

The rise and escalation of a multi-layered conflict in spatial planning

A land-use conflict between the national, provincial and municipal government:
a renewable energy landscape or housing development?

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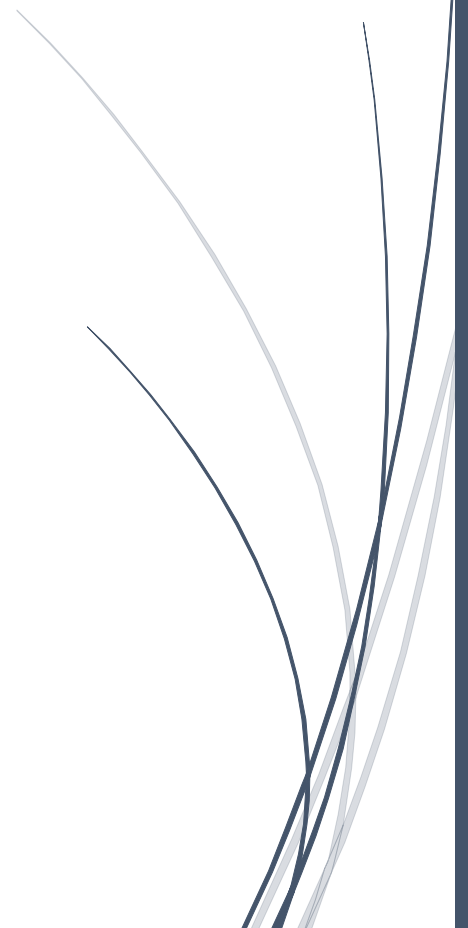
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Preface

Hereby I present the thesis that I wrote for the completion of the Master's programme Spatial Planning at Utrecht University.

I want to thank my supervisor Martijn van den Hurk for the support and feedback that he provided during the writing process of my thesis. As a result of the supervision, I was able to develop the thesis and my personal skills on researching and writing to a higher level.

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Summary

Over the past few decades, a shift from government to governance took place in spatial planning. Generally, this meant the decrease of national involvement and national tasks that shifted towards the provincial and municipal governments. A land-use conflict between the three governmental actors in Rijnenburg however, showed that the national government is still able to be a major actors in local spatial planning when it does not agree with regional and local policy. Rijnenburg was first designated for housing development, until the Province and Municipality of Utrecht shifted to a vision of an energy landscape. This conflicted with the national housing vision that already existed for several decades. The threat of a national intervention in this local decision-making process of Rijnenburg, led to the research objective to find out how the rise and escalation of such a multi-layered governance conflict in spatial planning can be explained.

Through the use of the theoretical approaches of governance and three phases of conflict, the research was operationalised. The research was conducted through desk-research which included policy and document analyses from various governmental and non-governmental sources. The rise and escalation of a land-use conflict in multi-layered governance was eventually explained by a confluence of events, policies and decisions. The research showed that the decentralisation in spatial planning created policy-making freedom which enabled the lower governments to deviate from existing national policy. Subsequently, conflict arose because the governments had substantively conflicting visions. At the same time, this substantive conflict escalated because the governments also had directly opposite views on the short and long-term implementation of their visions. The conflict then further escalated because, instead of solving the conflict through extensive discussion and consultation, unorganised and unclear communication took place between the governments. This resulted in misinterpretations and unclear views of each other's visions and intentions. Therefore, finding a solution became increasingly difficult. In the end, the conflict was solved because the national government renounced from intervening and it agreed that housing was unfeasible in the short term. On top of that, the Municipality of Utrecht officially committed to housing in Rijnenburg in the long term.

Keywords: Multi-layered governance conflict, land-use planning, housing development, energy landscape, intervention, conflict escalation.

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1. Introduction

Spatial planning in The Netherlands is facing two major objectives that will require great amounts of attention in the upcoming decennia. These are the energy transition towards sustainable sources and the construction of houses to mitigate the housing shortage. Therefore, the region of Utrecht is facing the task of building 100.000 additional houses within the upcoming 20 years (Koop, 2020). On top of this objective, the Province of Utrecht has to plan the energy transition. The province aims to sustainably generate all the required energy for the region by the year 2040 (Provincie Utrecht, n.d.-a). To contribute to these goals, the Municipality and Province of Utrecht planned to build solar panels and wind turbines in the Rijnenburg polder (Gemeente Utrecht, 2020). However, a contradictory decision from the national government put these plans in doubt. The national government wanted to force the municipality to build 25.000 houses in the Rijnenburg polder instead of the solar panels and wind turbines (RTV Utrecht, 2020a). The former Minister of the Interior stated 'we no longer want to wait for decision-making. If this does not happen on the local and regional level, it will be done at the national level' (DUIC, 2020). This was the start of a multi-layered governance planning conflict between the three levels of government. Such an intervention of the national government in a lower decentralised level of authority is rare in current Dutch spatial planning. According to a professor in housing systems, 'this intervention of the national government could be seen as an undermining of the local democracy, which should be undesirable' (DUIC, 2020). If the national government would indeed intervene, the representative of the Province of Utrecht, expected that the collaboration between national and lower governments would be under pressure and that it could cause long-term frustrations between the different levels of the government (DUIC, 2020).

According to the constitution, the government as a whole is responsible for taking care of the liveability of the country and protecting and improving the living environment. These responsibilities are spread out across the national, provincial and municipal governments. The national government has the task to offer the lower governments a policy framework in which they can operate. Besides that, the national government is responsible for national interests such as strengthening the economy, infrastructure, protection of, and against water, culture and nature. The municipality works within this framework and is considered to be the most important governmental actors regarding spatial planning. The municipality has the rights to assign lands a specific land-use purpose and is responsible for housing and business areas. The role of the province lies in between those of the national government and the municipality. The province mainly implements landscape policies and acts in areas that are too local for the national government and too large for a municipality. As a result of the overarching policies and overlapping areas of influence, the three levels have overlapping fields of interest and are required to work together (Spit & Zoete, 2016; Rijksoverheid, n.d.).

It is therefore rare that the national government intervenes in a policy domain that is typically assigned to the local government. It is especially remarkable since spatial planning has developed towards decentralisation over the last two decades. Generally, the national government should have become less prominent and influential in this regard. They do however have some tools at hand that can be applied when national interests are at stake (Bruinsma & Koomen, 2018). In the *Structuurvisie Infrastructuur en Ruimte*, the national government envisioned how they wanted to further decentralise spatial planning. This meant that citizens, businesses, municipalities and provinces got more responsibilities within their own expertise and local environment. This clearly showed the minimalisation of national government involvement in spatial planning (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, 2012). The mentality in Dutch spatial planning was therefore described as 'decentralised if possible, centralised when needed' (Spit & Zoete, 2016).

1.1 Research objective and research question

The case of Rijnenburg shows that conflict can occur between different levels of governments in spatial planning. Therefore, the aim of the research is to understand how and why such multi-layered conflicts in spatial planning arise and escalate. To achieve this objective, the following main research question was formulated:

- *How can we explain the rise and escalation of multi-layered governance conflicts in spatial planning based on the land-use conflict in Rijnenburg?*

The research aims achieve the main research objective by exploring how the governmental actors have been involved in the planning process of Rijnenburg. This aims to gain insights in how the extent of governmental involvement affected the rise and escalation of conflict. Next to that, the course of the conflict in Rijnenburg will be explored by looking at how the conflict developed over time. This has led to the following two sub-questions:

- *How and to what extent are the national, regional and local governments involved in the planning process of Rijnenburg?*
- *How can the phases of the conflict development be recognised in the planning process of Rijnenburg?*

The first sub-question involves the exploration of the applied administrative planning tools and formal tasks of the three governmental actors in spatial planning. The second sub-question applies the findings from the literature study to the case of Rijnenburg and aims to discover how the conflict has developed according to the theoretical concept of conflict phases.

1.2 Societal relevance

Current governance processes are often complex because of the large number of actors that are involved. Due to decentralisation, local governments have become increasingly important in spatial planning (Bruinsma & Koomen, 2018). However, the conflict of land-use planning in the Rijnenburg polder has shown that this is not inherently true and that the national government could still apply its' overruling administrative tools. Research towards a conflict between different governmental levels can identify different strategies to deal with the governmental complexities of spatial planning. This may determine how far a national government should go with their interventions in spatial planning and whether this is desirable. As a result, the different levels of government could reconsider their role in spatial planning and land-use policies. This can then lead to the improvement of the planning process which may result in better overall outcomes.

Next to that, a study towards conflict in spatial planning can be meaningful because conflict can have significant effects on a planning process. As a result of conflict, the course and outcome of a planning process are affected. First of all, due to disagreement between actors, conflict leads to an increase of negotiations time or the stagnation of a planning process. As a result, the process will be delayed since consensus can be hard to achieve. This is mainly caused by the large number of participating actors with differing interests (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012). When actors are not willing to make compromises, a conflict remains unsolved. In that case, no decisions are made which can result in the ongoing postponement of decision-making or the implementation of temporal solutions (Maruani & Amit-Cohen, 2007; Qviström, 2008). Due to the delay in decision-making, investors may lose their interest in a certain project, which can subsequently cause more delay and complicate the eventual implementation (Morphet, 2010). These consequences of conflict should be considered by all participating actors in a planning process. With the knowledge of how conflict arises and escalates, the course of a conflict might be more effectively dealt with. As argued by Wolf and Van Dooren (2017),

conflict can be of value in a planning process due to its problem solving capabilities. This does however need to be accepted and correctly managed to achieve this valuable outcome.

1.3 Scientific relevance

The existing literature on governance already includes a wide range of issues in multi-level governance. These articles range from governance challenges in domains such as politics, economics and climate change (Bache & Flinders, 2004; Daniell & Kay, 2018; Betsill & Bulkeley, 2006). With the objective to better understand the rise and escalation of a multi-layered conflict in the planning process, this study aims to gain insights in the operation of the mechanism behind this process. Traditionally, the spatial planning tasks of a national government encompass economy, infrastructure, culture and nature (Spit & Zoete, 2016). A local housing development project does not directly fit in these national tasks. Therefore, this research focusses on a rare case where a national government does aim to interfere in a local planning process. This will generate knowledge on why and how a national governments can get closely involved in local planning practices. The knowledge from the research can help planners to better understand and work with the complexities of a multi-layered planning process or conflict. Lastly, this research can add to the perspective that conflict in spatial planning can have positive effects, even though conflict is generally assumed to be negative. As addressed by Wolf and Van Dooren (2017), there could be value in conflict since conflict can foster creativity and it shows that democratic engagement is possible.

1.4 Thesis outline

The second chapter of this thesis consists of a theoretical framework which provides an overview of the existing scientific knowledge and relevant theoretical concepts of this study. The third chapter contains the explanation of the chosen research methods and provides an overview of how the research was conducted. The fourth and fifth chapter present the results that have been obtained during the research. In the sixth chapter, the research is concluded by answering the main research question. This is followed by a reflection on the research and the theoretical and practical implications.

2. Theoretical framework

This theoretical chapter serves as the scientific basis of the research. In order to get a better understanding of the theoretical concepts that have been used in this research, the first part of this chapter focusses on governance and how this concept applies to spatial planning. Thereafter, the literature about the development of conflict in spatial planning is explored. Lastly, this chapter presents an overview of the available governmental planning tools. The most important concepts from this chapter are presented in the conceptual framework.

2.1 Defining governance

The concept of governance encompasses all processes of collectively trying to solve a societal problem. This includes hierarchical and non-hierarchical actors which means governments, institutions, markets, networks and civil society. As stated by Stoker (1998), 'the value of the governance perspective rests in its' capacity to provide a framework for understanding changing processes of governing'. There are multiple researchers, scholars and institutions that define the concept of governance in a different way or find it difficult to come to one comprehensive definition (Kaufmann & Kraay, 2008). Despite these debates about the various meanings of the concept, there are definitions that allow governance to be usefully exploited as an analytical concept. In this research the definition of Rhodes (2007) is chosen since it fits best to the actors-oriented view of this research:

Interdependence between organisations. Governance is broader than government, covering non-state actors. Changing the boundaries of the state meant the boundaries between public, private and voluntary sectors became shifting and opaque. With continuing interactions between network members, caused by the need to exchange resources and negotiate shared purposes. Although the state does not occupy a privileged, sovereign position, it can indirectly and imperfectly steer networks. (p. 1246)

Spatial planning is considered to be strongly linked to governance. It is understood as 'the process of decision-making in a society on the use of land, based on assessing and balancing competing demands' (Nuissl & Heinrichs, 2011). Governance functions as a conceptual framework for the empirical analysis of spatial planning. It allows to see spatial planning in a wider societal context. Spatial planning of the last few decades is inherently connected to cross-sectoral and participatory practices. The concept of governance can be used to understand the complexity of these processes that deal with a wide range of actors, interests, resources, norms, values and power relations. This view on spatial planning moves away from the traditional view of solely being an activity of plan-making. Through governance, spatial planning can be seen as a societal process with the focus on plan and decision-making processes (Schmitt & Wiechmann, 2018).

Besides the general concept of governance, this research specifically explores the planning process of Rijnenburg through a multi-layered form of governance. Two types of multi-level governance have been identified by Hooghe and Marks (2010). The first describes the increase of decision-making power of public/private networks. The second type encompasses the spread of formal authority from the national government towards higher and lower governments. The authority is however not strictly separated between the different levels of government, which allows the governments to have overlapping jurisdictions. This research uses the second approach to multi-level governance, with a specific view on the spread of authority between national, provincial and municipal governments. In this system national policies trickle down through these three levels of government. The province functions as a bridge between national and local policy implementation. It also tackles tasks that are too local for the state, and tasks that are too extensive for municipalities. The municipality focusses on its' local environment, which enables them to serve local interests with local knowledge (Hooghe & Marks, 2010; Van Straalen & Witte, 2018).

2.2 The shift from government to governance

Since this research explores how a national government got closely involved in the planning process of lower governments, this part of the theoretical chapter takes a look at how the role of the national government in spatial planning has changed over the past few decades. This is relevant since it offers context to the shifting relations between national and lower governments.

