments, there is an increasing demand for rural and spacious living environments in close proximity to the Randstad (Regio Amersfoort, 2018a).

5. Results

This chapter describes the results and more deeply explores the regional approach to the housing shortages. Data derived from the interviews is presented in this chapter. This data will be supported by statistics and information derived from secondary sources. This chapter first explores the housing shortages the Regio Amersfoort has to deal with. Afterwards the measures will be discussed that have been taken to encourage regional cooperation. In the third part, obstacles are discussed that influence the effectiveness of cooperation. And in the last part solutions are noted for the regional housing shortages as well as for obstacles experienced in the process of cooperating.

5.1 Housing shortages in the Regio Amersfoort

In order to get insights into issues the Regio Amersfoort faces in the housing market, it is of importance to look at the housing shortage. It is of relevance to know how municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort experience housing shortages. The Regio Amersfoort as a whole faces housing shortages, now and in the future. This has been mentioned during the interviews as well as in a report published by the Economisch Instituut voor de Bouw (*Economic Institute for the Construction Industry*) [EIB] in 2014. The EIB is a research institute for economic analyses that executes work for private and public actors. Their report from 2014 was the starting point for the Regio Amersfoort to cooperate on the housing market. It forms the basis from which the participating actors approach the housing shortage. In their report the EIB investigated the housing market in the Regio Amersfoort and looked at future developments regarding supply and demand. According to this research, the Regio Amersfoort will continue to grow until 2040 due to a positive net migration and natural population growth (EIB, 2014). This growth is examined according to 3 scenarios. These scenarios are low, middle and high growth. Depending on these various future scenarios, growth in the housing shortage varies between 24,000 and 45,000 houses (EIB, 2014). When growth is low 24,000 extra houses are needed in the region by 2040, while a total of 45,000 houses have to be realised if growth is high. Current planning capacity for the period to 2040 entail a total of 24,700 newly-built houses (EIB, 2014). Comparing the regional planning capacity with the regional needs in the middle scenario shows that the Regio Amersfoort faces a shortage of 12,100 houses in the period to 2040 (table 5).

Table 5: Planning capacity and demands in the Regio Amersfoort, middle scenario (EIB, 2014)

	Planning capacity to 2030	Housing demand to 2030	Balance 2030	Planning capacity to 2040	Housing demand to 2040	Balance 2040
Amersfoort	8,300	13,100	-4,800	9,300	20,800	-11,500
Baarn	600	1,300	-700	600	1,800	-1,200
Barneveld	5,300	3,000	2,300	5,300	5,100	200
Bunschoten	1,800	1,300	500	2,300	1,900	400
Eemnes	600	400	200	600	500	100
Leusden	900	400	500	900	300	600
Nijkerk	3,000	2,400	600	3,000	3,700	-700
Soest	1,300	1,300	0	1,300	1,800	-500
Woudenberg	1,000	700	300	1,400	900	500
Total	22,800	23,900	-1,100	24,700	36,800	-12,100

The positive net migration is partly due to the central position of the Regio Amersfoort in the Netherlands. In the short term, the housing market in the Regio Amersfoort does not have to deal with major problems. However, the pressure on the housing market will increase throughout the years. This was also acknowledged by the Regio Amersfoort itself and the participating municipalities during the interviews. Regionally there is enough planning capacity for the short-term. Demand and supply are fairly equal in the middle scenario for the whole region. However, for the long-term, the lack of planning capacity will increase significantly. Consequently, according to the middle scenario, the Regio Amersfoort will lack a total of 12,100 houses in 2040 (table 5).

Within the region there are some variations in the extent to which municipalities deal with shortages. Shortages are largest in the municipality of Amersfoort. More than half of the regional housing demand in the long-term is situated in Amersfoort. Reasons for the large demand in Amersfoort are that the city is the biggest agglomeration in the city-region and is highly appealing to surrounding municipalities. Baarn, Nijkerk and Soest also have less housing plans than the demand requests. The municipalities of Barneveld, Bunschoten, Eemnes, Leusden and Woudenberg seem to have enough planning capacity for the demand. However, not all of the current housing plans will be realised. Loss of planning capacity can occur due to, for instance, delayed building procedures, changing market situations and competition between projects (EIB, 2014). Therefore, every municipality within the Regio Amersfoort has to increase their planning capacity in order to meet future needs. Regardless of the growth scenario, the Regio Amersfoort is short of housing plans.

5.1.1 Causes shortages

That housing shortages are currently high, is due to several reasons. As Van der Heijden et al. (2011) also noted, the financial crisis of 2008 has led to decreased housing production. Respondent 11 mentioned that before the financial crisis, 5,000 houses were built each year in the entire province. During the financial crisis, this production dropped. Currently housing production is more than 5,000 houses per year. The ambition of the province is to realise an annual housing production of 7,000 houses for the next couple of years (Provincie Utrecht, 2018). Although housing production has since recovered, losses suffered during the financial crisis have not yet been overcome.

Housing association De Alliantie has also mentioned that current shortages are partly the result of the financial crisis. As a consequence of the financial crisis, the Dutch government introduced several taxes to increase their income. These taxes hit housing associations. Not only has the Landlord Levy negatively influenced the capacity to invest for housing associations as Hoekstra (2017) noted as well, other taxes and sustainability tasks have too. Respondent 12 noted that, due to sufficient financial reserves, the housing association was still able to invest in its housing stock. But there are other, smaller housing associations which were hit harder by the governmental measures.

Another reason for the current housing shortage in the Regio Amersfoort is an increasing urban population. The regional strategic vision of the Regio Amersfoort has noted this and several respondents noted a move of households to urban regions as a key factor. Besides the fact that urban regions are becoming more popular in general, the Regio Amersfoort feels an increasing additional pressure from the urban regions of Utrecht and Amsterdam. Several respondents noted that households regard the Regio Amersfoort as a cheaper substitute for the expensive city-regions of Utrecht and Amsterdam. Not only the city of Amersfoort recognises this pressure, but also the surrounding municipalities:

“Regions like Amsterdam, Utrecht and Amersfoort are economically booming and people want to live in the city. Housing prices rise immensely. Families move to the suburbs. If they do not find a place over there, they move further into the region. That is a dilemma we are dealing with.”

(Respondent 3, municipality of Barneveld, 2018)

Thus, not only the city of Amersfoort feels the consequences of a move to the city and housing pressure in Utrecht and Amsterdam, but the surrounding municipalities as well. The housing market situation in the city-region of Amersfoort is therefore highly dependent on housing production in Utrecht and Amsterdam. When these cities will not manage to build enough housing, households will look at the Regio Amersfoort as a substitute.

5.1.2 Qualitative shortage

An ageing population is one of the most important demographic developments the Regio Amersfoort has to cope with. The number of people aged 65 years and older is increasing. Every municipality within the Regio Amersfoort recognises this trend. There are some differences in the extent to which the population ages. Municipalities like Baarn and Soest face a more ageing population than municipalities like Woudenberg and Barneveld for instance. Woudenberg and Barneveld also recognise an increase in the number of people aged 65 years and older, but at the same time the birth rate is high as well. Both municipalities belong to the so-called Bible Belt, a religious and conservative Christian area of the Netherlands. Traditionally households in these municipalities have higher birth rates and therefore larger families. Therefore, the ageing population is less severe than in other municipalities in the Regio Amersfoort. Another population group that deserves more attention in the Regio Amersfoort is first-time buyers on the housing market. Several municipalities stated that they have to put more effort into housing for this group. The municipality of Eemnes has, for instance, a specific loan for starters. This provides first-time buyers in the housing market with more financial means to afford themselves a house.

These demographic developments have led to an increase in small households, households consisting of one or two persons. The respondent from De Alliantie noted that:

“The demand shifts more often towards smaller and older households. 60% of the households looking for a home consists of singles. That is a lot. Another 10% to 15% consist of two-person households. Thus there is a shift towards smaller households. The housing supply is not correctly adjusted to this, which leads to a qualitative issue. So the problem is both quantitative and qualitative.”

(Respondent 12, housing association De Alliantie, 2018)

The shift towards smaller and older households results in a demand for more apartments and rental housing. However, according to the EIB (2014) increased economic welfare and the high level of education amongst the population leads to a request for more owner-occupied housing. Therefore, municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort focus on realising both rental as well as owner-occupied housing. And within housing production, specific attention is paid to first-time buyers in the housing market and to an ageing population.

5.1.3 Regional housing market relations

When looking at the regional moving relations it is striking that most of the housing movements occur within the same municipality. Research executed by consultancy company Companen in 2012 already noted that movements occur mainly within municipal borders. In the period from 1996 to 2010, 47% of the total number of movements within the Regio Amersfoort occurred within own municipal borders (Companen, 2012). The tight relation households have with their own municipality can also be seen in figure 8. Tables presented in this figure show the moving relations of the 9 participating

municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort between 2011 and 2016. The moving relations are expressed by the sum of incoming and outgoing migration flows. It appears that most of the households moved within the same municipality. Furthermore, data in figure 8 illustrate that the moving relations vary per municipality. Whereas Eemnes, for example, has strong moving relations with Hilversum, Laren and Huizen – all municipalities in the province of Noord-Holland – the municipality of Woudenberg has strong relations with Amersfoort, Scherpenzeel and Utrechtse Heuvelrug. There is a clear distinction between the western and eastern part of the Regio Amersfoort.

The city-region is thus typified by an open character and a rather limited number of interregional movements in the housing market. There are several municipalities which have strong relations with each other, such as Amersfoort and Leusden. The division between the “thinkers” in the western side and “doers” in the eastern side of the city-region is therefore not only economically but also demographically present. Households currently living in municipalities of Nijkerk and Barneveld are less likely to move to Soest and Baarn in the western part of the region and vice versa, according to the respondent from the municipality of Soest. Respondent 8 noted that there are many moving relations, but these are limited to a small number of municipalities:

“Soest, for example, has strong moving relations with Amersfoort and Baarn, while at the same time we also have relations with Utrecht, Zeist and, to an increasing extent, Amsterdam. Leusden has a one-to-one relation with Amersfoort. That shows that east and west from Amersfoort are different regions. [...] A municipality like Nijkerk looks more at the province of Gelderland and the Veluwe. And Bunschoten is a separate municipality. This shows that the region exist of various entities and different cultures.”

(Respondent 8, municipality of Soest, 2018)

That municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort only have limited regional moving relations, is something the respondent from the municipality of Amersfoort confirms. The many relations municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort have with other municipalities outside the region make it hard to decide where the housing market begins and where it ends, as respondent 6 explained. Moving relations are so diverse that assigning a housing market with strict boundaries cannot be achieved. Although the Regio Amersfoort is a cooperation of 9 municipalities, it is impossible to draw a hard line around a physical space and stating that is the regional housing market.

5.1.4 Shortage and regional variations

All in all the Regio Amersfoort faces housing shortage in the future. For the period to 2030 there is roughly enough planning capacity in order to meet the needs. However, also after 2030 the demand for housing keeps increasing. Currently there is not enough planning capacity within the city-region to deal with this demand. The largest shortages are concentrated in the municipality of Amersfoort. However, every municipality needs to enlarge their planning capacity as one needs to take loss of plans due to delayed building procedures, changing market situations and competition between projects into account. Not only are differences between the municipalities recognisable when looking at the shortages; there is fragmentation regarding the regional housing relations as well. Municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort only have limited moving relations with each other. While municipalities in the western part are oriented towards the Randstad, municipalities in the eastern part of the city-region have stronger moving relations with municipalities in the Food Valley. The regional strategic vision pays attention to this fragmentation by mentioning the distinction between “doers” and “thinkers” and the influence of the Randstad and Food Valley on the Regio Amersfoort (Regio

Figure 8: Top 10 moving relations, sum of incoming and outgoing migration flows, 2011-2016 (CBS, 2018c)

Amersfoort		Eemnes	
<i>Amersfoort</i>	52,100	<i>Eemnes</i>	1,133
Utrecht	6,320	Hilversum	493
Leusden	4,831	Laren	485
Amsterdam	4,507	Amsterdam	386
Soest	3,877	Huizen	330
Nijkerk	3,506	Baarn	263
Zeist	1,685	Gooise Meren	236
Hilversum	1,359	Blaricum	190
Barneveld	1,218	Utrecht	159
Rotterdam	1,199	Almere	139
Groningen	1,190	Amersfoort	133
Total Netherlands	119,777	Total Netherlands	5,196
Baarn		Leusden	
<i>Baarn</i>	6,550	Leusden	5,647
Soest	1,552	Amersfoort	4,831
Amsterdam	1,347	Utrecht	950
Amersfoort	1,131	Amsterdam	553
Utrecht	977	Nijkerk	411
Hilversum	977	Barneveld	402
Almere	265	Soest	378
Eemnes	263	Woudenberg	300
Gooise Meren	261	Zeist	263
Zeist	249	Utrechtse Heuvelrug	214
Bunschoten	223	Arnhem	175
Total Netherlands	19,083	Total Netherlands	19,290
Barneveld		Nijkerk	
<i>Barneveld</i>	17,474	<i>Nijkerk</i>	11,229
Ede	3,907	Amersfoort	3,506
Nijkerk	1,221	Barneveld	1,221
Amersfoort	1,218	Putten	779
Apeldoorn	832	Utrecht	684
Utrecht	672	Amsterdam	518
Putten	613	Leusden	411
Amsterdam	497	Zeewolde	378
Leusden	402	Ede	336
Veenendaal	389	Ermelo	305
Ermelo	372	Harderwijk	282
Total Netherlands	37,280	Total Netherlands	26,314
Bunschoten		Soest	
<i>Bunschoten</i>	6,083	<i>Soest</i>	10,951
Amersfoort	1,071	Amersfoort	3,877
Nijkerk	281	Utrecht	2,552
Baarn	223	Baarn	1,552
Amsterdam	186	Amsterdam	1,374
Utrecht	169	Zeist	1,366
Soest	133	Hilversum	856
Hilversum	75	De Bilt	559
Leusden	73	Leusden	378
Almere	71	Almere	359
Putten	70	Rotterdam	322
Total Netherlands	10,288	Total Netherlands	33,102
Woudenberg			
<i>Woudenberg</i>	2,749		
Amersfoort	705		
Utrechtse Heuvelrug	479		
Scherpenzeel	438		
Leusden	300		
Utrecht	291		
Zeist	280		
Ede	220		
Veenendaal	185		
Barneveld	124		
Amsterdam	100		
Total Netherlands	8,099		

Amersfoort, 2018a). But although there are differences between the municipalities and the moving relations extend beyond the city-region, several measures have been taken to encourage regional cooperation.

5.2 Measures taken for regional cooperation

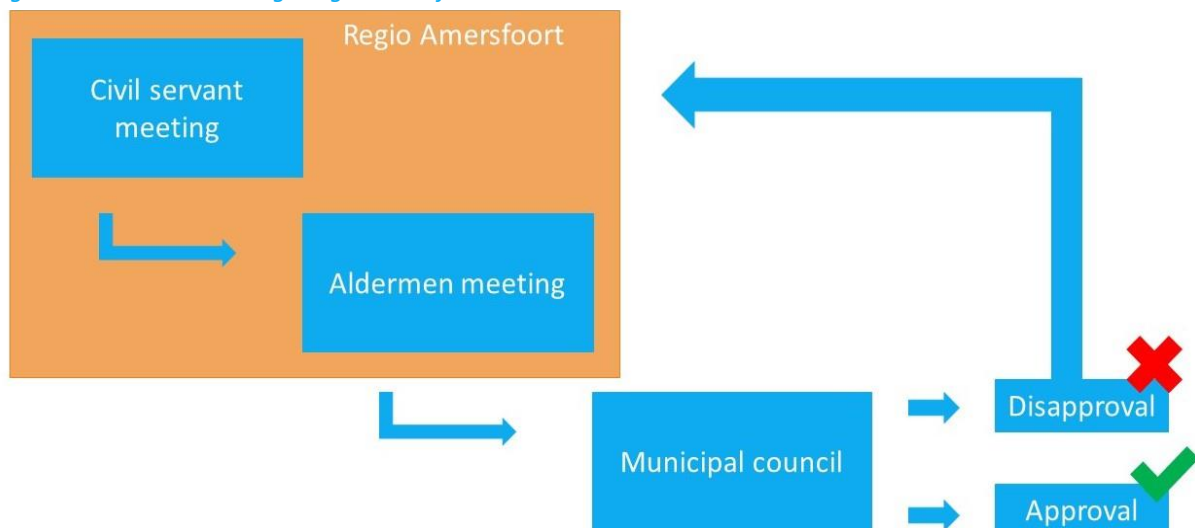
Municipalities within the city-region of Amersfoort cooperate on a regional scale. Measures have been taken in order to achieve structure and organisation. Within the structure every actor has its role and responsibilities. The Regio Amersfoort is a cooperative, voluntary organisation. To know how it is structured, it is necessary to examine the measures that have been taken to encourage regional cooperation within the Regio Amersfoort.

5.2.1 Cooperative organisation

The Regio Amersfoort is a voluntary cooperation which currently includes 9 municipalities. An agreement was signed by the municipalities. This agreement stated that the participating municipalities will cooperate on several strategic subjects such as spatial and sustainable development, recreation, economy, mobility and regional marketing (Regio Amersfoort, 2008). The collaboration is characterised by a flexible way of cooperating to enhance the opportunity to add new subjects and projects. The Regio Amersfoort thereby aims to provide a structure for consultation in order to intensify strategic cooperation.

For the sake of cooperation, the Regio Amersfoort organises several meetings First of all, civil servant meetings are held approximately every month. These meetings are meant for civil servants of the 9 municipalities. During these meetings civil servants have the opportunity to discuss subjects of interest. Issues discussed during these meetings serve as the input for the aldermen meetings which take place every 2 months. Managers and aldermen of the municipalities participate in these meetings. They decide on the proposals being prepared by the civil servants. When agreements have been reached in the aldermen meeting, this decision goes to the municipal council. Eventually municipal councils are binding and make a decision on whether or not to implement proposed policies and agreements (figure 9). When municipal councils accept proposals and policies, these are implemented; when councils disapprove, meetings start again and feedback from the council will be processed. In both the civil servant meetings as well as the aldermen meetings housing associations are involved and represented. Housing associations within the region cooperate and form the so-called SWEV (*Samenwerkende Woningcorporaties Eem en Gelderse Vallei*). Representatives of the SWEV join meetings in order to share their opinion on subjects being discussed – specifically on social housing.

Figure 9: Structure meetings Regio Amersfoort



The Regio Amersfoort makes a strategic agenda in cooperation with the municipalities. This agenda presents subjects which the Regio Amersfoort will focus on for the coming years. In addition to the agenda, a regional spatial vision was published which discusses spatial trends in the region regarding the housing market, mobility and the economy. Various gatherings were held where a wide variety of actors were able to participate, such as housing associations, real estate developers and environmental organisations. The regional spatial vision serves as a guideline to which municipalities conform themselves. Although the regional spatial vision is not binding, municipalities are expected to adhere to the agreements being made. Whenever a municipality does not agree with a topic, they have the opportunity to share their critique in the civil servant and the aldermen meeting. Therefore, when agreements and visions are shared with the region, these are widely accepted and adhered to by the participants. None of the municipalities nor the Regio Amersfoort has mentioned problems on this aspect during the interviews.

5.2.2 Political leadership

The Regio Amersfoort arranges and prepares the regional meetings. Every municipality pays a fixed amount of money to the Regio Amersfoort based on their municipal population size. The Regio Amersfoort is thus financed by the participating municipalities. From this funding, the Regio Amersfoort is able to arrange regional meetings. Additionally, the Regio Amersfoort can also set out research for strategic goals. Municipalities therefore pay (in)directly for research being conducted by either the Regio Amersfoort or third parties.

The role of the Regio Amersfoort is to bring actors together in order to share knowledge and information. Their role can be described as facilitating and coordinating. Scott (2001) and Sagan (2009) already stated that political leadership is of importance to balance interests and make sure every actor is heard. The Regio Amersfoort has not taken over responsibilities from the province and municipalities. They are, as Regio Amersfoort illustrates, the “horizontal lubricating oil” that brings actors together. Themes and strategic issues are discussed within the region, but the final binding decision is still made by the individual municipalities. The municipalities are also responsible for executing (regional) policies and maintain their autonomy:

“We are not an extra governmental layer. It is truly a cooperation of municipalities and we facilitate it all. We try to keep every municipality included if that is of relevance. But in the end everyone decides for themselves, independently.”