2.2.1 Spatial planning before governance

Traditionally, the national government was at the top of the institutional hierarchy. This hierarchy meant that the national government was governing from a top-down perspective. Decisions, visions, policies and plans were developed at the hierarchical top (Bevir, 2008). This top-down approach can be associated with strategic planning. It was around the 1960s that strategic planning started to occur in national governments in Europe and abroad. The main reason for this rise, was that governments were starting to take a pro-active role in realising a welfare state (Salet & Faludi, 2000). This was initiated by increasing urbanisation and rapid population growth. To manage these changes, strategic land-use planning was required by the national government. Their task was to ensure the quality of life and provide guarantees in cases where the market would fail. An example of such a task is the development of large infrastructural projects or the provision of sufficient, accessible and good quality housing (Olesen, 2014; Olsson, 1991).

Over time, spatial planning became very present in the evolution of strategic planning. The first reason for this entanglement is that there was a common desire to maintain the harmony of the spatial environment. Next to that, the longevity of large spatial projects forced planners to have long-term visions. Such a planning process consisted of preparation, implementation and evaluation, this could take ten to twenty years to complete. In order to manage this process, strategic planning was often applied. Another reason for the strategic approach in spatial planning was found in the variable circumstances and broad character of spatial policies and planning. The management of a multitude of social, economic and political disciplines became more efficient through the use of strategic planning (Salet & Faludi, 2000).

2.2.2 The shift to governance

Many scholars have identified several changes in governing. First, national governments were challenged with increasing social complexities and the strength of collective interest organisations. Besides that, due to poor economic performance of the state and economic crises, societal support for national governments decreased, which led to more neoliberal political preferences (Pierre, 2000; Scholte, 2005). Another reason for the decreasing role of national government is found in globalisation. People, markets and organisations became able to have closer connections in which distance became irrelevant. The interconnectedness enabled a global economy, which connected markets and financial systems. This went hand in hand with the ongoing development of neoliberalism (Chhotray & Stoker, 2009). Ongoing democratisation also contributed to the shift towards governance. The presence of democracy is essential for governance to exist, because it offers the conditions that make collaboration, participation and discussion possible. As a result, actors from governmental and societal levels are able to work together (Mayntz, 2017). The presence of democracy induced and allowed for more public and private stakeholders to participate in decision-making processes, which contributed to more inclusive governance practices (Chhotray & Stoker, 2009).

On the other hand, Peters and Pierre (2006) argue that the national government remained a relevant actor. It has however seen many changes in the form of the rise of institutional, non-governmental and societal actors (Peters & Pierre, 2006; Jessop, 2013). Mayntz (2017), does not describe it as the loss of the national government, but as the combination of the government and society. The national

government still plays a significant role in policy and decision-making; however, it now has a more facilitative and steering role while still being able to act as a major actor (Jessop, 2013; Mayntz, 2017; Peters & Pierre, 2006). According to Lange, Driessen, Sauer, Bornemann and Burger (2013), the role of the state is not fixed, it can differ between the two extremes of state intervention and societal autonomy. This research offers an opportunity to explore the role of the Dutch national government in the specific case of a land-use conflict in Rijnenburg.

2.3 Understanding conflict in spatial planning

To understand conflict in spatial planning, the following part of this chapter focusses on how and why conflict arises and escalates. First, the interest perspective on conflict is explored. Next to that, the development and escalation of conflict in a planning process is explored and divided into three phases according to the framework of Wolf and Van Dooren (2017). These phases can help to understand and analyse the course of a spatial planning conflict.

2.3.1 Conflict of interest

Wolf and Van Dooren (2017), address that there are multiple methods to analyse policy conflicts. They offer the interest perspective as the most common view on policy conflict. Decision-making or the lack of decision-making is often explained by the presence of a network of interests in which politicians are entangled. There can be a wide range of interests among different actors. Interests can for instance be financially or politically grounded. Next to that, actors can defend their personal interests or try to prevent reputational damage. By examining where the different interests lie, and where they clash, conflict can be better understood. A conflict of interest is seen as a complex process since modern planning processes are highly diverse and variable in terms of the actors and their interests. On top of that, decision and policy-making is a time-consuming process which means that actors and interests will change during the course of the process. This means that planners continuously have to adapt to these changing conditions. As a result, planners are not always able to serve and ensure all interests during a planning process (Wolf & Van Dooren, 2017).

2.3.2 The escalation of conflict

Next to the rise of a spatial planning conflict, the course and escalation of a conflict has been separated into a framework of three different phases by Wolf and Van Dooren (2017). These three are about the policy content, the plan-making process and distrust.

Policy content

The first phase is about the content of policy. Here, the question is how the main actors frame a plan-making or policy objective. For instance, is the problem about economics, mobility, liveability or public health? When different actors in the same planning process have differing visions on the planning and policy objective, the conflict will grow since the actors will then strive to prove their own vision. If this goes on, actors will start to lose trust in each other if they do not understand each other's visions. In an attempt to convince others of their visions, actors can start a competition of providing evidence in order to prove themselves right (Wolf & Van Dooren, 2017). This conflict escalates when the process of ongoing discussions and dialogue between actors stagnates or when actors are excluded from the decision-making process. Compromises and continuous negotiation are needed in order to prevent total failure of the planning process. It can become an irresolvable problem when there is no space for compromises (Chhotray & Stoker, 2009)

Plan-making process

The second phase of conflict contains the policy and plan-making processes as the cause for escalation. This conflict phase is about the difference in the view that actors have on the time framing of a decision-making process. When a planning process is delayed, the urge to come to a final decision will

grow among actors. The urge of decision-making can however raise suspicion since some believe that decisions should not be taken under pressure. Some actors may want the process to go faster, while others desire a slower process because the decisions that are made can have long-term effects. In case of conflicting timeframes between actors, the plan-making process itself, becomes part of the conflict. When time is considered unambiguous and there is no tolerance for other time perspectives, conflicting timeframes are quickly seen as an attack on the opposing actor. Slowing down the planning process is then seen as an obstruction. Instead of understanding the time framing from the perspective of the other, timeframes are often only understood from one's own perspective. This results in an escalation from the content of policy, towards a conflict about the course of the planning process. A conflict about the planning process can subsequently result in problematic dialogue since actors lose trust in each other and the overall integrity of the planning process (Wolf & Van Dooren, 2017).

Distrust

The third phase contains distrust as the next step in the escalation of a conflict. Here, actors form an image of each other in which they interpret the intentions of participating actors. This process of trust erosion takes place when actors have different expectation of each other's intentions and visions. The erosion of trust can thus occur as a result of substantive conflict of policy content or as a result of procedural conflict. The conflict escalates when actors distrust each other's intentions to such an extent that they interpret them cynically. This was recognised in the research case of Wolf and Van Dooren (2017) about a delayed infrastructural project in Antwerpen. Here, time pressure was used by the government as an argument to speed up decision-making. This however raised suspicion among local actors since they sensed that the government was trying to finish the plan by forcing it through. Next to that, a lack of interrelation connections between actors can be a cause of distrust. This unfamiliarity can lead to misunderstandings and conflict that precede substantive issues. In this case, a conflict moves beyond the content and course of the planning process and turns towards a personal or relational conflict (Wolf & Van Dooren, 2017).

In case of a relational conflict of distrust, actors often view each other in 'us' and 'them'. Actors then focus on defeating each other instead of solving the conflict. Such a relational conflict complicates all interaction, and good intentions become unnoticed. As a result, it becomes harder to solve a conflict and the relation between actors can be permanently damaged. This process of trust erosion develops over time, due to ongoing uncooperative behaviour and failing negotiations. Next to that, policymakers often present their solution as the only best option, which further erodes trust since other actors become suspicious about how policies were made (Wolf & Van Dooren, 2017; Wolf & Van Dooren, 2021).

2.2.3 The value of conflict

Even though conflict seems to have many negative effects on a planning process, this is not necessarily true. In the first place, the fact that a conflict can arise shows that there is opportunity for democratic participation and discussion with other actors. This means that stakeholders can stand up for what they envision to be good or desirable planning and policy. To achieve this positive outcome of conflict, it should however be correctly managed. Next to that, conflict can contribute to creativity. Due to the multitude of perspectives from different actors, tunnel vision is prevented. As a result of the friction between actors, creative plans will rise that may solve the disagreement. When actors do indeed come to a comprehensive solution to the conflict, plans regularly turn out to be better than the original plan. Afterwards, the initial plans often turn out to be one-dimensional. According to Wolf and Van Dooren (2017), it is important to take conflict and resistance from other actors seriously. In this view on conflict, ignoring these signals is not considered to be an option, conflict and resistance should be given a place in a planning process (Wolf & Van Dooren, 2017).

2.4 Governmental planning tools

As discussed before, the role of the national government in spatial planning has changed. Power and control have been distributed across national, provincial and municipal governments, which is recognised in the multi-level governance approach. Therefore, this part of the theoretical framework presents an overview of the planning tools that can be used by the three governments in spatial planning. This theory is used to analyse how and which planning tools have been applied by the three governmental actors in Rijnenburg.

2.4.1 National and provincial government

The national, provincial and municipal government work together, but also have their own spatial planning visions and strategies. The overarching spatial law is the '*Wet ruimtelijke ordening (Wro)*' or Spatial Plan Act. All governmental levels form their spatial policies according to this national policy framework. The administrative authorities and tools of the national and provincial government are very similar; therefore, they are described together. Just as the municipal structural visions, those of the province and national government are not binding and are purely indicative. The visionary document of the province should contain a general course of planned developments and policies that are to be carried out within the province's territory. This should also include a strategy to implement these plans. This can be done through provincial integration plans or private law instruments. During the development of these plans, the province is expected to take the national visions into account (Van Buuren, Nijmeijer & Robbe, 2017).

A provincial tool to affect municipal plan-making is the ability to make demands in municipal land-use planning. Through this tool, the province can prescribe general conditions and content of the municipal land-use plans. Next to that, the province can change municipal plans through different kinds of regulations that closely resemble a designations or *inpassingsplan*. This comes down to several methods where the province can adjust municipal land-use plans and purposes. These are applied when there are greater stakes at risk and when even better spatial planning outcomes can be achieved by doing so (Van Buuren, Nijmeijer & Robbe, 2017).

The national government is obliged to establish one or multiple structural visions for the whole country with an aim for good national spatial planning outcomes. The minister in charge of the vision must outline the general vision for the intended area and how plans have to be achieved. The national government should also consult the lower governments about the development of the structural vision. Since the national structural vision is a guideline for lower governments, the national government is able to intervene when a lower government deviates from these guidelines. A tool that is used is the '*inpassingsplan*'. This tool can be used by both the national and provincial government to change and designate the land-use plan of a certain location. In that case, the municipality will no longer be able to decide by itself (Van Buuren, Nijmeijer & Robbe, 2017).

Next to the *inpassingsplan*, the national government and province have several other tools at their disposal to intervene in municipal decision-making. Not all of these tools are binding, for instance the proactive designation or '*proactieve aanwijzing*'. This is used to offer a municipality a certain advice or suggestion. The *inpassingsplan* is an example of a binding tool, as well as the reactive designation or '*reactieve aanwijzing*'. This is to prevent a municipal land-use plan from coming into force. Even though the national government and province are able to use these tools, they are cautious with intervening in the municipal authority. The possession of these tools or threatening to use them is often already effective (Van Buuren, Nijmeijer & Robbe, 2017).

2.4.2 Municipality

According to the Wro, all municipalities have to establish their own structural vision(s). In this document, the municipality describes the main spatial policies that it wants to carry out. With these plans, the municipality is expected to take the provincial visions into consideration. The vision must also contain how these spatial policies will be implemented and achieved, for instance through what administrative or private powers. Next to that, the structural vision contains sectoral policies such as housing, leisure or public transport. These can be separated into multiple overlapping visionary document or combined in one. Even though all municipalities must establish structural visions, they are not binding, but have a indicative meaning (Van Buuren, Nijmeijer & Robbe, 2017).

Besides the structural visions, the municipality also establishes land-use plans, which is one of its' most important tools. The land-use plan functions as a planning, development and standardisation tool. It aims to describe the expected spatial developments and which developments are desirable for a specific location. When a certain land-use purpose such a housing or business area is assigned to a piece of land, it only allows for, and promotes future developments towards these purposes. The land-use plan is a legally binding tool for both governmental and public/private plans. If desired and approved, the municipality can change the land-use plan to a different purpose. There are however many conditions that an application must meet before the land-use purpose can be changed (Van Buuren, Nijmeijer & Robbe, 2017).

2.5 Conceptual framework

The following conceptual framework summarises the main findings from the theoretical framework. First of all, based on the theory on the shift to governance, it is expected to see a decreasing role of the national government in spatial planning. Secondly, the conceptual framework presents the expected interrelation between phases of conflict that will explain the rise and escalation of a multi-layered governance conflict. shows the conflict of interests approach as a common perspective to analyse spatial planning conflicts and an overarching cause for conflict. The conflict-of-interest approach is expected to be an applicable perspective that can be used to explain the rise of the conflict.

Next to that, the three phases of conflict from Wolf and Van Dooren (2017) are expected to explain the rise and escalation of conflict. The policy content involves the substantive differences on policy between the national, regional and local government. In the plan-making process, the focus lies on the course of the planning process. Here, differing vision on time-frames, decision-making and participation are expected to play a role in the conflict. The final phase of distrust is expected to be recognised in the fact that the conflict moved beyond the substantive policy content and the course of the planning process. Following the theory, it is expected that distrust arose as a result of misinterpreted intentions and the national threat of an intervention in local decision-making.

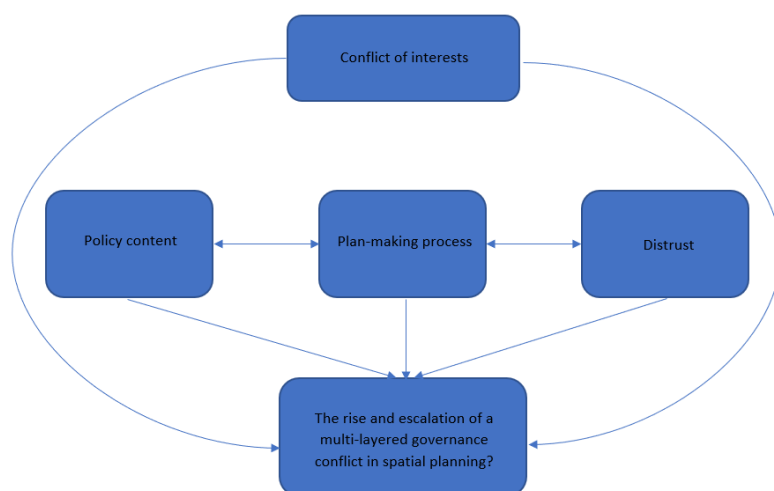


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

3. Methodology

This chapter presents the chosen research methods and how data was collected. Next to that, the main concepts from the theoretical framework are operationalised in order to be applied in the researching process. Finally, the ethics, validity and reliability of the research and data are discussed.