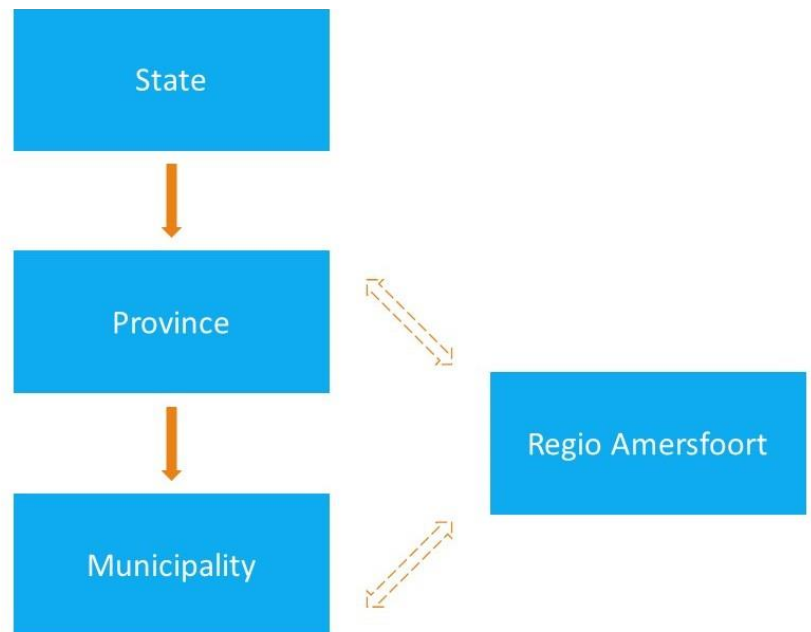
(Respondent 10, Regio Amersfoort, 2018)

The Regio Amersfoort as an organisation is not situated in-between the province and municipality. The Regio Amersfoort has no legal power and is not capable of imposing rules and regulations towards municipalities. Participating municipalities maintain their own authority, which is something they unanimously wish for. In that sense the regional cooperation is without obligations as municipal councils make the final decisions. Taking over responsibilities from either the province or the municipalities is not something the Regio Amersfoort aims for in the future. The role of the Regio Amersfoort within regional cooperation is therefore facilitating rather than binding or steering. Because of the clarity regarding the role of the Regio Amersfoort, problems of accountability as mentioned by Kantor (2008) are not present within the collaboration. For every actor it is clear who is responsible for which action.

Role of the province

Besides municipalities and the Regio Amersfoort being involved in the regional cooperation, the province of Utrecht has a role as well. The province is the link between the State and municipalities, thereby connecting the national and local governmental scales (figure 10). One of the roles of the province is to translate national policies in such a way that municipalities are able to implement them. The policy of the *rode contouren* is an example where the province translated national goals of sustainable development to instruments which can be used in practice. Within these *rode contouren*, housing development is possible; outside these boundaries it is not possible. Such spatial policies have to be taken into account when regionally cooperating. The provincial strategic vision in which the *rode contouren* are published thereby functions as the formal framework in which the city-region is allowed to act.

Figure 10: Governmental structure Netherlands with position of the Regio Amersfoort



The province is, besides being a translator, also a facilitator and supporter of regional cooperation. The province is in contact with the several regions situated within its boundaries, namely the U16 (city-region of Utrecht), the Food Valley region and Regio Amersfoort. When issues are present that relate to a supraregional scale, the province of Utrecht can bring the multiple regions together for discussion. When, for instance, the Regio Amersfoort deals with a mobility issue, the province can facilitate and organise meetings with involved regions and municipalities in order to exchange information and discuss potential solutions. Respondent 11 said such facilitation of processes is an important role of the province. Additionally, the province of Utrecht can support the Regio Amersfoort by conducting research, providing information and granting financial resources:

“As the province we can provide support by outsourcing research, applying knowledge and by granting subsidies. And we can, of course, say in a meeting to a municipality “you want to build many semi-detached houses but the composition of your population changes and therefore you require more smaller houses, think about it thoroughly”. We can provide help with the question for which type of housing municipalities have to build.”

(Respondent 11, province of Utrecht, 2018)

A good example of the effort the province of Utrecht makes to bring together a wide variety of actors is an annual housing market platform which the province organises together with the Regio Amersfoort. During this annual meeting, both private and public actors come together to discuss a present annual theme. This year’s theme was inner city (re)development and acceleration in the housing market. Its aim is to share knowledge, network and get in touch with each other. In this way the province facilitates and supports regional cooperation. It creates conditions by which municipalities can profit.

5.2.3 Maintain autonomy

Within the process of cooperating, maintaining autonomy is desired by the municipalities. Municipalities are not obliged to get involved in every subject or regulation. The municipalities of Baarn and Barneveld have, for instance, decided to not take part in a regional distribution system for social housing. In 2014 housing associations and the Regio Amersfoort decided to distribute social housing regionally rather than via the municipality. Households looking for social rental housing therefore have to sign up only once in order to be eligible for social housing in the whole region. Before this regional regulation, households had to sign up for every individual municipality in the city-region. This shows that strategic subjects, such as housing, are increasingly globalising as Basolo & Hastings (2003), Kantor (2006) and Kasala & Sifta (2017) noted. Boundaries of the housing market are dynamic and cooperating regionally has therefore become more important (Harrison, 2006; Hettne & Söderbaum, 1998).

The fact that municipalities maintain their autonomy is, as the respondent from the municipality of Woudenberg explained, the power of the region. Municipalities are not forced to execute policies or regulations they are not in favour of. Deciding who is responsible is therefore also not an issue. In the end, municipalities are accountable for their own decisions. This is also one of the standpoints in the regional cooperation:

“Everyone maintains its own responsibility. That is a starting point. If you know something relevant, you can discuss this in the region and perhaps other municipalities can learn from that. In that way you can help each other with strategic issues. Eventually the execution is purely for the municipality.”

(Respondent 4, municipality of Bunschoten, 2018)

Every municipality therefore decides whether or not to participate on topics. Participation is thus based on each municipalities' interest. But, although municipalities are not obliged to take part in every subject in the regional cooperation, municipalities are expected to execute regulations and rules once these are approved of and implemented by the municipal councils.

5.2.4 Unbounded character

It has been mentioned that the Regio Amersfoort is a voluntary cooperation. Boundaries around the city-region are not strictly drawn. This unboundedness is characteristic for contemporary city-regions (Harrison & Growe, 2014). Illustrative for the unboundedness is the participation of the municipalities of Nijkerk and Barneveld. At first, these municipalities did not sign the agreement in 2008 (Regio Amersfoort, 2008). However, as both municipalities joined regional meetings of the Regio Amersfoort often they eventually became part of the regional cooperation.

The tight political structure in the Netherlands of the State at the national level, the province and at the lowest level the municipality leave no space for a regional governmental layer. More loose, informal and cooperative structures for regional planning seem to be more feasible as explained by respondent 14. The municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort acknowledge the benefits of a voluntary regional cooperation. The respondent of the municipality of Woudenberg, for instance, noted that boundaries are always arbitrary. The municipality of Woudenberg is on the edge of 3 different regions: the Regio Amersfoort, U16 and the Food Valley. Eventually the municipality of Woudenberg decided to join the Regio Amersfoort, but the municipality noted that the relations with the Food Valley are strong as well. And as municipal relations are unbounded, so are issues on the housing market:

“Regional cooperation is required regarding the housing market, but also in the field of traffic, mobility and other themes. A housing market is of course always regional. It exceeds borders. Than you should also adjust it that way.”

(Respondent 9, municipality of Woudenberg, 2018)

5.2.5 A voluntary regional cooperation

In a nutshell, the Regio Amersfoort is a regional cooperation with a voluntary and unbounded character. The city-region cooperates on various strategic issues concerning housing, mobility, tourism and economy. Through civil servant meetings, aldermen meetings and annual gatherings, the Regio Amersfoort facilitates and coordinates the collaboration. Its aim is to gather actors and exchange knowledge. The Regio Amersfoort therefore regards itself as the “horizontal lubricating oil”. Municipalities are free to participate in subjects they have an interest in. This flexibility is distinctive of an informal regional structure. As strategic issues such as housing shortages exceed existing boundaries, the current cooperative structure seems to fit. In this structure, municipalities maintain their autonomy while the Regio Amersfoort facilitates and coordinates. This keeps the municipalities responsible for policies and regulations implemented. Eventually municipalities collectively seek solutions for the (regional) housing shortage.

5.3 Obstacles in regional cooperation

When regionally cooperating and dealing with housing shortages, city-regions come across various obstacles which influence the effectiveness of cooperation. Some obstacles have to do with the housing market in general while other obstacles are of political character. The Regio Amersfoort also faces obstacles when approaching the housing shortages regionally. One of these obstacles concerns the slow pace of housing production in the city-region.

5.3.1 Slow pace housing production

Housing production has to increase in order to deal with housing shortages. All the respondents acknowledged that more houses have to be produced in the coming years. Respondents mentioned that the demand has been distributed amongst the municipalities until 2030. It is therefore clear what every municipality has to build. According to the research of the EIB (2013) and input from the respondents, there is regionally enough planning capacity to meet the needs for the short term. There is, however, a difference between types of planning capacity regarding their legal status which is of importance concerning the pace of housing realisation. A distinction is made in Dutch spatial planning between *soft* planning capacity and *hard* planning capacity. *Soft* planning capacity is capacity that can potentially be realised but need to be examined in more detail. *Hard* planning capacity is legally determined and ready to be realised. According to research executed by consulting office Stec Groep (2017b), by order of the province of Utrecht, only 77% of the total housing plans in the period between 2017 and 2027 in the entire province is currently *hard*. Thus almost a fourth of the planning capacity is still *soft*. As *soft* capacity is not yet legally determined it is at risk of being lost or delayed in time. This has been proven during the last couple of years in the municipality of Amersfoort for example (Stec Groep, 2017a). Stec Groep (2017a) noted that the municipality of Amersfoort has not managed to turn both *soft* and *hard* planning capacity into realised housing production during the last couple of years. Not all *soft* plans were turned into *hard* ones. The processes of turning *soft* housing plans into *hard* housing plans and eventually realising them is time-consuming and difficult. Acceleration of housing production is a problem:

“That is very complicated. We recently had a meeting about that. It has to do with the compartmentalisation of the average municipality. There is a department of urban development that imposes quality specifications. There is a compartment of sustainability that demands projects are energy neutral. You get an accumulation of ambitions which have to be realised everywhere. [...] This eventually leads to unrealistic images in many cases.”