3.1 Research method

In order to answer the main research question: *How can we explain the rise and escalation of multi-layered governance conflicts in spatial planning based on the land-use conflict in Rijnenburg?*, qualitative research methods have been chosen. This approach was chosen since the research aimed to understand how conflicts in spatial planning arise and escalate. In order to gain these insight, qualitative research fitted best since it was able to explore the decisions, motivations and visions of actors. Next to that, qualitative research enabled the research to gain insights and understanding of the complexity of a spatial planning process (Bryman, 2016).

Desk research

The qualitative research was carried out through desk research and document analyses specifically. This involved analysing both governmental and non-governmental documents and articles. This approach was taken since documents contain substantive content and can provide insights in the goals and objectives of the governmental actors. For instance, data from national, provincial and municipal meetings, discussions, communication and conferences are widely available. These are actively and accurately summarised and written down in various public documents. Analysing these documents was a time efficient research method since the data only had to be selected, instead of collected. Moreover, the documents were easily available without any direct interaction with actors, stakeholders or writers. For instance, retrieving data about a municipal structural vision from their own document was more efficient than conducting a full interview with a municipal employee (Bowen, 2009). Besides that, documents were able to provide data from any point in time. Since the conflict in Rijnenburg had been developing over several years, older documents have been analysed to provide relevant data from the past. In this way, document and articles were more reliable than the memory of a potential respondent. Therefore, desk research was chosen as the most efficient and reliable method to collect the necessary data to answer the sub and main research questions.

The sources that have been analysed during the research consisted of national, provincial and municipal policy and visionary documents and internal communication. On top of that, newspaper articles and other online articles have been used to collect complete and diverse data for the research. The policy and visionary documents were used to get an overview of the existing spatial policies and future plans for the Rijnenburg polder. The analysis of these documents aimed to gain valuable data on governmental tasks in spatial planning and the administrative relations between the three governments and how these evolved over time. The variety of articles that have been used, were added to widen the vision on the conflict. In this way, the data did not only consist of governmental sources. These articles aimed to gain insights into both governmental and non-governmental opinions and discussions that arose during the conflict.

Case study

The research consisted of a single case study of a land-use planning conflict in the Rijnenburg polder in Utrecht. The single case study approach to the research made it possible to get a deeper understanding and overview of the multi-layered conflict between the three governments. This created the opportunity to richly describe the existence of a phenomenon. In this case, the rise and escalation of a conflict and the close involvement of the national government in the land-use planning in the Rijnenburg polder. Unlike the use of a multiple case study, a single case study does not have

other direct cases to compare the data to. This is however compensated by comparing the new data from this research with existing literature and data (Gustafsson, 2017).

The area of Rijnenburg is located in-between two major highways in Utrecht. It lies between the A2 to the North and A12 to the East, which can be seen in Figure 2. This image also shows the outline of the area and which parts of this location are suitable for spatial development. The Rijnenburg polder is the only undeveloped location surrounding the A2 and A12 junction. The other corners around the junction have already been occupied by Leidsche Rijn, Vleuten, De Meern, Nieuwegein and the city of Utrecht itself. Rijnenburg currently has 254 inhabitants and there are 88 houses. The growth expectations are 277 inhabitants by 2040. Without any developing plans, the area is not expected to significantly grow in terms of housing (Gemeente Utrecht, 2022).

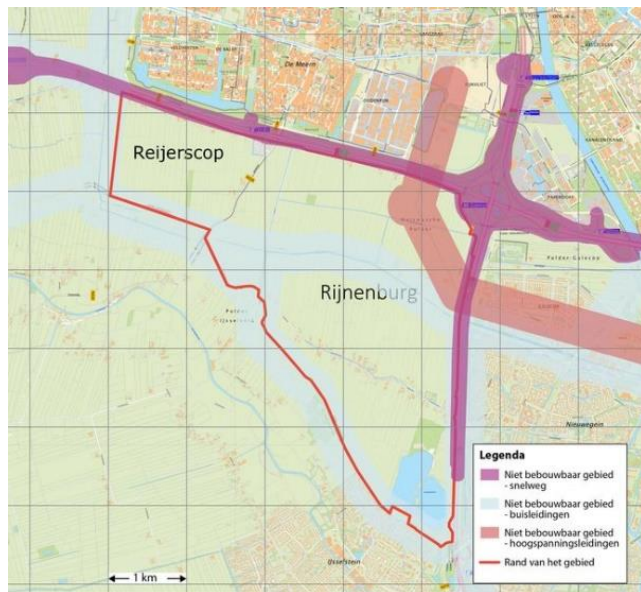


Figure 2 Outline of Rijnenburg. Source: Gemeente Utrecht

3.2 Data collection

Desk research

During the desk research, a wide variety of document and articles have been analysed. To simplify the selection process of governmental documents, the search function of governmental databases for data logs was used to find documents related to 'Rijnenburg'. Within these documents the term 'Rijnenburg' was searched again to find the chapters or sections that included the subject. This was done in all documents and articles that were not solely about Rijnenburg. Next to this strategy, newspaper articles were analysed to retrieve data. These have been selected by searching for 'Rijnenburg' on Google, which resulted in a variety of articles. The articles subsequently provided non-governmental, external and diverse data since these were not strictly focussed on official governmental policy and visions. In contrast to the governmental documents, the articles were able to offer discussions and opinions about Rijnenburg, which were not found in policy or visionary documents. In total, 39 sources were used throughout the analysis in Chapter 4 and 5. From these 39 sources, 30 were governmental and nine were news and opinion articles. Table 1 presents an overview of the number and type of governmental sources.

Type of source	National government	Province of Utrecht	Municipality of Utrecht	Collaborative	Total
Visionary or policy document	10	4	2	1	17
Letters	2	1	2	-	5
Governmental website	1	1	4	-	6

Research commissioned by the government	1	-	1	-	2
	14	6	9	1	30

Table 1 Overview of governmental sources

Operationalisation

The operationalisation is based on the findings from the theoretical framework and functioned as a guideline to collect and analyse data. Besides that, the operationalisation has been used as a checklist to discover which of the theoretical concepts were recognised in the case study of Rijnenburg. To optimally operationalise the theory, two separate tables were made. This is in line with the two sub-questions. The first sub-question: *How and to what extent are the national, regional and local governments involved in the planning process of Rijnenburg?*, connects to the first operationalisation table since it aimed to explore the involvement of the three governments in the planning process of Rijnenburg through a theoretical lens of governance. The involvement of the governments was measured by looking at since when the actors were involved, which planning tools they have applied and which tasks were assigned to which actors.

Theoretical concept	Definition	Indicators
Governance	For spatial planning, the concept of governance can be used to understand the complexity of planning processes that deal with a wide range of actors, interests, resources, norms, values and power relations.	<p>Which governmental actors are involved in the planning process?</p> <p>Since when is each actor involved in the planning process?</p> <p>What planning tools have been applied?</p> <p>Which tasks are assigned between governments?</p>

Table 2 First operationalisation: Governance

The operationalisation of the second sub-question: *How can the phases of conflict development be recognised in the planning process of Rijnenburg?*, is based on the phases of conflict from Wolf and Van Dooren (2017). The second operationalisation is an analytical framework that was used to guide the analysis conflict in Rijnenburg. Multiple indicators for the different phases of conflict can be seen in Table 3.

In order to keep the data clear and organised, the research took a specific look at three chosen years in which the operationalisation of the conflict analysis was applied. The chosen years were 2010, 2016 and 2022. This strategy enabled an in-depth analysis of the conflict development and escalation. Next to that, the comparison of the data became clearer since the three moments in time were easier to compare than a continuous planning process over several decades. In case there were no documents or visions available from the exact chosen year, the most recent documents have been used.

The strategy to use three chosen years was not applied to the first operationalisation. This allowed for a more broad analysis over the governance process. This approach fitted the first sub-question since it seeks to find broader data over a longer period of time. On the other hand, the second sub-questions aims to discover the meaning and reasons behind choices and policy with a more in-depth approach, which does fit the strategy of analysing the planning process in 2010, 2016 and 2022.

Phase of conflict	Definition	Indicators
Policy content	A conflict between actors with different visions about planning and policy content and objectives	<p>What are the main planning and policy objectives in the actors' visions?:</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economics • Mobility • Liveability • Sustainability • International competition <p>Which substantive differences can be noted between visions?</p> <p>To what extent have the visions and policies been made in coordination with other actors?</p>
Plan-making process	A policy conflict moves beyond substantive issues. The course of the plan and decision-making process becomes part of the spatial planning conflict.	<p>Who should participate in Rijnenburg according to which actors?</p> <p>What are the differences in timeframe planning?</p> <p>What opinions have been formed on the duration of the decision-making process?</p>
Distrust	When a conflict in a spatial planning process turns into a relational conflict, which goes beyond the policy content and planning process.	<p>How did communication and dialogue between actors take place?</p> <p>What role did mutual trust play in the planning process of Rijnenburg?</p> <p>How do actors react to the input of each other?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry • Suspicion • Openly • Supportive <p>What is the actors' goal when they react to each other?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal to let other actors lose. • Goal to search for a solution.

Table 3 Second operationalisation: Phases of conflict

3.3 Research quality

Reliability

Due to the use of the framework of Wolf and Van Dooren (2017), the reliability of the research was increased. This framework was the result of existing and reviewed research that has been proven to be an applicable framework to a similar conflict case. Moreover, the use and clear categorisation of the three phases of conflict and years 2010, 2016 and 2022, made the research steps more accessible for other researchers to reproduce in future research. Besides that, the reliability was assured by systematically applying the operationalisation to each year and phase of conflict in the result chapters. In this way, the researching strategy was standardised which assured that the data was structurally collected throughout the entire researching process. This also meant that the collected data matched the topics of the research.

Validity

The collected data from document analysis can be seen as valid data. The data connected well to the main and sub-questions because the operationalisation was formulated with these questions in mind. On top of that, the use of the operationalisation ensured that the data from the analysis was useable and linked with the theory. In this way, the interconnectedness between the research questions, theory, analytical framework and data was assured. As a result, there was a main line throughout the entire research. The validity of the data is also ensured by the fact that a variety of official governmental documents have been used. By using policy and visionary documents from consecutive years and different governments, it became possible to recognise and compare the changes in policies and visions. These documents were publicly available and have been retrieved from official governmental sources. Therefore, the data can be considered as valid, since it is based on a variety of legitimate sources.

Ethics

Since this research only uses documents, articles, letters and websites, ethical issues are not at risk. The sources that have been used during the research are publicly available online, which means that all the collected data is already open to the public. Therefore, this research cannot accidentally reveal any confidential information. On top of that, actors from which quotes have been used in the result chapters, have been named by their position or the government for which they work. To find out more about the person that was quoted, the citation would now first be actively searched for online to find out from who it was. This therefore added a layer of anonymity for the persons in question.

4. Results on governance

This chapter provides the data that have been collected through the use of the first operationalisation. The chapter therefore describes the governance process of Rijnenburg by analysing which governmental actors have been involved and what policies, visions and tasks they have had in the planning process of Rijnenburg over several years.

4.1 Governmental involvement in the planning of Rijnenburg

4.1.1 Actors and their involvement

This first results chapter takes a look at how and to what extent the governmental actors have been involved in the planning process of Rijnenburg. The three governmental actors are divided in the national government, the Province of Utrecht and Municipality of Utrecht. These actors each had their own tasks and goals over the past three decennia in the spatial planning process of the Rijnenburg polder. The national government was the first actor the get involved in the planning process of Rijnenburg. This became clear in the publication of a national vision for urbanisation in 1991 (Tweede Kamer, 1991). The Province of Utrecht got involved in Rijnenburg when it developed its regional vision which was published in 2004 (Provincie Utrecht, 2004). Following on the visions of the national and provincial governments, the Municipality of Utrecht published its local vision for Rijnenburg in 2009 (Gemeente Utrecht 2009).

4.1.2 Planning tools and task distribution

National government

Vierde Nota Extra

In the *vierde nota extra* (VINEX), the national government outlined the key spatial decisions for national spatial policies till 2015. One of the central themes in this document was the national planning of urbanisation. The VINEX included the proposal of several development locations which included large-scale housing developments. As part of this, the national government chose Rijnenburg as a potential option for housing. It was however not a highly prioritised location. Multiple development locations were assigned in other major cities such as The Hague and Amsterdam. Due to these developments and the choice for housing development in different parts of Utrecht, the housing supply was expected to be sufficient beyond 2005. Therefore, Rijnenburg became irrelevant, it was however kept as an alternative option if further expansion was needed after 2005. In a later revision of the VINEX, housing development in Rijnenburg was completely cancelled. Urbanisation and housing development was no longer needed till at least 2010. The governments even agreed on a construction ban in Rijnenburg until 2010. In 2000, this ban was revisited to see whether the location should be further developed for housing (Tweede Kamer, 1991; Tweede Kamer, 1998).

When it comes to task distribution, decentralised polity was at the core of the implementation of the VINEX. The national government stated 'What is needed, is central direction and a strong national planning policy on the main lines, coupled with decentralised implementation.' (Tweede Kamer, 1991). The task to provide substantive policy for the development of Rijnenburg was therefore handed to the Province. This was further elaborated on in the provincial document *Streekplan 2005-2015* (Provincie Utrecht, 2004).

Nota Ruimte

In the next national policy document for spatial planning, the *Nota Ruimte* from 2004, development plans for Rijnenburg reincluded. In this document, that set the national vision towards 2020, Rijnenburg was named in the context of urbanisation and housing specifically. The national government commissioned research on the potential housing demand. This resulted in the scenario

that the development in Rijnenburg should provide a rural and village-like neighbourhood with 5.000 houses (Keers, Van der Reijden, Leidemeijer, Schuurman & Sprenger, 2004). The overall goal of the *Nota Ruimte* was to ensure a strong economy, a safe and liveable society and an attractive country (Tweede kamer, 2004).