(Respondent 12, housing association De Alliantie, 2018)

The accumulation of ambitions and compartmentalisation make the process of turning *soft* planning capacity into *hard* capacity viscous. The real estate expert from the University of Utrecht and the PBL acknowledges this. Because of the compartmentalisation there are multiple pipelines within municipalities which have their own dynamics. When making housing plans, research has to be conducted on water, mobility, archaeology, noise pollution, fine particles and other segments. All these aspects have to be balanced financially and spatially. These individual processes are complex and time-consuming.

What adds to these time-consuming processes is the ambition of governmental institutions to prefer densification to urban expansion. Housing developments within existing urban boundaries usually take more time to realise than expansion (Broitman & Koomen, 2015). An obstacle in processes of inner-city development is that actors directly involved with the new housing development have become more critical and articulate. NIMBY-attitudes of individuals and companies are more prevalent in inner-city development than in locations of expansion. Several respondents mentioned that dealing with such opinions and interests takes a lot of time.

Assigning the *rode contouren* by the province of Utrecht illustrates the focus on inner-city development. Housing developments within these boundaries are in line with strategic ambitions of sustainable urbanisation. However, some municipalities said they have a lack of building locations as the *rode contouren* have been drawn too narrow. Whether or not the *rode contouren* are drawn too narrow is a discussion that has been mentioned several times. The province of Utrecht, on the one hand, states the *rode contouren* include enough locations for housing development. They therefore are reluctant to approve housing projects outside the *rode contouren* as they want to preserve green areas outside urban boundaries. On the other hand, municipalities highly value the open spaces within the *rode contouren*. Realising too much housing in inner-city locations may threaten the quality of the urban space:

“That is a discussion currently between municipalities and the province as the province is busy with their provincial strategic vision. A lot of municipalities want to be able to stop building within the rode contouren at a certain moment as it threatens the rustic qualities. Municipalities also want to use locations outside the boundaries for housing development. [...] It is, of course, questionable whether inner-city or outer-city green areas are more valuable.”

(Respondent 8, municipality of Soest, 2018)

Urban green spaces are, as Lin et al. (2015) already stated, beneficial for the quality of life. Municipalities thus deal with a lack of building locations as they are generally less willing to sacrifice green spaces within urban boundaries than the province of Utrecht. Many respondents, for example the municipality of Amersfoort, stated it is unrealistic to force all housing development within the *rode contouren*. The demand is so high that it will not lead to a desired spatial quality as the urban space becomes too dense. This discussion on whether to densify or expand, the compartmentalisation of municipal organisations and increased resistance of involved actors and NIMBY reactions therefore

result in a rather slow pace of housing production.

5.3.2 Political barriers

Another obstacle the city-region has to deal with are entrenched local sentiments among municipal councils. These sentiments have become more emphasised since the latest municipal elections earlier this year as several local and more conservative political parties won terrain. In newly established coalition agreements, several councils have mentioned that they are willing to build housing. However, this housing production is based on local demands rather than regional. By stating this, these councils want to protect their own inhabitants instead of offering space to households from the entire city-region. Councils in municipalities such as Bunschoten, Eemnes and Soest have taken these positions. The new coalition agreement of the municipality of Soest, for instance, states that Soest will not explore locations for housing development for the period after 2030 that are related to the regional housing market pressure (Gemeente Soest, 2018). Thus, although employees of municipalities recognise the necessity of building housing for regional demands, this thought is not always shared by municipal councils:

“Politically there regularly is a sentiment that they [the municipal council] only want to build for own inhabitants, although the civil servants know it does not work like that. But Amersfoort fully acknowledges the problem and accepts that they have to build when the region demands it. However, you notice that neighbouring municipalities are more reserved. They actually rather not grow too much in order to maintain their identity.”

(Respondent 1, municipality of Amersfoort, 2018)

Although people are free to move wherever they want according to the Dutch law, several municipal councils strive to build for their own inhabitants rather than for regional demands. Therefore municipal councils are reluctant to approve housing projects that serve regional demands. Respondent 8, for instance, notices that this is often a result of the narrow perspective councils have regarding housing development. Municipal councils often only look at the space such developments claim and, as they regard it, the threat it imposes on spatial quality. However, municipal councils underexpose the effects housing development has on the demographic, economic and societal situation. New inhabitants provide more support for amenities and business and mean more potential members of (sports)clubs and schools. Such benefits are, as the municipality of Soest suggested, only to a limited extent taken into account by municipal councils when assessing housing plans.

This limited view on housing plans by municipal councils can partly be attributed to the fact that a municipal council is regularly more focused on politics in the short-term. Coalitions in a municipal council make visions for the coming 4 years, as new elections occur every 4 years. The problem in the housing market after 2030, when housing shortage increases rapidly according to the current supply and demand, does not receive enough attention, according to respondent 6:

“Leusden can build enough for the next couple of years. [...] The coming 10 years we will not have a problem. Politicians usually do not look further than 10 years. A municipal council primarily looks at the coming 4 years. A coalition agreement is also made for 4 years. Causing discussions and trouble about what to do in 10 years is not done quickly”.

(Respondent 6, municipality of Leusden, 2018)

However, making new housing plans usually takes around 8 to 10 years. In order to enlarge the planning capacity in time for 2030, municipalities need to start making plans in a short term. The local,

conservative sentiments and the limited scope in the future of municipal councils therefore are regarded as obstacles when approaching the housing shortage.

5.3.3 Political fragmentation

Another point that has regularly been mentioned by respondents is the political fragmentation within the Regio Amersfoort. There are multiple municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort that also cooperate with other municipalities outside the Regio Amersfoort. The municipality of Eemnes, for instance, is part of the BEL Combinatie. Eemnes therefore cooperates with Blaricum and Laren where other spatial policies are driven. Blaricum and Laren are part of the province of Noord-Holland but also of the Gooi en Vechtstreek region, which has an own housing vision. Both the municipalities of Nijkerk and Barneveld belong to the province of Gelderland and are part of the Food Valley region. Woudenberg is on the edge of 3 different regions, namely the U16, Regio Amersfoort and Food Valley. Although they have chosen to belong to the Regio Amersfoort they still have strong relations with municipalities in the other regions. The same is true for the municipality of Soest, which has strong relations with Zeist and Utrecht as these municipalities are nearby.

The varying relations and collaborations make regional cooperation more complicated. Especially difficult is the fact that the province of Gelderland has another spatial policy than the province of Utrecht. Whereas the province of Utrecht works with *rode contouren* to control housing development, the province of Gelderland works with contingents to set a maximum number of houses municipalities are allowed to build. The Regio Amersfoort therefore consists of municipalities that need to adhere to different spatial policies, which can be difficult:

“Well, it is the case that Barneveld and Nijkerk only have to adhere to the framework settled by the province of Gelderland. Just as Amersfoort only has to adhere to the framework of the province of Utrecht. But since the municipalities belong to the same city-region and want to adjust their housing policy to each other, this is difficult. Barneveld and Nijkerk often say “well, the province of Utrecht is more flexible than the province of Gelderland”. That is a tough game”.

(Respondent 11, province of Utrecht, 2018)

Fragmentation is also an issue regarding the social housing market, as respondent 12 noted. Housing associations are only allowed to invest in particular housing market regions. In total the Netherlands consists of 19 housing market regions. Every municipality has a core region where they are allowed to invest in new housing; outside that region, housing associations may not build new houses. De Alliantie is allowed to invest in the housing market region of Amersfoort (figure 11). Most of the municipalities in the Regio Amersfoort are part of this housing market region. However, Barneveld is part of the housing market region of the Food Valley. This means the Regio Amersfoort deals with two different housing market regions. Additionally, collaborating housing associations have set up a regional distribution system for social housing. But Baarn and Barneveld do not participate in this distribution system. Thus the boundaries of the housing market region, Regio Amersfoort and the regional distribution system are not equal and overlap. This makes it, according to the respondent from De Alliantie, rather complicated and fragmented.

Figure 11: Housing market regions (MBZK, 2018)



5.3.4 Local differences

Homogeneity is an important aspect for a city-region to enhance regional cooperation. As Feiock (2009) and Scott (2001) noted, a shared vision and similar preferences amongst the multiple municipalities within a city-region is of relevance for regional cooperation. Significant differences between participating municipalities do not contribute to efficient decision making. However, according to various respondents, every municipality within the Regio Amersfoort has an own unique identity with distinct characteristics:

“I think that every municipality has its own distinct characteristics. Baarn attracts a lot of people from Amsterdam since we are connected decently by rail and road. But Bunschoten has a unique character, a Christian character. The same goes for Nijkerk. [...] We have looked at whether or not our housing projects compete with each other. Eventually we concluded that is not the case because of the fact that every municipality has its own characteristics”.

(Respondent 2, municipality of Baarn, 2018)

On the one hand, municipalities said these local differences are beneficial as the city-region can offer a wide range of living environments. On the other hand, however, the differences lead to a certain lack of coherence. This results in the fact that housing relations do not spread across the whole region. They rather tend to focus on a few municipalities within the city-region. A significant part of the households come from and move to municipalities outside the Regio Amersfoort. The municipalities also differ from each other regarding their spatial characteristics. Consequently, municipalities instantly build houses in distinct living environments. Therefore, municipalities do not feel the urgent necessity to adjust their housing stock qualitatively. Qualitative adjustment of the living environments and types of housing is, however, important to be able to compete with neighbouring city-regions. Respondent 8 has seen that municipalities in the Food Valley region offer living environments the Regio Amersfoort does not offer. When municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort do not cooperate in order to offer competing living environments, households get lost to neighbouring city-regions.

The heterogeneity in the Regio Amersfoort and distinct characteristics mean the city-region does not have a shared identity. When compared to the Food Valley, as several municipalities mentioned, the Regio Amersfoort does not have a strong shared identity. In terms of food production, processing and distribution, the Food Valley region has a strong collective interest. This identity has, however, not always been a characteristic feature of the region. Several municipalities within the Food Valley actually have not much to do with food. But as the Food Valley region has branded its identity around food, municipalities within the city-region have come to share an identity. A collective interest has thereby been created and mutual coherence is strong. But due to distinct characteristics of municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort, the city-region lacks a powerful mutual coherence and interest.

5.3.5 Regional barriers and fragmentation

All in all there are several obstacles the city-region faces. The obstacles concerning the slow pace of housing production have to do with the housing market and governmental organisation structures. Due to municipal compartmentalisation, focus on infill-development and an experienced lack of building space housing production occurs at a rather slow pace. Entrenched local sentiments, political fragmentation and heterogeneity within the Regio Amersfoort form obstacles as well which make regional cooperation more difficult. In order to encourage regional cooperation and solve the housing shortages, it is desirable to overcome these obstacles.