To deal with these spatial challenges, a clear division of tasks was made between the national and decentralised governments. In this approach, the national government imposed less laws and rules and made room for the lower governments to act in local issues. Municipal land-use plans became central tools in this regard. Therefore, decentralisation, deregulation and focus on implementation were central. The national government stated this as ‘The state will not only regulate less from The Hague, but offer a helping hand more than before, for example by providing knowledge, with which others can make their own policy or implement policy’. This translated to Rijnenburg in the fact that the national government did not substantively specify the plans for Rijnenburg in the *Nota Ruimte*. This objective remained a task for the provincial government, which was presented in the *Streekplan 2005-2015*. The national government did however contribute to the development of Rijnenburg by removing legislative limitations through the adjustment of the border of *het Groene Hart* (the Green Heart); a protected area to conserved green open space and nature in which building is undesirable. The adjustment enabled future urban development in the Province of Utrecht since it would no longer interfere with the protected landscape (Tweede kamer, 2004).

Ontwikkelingsvisie Noordvleugel Utrecht 2015-2030

The *Ontwikkelingsvisie Noordvleugel Utrecht 2015-2030* is a regional vision from the Municipality and Province of Utrecht in which they collaborated with the national government. The establishment of this collaboration was special since the vision was about an area that is not an administrative whole. The goal of this vision was, in response to a request from the national government, to create a vision that would provide a coherent response to the complex spatial issues facing the region. These issues were concerned with housing, working, nature, water management and infrastructure. The housing goal for Rijnenburg in this vision was therefore increased to 7.000 houses by 2030 (NV, 2009).

During the development process of this vision, the national government served as a supportive actor and their *Nota Ruimte and Structuurvisie Randstad 2040* were actively used as a foundation. During the implementation of the plans from the vision, the national government’s task was to facilitate the right laws and regulation and provide land, finance and knowledge to other involved actors (NV, 2009).

Structuurvisie Randstad 2040

In the evaluation of the *Structuurvisie Randstad 2040* from 2010, the national government emphasizes on the fact that the urbanisation goals from the *Nota Ruimte* had not been reached and that it should be fulfilled in the short term. Due to the strained housing market, the housing demand in cities such as Utrecht was increasing. Rijnenburg therefore remained a non-urban expansion location for large-scale housing development. The goal of 7.000 houses in Rijnenburg also remained the same. Together with several other development locations, these project were expected to provide sufficient housing until the year 2020 (Tweede Kamer, 2010).

Structuurvisie Infrastructuur en Ruimte

In the *Structuurvisie Infrastructuur en Ruimte (SVIR)* the national government presented the spatial goals till 2028 and the long term visions till 2040. At the core of this vision was the objective to keep the country competitive, accessible, liveable and safe. The vision had no substantive content regarding the development of Rijnenburg. This can be explained by the fact that urbanisation policies became a task of the provinces and municipalities. This is recognised in the SVIR since it only refers once to the plans for Rijnenburg and it stated that the implementation section of Rijnenburg was deliberately left

out of the SVIR (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2012). The subject of Rijnenburg has since then not been included in any major national visions (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2020).

The national government aimed to achieve its vision through a strategy based on trust, clear responsibilities, simple rules and selective national involvement. In practice, this meant that provinces and municipalities were tasked with regional and local issues in which they could apply their local knowledge. Municipalities were seen as the government closest to citizens, and therefore responsible for a safe living and working environment. The provincial role was described as the mediating, overarching and connecting actor between the local and interregional domains. Next to that, the province had an active role in the solution of administrative problems of municipalities. The national government itself, wanted to focus on the competitive international position and interests that affect the country as a whole. The aim was to interfere as little as possible at the provincial and municipal levels (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2012).

Provincial government

Streekplan 2005-2015

In the *Streekplan 2005-2015* document, the Province of Utrecht presented the regional spatial vision till 2015 with a long term vision towards 2030. Quality, implementation and collaboration were central in this vision. The *Streekplan 2005-2015* was created within the policy framework of the national government. This translated to Rijnenburg in the fact that the province adopted the same plans from the *Nota Ruimte*. In its vision, the province mainly considered the objectives of water management and infrastructure in the Rijnenburg polder. The province also took the effects of the development of Rijnenburg on the surrounding urban area and nature into account (Provincie Utrecht, 2004).

The substantive planning of Rijnenburg was a joint task of the Province and Municipality of Utrecht. Collaboration with national, municipal and private actors was key to create a sustainable and attractive living environment. Within this system, the province was given a new role as a director, initiator, co-financer, coordinator and partner in spatial planning processes and projects (Provincie Utrecht, 2004).

Ontwikkelingsvisie Noordvleugel Utrecht 2015-2030

In the *Ontwikkelingsvisie Noordvleugel Utrecht 2015-2030*, the province incorporated its regional visions from the *Streekplan 2005-2015* into the new collaborative vision that looked beyond 2015. The role of the province was described as a mediating and connecting actors between a variety of both governmental and non-governmental actors. The province was responsible for the implementation of the national spatial policies. In 2008, the province asked for a research to find out whether goal of 7.000 or more houses in Rijnenburg was realistic. It was concluded that 7.000 was the maximum amount for Rijnenburg due to infrastructural limitations of the area (NV, 2009).

Provinciale Ruimtelijke Structuurvisie 2013-2028

In order to connect to the SVIR from the national government, the Province of Utrecht wrote the *Provinciale Ruimtelijke Structuurvisie 2013-2028* (PRS). Here, the province described the spatial vision of the region up to 2028. The goal of the province with this vision, was to keep Utrecht a pleasant environment to work and live. These goals rest on the objectives of a sustainable living environment, vital villages and cities and the quality of rural area. The main focus was therefore set on inner-city developments and preserving and enhancing rural areas (Provincie Utrecht, 2013).

In this vision, the province has chosen Rijnenburg as one of a limited number of potential locations for the development of wind turbines. For the implementation of wind turbines, the province addressed that they preferred locations at which there was municipal support. The wind turbines would be place

along the A12 highway within the plan area of Rijnenburg. In this plan, the vision of 7.000 houses remained, provided that the infrastructural accessibility and water management would be arranged first. Building in the Northern part of the polder can be a challenge since the area is rather low and the soil is wet, which limits the building capacity and increase the change of flooding (Provincie Utrecht, 2013).

In the document, the Province of Utrecht addresses that the governmental roles in spatial planning are shifting. As a result, a search for the right distribution of roles and tasks took place. Municipalities for example, insisted on less regulations from provincial implementation policies. The actors were therefore experimenting with task distribution and less strict regulation in spatial planning (Provincie Utrecht, 2013)

Provinciale Ruimtelijke Structuurvisie 2013-2028 (Herijking 2016)

In 2016, the Province of Utrecht published a partially revised version of the PRS. The main objectives and implementation strategies remained largely the same in this revision. The development program for housing in Rijnenburg was however cancelled. It was not expected that the 7.000 houses would be built within the short-term period of 2013 to 2028. Instead, to meet the housing demand, the housing number for inner-city development in the city of Utrecht was increased. Housing in Rijnenburg was since then kept as a potential option on the long term. Until then, to province envisioned Rijnenburg as a *pauzelandchap* (break landscape) with forms of sustainable energy generation. At the time of this revision, the internal discussions about this sustainable energy plan were still going on (Provincie Utrecht, 2016).

Omgevingsvisie Provincie Utrecht

In 2021, the Province of Utrecht published its most recent vision, the *Omgevingsvisie Provincie Utrecht*. In this vision, the province described how it wanted the Province of Utrecht to look in the year 2050. The main tasks of the province were to manage the physical environment, the growing population and ensure a good and healthy living environment for all inhabitants. To achieve this, the focus lied on combining living, working and leisure. This included tasks such as housing, infrastructure, nature preservation and climate adaptation (Provincie Utrecht, 2021).

The planning for Rijnenburg has largely been unchanged in this vision. The visions remained to develop Rijnenburg as an energy landscape in the short term. In case of future housing development in Rijnenburg, the province would be tasked with the accessibility challenge to connect the area to car and public transport infrastructure (Provincie Utrecht, 2021).

Municipal government

Structuurvisie Rijnenburg

Following on the variety of national and provincial visions, the Municipality of Utrecht published its local vision on Rijnenburg in 2009. In the *Structuurvisie Rijnenburg*, the Municipality of Utrecht described its view on the future of living, working and leisure in Rijnenburg. The municipality envisioned a unique and divers living area where nature, water management, sustainability, rural landscape and living are combined. There has been close cooperation with the province to improve the plan design. On top of that, the municipality set up a participation path for stakeholder to actively bring input to the planning process. For the design of Rijnenburg, the municipality used the same number of 7.000 houses as the plans from the national government and the province (Gemeente Utrecht 2009).

With the *Structuurvisie Rijnenburg*, the municipality was tasked to create extensive and detailed drawings, blueprints and models in which the development of the area was thought out, researched

and prepared. These ranged from water management and soil research, to floor plans and home designs (Gemeente Utrecht 2009). In addition to the *Structuurvisie Rijnenburg*, a MER (Environmental Impact Assessment) was commissioned by the municipality. This assessment determined to what extent the envisioned developments would affect the environmental situation (Van Rooijen & Gerrits, 2009).

Visie Energielandschap

In 2020, the Municipality of Utrecht presented its vision for Rijnenburg as a landscape for renewable energy. This vision would fulfil the long existing ambition to increase the use of renewable energy sources in the city of Utrecht. In 2011, the municipal council determined that the Rijnenburg polder would be one of the few suitable location for the large-scale development of wind turbines and solar fields. This led to the decision that there would be no housing development in Rijnenburg before 2030. In consultation with the national and provincial government, the municipality wanted to look at a long-term future for housing in Rijnenburg. Since the cancelation of housing in the short term, the plan development of the energy landscape started. Surrounding municipalities, initiators, experts, landowners, residents and stakeholders were all included in this process (Gemeente Utrecht, 2020a).

Since the energy vision was a municipal initiative, it was mainly tasked with internal discussions and preparations to complete the vision for the energy landscape. This included research towards the different forms of energy generation, the exploration of different scenarios and the potential effects of the latter. These results were all researched to check the feasibility the different plans (Gemeente Utrecht, 2020a).

Most important substantive events and facts

A general overview of the results from the document and policy analysis is shown in Figure 3. The most outstanding events and facts from this analysis are described in this section. Substantively, a notable fact is that all three government have long shared the same vision for the development of Rijnenburg. Here, the national government was far ahead of the province and municipality because, in 1991, the national government was the first initiator of potential housing in Rijnenburg. Next to that, the idea of 5.000 to 7.000 houses in the polder has long been a shared guiding line for potential developments. All three governments even collaborated in an regional vision and individual visions were mostly aligned with existing overarching visions. Eventually, the national government stopped to include Rijnenburg into its national spatial visions. This was in line with the ongoing delegation and decentralisation of national spatial policy towards regional and local governments. Despite the long existing consensus on housing development, the Province of Utrecht was the first to introduce sustainable energy generation into the plan area of Rijnenburg. The vision of an energy landscape later fully replaced the original urbanisation and housing vision for Rijnenburg. Even though the Municipality of Utrecht developed an in-depth vision of housing development in Rijnenburg, it fully adopted to the province's vision to devote Rijnenburg to sustainable energy generation. The option of future housing development in the long term has however never been fully excluded from the provincial and municipal visions.

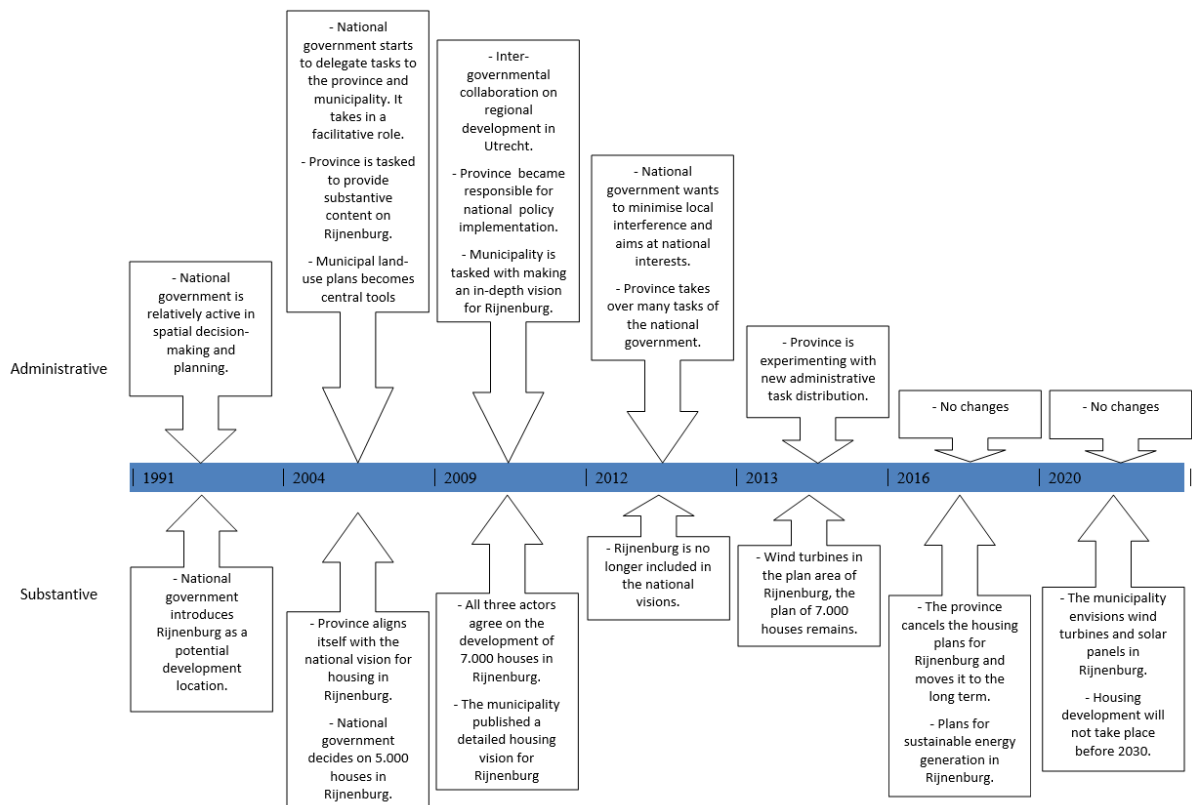


Figure 3 Timeline of the most important events and facts of the policy analysis.

Most notable administrative events and facts

Based on the document and policy analysis of Rijnenburg, there are multiple aspects of governance theory that can be recognised in practice. First of all, the case of Rijnenburg showed that a planning process consists of various interactions between multiple governmental actors that each have their own visions on spatial planning. It also indicated that the relations between governmental actors changed over time. This was most evident in Rijnenburg in the shifting tasks of the three governmental actors. In 1991, the national government was relatively closely involved in the planning of Rijnenburg. The lower governments then often adopted the national visions in their local visions. As multiple visions were developed over time, the national government shifted towards a more collaborative and facilitative role in spatial planning and eventually stopped to include the local development of a case such as Rijnenburg in its national visions. The national government clearly described its goal to decentralise and delegate tasks towards provinces and municipalities. As a result, lower governments got more freedom and responsibilities in regional and local spatial decision-making. Municipal land-use plans became the most important and detailed local planning tool under provincial supervision and general national policy. An overview of the most notable administrative events and facts from the analysis of Rijnenburg can be found in *Figure 3*.

4. 2 Concluding the policy analysis

To conclude, Chapter 4 has shown the development of spatial policies across the three governmental actors that have been involved in the planning process of Rijnenburg. In this way, Chapter 4 portrays the governance situation of the planning process, which is used in the next chapter to see how the previous developments in governance and policy-making affected the conflict about Rijnenburg. The policy analysis therefore forms the foundation of the conflict analysis in Chapter 5.

National government	<p>1991 Planning tool: <i>Vierde Nota Extra</i> Task: Managing and planning for the spatial development of urbanisation.</p> <p>2004 Planning tool: <i>Nota Ruimte</i> Task: Facilitating spatial policy to the decentralised regional and local governments. Actively assisting lower governments to develop and implement regional and local spatial policy.</p> <p>2009 Planning tool: <i>Ontwikkelingsvisie Noordvleugel Utrecht 2015-2030</i> Task: Facilitating the right laws, regulations, knowledge and finance for regional and local actors to develop and implement spatial policies.</p> <p>2012: Planning tool: <i>Structuurvisie Infrastructuur en Ruimte</i> Task: The main focus is on national and international issues for the country as a whole. The national government is selectively involved in regional and local spatial decision-making. Trust was put in the lower governments with clear responsibilities and simple rules.</p>
Province of Utrecht	<p>2004 Planning tool: <i>Streekplan 2005-2015</i> Task: Implementing and translating national policy to the regional and local level. The province got the role of a director, initiator, co-financer, coordinator and partner in spatial planning processes.</p> <p>2009 Planning tool: <i>Ontwikkelingsvisie Noordvleugel Utrecht 2015-2030</i> Task: Mediating between, connecting and overseeing a variety governmental and non-governmental actors.</p> <p>2013 - 2016 Planning tool: <i>Provinciale Ruimtelijke Structuurvisie 2013-2028</i> Task: Tasks in spatial planning were shifting between the governmental actors, which resulted in experimentation with task distribution and less strict regulation from the province in municipal spatial planning.</p> <p>2021 Planning tool: <i>Omgevingsvisie Provincie Utrecht</i> Task: Managing the physical environment, the growing population and ensuring a good and healthy living environment for all inhabitants. This included tasks such as housing, infrastructure, nature preservation and climate adaptation.</p>
Municipality of Utrecht	<p>2009 Planning tool: <i>Structuurvisie Rijnenburg</i> Task: Creating an extensive vision with detailed drawings, blueprints and models in which the development of the Rijnenburg was thought out, researched and prepared.</p> <p>2020 Planning tool: <i>Visie Energielandschap</i> Task: Internal discussions and preparations to complete the vision for the energy landscape. This meant, researching different forms of energy generation, the exploration of different scenarios and the potential effects of these scenarios.</p>

Table 4 Summary of Chapter 4

Table 4 is based on the first operationalisation and shortly summarises the policy analysis of Chapter 4. It therefore gives an overview of, since when actors are involved, what planning tool was used and tasks the actors had in these policy and visionary documents. Table 4 therefore answers the first sub-question: *How and to what extent are the national, regional and local governments involved in the planning process of Rijnenburg?*

In short, all three governments were mainly involved in Rijnenburg through the use and publication of visionary and policy document. These were used to present general and detailed visions of which and how spatial developments should take place within a certain timeframe. The extent of involvement in Rijnenburg varied between the governmental actors and years. These developments can be seen in Table 4. Most notable is that the extent of national involvement decreased over time as a result of national decentralisation and deregulation policies. The delegation of national tasks subsequently increased the involvement and policy freedom of provinces and municipalities. This allowed for autonomous regional and local spatial decision-making and increasing collaboration between the province and municipality.

5. Results on conflict

Following on the previous chapter that contained a governance analysis, this chapter contains the conflict analysis. The chapter presents the results that were used to answer the second sub-question through the use of the second operationalisation. The structure of this chapter is therefore indicated by the three year that were chosen for the analysis; 2010, 2016 and 2022 and the three phases of conflict.

5.1 A planning process without conflict in 2010

5.1.1 Policy content in 2010

Previously, it has become clear that the three governments have used visionary documents to present their spatial policies, preferences and expectations of other actors for future spatial developments. When it comes to the main planning and policy objectives in 2010, the national, provincial and municipal visions were fairly similar.

Policy content and objectives

Substantively, the visions for the planning of Rijnenburg were the same across all three governments in 2010. As seen before in the governance analysis, the national government envisioned Rijnenburg as a large-scale development location for housing. To preserve the rural, open and green character of the Green Heart and the Rijnenburg polder, the maximum amount of houses was 7.000. This choice was made to make optimal use of the existing infrastructure and achieve the best ratio between housing, nature and water (NV, 2009). As a result, there would remain enough space for recreational and agricultural purposes (Gemeente Utrecht, 2009).

First of all, when looking at the policy objectives, the national government mainly aimed at the two subjects of (sustainable) housing development and infrastructure. The goal of sustainable housing was to be carried out through the preservation of nature and water-rich environment. The infrastructural objective was to increase the infrastructural capacity of the region of Utrecht so it could keep up with economic and societal growth (Tweede Kamer, 2009). To supply sufficient housing, the total objective was to build 65.000 houses in the Utrecht region between 2015 and 2030. Inner-city densification was at the core of this objective (Tweede Kamer, 2010).

Secondly, as seen in the previous chapter, in the *Streekplan 2005-2015* and *Ontwikkelingsvisie Noordvleugel Utrecht 2015-2030*, the provincial government mainly adopted the visions of the national government and implemented those at the regional level. As a result, the main objectives in the provincial visions were concerned with nature, water management, infrastructure and cultural-history (NV, 2009).

Thirdly, within these national and provincial policy frameworks, the Municipality of Utrecht developed the *Structuurvisie Rijnenburg*. This document contained detailed elaborations that gave local substance to the more general national and provincial policies. In this local vision, the municipality had the objective to visualise the development of Rijnenburg as a unique and diverse living area where nature, water management, sustainability, rural landscape and living would be combined. In this way, Rijnenburg would keep its green and rural character and function as a stepping stone between the city of Utrecht and the Green Heart. Next to that, the municipality took more local objectives into account. For instance, the soil on which housing and infrastructure would be developed, what cultural-historical values are present in the area and how the geographical location may affect future development (Gemeente Utrecht, 2009).

Substantive differences

The analysis of the governmental visions from 2010, indicated that there are no notable differences between the national, provincial and municipal policy content and objectives. The shared content and objectives that are recognised are concerned with urbanisation, housing and working (liveability), mobility and water management (infrastructure) and nature and landscapes (sustainability). There is however a minor substantive difference that can be noted from the different preferences in building locations of the national government and the Province of Utrecht. Even though the national government did adapt to the Province's choice to focus on inner-city densification, the national government actually preferred housing development in outer-city areas since 'densification is difficult and expensive. The cheap and easy to realise locations have already been used. As the national government is no longer providing funds for the densification task for the time being, other solutions have to be found' (Tweede Kamer, 2009, p. 36). The province on the other hand, preferred urban densification in order to stay within the existing urban boundaries and not expand into green space (Tweede Kamer, 2009).

Coordination between actors

The general policy agreement in 2010, on the future of spatial developments in Utrecht can be explained by the fact that the national, provincial and municipal governments have collaborated in the establishment of a regional vision in 2009; *the Ontwikkelingsvisie Noordvleugel Utrecht 2015-2030*. There are multiple statements about this agreement between actors in the document. For example, the document described that the national governments has been involved in the development of the document and that it supported the main lines of the vision. Previous national visions have also been used as a foundation for the collaborative vision. On top of that, the document stated that the regional vision had broad support since it was widely discussed amongst local, regional and national actors. In addition, the collaborative vision acted as the foundation for future visions from participating actors (NV, 2009).

5.1.2 Plan-making process in 2010

Participation

As a result of the unanimity and cooperation between the national government, province and municipality in 2009, all three actors agreed that each of them should participate in the planning process of Rijnenburg. Collaboration was therefore one of the key values of the vision from 2009. The vision did for instance state 'because there is a close relationship between space for housing and infrastructure, the decision-making processes about this are closely coordinated' (NV, 2009, p.11). This indicated that the governments actually needed each other in order to manage overlapping policy domains. In this way, the governments were able to tackle national and regional challenges that were intertwined in a complex way (NV, 2009). Next to that, the national government felt that it had a specific role as a protector on the complex and expensive housing market. The task was to assure accessible and affordable housing since it was seen as a basic necessity in life (Tweede Kamer, 2011).

Timeframe planning

When it comes to time framing, there was again an agreement. In this vision from 2009, the goal was to build the first 2.000 houses before the year 2015 and the next 5.000 houses after 2015 (NV, 2009). The national goal of 65.000 houses for the Utrecht region was to be fulfilled between 2015 and 2030 (Tweede Kamer, 2010). In the local structural vision of Rijnenburg, the municipality referred to the existing collaborative and national visions of Rijnenburg and adapted the same time framing as these documents (Gemeente Utrecht, 2009). Due to the unanimity in terms of policy and time frame planning in 2010, there have not been any clear opinions formed on the duration of the planning process.

5.1.3 Distrust in 2010

As seen in the previously explored *Ontwikkelingsvisie Noordvleugel Utrecht 2015-2030*, all three governments worked together on the collaborative vision, which meant that discussions and consultations between participating actors were common (NV, 2009). As a result of the agreements and collaboration on policies and planning, the actors generally reacted to each other's input openly and supportive. Moreover, since collaboration was at the basis of this vision, the participating actors had to trust each other in order to work together and come to a collective agreement about the vision.

5.2 The beginning of substantive and procedural conflict in 2016

5.2.1 Policy content in 2016

Even though there had been a long-lasting agreement on the policy content and objectives, major changes took place in 2016. The Province of Utrecht introduced a completely different vision from previous years on which the municipality followed. Next to that, the national government continued its goal to decentralise spatial planning and delegate tasks to lower governments.

Policy content and objectives

Firstly, as seen in chapter 4, the national government stopped to include Rijnenburg in their national spatial policies. This went hand in hand with the latest national vision from 2012, in which the national government adjusted its objective to international economic competition and interests that affected the country as a whole. This meant that objectives such as housing, urbanisation and landscape policies, shifted to the province and municipality. As a result, there were no new national objectives or visions in 2016 that contained Rijnenburg as a subject. There were only previous visions that had longer plan durations, for example the *Ontwikkelingsvisie Noordvleugel Utrecht 2015-2030* or *Structuurvisie Randstad 2040* (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2012).

Secondly, the Province of Utrecht made major changes in its spatial policy regarding Rijnenburg. Instead of the 7.000 houses that had long been a general agreement, the province envisioned a different purpose for Rijnenburg. As described before, the Province of Utrecht preferred housing development through urban densification. This had already resulted in the completion of 11.000 houses between 2013 and 2016. The major share of these houses was built within existing urban area. On the other hand, little progress was made in the development of outer-city expansion locations. Due to the success of densification and expected growth of the housing market, the province devoted 90% of its housing plans to inner-city development. This meant that the expansion location Rijnenburg became redundant in the short term. The province did however address that it kept Rijnenburg as an option in the long term. In the meantime, Rijnenburg was envisioned as a break landscape combined with forms of sustainable energy generation (Provincie Utrecht, 2016).

From this vision, it can be noted that the main policy objectives from the Province of Utrecht are concerned with liveability and sustainability. The province's aim was to create a pleasant physical environment for living, working and leisure. The province wanted to increase urban liveability while preserving the outer-city landscape and nature. In Rijnenburg, the main objective in the short term, has thus shifted from liveability and housing to sustainability in the form of sustainable energy generation (Provincie Utrecht, 2016). This sustainable objective contributed to the provincial ambition and objective to pursue the energy transition towards a climate neutral province by the year 2040 (Provincie Utrecht, n.d.-a)

Thirdly, the municipality of Utrecht also took a different approach to Rijnenburg in 2016. Despite the fact that a different vision had not yet been formed, the municipal council agreed on the starting document of the energy landscape. This was the start of a further research process towards the possibilities of wind and solar energy in the Rijnenburg polder. This resulted in the development of

different scenarios and eventually the municipality proposed an official vision for the energy landscape Rijnenburg in 2020 (Gemeente Utrecht, n.d.-a).

With the start of the development of this new vision, the municipality had the objective to comply with the international Paris climate agreement. The implementation of the energy landscape could supply up to 82.500 households with electricity, which would be 20% of Utrecht's current electricity demand. In doing so, the municipality wanted to provide a maximal contribution to the energy transition. The use of Rijnenburg for this purpose, was seen as a necessity in order to contribute to the major energy challenge (Gemeente Utrecht, n.d.-b).

Substantive differences

The analysis of the policy content and objective from the three governments has clearly shown the substantive differences between the national government and the province and municipality. The national government had not changed any plans regarding the development in Rijnenburg. Looking at the most recent national vision at that time, the main objectives in Rijnenburg remained on housing. The national government has however left housing policy and planning entirely to provinces and municipalities since 2012 (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2012). In 2016, the Province envisioned 90% of the implementation of the housing objective within existing urban areas. In this view, Rijnenburg became redundant for housing. This opened up the opportunity for the province and municipality to devote Rijnenburg to tackling a different major spatial challenge; the energy transition (Provincie Utrecht, 2016; Gemeente Utrecht, n.d.-b).