5.4 Regional approach housing shortages

The regional approach leads to several steps and solutions being taken to tackle housing shortages, aimed at both issues on the housing market as well as obstacles experienced in the process of cooperating. Participants experience benefits from cooperating regionally and approach strategic issues collectively. These benefits are discussed before elaborating on regional solutions taken within the Regio Amersfoort in order to solve housing shortages and organisational obstacles.

5.4.1 Benefits regional cooperation

One of the advantages of regional cooperation is that municipalities are able to pool skills and knowledge. The real estate expert from the UU and PBL noted this can provide professional support for municipalities through which they can achieve a higher quality of work. A larger municipality such as Amersfoort has more resources to execute research. They even have their own research department. Both the Regio Amersfoort and the other 8 municipalities profit from such resources. This can be especially beneficial for smaller municipalities. Small municipalities occasionally lack employees and, sometimes, expertise as they have to perform within small teams while doing a lot of work. One example that illustrates this was given by the respondent from the municipality of Eemnes. The respondent noted that, since Eemnes is part of the BEL Combinatie, she works at the public housing department of Blaricum, Eemnes and Laren. The resulting large volume of work can be made more bearable by pooling skills and knowledge to enlarge one's knowledge base and set of skills. In a way municipalities thus borrow-size from each other, which Burger et al. (2014) have noted to be beneficial.

Another advantage of regional cooperation is that one gains easy access to information and statistics of neighbouring municipalities. This is beneficial to get an overview of the regional housing demand as well as that information and data from neighbouring municipalities can easily be used for writing own municipal policies and plans. The city-region thereby not only profits from exchange of information between municipalities. As Nijkerk and Barneveld belong to the Food Valley, the Regio Amersfoort learns from that region as well. Gatherings and the subjects being discussed within the Food Valley can be used within the Regio Amersfoort. Nijkerk and Barneveld can give good insight into

the regional themes and issues the Food Valley deals with. Sometimes representatives of the Food Valley also join meetings of the Regio Amersfoort or give a presentation on current themes. In that way municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort learn from the other municipalities as well as from neighbouring regional cooperative organisations.

And lastly, municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort profit from the amenities and growth in the regional heart, the so-called LANS-municipalities (Leusden, Amersfoort, Nijkerk and Soest). The regional spatial vision discusses that the municipalities of Leusden, Amersfoort, Nijkerk and Soest form a regional heart where the level of amenities is highest. This heart is also the place where the majority of the housing production in the period after 2030 should take place. Surrounding municipalities profit from the proximity of amenities such as theatres and swimming pools. When developments and distribution of this kind of amenities can be adjusted regionally, every municipality within the Regio Amersfoort profits from that. The differences between municipalities are thereby considered complementary. Advantages municipalities have from each other relate to the borrowed-size effect as discussed by Burger et al. (2014).

5.4.2 Increase and accelerate housing production

That the LANS-municipalities form the regional heart is a result of the city-region's approach to deal with the housing shortage. It is, however, relevant to accelerate building processes in order to make sure that all planned capacity is actually realized. Acceleration of the housing production has also been pointed out as an ambition of the province of Utrecht in the provincial action agenda (Provincie Utrecht, 2018). One of the factors that slows down housing production is a lack of expertise within municipal organisations (Provincie Utrecht, 2018). The province has therefore taken the responsibility to establish so-called *acceleration teams* which help municipalities with issues of capacity and expertise. These teams of experts are established to enlarge specific knowledge and skills which are not available at the relative municipality. The teams therefore contribute to accelerating processes of turning *soft* planning capacity into *hard* planning capacity.

Another way of accelerating housing production is for municipalities to change their role and strategy on the housing market. Currently, several municipalities mentioned they own few grounds to build on. This is a consequence of the fulfilled land policy which has shifted from being active before the financial crisis of 2008 to more passive nowadays. Consequently, possession of own grounds is limited. Opportunities for municipalities to realise housing projects have thereby decreased and their role in the housing market has been up for debate:

"We have very few own grounds left. It has been brought up for discussion whether we should fulfil an active land policy again. This also give us the possibility to direct as locations in the city slowly exhaust".

(Respondent 1, municipality of Amersfoort, 2018)

Besides fulfilling a more active land policy municipalities could be more flexible in deploying norms. The compartmentalisation has been mentioned as a factor slowing down housing production. On a wide variety of aspects municipalities deploy norms which need to be achieved in order to approve a housing project. However, rather than repeatedly deploying the same norms, a more flexible and specialised approach could accelerate housing production:

"I think that it is key to focus more on an area-specific approach rather than compartmentalised working. Otherwise you get time-consuming processes. You can look at an area beforehand and state "we will realise sharing of vehicles here so we will not deploy a parking availability ratio of 1.6 vehicle per household". Just that, that you create

a vision. But not a single municipality has such a vision”.

(Respondent 12, housing association De Alliantie, 2018)

Flexibility concerning norms would, as several respondents state, stimulate new housing investments. Especially with the focus on inner-city (re)development it is hard to use a standardised method of assessing and realising projects. Every project needs to be custom fit as every location differs. It would therefore be helpful when municipalities are more flexible in their usage of norms.

Other respondents stated that municipalities could be more active and stimulating in the housing market. The respondent from developer Schipper Bosch, for instance, would like municipalities to take more initiative and consider area development more integral. Thereby the respondent means that, rather than looking only at housing development within an area, municipalities could also look at preconditions to make an area attractive. An example was given on a case in London, at the Battersea Power Station. This former factory was bought by an investor:

“The only thing this investor was busy with was making sure that the underground line would be extended to Battersea. Investing in real estate was not yet up for discussion. It was just a plot of land with businesses and potential. So the city invested in extending the underground line to that area. When you have done that as a city, you are ready. That area has been made warm and as a city you will not have to direct much in order to stimulate housing production. Interested actors will come by themselves”.

(Respondent 13, developer Schipper Bosch, 2018)

Thus by investing in preconditions locations can be made more attractive. By investing in public transport an area is made appealing to businesses and households. Municipalities in the Netherlands can also act according to this strategy. Schipper Bosch is the only respondent mentioning such a development and investment strategy. This might be because Schipper Bosch is a private actor and more used to think out-of-the-box. Such a strategy is not common and not without risks; whenever investments have been made and no interested actor shows up, financial losses can be a result. But as Schipper Bosch said, in the contemporary situation the question is not if such an area will develop, but when.

Private actors can also contribute to housing production themselves. Private developers are the main actor investing in private rental housing. Private rental housing priced between approximately €700 and €1,000 is relevant for middle-income households and stimulates a better flow through on the housing market. It is therefore of relevance to bring housing associations, private developers and municipalities together to discuss production of private rental housing. Stec Groep (2017b) has noticed there are rarely concrete initiatives where developers and housing associations collaborate. Respondent 11 also mentioned that developers, housing associations and governments barely meet simultaneously. They do have one-to-one contact but not with the three of them. The province therefore arranges meetings where both housing associations and private developers are invited. By organizing these meetings, actors become more familiar with one another and can look at the possibilities to complement each other. Arranging these meetings is therefore of importance to the housing production and acceleration to solve the housing shortage. Additionally respondent 11 noted the province is exploring the role housing associations can play on the private rental market. Investing in private rental housing is currently primarily been a task of private developers. But there is a great deficit in private rental housing. Therefore the province and housing associations are exploring the extent to which it is legally possible for housing associations to invest in private rental housing.

5.4.3 Regional regulations

The Regio Amersfoort is not only useful for exchanging information and knowledge, but also for setting up regional regulations. One of the regulations that has been set up is a regional distribution system for social rental housing. This distribution system has been put into operation in 2014 by the Regio

Amersfoort and the SWEV. 8 collaborating housing associations thereby offer their social rental housing in 7 municipalities via the same system. Individual distribution systems have been merged into one. Households looking for a social rental dwelling therefore register once in order to be eligible for social housing in the 7 participating municipalities. The municipalities of Baarn and Barneveld are the only municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort that are not part of the regional distribution system.

The regionalised distribution system for social housing is beneficial for households looking for a new house and for providers of social housing. Transparency has increased, households have gained access to a larger housing stock and criteria concerning admission, suitability and priority have been regionalised. In Nijkerk, for instance, results are already visible: 30% of the households moving in newly realised social housing in Nijkerk is from outside the municipality. And this percentage will increase according to respondent 7. Furthermore, the regional distribution system gains better insight into the situation on the social rental market in neighbouring municipalities. Research conducted by consulting office RIGO in 2017 evaluating the first period of the regional distribution system supports the statements made by the respondents. Many households seize the opportunity to react on vacant social housing in the entire city-region (RIGO, 2017). In municipalities such as Bunschoten, Eemnes, Leusden and Woudenberg more than half of the reactions on vacant housing came from other municipalities within the city-region.

Urgency regulation social housing

Since the distribution system has been regionalised differences between municipalities on the urgency regulation have become more apparent. Housing associations are therefore an advocate for a regional urgency regulation, as respondent 12 and RIGO noted. A regional urgency regulation would enhance transparency, create more uniformity and increase accessibility to the regional social rental market for households.

However, a regional urgency regulation is currently not in operation. Various municipalities prefer keeping a municipal urgency regulation rather than adjusting this regionally. Differences between municipal urgency regulation are so significant that municipalities are reluctant to change them. Respondent 4, for instance, noted that the municipality of Bunschoten is more social than other municipalities. In the municipality of Bunschoten households become urgent more quickly than in other municipalities of the Regio Amersfoort. The municipality of Woudenberg, however, is more strict. Because of these differences, municipalities like to maintain municipal urgency regulations:

“We have our own urgency regulation. There are a lot of similarities but also differences between the municipalities. In my opinion it is the specialised, municipal regulation that works well. [...] We want to uniform a lot of things that you can do collectively but without the loss of own distinct characteristics that apply to our own municipality”.

(Respondent 9, municipality of Woudenberg, 2018)

Several municipalities have an own commission dealing with cases of urgency. These commissions consist of people from the community who have a tight relationship with the inhabitants. These people know the inhabitants and can provide custom fit help. Regionalising the commission handling urgency cases is therefore considered a cool and distant approach. The opinions with relation to a regional urgency regulation are therefore divided. On the one hand housing associations are in favour of a regional regulation while on the other hand various municipalities want to keep it local. Realising more regional regulations would enhance uniformity and results in less political fragmentation. The more rules and regulations are regionalised, the less fragmented the Regio Amersfoort will be.