Coordination between actors

The national shift towards international competition and decentralisation explained the less prominent role and minimal national interference in the local planning process of Rijnenburg from 2012 to 2016 (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2012). The province and municipality on the other, collaborated since the start of the exploration towards the possibility of the energy landscape in Rijnenburg. The province was for instance, involved in the approval of the starting document and the opinions of neighbouring municipalities were also taken into account in this process (Gemeente Utrecht 2020).

5.2.2 Plan-making process in 2016

Participation

Relative to 2010, the opinions of the actors, on who should have participated in the planning process of Rijnenburg changed in 2016. First of all, the national government decreased its own involvement in housing since 2012 because it indicated that it foresaw a less prominent role for itself in housing policy and planning such as Rijnenburg. Subsequently, participation of municipalities and provinces had to increase since they got more tasks and responsibility in housing policy and implementation. According to the national government, municipalities got the task of deploying and managing local housing programs within provincial policy frameworks. If not, the province was meant to actively stimulate inter-municipal collaboration for housing development (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2012). The fact that the Province and Municipality of Utrecht were able change the existing housing vision of Rijnenburg to that of an energy landscape, shows that the lower governments experienced less interference and regulation from the national government. In contrast to 2010, this indicated that the lower governments relied less on the participation of the national government in the decision-making processes such as Rijnenburg. The province and municipality on the other hand, did closely collaborate and therefore required each other's participation in spatial planning and the development of Rijnenburg (Provincie Utrecht, 2016).

Timeframe planning

As a result of the changes in the policy content in 2016, a change in time frame planning occurred between the national government, the Province and Municipality of Utrecht. The national government had not made specific changes in the time frame planning of housing in Rijnenburg since the collaborative vision from 2009. This meant that there would be 2.000 houses in 2015 and 7.000 houses in total by the year 2030 (NV, 2009). This opposed the renewed provincial and municipal vision about the energy landscape in Rijnenburg. The provincial vision postponed housing in Rijnenburg to the long term, without naming an exact year. The energy landscape would be the short-term land-use purpose of Rijnenburg (Provincie Utrecht, 2016). The municipality also stepped away of the national time frame planning and started a new research trajectory in 2016 to explore the possibilities of energy generation in Rijnenburg. The municipal roadmap consisted of the steps that can be seen in Figure 4. In short, the municipality expected to have a functioning energy landscape by the year 2026 (Gemeente Utrecht, n.d.-a).

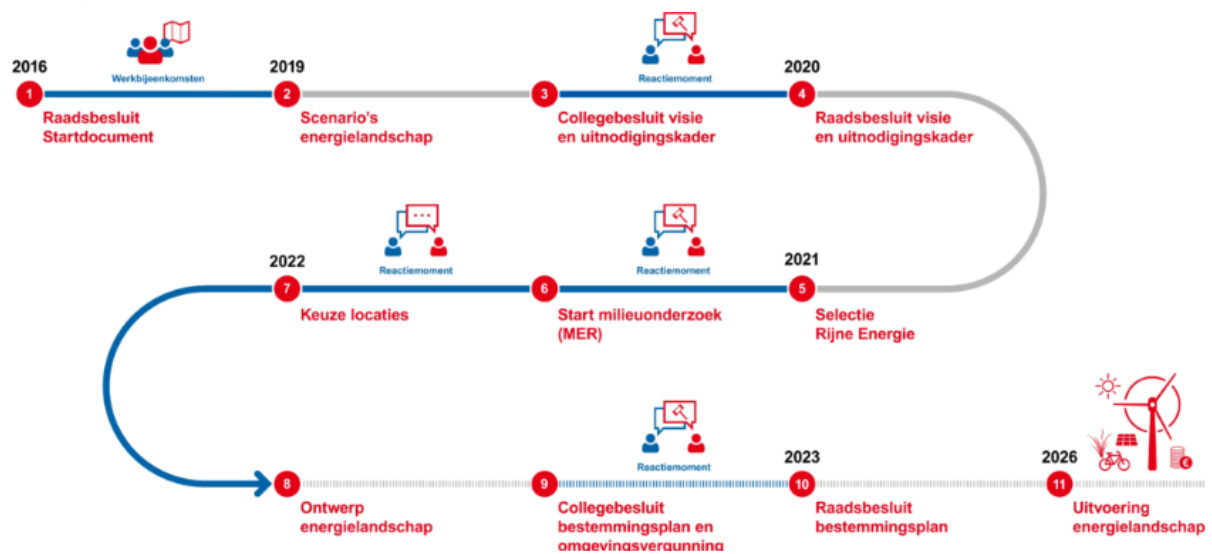


Figure 4 Municipal roadmap of the development of the energy landscape. Source: Gemeente Utrecht, n.d.-a

Duration of the planning process

As well as in 2010, the plan duration of the planning process of Rijnenburg had not yet become a point of discussion in 2016. The idea of the energy landscape was still in an early exploratory phase. This meant that it did not get much political and media attention since it was not yet known what the outcome of the early vision would be.

5.2.3 Distrust in 2016

Discussion, communication and dialogue

Regarding spatial planning, and housing policy specifically, interaction between the national government, provinces and municipalities decreased as a result of decentralisation policies from the national government. In the national vision from 2012, 'the national government leaves urbanisation and landscape policy to the provinces and municipalities. Municipalities are given room for small-scale natural growth grafted on building houses that match the housing needs of people' (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2012, p. 6). On top of that, the national government chose thirteen main national interests at which it would focus. Housing and the energy transition were not included in these thirteen interests. Therefore, provinces and municipalities got more control over their regional and local plan-making. The national governments stated 'beyond these 13 interests, decentralised authorities have policy freedom' (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2012, p. 10). As a result, communication and consultation mainly took place between provinces and municipalities. The Province of Utrecht for instance, described that

consultation with municipalities is mandatory. The purpose of this formal consultation is to assure that the provincial interests are implemented at the municipal level. This prevented municipal spatial developments that would clash with provincial interests. The province is however selective in consultations about individual municipal plans because the municipality is responsible for its own policy and interpretation of provincial visions. To keep the joint spatial agenda up to date, the municipality and province engaged in consultations several times a year (Provincie Utrecht, 2016).

Mutual trust

As part of the decentralisation policy of the national government, trust was seen as the foundation for putting decisions closer to lower governments and citizens. The national government explained its trust in the lower government as follows ‘through their regional knowledge and mutual cooperation, municipalities and provinces are able to tackle the tasks integrally, effectively and with quality.’ (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2012, p. 11). Therefore, the SVIR contained less regulations and national interests. It was expected that national interests would automatically be adopted by lower governments (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2012).

The Province of Utrecht applied the same dialogue of trust. As the mediating actor between the national government and municipalities, the province emphasised on trust as the foundation for successful collaboration between all three governments. The province trusted the municipalities to translate national and provincial policy into municipal policy implementation (Provincie Utrecht, 2016).

How actors reacted

The energy visions from the province and municipality did not raise many reactions because the idea of an energy landscape only was a visionary concept. In the province’s vision, it was not a major part of the overall document and for the municipality, the energy landscape was only introduced as an idea that needed more research (Province Utrecht, 2016; Gemeente Utrecht, n.d.-a). Due to this limited elaboration of the plan, it did not receive much attention from other actors or media.

Next to that, as a result of the reduced involvement of the national government, the province and municipality reacted to their increased plan-making freedom by developing different visions on housing and the energy transition. The housing vision shifted to inner-city development, which meant that Rijnenburg remained unassigned. This opened up the opportunity to plan for the energy transition of Utrecht in Rijnenburg, while housing was implemented at different locations (Province Utrecht, 2016; Gemeente Utrecht, n.d.-b).

5.3 The erosion of trust in 2022

5.3.1 Policy content in 2022

Policy content and objectives

Firstly, in the national spatial vision from 2020 (*Nationale Omgevingswet*), the national government addressed a shift in their objectives. It was made clear that there would be an increase of national involvement in housing policy (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2020a). Even though the national government had fully decentralised the housing task to provinces, municipalities and their participating private actors, the national government planned to make a return in housing policy. The national government actively returned in the domain of housing policy as a reaction to the increasing housing shortage and housing impasse that had arisen (Rijksoverheid, 2022). According to the Minister of Housing and Spatial Planning, increased national steering was needed because:

The housing shortage is big, too big. And houses are expensive, low- and middle-income people are now too often left out. If we leave housing to the free play of forces, the law of the strongest applies and people get caught out. A place to live, is a fundamental right, but in recent years it has become a barely

attainable privilege for too many people. This must change with this broad housing and building agenda. National housing is back from the past. (Rijksoverheid, 2022)

The national government published two documents on their new housing strategy; the *Nationale Woon- en Bouwagenda* (National Housing and Construction Agenda) and the *Programma Woningbouw* (Housing Program). In both these documents, the national government acknowledged that ‘too much has been thought that the market would solve the housing shortage on its own and by itself. For too long, it has been believed that the sum of all decentralised choices would lead to the solution.’ (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2022a). As a result of the decentralisation of housing policy, there have been insufficient directional building objectives to foster housing development at the decentralised level. This led to a discrepancy between the efforts of decentralised actors and nationally defined ambitions for housing (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2022b).

The increase of national steering did however not mean that tasks and responsibilities will be centralised. It meant that the national government will give more direction in great challenges and ensure good collaborations between the participating actors. The national government therefore proposed a short-term set of measures to give housing development a renewed and strong boost (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2020a). From this new national involvement strategy in housing policy, it can be noted that the government has chosen (affordable) housing and liveability as part of its national objectives. During the years of debate, no official new visions or policies about Rijnenburg have been formed. However, there was a general proposal among the political parties in the House of Representatives that supported the goal of short-term housing. Different parties had varying opinions, but the general idea was to build around 20.000 to 25.000 houses in Rijnenburg (DUIC, 2020).

Secondly, in the most recent provincial spatial vision (*Omgevingsvisie Provincie Utrecht*) from 2021, it is shown that the province mainly focusses on sustainability and liveability. The provincial objective is to first develop Rijnenburg as an (temporal) energy landscape in the short term. In the long term, the location is assigned as a potential location for large-scale development where living, working and accessibility will be combined. The province estimated that housing will not be necessary in Rijnenburg to achieve the needed housing numbers until 2035-2040. Moreover, the housing objective is assigned to the long term since the development of car and public transport infrastructure to the area is complex and costly (Provincie Utrecht, 2021).

Thirdly, on June 1st 2022, a new municipal coalition agreement was announced. In this agreement, the development of Rijnenburg combined the objectives of the energy transition and housing (DUIC, 2022). The municipality chose to divide the total area into a permanent energy landscape in the North as seen in Figure 5 and an area for housing in the South. The energy landscape will be optimally used and will start with four wind turbines (Gemeente Utrecht, 2022a).

The future residential area of Rijnenburg will become an urban neighbourhood with its own city centre. The urban area will be built with high densities in a circular, climate-adaptive, energy-neutral and nature-inclusive way. The municipality did however address that they will

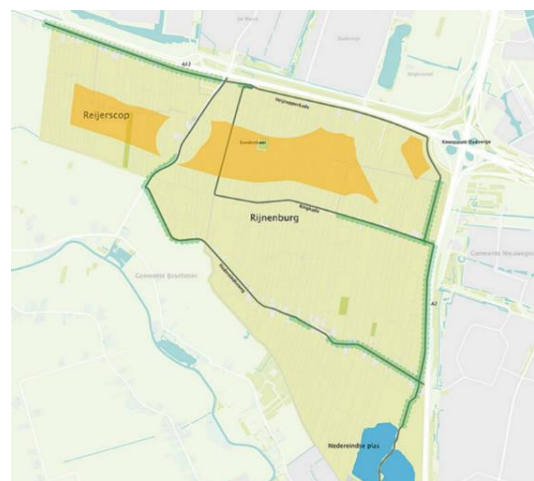


Figure 5 Search area for wind turbines (Yellow area). Source: Gemeente Utrecht, 2020a.

only start housing in Rijnenburg when it is certain that the connection to public transport and car accessibility are assured by the province or national government. These infrastructural challenges were the reason for the municipality to postpone the start of building until at least 2035 (Gemeente Utrecht, 2022b).

Substantive differences

Despite the fact that the municipality has come to an agreement on the future of Rijnenburg that satisfied all three governments for now, there have been years of debate between the three governments that preceded this final plan. Since 2020, there have been several thoughts and visions on what should be built in Rijnenburg. This resulted in a series of back and forth proposals and requests to decide on a particular development in Rijnenburg.

The core of the national government's proposals consisted of plans with 20.000 to 25.000 houses in the short term. While on the other hand, the province kept its focus on developing houses within the existing urban boundaries and developing Rijnenburg as a temporal energy landscape. The development of houses was seen as a long term possibility by the province and municipality. However, in 2020, the municipality's primary goal was the development of a (temporal) energy landscape and shared the provincial vision to implement housing within the existing urban boundaries first. The vision of the energy landscape did take future housing development into account because the municipality was aware that housing potential of the area (DUIC, 2020). The original plan of the energy landscape from 2020 envisioned a maximum of eight wind turbines and 230 hectares of solar fields. To make this project financially profitable, the energy landscape has to exist at least 20 years (Gemeente Utrecht, 2020a)

Coordination between actors

When it comes to the coordination between the three governments during the years of debate, it is most notable that in some cases, decisions were made without informing or taking the other actors into account. On the national level, this happened in the form of the attempt to force the Municipality of Utrecht to develop housing in Rijnenburg instead of the energy landscape. This would have been a choice against the local decision-making (DUIC, 2020). On the other hand, the Municipality of Utrecht had not informed or consulted the Minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations about the initial proposal to develop Rijnenburg as an energy landscape. Therefore, this vision came as a surprise to the national government because they found out about the energy plan through a news report (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2020b).

To bring back and improve collaboration in the inter-governmental housing strategies, the Housing and Construction Agenda and the Housing Program included a revised vision on the collaboration between the three governments on housing development. In this new strategy, housing became a common task of all governments, external partners and participating actors. The implementation of housing policies remained a task of the provincial and municipal levels. The national government does however have an active and facilitative role to provide these lower governments with the right objectives and sufficient tools and resources to achieve the common housing goals (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2022b).