5.4.4 Inform and communicate

One of the largest obstacles that respondents have noted is the withdrawing movement of municipal councils and their statements to build only for local demand. Although the regional spatial vision has been accepted by municipal councils last year, various newly-established municipal councils show opposite statements. Councils of Soest and Eemnes have, for instance, expressed the desire to only build for own inhabitants and not for regional demands. When assessing housing projects municipal councils tend to focus on the spatial claim rather than the societal and economic benefits. It is therefore of importance to inform and make municipal councils aware of the positive effects new housing developments have on the municipality:

“It is relevant to bring the positive societal effects under attention towards the council and to make them aware of the fact that housing development is not barely a claim for space. It involves a demographic development, a societal development. [...] But often only the opposition is heard. When there is a plan, the developer and civil servants from a municipality are positive. But the neighbourhood is against the development, especially in the case of inner-city housing development. And the critique from the directly involved neighbourhood is the thing the council listens to”.

(Respondent 8, municipality of Soest, 2018)

As the EIB (2014) has noted as well housing development and an increasing population has stimulating effects on employment and strengthens the economic competitiveness of the city-region. And, as several respondents said, it also provides more support for local amenities such as (sports)clubs, schools and businesses. By informing municipal councils on the economic and societal benefits, councils are more aware of both the positive and negative aspects. As local sentiments are more emphasised since the latest municipal elections, informing councils properly has become more important. The withdrawing movements from newly-established councils are not supportive, especially as the regional spatial vision was accepted last year by previous municipal councils.

Eventually trust is of vital importance in horizontal, voluntary regional planning as Harrison (2006) and Kantor (2008) also pointed out. Not only need municipalities within the city-region to trust each other, municipal councils have to trust analyses and spatial data presented by its civil servants. Respondents from the municipalities of Leusden and Amersfoort both acknowledged that trust is important. In order to align stakeholders' interests and let actors voluntarily participate in regional cooperative processes, mutual trust is relevant. By informing and communicating trust can be built.

5.4.5 Qualitative adjustment

Another important aspect of approaching the housing shortages regionally is adjusting the housing stock qualitatively. This means that the municipalities need to distribute types of housing and living environments. As the planned capacity of the Regio Amersfoort has shown, there are enough housing plans for the next couple of years. Several respondents noted that municipalities themselves take care of the quantity. The number of newly-built houses to 2030 is not the biggest issue.

Qualitatively adjusting the regional housing stock is, however, of vital importance to create enough suitable housing for every type of household and to be able to compete with other regions. Respondent 10 said there is a slight tendency to realise similar types of housing despite the fact that the distinct characteristics of the municipalities lend themselves to create various types of living environments. This is acknowledged by respondent 8. This respondent recognises that the Regio Amersfoort is competing with, for example, the Food Valley region. Municipalities within the Food Valley such as Ede, Wageningen and Veenendaal realise a lot of housing and offer living environments that the Regio Amersfoort can currently not offer. It is therefore of importance to qualitatively adjust

the housing stock in a way that enhances diversity and competing living environments are created. According to Frisken & Norris (2001) and Harrison (2006) inter-regional competition has become more important. By regionally cooperating the Regio Amersfoort is able to compete with neighbouring regions for households. Respondent 10 mentioned qualitative adjustment is currently not happening but it is a point of interest for the coming period.

What might be helpful in stimulating the regional cooperation is to create a regional identity that is proclaimed by the municipalities and the Regio Amersfoort. Several respondents mentioned that the neighbouring Food Valley region is a strong regional cooperation due to the shared identity of food. Food production, processing and distribution creates an identity and shared interest that binds municipalities and strengthens regional cooperation. This identity is even visible in their logo, where the identity formed around food is presented (figure 12). Although historically not all the municipalities have a relation with food production, processing and distribution, branding and marketing of the Food Valley focusses on that. The Food Valley region profits from this uniformity. However, municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort have distinct identities and lack a strong, shared characteristic. Creating a shared interest encourages and strengthens regional cooperation, possible for the Regio Amersfoort as well.

Figure 12: Logo Food Valley (Food Valley, 2018)



5.4.6 Participants are positive but critical

All in all participants within the Regio Amersfoort are mainly positive about the regional cooperation. Municipalities profit from benefits such as the possibility to pool skills and knowledge and get insights into the regional housing problem. Regionally cooperating also gains municipalities easier access to data and information from other municipalities. The Regio Amersfoort has helped municipalities during the last couple of years to find each other and get to know each other better. Therefore the participants recognise that cooperating within the Regio Amersfoort is beneficial.

In order to solve housing shortages and overcome obstacles that hamper regional cooperation, actors have come up with various measures. Measures to accelerate housing production are of importance for both the regional and provincial scale. Therefore special teams are established to help municipalities accelerating their housing production while the compartmentalisation of municipal organisations has also been brought under attention. However, convincing municipal councils and informing them about the necessity to regionally approach and tackle housing shortages is of vital importance. Withdrawing movements of municipal councils due to emphasised local sentiments are endangering the regional cooperation. Therefore informing municipal councils of societal and economic benefits of housing development is importance for future cooperation within the Regio Amersfoort to tackle housing shortages.

6. Conclusion

This chapter provides an answer to the research questions. To begin with an overview is given of answers on the sub questions. Afterwards the main questions will be answered and an advice is given to organisations involved in regional planning on how to practice regionalism in the future. In the discussion a link is made with theoretical notions as described in the theoretical approach and the results. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research and a personal reflection on the research process.

6.1 Conclusion

This thesis discussed the regional approach in the Regio Amersfoort to housing shortages. In order to get insights into the problem, housing shortages within the Regio Amersfoort have been explored. It can be concluded that municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort face housing shortages. The municipality of Amersfoort faces the highest pressure on the housing market and already has a shortage in planning capacity of 4,800 houses in 2030. This is expected to increase to 11,500 houses in 2040 for the municipality of Amersfoort and to a total of 12,100 houses in the entire Regio Amersfoort. Only a few municipalities in the city-region have enough planning capacity to meet the needs. However, these surpluses are not sufficient to accommodate for the needs of the entire city-region. Deficits suffered due to decreased housing production during the financial crisis of 2008 and a move of households to urban regions lead to current and future housing shortages in the Regio Amersfoort.

Regional cooperation

In order to achieve a balanced regional housing stock and tackle housing shortages, 9 municipalities collaborate voluntarily in the Regio Amersfoort. Because of the voluntary character of the city-region, borders are not strictly drawn and the Regio Amersfoort is rather unbounded. A regional spatial vision was published by the city-region which discusses spatial trends regarding the housing market, mobility and the economy. This vision was accepted by each municipal council. Although municipalities signed an agreement to cooperate regionally, municipalities keep their autonomy. In the end municipalities are responsible for their own policies and decisions made, also when this is based on regional agreements. The Regio Amersfoort is therefore not able to enforce rules and regulations. They are facilitators and coordinators. The Regio Amersfoort arranges meetings and gathers actors to exchange knowledge and skills. Civil servant meetings are arranged approximately every month and aldermen meetings every 2 months. During these meetings participants have the opportunity to discuss subjects of interest on which they would like to cooperate. Additionally annual housing market platforms are organised where both public and private actors are invited to discuss relevant present themes. Its aim thereby is to share knowledge, network and get in touch with a wide range of actors. The province of Utrecht is, within the regional collaboration, a facilitator and supporter of regional cooperation. They are in direct contact with other regions in the province, such as the Food Valley region and U16. When issues are present of a supraregional character, the province of Utrecht can bring together the several regions for discussion.

Obstacles

However, when regionally cooperating and dealing with housing shortages, several obstacles are faced. One of them is the slow pace of housing production. Compartmentalisation of municipal organisations and long processes of realising planning capacity result in a slow pace of housing production. Additionally the provincially assigned *rode contouren* are by some municipalities regarded

as too narrowly drawn. This leaves municipalities with limited space for housing development, too limited in some cases. Besides the slow pace of housing production, political barriers are obstacles to regional planning. Since the latest elections, local and more conservative political parties have won terrain. Consequently entrenched local sentiments have gained more attention. This leads to standpoints of municipal councils to only build for own demands rather than for city-regional demands. Such standpoints of municipal councils are especially difficult to deal with since the regional spatial vision has been accepted and municipalities discuss housing shortages regionally. What is difficult to deal with as well is the political fragmentation in the Regio Amersfoort. The Regio Amersfoort consists of municipalities that belong to 2 different provinces as well as municipalities that collaborate with municipalities in other regions. When implementing policies, municipalities and the Regio Amersfoort therefore need to take various differing collaborations and strategies into account. Lastly the municipalities within the city-region have distinct characteristics and identities. This heterogeneity amongst the municipalities leads to a certain lack of coherence and shared interest.

Regional approach

Despite these obstacles participants see benefits of regional cooperation. Municipalities are able to pool skills and knowledge, it gains one easier access to information and statistics of neighbouring municipalities and municipalities can profit from amenities and growth in the regional heart. And in order to deal with housing shortages, municipalities are busy accelerating housing production. Together with the province of Utrecht acceleration of housing production has been assigned as an ambition. So-called *acceleration teams* are established to help municipalities by providing knowledge and skills that are not available at the municipality. Additionally respondents would like more flexibility and an area-based approach of municipalities concerning housing development. This would stimulate new housing investments. Current usage of norms and regulations and consequent compartmentalisation of municipal organisations leads to long planning processes and results in too ambitious and unfeasible plans.

Within the Regio Amersfoort regional regulations can be set up to tackle experienced political fragmentation. Whereas the Regio Amersfoort is rather fragmented due to multiple (political) collaborations and overlapping boundaries, regional regulations create more uniformity. This has partly been achieved by establishing a regional distribution system for social rental housing. Discussions are currently held to realise a regional urgency regulation for social housing. Not only do regional regulations create more transparency towards households in the city-region, but regionally executing work is also more efficient and informative. Municipalities and housing associations can more quickly analyse and detect problems on the regional social rental market.

However, the latest elections changed the political field. Local, more conservative political parties won terrain and hamper regional cooperation. Although the regional spatial vision was accepted last year, several municipal councils show withdrawing movements. Several councils state they only want to build for the own demand instead of for the city-region. It is therefore of importance to inform municipal councils about the positive societal and economic benefits of housing development. As councils tend to emphasise the space claimed by new housing development, positive aspects of housing development need to be communicated as well. This will encourage the process of aligning stakeholders' interests and stimulates cooperation.