5.3.2 Plan-making process in 2022

Participation

By the year 2022, it had become clear that the national government saw the need to actively participate in the development of Rijnenburg. This became evident in September 2019, when a motion was submitted that suggested a binding designation (*bindende aanwijzing*) to the Municipality of Utrecht. This is however, a rarely applied intervention tool in spatial planning. In this case, it would be

used to enforce housing development upon the municipality (De Zeeuw, 2020). Despite the rarity of such an intervention tool, there was a majority in the House of Representatives that supported the motion. The Minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations on the other hand, eventually rejected the motion because she believed that the municipality and province would manage the housing goals through urban densification. Moreover, at that time, there was not enough funding available for both the infrastructural and housing developments. The costs were estimated at 1 billion and 4 billion euros (Hoekstra, 2020; Binnenlands Bestuur, 2020).

In 2021, this led to the decision of the Minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations to definitively renounce national intervention in Rijnenburg. In doing so, a potential future intervention in the decision-making of Rijnenburg was passed on to the next cabinet (Kragten, 2021). The Minister refused to force Utrecht to housing, due to the complexity and high investment costs that were required to make large-scale housing possible. The Minister concluded 'the large-scale development of Rijnenburg requires a lot of preparation time, pre-investment and the solutions are complex: therefore, Rijnenburg is not a short-term solution to the housing shortage.' (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2021). De Zeeuw (2020) and Hoekstra (2020) did think that the national motion and the threat of an active designation increased the pressure on the municipality to make plans for Rijnenburg.

The active role of the national government in spatial planning was further emphasised in 2022. As seen before, the new Minister of Housing and spatial planning introduced a revised national housing strategy in which the national government presented that it will actively participate in spatial planning as a steering and facilitative actor. These plans aimed to provide more direction and more pace, resulting in better availability, affordability and quality of the housing supply in the Netherlands (Rijksoverheid, 2022).

Even though the national government was increasing its participation in spatial planning and Rijnenburg specifically, the Municipality of Utrecht had no need for this participation. On December 9th 2021, the municipality sent the national government an informative letter about the status of the planning process of the energy landscape. The letter included a specific request about the involvement of the province and national government:

The moment the plan for the solar fields becomes so large that it creates a competence for the province or the national government, we will ask the province or the national government to renounce this competence. This is not an issue at present. We hope to receive a response to our intention as a municipality to act as the competent authority for realisation of wind turbines in Rijnenburg and Reijerscop (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021, p. 2)

From this request it seemed that the municipality did not want the province and national government to interfere in the local development and decision-making process of the energy landscape in Rijnenburg. This showed that the municipality was not willing to give up its local autonomy. The Province of Utrecht did however not agree on this request and answered the municipality as follows 'We request that you involve the province of Utrecht in your further elaboration of energy landscape Rijnenburg and Reijerscop with a view to careful and smooth decision-making.' The province also emphasised that the municipality is expected to inform the province when plans for the energy landscape change. This clearly showed the overarching role of the province in controlling municipal spatial policy development (Provincie Utrecht, 2022).

On top of that, it became clear that the province acted as a mediating and connection actor between the national government and the municipality during the planning conflict in Rijnenburg. Here, the province organised the *conferentie Rijnenburg* (Rijnenburg Conference). The province was worried

about the course of the planning process of Rijnenburg and therefore held a meeting in which various actors and parties shared information and engaged in discussions about the policies, values, tasks and various interests in Rijnenburg (Provincie Utrecht, n.d.-b). This not only indicated that the province saw the urge to participate as the connection actor, it also showed that the province wanted to improve the collaboration between all three governments to come to a solution.

Timeframe planning

A central point of debate between the national, provincial and municipal proposals of Rijnenburg was found in the time framing of the different kinds of development that the governments envisioned. From the national standpoint, housing was the only option for Rijnenburg and the idea was that building should start in the short term. This can be noted from the fact that the majority of the House of Representatives wanted the Minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations to intervene immediately in 2020 (DUIC, 2020). Votes were raised to start building in the polder as early as 2025. This national goal directly opposed to the proposals of the province and municipality who had inner-city development, nature conservation and the development of an energy landscape as their highest priority in the short term. They only considered housing to be a future option beyond 2035-2040. Housing was therefore not fully excluded from the provincial and municipal visions, it was however not a highly prioritised objective (Provincie Utrecht, 2021; Gemeente Utrecht, 2020a).

Duration of the planning process

For the national government, one of the main reasons to initially intervene in Rijnenburg had to do with the total duration of the planning process of Rijnenburg. As seen in the previous chapter, older national visionary documents showed that Rijnenburg has been an optional location for housing in the national agenda for more than two decades. As a result of the municipality's choice to reject the plan of housing in Rijnenburg, the Minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations stated 'we no longer want to wait for decisions that are, for whatever reason, not being made. If this does not happen on the local and regional level, it will be done here, at the national level' (DUIC, 2020). This process was described by RTV Utrecht (2020b) as 20 years of hassle. Next to that, advisor in spatial planning, Frits de Zeeuw, wrote 'the continuing high demand for housing in the Utrecht region (not just the city), makes housing construction inevitable. Planning and pre-investment will take at least a decade. Therefore, this process should start now' (De Zeeuw, 2020).

From a provincial and municipal standpoint, the duration of the planning process was less of a problem. Even though this was not clearly stated by either of these actors, it is imaginable that the province and municipality do not see a problem in the duration of the current planning process of Rijnenburg since they started a new process in 2016 with the choice for the energy landscape. According to current policies and time frame planning, this energy project will be operational in 2026. Whereas the national government's vision for housing was postponed till at least 2035.

5.3.3 Distrust in 2022

Discussion, communication and dialogue

In the regional vision from 2021, the Province of Utrecht addressed that it wanted to continue communication with municipalities on the same note as the previous vision from 2016. The goal was even to increase the periodic municipal consultations. In this way, discussions could take place to assure the alignment of provincial and municipal spatial policy (Provincie Utrecht, 2021). While the communication and collaboration between the province and municipality was well arranged, this had not been the case between the three governments during the conflict about Rijnenburg. The Province of Utrecht stated that:

The mutual communication of stakeholders and governments takes place largely through the media, which does not benefit mutual relations; and that actors sometimes lack insight and knowledge or make assumptions about the motivations and possibilities of other parties, for example when it comes to spatial and financial frameworks and accessibility consequences (Provincie Utrecht, n.d.-b)

As a reaction to this, the Rijnenburg Conference was organised by the Province of Utrecht to encourage all involved actors into direct dialogue and discussion, instead of correspondence via the media (Provincie Utrecht, n.d.-b). The communication via the media is recognised in news articles and television interviews in which it became clear that multiple governmental actors and politicians told their stories or promoted their visions on some media platform (RTV Utrecht, 2020c; DUIC, 2020; Van Rossum du Chattel, 2020). As a result of this form of communication, mutual relations eroded and actors became less likely to understand each other due to a lack of insight, knowledge and wrong assumptions (Provincie Utrecht, n.d.-b).

Next to the bad communication via media, it also occurred that no communication took place at all. This happened between the Municipality of Utrecht and the national government. On April 17th 2020, the Minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations answered questions from the House of Representatives. Here, the minister was asked if she was familiar with an article named wind turbines and solar fields in the polders Rijnenburg and Reijercop from Van Rossum du Chattel (2020). The minister answered with 'no, the Municipality of Utrecht has not contacted me about this', which indicated that the national government was not aware of the progress of the municipal planning of the energy landscape in Rijnenburg (Van Rossum du Chattel, 2020).

Mutual trust

Compared to the national vision of 2012, which heavily relied on trust in lower governments and the market, the national vision from 2020 took a different approach to trust. It was shown before that the national government had too much trust in the decentralised governments and the market because they failed to match the national housing ambitions. As a result of this failed system based on trust, the national government developed a lack of trust and felt the need to increase its involvement and support lower governments in housing policy through stimulating and facilitating housing development (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2020a, 2022a, 2022b).

The Province of Utrecht on the other hand, had not made any major changes in its regional vision regarding trust. In 2021, the focus remained on mutual trust and trust in the fact that all actors in spatial planning take and fulfil their own responsibility (Provincie Utrecht, 2021). It was however addressed by the representative of the Province of Utrecht, that an intervention from the national government would have damaged this collaboration and trust between decentralised governments and the national government. This could have frustrated the long-term collaboration between the national and lower governments across the country (DUIC, 2020).

How actors reacted

In period between 2020 and 2022 there have been many reactions across a variety of actors regarding the policy proposals and visions for Rijnenburg. First of all, the national government initially reacted suspiciously because the vision of the energy landscape came as a surprise and no consultation had taken place. Disagreement over this vision eventually led to the proposal of an active designation for the municipality from the national government. The Minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations however reacted to this proposal with 'a proactive designation is neither a feasible nor a desirable route. There is good cooperation between the ministry and the region and other construction sites for sustainable housing are already in sight' (Binnenlands Bestuur, 2020). In this way, the minister supported and trusted the provincial and municipal plan and decision-making. The fact that the

national government considered the use of such a planning tool, does however show the urgency and political impact of a case such as Rijnenburg.

There was however no unanimity in the House of Representatives, some parties did not want the national government to concern itself with local decision-making in Utrecht, 'that discussion should take place in the municipal council' (DUIC, 2020). A member of the House of Representatives did for instance suspected that local parties that could not fulfil their vision of housing on the local level, were trying to enforce housing via the national majority parties (DUIC, 2020).

In 2022, the Province of Utrecht remained supportive towards the municipality by confirming that the municipal energy vision fitted within the provincial spatial vision. Moreover, the province emphasised that the plan of the energy landscape was not going to hinder the potential future development of housing (Provincie Utrecht, 2022). On the other hand, the province reacted somewhat angry or suspicious to the potential national intervention in the regional and local decision-making process. The representative of the Province of Utrecht, said the following about the intervention:

'It would be extremely unwise if the House of Representatives ignores all the cooperation that is there, all the good conversations that are there now, the good agreements that we are making between province, municipality and different departments, then you are really doing the wrong thing as far as I am concerned' (DUIC, 2020)

This opinion was supported by the municipal councillor of spatial planning, who said 'the motion is inappropriate and unnecessary because we are working well with the minister and the national government. I also cannot imagine that the House of Representatives wants to obstruct that' (Hoekstra, 2020). In these two quotes, some distrust is recognised among the local actors, since they question the national government's intentions of the intervention in Rijnenburg. They suspected that the national government was willing to damage collaborative relations and local authority.

The Municipality of Utrecht also reacted suspiciously to the potential intervention of the national government and its proposal for housing. For instance, a motion was proposed in the municipal council that suggested the municipality to convince the national government of the infrastructural challenge in Rijnenburg and the costs that come with it (Gemeente Utrecht, 2020b). Next to that, the request of the municipality to the national government and province, to let the municipality manage its own spatial policy in Rijnenburg, even when project becomes too big, showed that the municipality was suspicious towards the involvement of the higher governments (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021). Eventually, in the achievement of the municipal coalition agreement in 2022, the Municipality of Utrecht searched for a solution to the conflict about the development of Rijnenburg. Here, they did choose their own energy vision over the national vision of housing in terms of urgency and prioritisation. Housing development was however confirmed in the long term (Gemeente Utrecht, 2022b).

5.4 Concluding the conflict analysis

To conclude, the conflict analysis in Chapter 5 has shown how the phases of conflict are present in the planning process of Rijnenburg in 2010, 2016 and 2022. Therefore, the results have answered the second sub-question: *How can the phases of the conflict development be recognised in the planning process of Rijnenburg?* Table 5 answers this question by summarising the chapter in an overview which shows that there was no conflict to be recognised in 2010. In 2016, the planning process did enter the first two phases of conflict as a result of different governmental visions on policy content and the course of the planning process. In the planning process in 2022, all three phases of conflict were recognised since distrust became an additional phase to the existing conflict.

Year	Phase of conflict	How the phases were recognised in Rijnenburg
2010	-	-
2016	Policy content and plan-making process	There was a provincial and municipal shift in visionary policy content, from the nationally shared vision of housing development, towards the new plan of an energy landscape in Rijnenburg. At the same time, the plan-making process became part of the conflict due to the effects of the policy content on the time-frame planning of all actors.
2022	Policy content, plan-making process and distrust	There was increased tension between the three governments, caused by, the way communication took place, the lack of communication and consultation and the threat of national intervention. This resulted in distrust since the actors did not have clear knowledge on each other's visions and intentions. On top of that, threat of an intervention was seen as the undermining of local autonomy and the frustration of good collaborations between the national and lower governments.

Table 5 The phases of conflict in 2010, 2016 and 2022.

6. Conclusion

The research has focused on the planning process that preceded the rise of the land-use conflict about Rijnenburg and the development and escalation of this conflict. The research is therefore able to answer the main research question: *How can we explain the rise and escalation of multi-layered governance conflicts in spatial planning based on the planning conflict in Rijnenburg?*

6.1 Answering the main research question

Decentralisation and deregulation

The rise and escalation of the multi-layered governance conflict can be explained by a confluence of factors. First, the research has shown that years of decentralisation and deregulation allowed the lower governments to develop policies that deviated from national policy. The created policy freedom made the national government lose sight and grip on the development and implementation of housing policy by the province, municipality and market. As a result, a discrepancy between national, provincial and municipal housing policy objectives and ambitions arose. Therefore, decentralisation and deregulation created the conditions for a governance conflict about policy content to arise.

Differing substantive and procedural visions and intervention

Secondly, the research has shown that the policy-making freedom also allowed the province and municipality to deviate from the long existing national housing vision. The national government was frustrated and surprised by the sudden change in provincial and municipal policy. Therefore, the conflict arose due to the combination of substantively different visions and a protracted and failing decision-making process. The choice for an energy landscape postponed the development of housing for at least another decade, which meant that the national government started to consider an intervention in the local decision-making process. The conflict about Rijnenburg therefore went beyond the policy content because the course of the plan-making process became part of the conflict. The threat of an intervention contributed to the escalation of the conflict since it opposed the trend of decentralisation, it disturbed the local autonomy and threatened good collaborative relations.

Impasse in the planning process

Thirdly, the conflicting visions and timeframe in which these visions were to be implemented, caused an impasse in the planning process of Rijnenburg. The conflict over policy content could have been resolved in the long term because the province and municipality did account for housing development in Rijnenburg after 2030. They were aware of the chances that Rijnenburg had to offer for housing, but they aimed to explore these possibilities in the long term. However, the national government's determination to the short-term implementation of housing made it impossible for the province and municipality to implement their own short-term vision of urban densification. This caused the two visions to become diametrically opposed.