When municipal councils think from a regional perspective, this will make it easier to qualitatively adjust the housing stock in the Regio Amersfoort. Currently this does not yet occur. There is a tendency to realise the same types of housing and living environments in the separate municipalities. Certain living environments are therefore not realised and households consequently get lost to neighbouring regions. Therefore it is of importance to qualitatively adjust the housing stock. In this way not only the quantity of housing will eventually correspond to demands, but also the quality

and type of housing. Qualitative adjustment of the housing stock is on the agenda to be discussed within the Regio Amersfoort.

Regional positivity but with critical notes

All in all municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort are positive about regionally cooperating. The voluntary and horizontal character of the Regio Amersfoort is highly valued. Municipalities maintain their authority and stay independent. In the end municipal organisations are responsible for their decisions and policies implemented. Problems of accountability and responsibility as Kang & Groetelaers (2017), Kantor (2006) and Mashaw (2006) mentioned, are thus not apparent in the Regio Amersfoort. Acting as the horizontal lubricating oil the Regio Amersfoort does not bring disorder in existing lines of responsibility. The role of the Regio Amersfoort as facilitator and coordinator is regarded as useful and of vital importance to gather actors and knowledge.

However, due to the voluntary and flexible character of regional cooperation and local (political) differentiations, it is difficult to implement regional rules and regulations. These factors influence the extent to which municipalities manage to cooperate. Currently, most far-reaching forms of cooperation entail exchange of knowledge, regionally exploring the housing problem and the regional distribution system for social housing. The regional spatial vision is, despite being a valuable source, still quite abstract. It forms a decent foundation from which the Regio Amersfoort can further explore and expand regional cooperation. It is regarded as a good step towards more regionalisation to tackle the housing shortage.

Although regional cooperation works properly in current times, several respondents have expressed their curiosity about what will happen when strategic issues become more urgent and problematic. Various respondents mentioned that housing of refugees or distribution of less attractive social housing is more problematic than the current shortage. Solving such problems will be a true test case. The willingness of municipalities to cooperate and serve regional purposes will be put to test when solving such challenging issues. The shortages of planned capacity after 2030 in the Regio Amersfoort is also a situation where problems become more urgent. The regional spatial vision states the LANS-municipalities will provide for the majority of regional housing production in the Regio Amersfoort. The regional heart will therefore receive the largest share of regional growth. However, the municipality of Leusden did not approve of this proposal. And in their new council agreement the municipality of Soest noted they will not explore locations for housing development for the period after 2030 when these are related to regional demands. Consequently, Leusden accepts and shares the regional spatial vision but with critical notes concerning housing production being focussed on the LANS-municipalities. How the council of the municipality of Soest will act on this issue is not yet known. But this shows that, when issues become more urgent, problematic and difficult to handle, it has yet to be proven how willing participating municipalities are to regionally cooperate.

Despite the fact that Leusden did not approve of the proposal to focus regional growth on the LANS-municipalities, they stay part of the Regio Amersfoort and share the rest of the regional spatial vision. This illustrates the importance every municipality attaches to regionally cooperating within the Regio Amersfoort. Benefits of regionally cooperating exceed the efforts participants have to put into the Regio Amersfoort. Various steps have been taken to encourage regional cooperation and solve the regional housing shortage. The regional spatial vision thereby functions as a clear foundation for the future. A sense of community has been created and participants are aware of the fact that the housing market crosses municipal boundaries. Municipalities realise that regional cooperation is of vital importance to deal with the housing shortage. But to what extent cooperation will eventually take its form, is highly influenced by the urgency, willingness to cooperate and the room for movement local politics will provide.

It is therefore of vital importance that more uniformity and homogeneity is created and municipal councils are informed about and convinced of the necessity to regionally cooperate and tackle housing shortages. By implementing more regional regulations, uniformity is created which fights the political fragmentation. Eventually this results in a transparent regional housing market. The regional spatial vision is a clear foundation, but further forms of collaboration need to take place in order to more effectively tackle regional housing shortages. Informing withdrawing municipal councils of the need to regionally cooperate and tackle housing shortages is thereby most important. Especially since realising new planning capacity usually takes around 8 to 10 years, municipalities need to start thinking now about the rapid increase of shortage in planning capacity after 2030.

6.2 Discussion

The Regio Amersfoort thus faces difficulties dealing with regional housing shortages. While dealing with the shortage, municipalities and the province also have discussions about densifying or expanding housing development. Various authors have paid attention to this discussion as well (Burton, 2000; Daneshpour & Shakibamanesh, 2011; Gordon & Richardson, 1997; Neuman, 2005; Ye et al., 2005). In order to encourage densification and sustainable use space, the province has assigned *rode contouren*. Sustainable use of space is encouraged to preserve open and green areas outside existing urban boundaries (Neuman, 2005). However, various municipalities consider the *rode contouren* to be too narrow. Municipalities highly value green spaces inside urban boundaries as Burton (2000) and Lin et al. (2015) have noted as well. This discussion is one of the reasons why housing production occurs at a rather slow pace. This shows that balancing interests of economic growth and environmental protection, as Campbell (1996) has mentioned, is currently still applicable and a point of discussion.

Unbounded and dynamic characteristics of contemporary city-regions, as Harrison (2006) and Kantor (2006) have noted, are characteristic for regional cooperation within the Regio Amersfoort. Relying on voluntary collaboration, the Regio Amersfoort is a horizontal and flexible way of cooperating. Actors are not obliged to participate on every subject proposed within the city-region. Additionally the monocentric feature of the Regio Amersfoort with the city of Amersfoort as the centre of the region should, according to Feiock (2009) and Scott (2001), contribute to a homogeneous city-region. Homogeneous regions are less vulnerable to fragmentation. However, the Regio Amersfoort is still characterised by local, distinct characteristics. Municipalities have relations of political, demographic and economic nature that lead to fragmentation and heterogeneity.

The fragmentation and heterogeneity emphasise the importance of the role of political leadership, as Bafarasat (2016), Harrison (2006) and Lambregts et al. (2008) noticed. The role of the Regio Amersfoort is important to get an overview of opinions and align stakeholders' interests. Respondents valued the work executed by the Regio Amersfoort as the regional organisation facilitates and coordinates gatherings and the collaboration. This horizontal facilitating role of the Regio Amersfoort makes sure that problems of accountability and responsibility as mentioned by Kantor (2006) and Mashaw (2006) are not an issue. Since the Regio Amersfoort is not situated in-between the province of Utrecht and municipalities the regional organisation is not able to impose rules and regulations. Municipalities stay responsible for their own decisions. The regional spatial vision only serves as a guiding principle for municipalities.

But despite the fact that the obstacle of accountability and responsibility as noted by Kantor (2006) and Mashaw (2006) is not applicable to the Regio Amersfoort, there are notions of NIMBY-attitudes (Basolo & Hastings, 2003). Especially infill-development are influenced by NIMBY objections as neighbouring households and businesses have become more articulate. But the withdrawing movements and local sentiments at municipal councils can also be regarded as NIMBY objections and a political barrier. Various municipal councils expressed desires to only build for local demands rather

than for regional demands. Thus various councils do not want housing based on regional demands in their backyards.

Therefore the role of the Regio Amersfoort is of vital importance to align stakeholders' interests (Bafarasat, 2016; Harrison, 2006; Lambregts et al. 2008). However, because of the heterogeneity, political barrier and voluntary character of the city-region, further cooperation is hampered. The Regio Amersfoort as a facilitating organisation is only limitedly capable of aligning interests and creating mutual interests. It is questionable to what extent municipalities in this voluntary, horizontal regional cooperation manage to collaborate, regionally adjust policies and find solutions collectively to tackle housing shortages.

6.3 Reflection

For further research it is interesting to see how the political trend of withdrawing local municipal councils will develop in the future. It is only since the latest elections that local, more conservative parties gained terrain on such a large scale. Standpoints that prefer local interests to regional ones potentially endanger regional cooperation. The success of the Regio Amersfoort highly depends on the willingness to cooperate and sacrifice own municipal interests for the sake of regional cooperation. The effects on regional cooperation in the Regio Amersfoort are not yet clearly visible. Therefore further research is necessary.

Additionally it is interesting to examine results of measures taken to accelerate housing production. The slow pace of housing production is one of the obstacles in dealing with housing shortages. The province, Regio Amersfoort and municipalities are currently busy finding ways to accelerate housing production. Accelerating housing production is of importance to make sure that all planned capacity to 2030 is also realised. As the ambition of accelerating housing production has gained more attention since the provincial action agenda for the housing market of 2018 it is interesting to see how this ambition will be achieved.

Personal reflection

During this research several points of attention can be noticed that need to be taken into account in future research. One of them is the structure of the theoretical approach. At first this was not scientifically enough as contextual information on the Dutch housing market and causes of the housing shortage were included as well. It took quite some time before literature on regional planning and city-regionalism was included. Eventually part of the information on the Dutch housing market was still useful and transferred to the context chapter. However, research would have benefited from an earlier focus of the theoretical approach on regional planning.

The sooner there is a clear focus in the theoretical approach, the better interviews can be prepared and directed. Interviews were rather long and extensive now. In the end this led to the right type of results. However, parts of some interviews were not always useful. Having a clearer focus from the beginning could result in more efficient and effective interviewing. And, lastly, it is of importance in future research to look back on written texts more often and adjust them in an earlier phase. Especially since a master thesis consists of large amounts of information, it is of importance to more often look at written texts in order to check whether or not everything still makes sense and is connected with each other.

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Attachments

- A. Question list public actor*
- B. Question list private actor*

A. Question list public actor

Introduction

- What do you do?
- For how long have you been involved in the organisation?

Housing shortages

- What is the biggest problem regarding the housing market in the Regio Amersfoort?
There are various reasons why housing shortages in the Netherlands are expected to peak. This, for instance, has to do with demographic changes, the financial crisis of 2008 and the Landlord Levy introduced during the crisis (Haase et al., 2013; Hoekstra, 2017; Van der Heijden et al., 2011). It is important to know what the biggest problem is on the housing market in the Regio Amersfoort as this decides what kind of measures are to be taken. Dealing with demographic changes are possibly dealt with differently than the consequences of the financial crisis.
- What do you experience on the housing market in your own organisation?
Housing shortages are expected to peak. However, not all municipalities face housing shortages (to the same extent) (Capital Value, 2017). It is therefore relevant to know which municipalities deal with the largest shortages as this influences the process of regional cooperation and the outcome of the cooperation.