Communication and dialogue

Fourthly, regardless of the content and course of the plan-making process, the way of communication and dialogue further escalated the conflict about Rijnenburg. Inadequate communication, misinforming or not informing actors, created a poor connection between actors. So, instead of putting effort into solving the conflict about the content and time framing through sufficient discussion and consultation, the conflict played out via the media. This resulted in misinterpretations and unclear ideas of each other's opinions and visions. These conditions caused distrust to arise amongst the governmental actors, which meant that the conflict escalated even further, beyond the policy content and plan-making process.

Compromise and renouncement

Eventually, for now, the conflict about the land-use planning of Rijnenburg has ended. The Municipality of Utrecht reached an internal compromise which determined the short-term implementation of an energy landscape in the Northern part of Rijnenburg and the long-term development of housing in the Southern part of Rijnenburg. On top of that, the national government renounced from intervening because trust was put in the plans of the Province and Municipality of Utrecht. Due to insufficient resources, infrastructure and not wanting to disrupt the intergovernmental collaboration, the national government could not maintain the enforcement of the short-term housing vision in Rijnenburg.

In sum, based on the case study of Rijnenburg, the rise of a conflict in a multi-layered spatial planning process is explained by the development of substantively different land-use visions and a disagreement on the short and long-term implementation of these land-use plans. The trend of decentralisation and deregulation in governance created the conditions for the provincial and municipal governments to deviate from the existing housing vision on which all governments agreed before. The development of a different vision was yet another delay and postponement in an already protracted decision-making process. This therefore explained the escalation of the conflict because, in addition to the substantive policy disagreements, the plan-making process had become part of the conflict. The solution of the conflict was subsequently hindered by the way communication and dialogue took place between the governmental actors. Instead of solving the conflict through discussion and consultation, poor communication led to misunderstandings and distrust between the governments. Further escalation of the conflict followed because actors were unable to correctly communicate and interpret each other's intentions and visions. This made it increasingly difficult for the governmental actors to come to a comprehensive solution.

6.2 Theoretical implications

First of all, the research has gained additional scientific knowledge on the development and escalation of conflict in multi-layered spatial planning processes. As a main line throughout the research, the theoretical concepts of governance and the phases of conflict were key. The research has shown how these two theoretical concepts are related to each other in the case study of Rijnenburg. Since the analysing approaches of governance and conflict phases were able to answer the research questions, it indicated that these are suitable and reliable strategies to analyse multi-layered governance conflicts in spatial planning.

6.2.1 The shift towards governance in Dutch spatial planning and Rijnenburg

This section elaborates on the development of Dutch spatial planning and how this played out in the planning process of Rijnenburg. These developments in spatial planning are compared to the governance theory to identify the shift towards governance in the case study of Rijnenburg.

A shift towards governance in spatial planning policies can be noted from the policy analysis in Chapter 4 and 5. The national government initially was closely involved in spatial decision-making and planning. However, a clear trend of decentralisation and deregulation was recognised in national spatial policies, visions and strategies from 1991 to 2012. Table 6 shows this trend of decentralisation and deregulation and how this affected the spatial policies of the three governments.

Steps of decentralisation and deregulation	National spatial policy	The effect of national policy on lower governments	The effects on the planning of Rijnenburg
Step 1 (1991)	The national government wanted strong central direction and national policy on the main lines, while decentralising the implementation of the latter.	The nationally decided spatial policies were implemented by the provincial and municipal governments. Therefore, spatial policies and visions closely resembled national spatial policy.	Since the province and municipality adopted national policies, the national housing plans for Rijnenburg were also copied.
Step 2 (2004)	The goal was to regulate even less and help lower governments to solve local spatial issues. The national government facilitated the right laws and resources for the lower governments to develop and implement regional and local spatial policies.	The lower governments slowly got more freedom in their local spatial decision-making.	As a result of a more collaborative relation between the governments, they all worked together and agreed on the spatial policy of Rijnenburg.
Step 3 (2012)	The national government maximised decentralisation and minimised its inference at the provincial and municipal levels. Since then, the national government focused on national international competition and interests that affected the country as a whole.	The province and municipality got plan and decision-making freedom in order to tackle regional and local issues with the regional and local knowledge. It was the province's task to control municipal polities and mediate as an interregional actor.	As a result of the ability to autonomously decide on regional and local spatial planning, the Province and Municipality of Utrecht were able to develop a vision and plan for an energy landscape in Rijnenburg, even though this did not correspond with existing national policy.
Step 4 (2020)	The national government came to the conclusion that too much trust was put in the decentralised governments. They failed to comply to the national housing policy ambitions. This resulted in a new vision in which the national government actively re-entered the policy domain of housing.	Housing became a collective and collaborative objective for all governmental and non-governmental actors.	The national vision to increase involvement in housing policy is recognised in the interference of the national government in the planning process of Rijnenburg.

Table 6 Steps of decentralisation and deregulation in governance.

In the analysis of the planning process of Rijnenburg, the governance theory of several scholars is recognised. First of all, in the steps of decentralisation, (multi-layered) governance is recognised. It has shown the decreasing role of the national government in spatial planning and the spread of national authority towards the lower governments, while the national government oriented itself towards international objectives and issues. This corresponds to the theory of Hooghe and Marks (2010) on multi-level governance and Van Straalen and Witte (2018) on the distribution of governmental tasks.

Secondly, on the other hand, the research also confirmed the theory of Peters and Pierre (2006) and Mayntz (2017) about the role of the national government in governance. They argued that the national government remained a relevant actor in spatial planning, however, with a more facilitative and steering role while still being able to act as a major actor. This facilitative role was found in the second step of decentralisation and deregulation which was presented in the visionary documents from 2004 and 2009, the *Nota Ruimte* and *Ontwikkelingsvisie Noordvleugel Utrecht 2015-2030*.

The ability of the national government to act as a major actor in spatial planning was found in the potential intervention in Rijnenburg. Even though the intervention did not take place, the threat of one contributed to the rise of the conflict in Rijnenburg due to the discussion about the autonomy of the local government. The caution of the national government with the application of such an intervention tool in local spatial planning was described in the theory of Van Buuren, Nijmeijer and Robbe (2017). They argued that the threat of an intervention could be enough for a lower government to change its policy. In case of Rijnenburg, this was not fully recognised since the province and municipality continued their vision of the energy landscape in Rijnenburg while the national government wanted to intervene to assure housing development. However, as described before, De Zeeuw (2020) and Hoekstra (2020) did argue that the national motion and the threat of an active designation increased the pressure on the municipality to make plans for Rijnenburg.

Thirdly, many scholars in the literature offered several causes for the decreasing role of a national government. Pierre (2000), Scholte (2005) and Chhotray and Stoker (2009) for example, offered increasing social complexities, collective interest organisations, poor economic performance, globalisation and neoliberalism challenges that decreased the importance and role of a national government. These causes have not been found in the case study of Rijnenburg. From the policy analysis in this research, it seemed that the decreasing role of the national government was primarily caused by the national government's own policy choices and not by external factors. Globalisation could however be related to the choice of the national government to focus more on international policy than national, regional and local spatial planning policies. Further in-depth research on national policy choices would be needed to assure this theory.

To conclude on governance in spatial planning and Rijnenburg, the research has shown that the ongoing decentralisation and deregulation had a turning point. As a result of the peak in decentralisation and deregulation, the spatial visions and policy objectives across the three governments started to deviate from each other. In Rijnenburg, this resulted in the provincial and municipal planning of the energy landscape, which postponed the national vision of housing. Housing development in Rijnenburg was part of the national vision to supply sufficient housing. The nationally envisioned housing numbers were however not achieved as a result of the freedom of, and trust in the lower governments and market (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2022a). This indicated that decentralisation and deregulation in governance can potentially result in a conflict over the policy content and time-frame planning because lower governments had little national steering to follow. To solve this problem, the national government saw the need to increase its involvement and guidance in housing policy by making housing a collective and collaborative policy domain for all three governments.

6.2.2 The phases of conflict in the planning process of Rijnenburg

This section of the chapter takes a look at the data on the planning process of Rijnenburg and compares it to the theory of the phases of conflict. This indicates what phases of conflict were recognised in the years 2010, 2016 and 2022 of the planning process of Rijnenburg.

Firstly, in the year 2010, the analyses have shown that there generally was an agreement between the three governments about the substantive policy content and course of the plan-making process. This also meant that there was no reason for conflict or distrust between the three governmental actors that participated in the planning process. It can therefore be noted that, in 2010, the planning process of Rijnenburg was not in any of the three phases of conflict.

Secondly, for the year 2016, the research showed that the planning process of Rijnenburg entered to first phase of conflict. This was the result of the provincial and municipal shift in visionary policy content, from the shared vision of housing development, towards the new plan of an energy landscape in Rijnenburg. It also became clear that the change in policy content resulted in conflict about the plan-making process. As described by Wolf and Van Dooren (2017), the opposing actor, the national government in this case, did indeed see the change in time framing as an obstruction of the planning process. The vision of housing had been on the national agenda for almost three decades, which meant that the national government did not want to wait much longer with the development of Rijnenburg. The Province and Municipality of Utrecht postponed housing development and the energy landscape became the prioritised objective in the short term. In this way, the first and second phase of conflict merged in 2016.

The changes in policy content and plan-making process formed the foundation of the open planning conflict about Rijnenburg that would further develop in 2020. However, the changes did not directly

cause an open conflict between the three governments since the new plans were in an early stage and only visionary. As a result, the provincial and municipal planning for an energy landscape did not gain much attention from the national government or media.

Thirdly, it can be noted that the planning process of Rijnenburg in 2022 entered the conflict phase of distrust. This was caused by the form of communication, the lack of communication and consultation and the threat of national intervention. These causes resulted in distrust since the actors did not have clear knowledge on each other's visions and intentions. Next to that, an intervention in the local decision-making process from the national government was seen as the undermining of local autonomy and the frustration of good collaborations between the governmental actors. The conflict in 2022 was however not solely about distrust. The policy content and course of the planning process always played a major role in the conflict. The phase of distrust therefore was an addition to the already existing conflict. In this way, the escalation towards distrust did follow the principles of Wolf and Van Dooren (2017) since the conflict about the policy content and plan-making process escalated even further.

6.3 Limitations and future research

In the reflection on this research, there are two limitations to acknowledge. First of all, the research has focused on three governmental actors in the planning process of Rijnenburg. This choice was made in order to gain in-depth insights on the functioning of the governments in a conflictual planning process and how they contributed to the rise of the conflict. The research achieved this objective and was able to answer the research questions. However, a spatial planning process contains many more actors than the national, provincial and municipal governments. Therefore, future research should be conducted on the local scale of the Rijnenburg conflict. Potential local actors to study could be land-owners, local residents and project developers that have significant roles in the participation and planning process of Rijnenburg. The data from such a study could be compared or added to the data from this study to create a more comprehensive dataset and overview of all actors and their roles in the rise and escalation of a multi-layered governance conflict about land-use.

Secondly, a limitation of the research design is found in the absence of interviews as an additional strategy to collect data. During the design of the research, it was decided that desk-research was the most suitable research strategy to collect data. Desk-research was the most efficient strategy to select the required data from a large amount of governmental and non-governmental sources. This approach was taken since documents contain substantive content and can provide insights in governmental goals and objectives. Moreover, documents are able to provide data from any point in time, while an interviewee relies on its own memory which can make the data less accurate. Next to that, collecting data about governmental visions is more efficient from the document itself than through interaction with a governmental employee that might not have all the required knowledge available.

Future research on the conflict in Rijnenburg or other spatial planning conflicts could therefore add interviews to the research strategy since it is able to supply data that is not available from documents and articles. As an addition to this research, unanswered or partially answered questions could have been asked in an interview to finalise certain governmental decisions and motivations. A specific case in which this would have been a valuable addition, is in the conflict analysis on distrust. During the research it appeared that distrust was the most difficult phase of conflict to analyse through desk-research. As described by Wolf and Van Dooren (2017), the conflict phase of distrust can cause a relational or personal conflict between actors. For the collection of such personal experiences and opinions, interviews would have been more suitable. On the other hand, the current analysis of distrust was still able to fill in the operationalisation and answer the research questions because a variety of governmental and non-governmental sources was used during the desk-research.

6.4 Practical implications

Based on the research, there are some practical implications to address. First, with the knowledge on how multi-layered governance conflicts arise in the development of land-use plans, governmental actors in spatial planning can become more aware of how their decisions and policies in spatial planning may lead to the development of a conflict. This research has shown that continuous decentralisation and deregulation in national policy can create policy-making circumstances in which lower governments are able to unnoticeably deviate from national policy. If a national government wants to prevent this from happening, it could be more careful with decentralisation policies or add a steering strategy to its policy to foster the lower governments to achieve national goals and ambitions.

Secondly, as described by Wolf and Van Dooren (2017), conflict shows that there is a chance for actors to stand up for what they envision to be good or desirable spatial planning and policy. From the perspective of the lower governments in this research, it became evident that, as a province or municipality, it is possible to withstand the threat of potential national interference and a different national vision. In the end, the vision of the energy landscape is the first vision to be implemented, while the housing vision became a long-term project because the national government eventually agreed that it was not ready for implementation. In this way, the conflict prevented the development of a project that was not yet viable.

Thirdly, based on the research, it can be stated that conflict is not inherently negative. Wolf and Van Dooren (2017) argued that plans regularly turn out to be better after conflict since it fosters creativity and democratic participation in order to solve the disagreement. In the case of Rijnenburg, it seemed that there also is value in conflict. After years of debate, the Municipality of Utrecht presented a plan that assured a combined implementation of the provincial and municipal plans of the energy landscape and the vision of housing in Rijnenburg. Therefore, the conflict led to the development of a comprehensive land-use plan for Rijnenburg. In the long term, this will result in the implementation of both visions that conflicted before.

In order to achieve this implementation of this new plan, Province and Municipality of Utrecht should not postpone the decision-making again. It became clear in the research, that the current infrastructural and financial limitations in Rijnenburg are the key reasons for the postponement of housing to 2035. To prevent the same indecisive planning process as seen before, the governments should start to actively plan for the solution to the existing problems. Therefore, the governments should work together to facilitate the right circumstances for the province and municipality to start the housing development after 2035. If this facilitative process is initiated by the national government, it will become difficult for the province and municipality to renounce from the development housing in Rijnenburg. To guide this process and prevent bad communication as seen during the conflict, all three governments should keep discussions and consultation about the current and future development of Rijnenburg going.

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