Measures

- Why was the Regio Amersfoort set up?
Globalisation forces and increasing housing shortages led to the need of municipalities to cooperate rather than compete with each other (Frisken & Norris, 2001; Kantor, 2008; Kearns & Paddison, 2000). This question gives insight in the reason why the Regio Amersfoort has been set up.
- Which actors were involved in writing both the regional strategic (housing) vision and during meetings of the Regio Amersfoort?
Deregulation, decentralisation and privatisation processes have given more room for other actors rather than governmental institutions to participate in spatial planning (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Kearns & Paddison, 2000). Following new regionalism, governmental as well as non-governmental institutions and parties act to solve issues beyond the local level (Harrison, 2006; Kantor, 2006). Therefore, it is of importance to know who is involved in the Regio Amersfoort.
- Why did you as a municipality decide to join the Regio Amersfoort and what is the greatest added value for your organisation of the work executed by the city-region?
There are several advantages for municipalities of cooperating on a regional scale. Municipalities can, for instance, profit from the borrowed size effect or strengthen their market position by cooperation (Burger et al., 2014; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). Coordination can also result in vertically synchronised policies which are less likely to clash with each other (Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). Whether municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort based their participation on such reasons, is examined by asking this question.
- What is the role of your organisation within this field?

In current regional planning, clear hierarchies with a governmental institution at the top is not that common anymore (Harrison, 2006; Kantor, 2008; Semain, 2016). Boundaries have become fuzzy and the role of governmental institutions less obvious (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). To get insight in the various roles within the region, this question is discussed.

- Is there a hierarchy present in the organisation of the Regio Amersfoort, as in that the Regio Amersfoort decides what the municipalities have to do, or is the Regio Amersfoort open for debate?

Hierarchical structures in regional planning have been abandoned as regions are more often regarded as dynamic, social structures (Harrison, 2006; Kantor, 2006). In hierarchical structures higher levels within the hierarchy are allowed to direct behaviour of lower-level authorities (Bafarasat, 2016; Paasi, 2009; Sagan, 2009). To see whether the Regio Amersfoort is also regarded as such, this question is discussed.

- To what extent is the composition of actors within the Regio Amersfoort fixed and static or dynamic and continually changing?

Harrison & Growe (2014) mention that in current times, city-regionalism is not about exercising territorial power, but rather about aligning networks and look at relations within a region. The region is more a social construct which changes continually and where borders are fuzzy. It is important to get insight in the way the Regio Amersfoort perceives the regional scale and whether or not actors are allowed to leave and enter during its existence.

- To what extent do you think municipalities keep their own autonomy and independence and are able to make own decisions, despite regional agreements being made?

According to the new regionalist approach, it is important to preserve autonomy of actors to avoid political conflicts (Feiock, 2009; Kantor, 2008). This gives municipalities the opportunity to respond to regional problems at their own will, which will more easily lead to approval of the regional activities and successful regional cooperation (Feiock, 2009). Therefore it is important to know to what extent municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort maintain their own autonomy.

- Whose strategic plans are leading and who is responsible for the execution, the municipalities or the Regio Amersfoort?

Kang & Groetelaers (2017) have mentioned problems of accountability and responsibility in regional planning processes. It is therefore relevant to know whether there are clear agreements of accountability and responsibility within the Regio Amersfoort and whether or not municipalities maintain independence and autonomy (Feiock, 2009; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Kantor, 2008).

Obstacles

- Do you experience any obstacles when approaching housing shortages on a regional scale?
Several obstacles can be pointed out when regionally approaching the housing market (Basolo & Hastings, 2003; Feiock, 2009; Kantor, 2006; Mashaw, 2006; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). Cooperation within the Regio Amersfoort probably also faces such obstacles.
- Have you experienced the aftermath of the financial crisis and/or strategies implemented during that period of time?

During the financial crisis multiple strategies have been implemented by the Dutch government which make it harder to realise new housing development, for instance the Landlord Levy and the *Ladder of Sustainable Urbanisation* (Hoekstra, 2017; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). Such restrictive policies make new housing development hard to

realise. The extent to which the Regio Amersfoort is still affected by these measures and the financial crisis, influences the opportunities to tackle the housing shortages.

- Do you have knowledge of contradictory interests between municipalities and/or between the municipalities and the Regio Amersfoort?

Fragmentation and intermunicipal competition is often present in regional cooperation structures (Feiock, 2009; Frisken & Norris, 2001; Kantor, 2006). The extent to which the Regio Amersfoort and the separate municipalities experience such contradictory interests influences the process of cooperation.

Solutions

- To what extent does the city-region cooperate to balance the housing stock?

Cooperation between municipalities within a region can lead to a more balanced housing stock and less housing shortages (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). There are several degrees to which municipalities can regionally cooperate (Feijel et al., 2013), and these degrees affect the potential of creating a balanced housing stock. It is thus important to know to what extent the municipalities cooperate within the Regio Amersfoort.

- Where is new housing development within your organisation planned?

The debate on whether to densify or expand urban existing areas also relates to the Regio Amersfoort. Housing shortages are expected to peak and many houses have to be developed. However, both densification and expansion have their advantages and disadvantages (Burton, 2000; Daneshpour & Shakibamanesh, 2011; Neuman, 2005; Ye et al., 2005). It is relevant to know where the Regio Amersfoort positions itself within this debate as this affects the potential for new housing development.

- What solutions have actors within the city-region come up with to tackle the obstacles and housing shortages?

Several solutions have been discussed in literature to increase housing stock and decrease shortages on the housing market (Broitman & Koomen, 2015; Haase et al., 2013; Ye et al., 2005). The Regio Amersfoort also has to come up with solutions in order to tackle their housing shortages.

- How effective do you think the regional approach is to tackle housing shortages?

Regional cooperation should help municipalities to balance their housing stock and fight housing shortages in times of high housing shortages and privatisation (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). Whether the municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort view the regional approach the same way, highly depends the potential success of it.

B. Question list private actor

Introduction

- What do you do?
- For how long have you been involved in the organisation?

Housing shortages

- What is the biggest problem regarding the housing market in general and more specifically in the Regio Amersfoort?

There are various reasons why housing shortages in the Netherlands are expected to peak. This, for instance, has to do with demographic changes, the financial crisis, which began around 2008 and the Landlord Levy introduced during the crisis (Haase et al., 2013; Hoekstra, 2017; Van der Heijden et al., 2011). It is important to know what the biggest problem is on the housing market in the Regio Amersfoort as this decides what kind of measures are to be taken. Dealing with demographic changes are possibly dealt with differently than the consequences of the financial crisis.
- What is the role your organisation on the housing market?

In current regional planning, clear hierarchies with a governmental institution at the top is not that common anymore (Harrison, 2006; Kantor, 2008; Semain, 2016). Boundaries have become fuzzy and the role of governmental institutions less obvious (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). To get insight in the various roles within the region, this question is discussed.
- To what extent do you experience privatisation on the housing market and has the monopoly position of municipalities changed?

Processes of privatisation and deregulation in the public sector has given more space for private and non-governmental actors to participate in spatial planning and housing developments as well (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014; Kantor, 2006). This has changed to position of municipalities on the housing market. Because these processes have been occurring during the last two decades, it is relevant to know to what extent involved actors recognise this.

Measures

- In what way is regional planning of added value?

Regional cooperation can result in vertically synchronised policies which are less likely to clash with each other (Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). This can eventually also lead to more balanced housing stocks for the region. Additionally, municipalities and societies can profit from the borrowed-size effect (Burger et al., 2014). It is relevant to know what private parties think about the added value of regional planning.
- What type of cooperation is most effective in current times?

Regional cooperation can take place in various degrees and forms (Feijel et al., 2013; Harrison, 2007; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). Exchange of information can take place, as well as the implementation of a regional strategic policy document. Whether this occurs in a horizontal or in more vertical (governmental) structures, affects the type of cooperation (Feiock, 2009; Harrison, 2007; Sagan, 2009). It is therefore relevant to know what type of cooperation private parties regard as most effective.

- To what extent do you think regional authorities should take over responsibilities from the province or municipalities?

The role of political leadership in regional cooperation is of importance (Feiock, 2009; Saga, 2009; Scott, 2001). Regional authorities are able to balance interests of the various actors and can make sure everyone is heard. These authorities can take over responsibilities of other governmental institutions, but existing governmental institutions can also maintain their autonomy (Feiock, 2009). The outcome affects the structure of regional cooperation and it is therefore of relevance to what how private parties think about this.

Obstacles

- What are regularly perceived obstacles when tackling housing shortages on a regional scale?
Several obstacles can be pointed out when regionally approaching the housing market (Basolo & Hastings, 2003; Feiock, 2009; Kantor, 2006; Mashaw, 2006; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). Cooperation within the Regio Amersfoort probably also faces such obstacles.
- Have you experienced the aftermath of the financial crisis and/or strategies implemented during that period of time?

During the financial crisis multiple strategies have been implemented by the Dutch government which make it harder to realise new housing development, for instance the Landlord Levy and the *Ladder of Sustainable Urbanisation* (Hoekstra, 2017; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). Such restrictive policies make new housing development hard to realise. The extent to which the Regio Amersfoort is still affected by these measures and the financial crisis, influences the opportunities to tackle the housing shortages.

Solutions

- What is the role of your organisation in solving regional housing shortages?
Deregulation and horizontal governance structures have given space for a more diverse field of actors involved in solving regional housing shortages (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014; Feiock, 2009; Kantor, 2006). Private parties have a role in increasing the building capacity, in cooperation with municipalities and other governmental institutions. It is necessary to know how they perceive their own role in solving the issue.
- How do you perceive the role of regional cooperation on the housing market to tackle the housing shortages?
Regional cooperation has some benefits and can be implemented in various degrees (Burger et al., 2014; Feijel et al., 2013; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017). The importance of regional cooperation within the city-region is rising (Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). In current times of peaking housing shortages, it is of importance to know how private actors think about the role of regional cooperation to tackle housing shortages.
- What has to be done to decrease housing shortages?
Several solutions have been discussed in literature to increase housing stock and decrease shortages on the housing market (Broitman & Koomen, 2015; Haase et al., 2013; Ye et al., 2005). The Regio Amersfoort also has to come up with solutions in order to tackle their housing shortages.
- How effective do you think the regional approach is to tackle housing shortages?
Regional cooperation should help municipalities to balance their housing stock and fight housing shortages in times of high housing shortages and privatisation

(Boelhouver & Priemus, 2014; Kang & Groetelaers, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). Whether the municipalities within the Regio Amersfoort view the regional approach the same way, highly depends the potential success of it.

