

The influence of cooperation on the regional housing agenda in the province of Gelderland

A CASE STUDY ABOUT THE SOFT ASPECTS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PROVINCE OF GELDERLAND AND HER REGIONS REGARDING THE HOUSING AGENDAS

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PREFACE

The master thesis in front of you is the closing of the master programme Spatial Planning and is also the end of my student time. I worked hard for twenty years to be where I am now. I think that I can be proud of what I achieved and certainly on the result of this master thesis. It was an exceptional time to write a master thesis. The uncertainties surrounding the COVID-19 situation caused more stress than the usual stress of writing a master thesis. The common ways to find relaxation in between writing was not possible due to the intelligent lockdown (and subsequent phases). However, that does not stop me from being proud of the result.

To get more out of my education and to better orient myself on the labour market, I looked for a graduation internship. What is more, I was lucky enough to take a peek in the kitchen at the Netherlands' largest project developer BPD. I was received with open arms at the office in Amersfoort and I would like to thank all employees of the Amersfoort office for that, and specifically Team Gelderland. Then I would like to give an extra word of thanks to Henri Schimmel. As my internship supervisor, Henri tried to involve me as much as possible in the business activities of BPD. Due to the exceptional situation worldwide, the physical internship was, unfortunately, of short duration. In this short time, I was able to attend several meetings and later digitally. I would also like to thank Henri for his feedback that he gave on my drafts several times. It was valuable to broaden my vision with the view from the business world.

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Enjoy reading!

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SUMMARY

The Netherlands is facing a large housing shortage, which threatens to become greater than the housing shortage after World War II. In response to this problem on the housing market the national government has stipulated in the housing policy that 75,000 houses must be built every year. The Dutch housing policy is implemented by different layers of governmental bodies. The Dutch government consists of several layers, each of which is linked to a specific spatial scale. For example, the national government operates on a national scale, the province on a provincial scale, the region on a regional scale and the municipalities on a municipal scale. The government levels of the larger scales divine guidelines for the implementation of the housing policy for the government layers beneath them. The national housing policy is implemented on the regional scale based on the housing agendas, which are established by the province and regions. The regions are created by municipalities that are linked by the same regional housing market. To be able to act properly on the regional housing market, it is important that good cooperation takes place between the province and region, but also between the municipalities within the region. Cooperation can be divided into hard and soft factors, with the soft factors relating to social aspects. Because preliminary research/review showed that the cooperation between provinces and municipalities in the search for a coordinated housing agenda does not always run smoothly. In addition, the literature shows a causal relationship between the soft aspects and the outcome of the cooperation. Therefore, this research focuses on the soft aspects of cooperation between the province and her regions, and how these soft aspects hinder the outcome of the cooperation, which is the formulation and establishment of the housing agendas. The research question is as follow:

“Which soft aspects hinder cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions in establishing the housing agenda?”

To determine an answer for this research question, several steps were taken. First, this thesis clarifies in which context the research topic is set, in order to better understand the relationships between the layers of government and to get a better picture of the housing problems. After the context, the soft aspects of cooperation were extracted from the literature. Multi-level governance theory, institutional collective action theory and collaborative governance theory are the used theories for the determination of the soft aspects of cooperation. On the basis of the theoretical framework a selection was made of the soft aspects: trust, shared ambition, expectations, sense of urgency, communication and leadership.

Due to the large housing shortage and the differences in urbanisation of the regions, it was decided to use the province of Gelderland as a case study. data was collected on the basis of documents - including housing agendas, reports and official letters - and interviews with representatives of the province, regions and external experts. In addition, the collected data was analysed using Atlas.ti. The findings showed that there are two types of relationship that influence the housing agendas – the cooperation between the province and its regions and the intermunicipal cooperation within the regions. The cooperation between municipalities within a region have a great influence on the outcome, as the region has responsibility to draw up a housing agenda. The role of the province is to stimulate regional coordination and to open the dialogue for better substantiation of the regional housing plans.

It can be concluded that the new role of the province of Gelderland has a positive effect on the housing agenda, but there are points of improvements for the cooperation between the province and its regions and the intermunicipal cooperation. The formulation and establishment of the housing agenda are hindered by all soft aspects. The soft aspects are influenced by politics, priority of own interests and the uncertain benefits the housing agenda can bring to the regions.

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GLOSSARY

Collaboration

Collaboration and cooperation are used interchangeably in this thesis, both referring to the act of working together with other people or organisations to jointly create something ('Collaboration', 2020; 'Cooperation', 2020).

Cooperation

Collaboration and cooperation are used interchangeably in this thesis, both referring to the act of working together with other people or organisations to jointly create something ('Collaboration', 2020; 'Cooperation', 2020).

Planning capacity

The planning capacity concerns the number of housing plans that the province allows per municipality (Wichard et al., 2018).

Regional coordination

Regional coordination refers to the consultation between municipalities in which the municipal housing programs are discussed and assessed, whereby the consultation results in a distribution of approved housing plans among the municipalities within the region (Wichard et al., 2018).

1. | INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the influence of cooperation on the regional housing agenda in the province of Gelderland. This chapter explains the chosen subject for this thesis and the relevance of this research. First, this chapter explains the research motive and background, research aim and research questions, which clarifies the chosen research subject. Further sections define the relevance of the research subject.

1.1 Research motive and background

The Netherlands has been dealing with a housing shortage since at least the end of World War II, and newspapers write weekly about the shortage to this day (Eerenbeemt, 2019; Kalse, 2020; NOS, 2020; Teije, 2019). In 2019, the housing shortage was estimated on 315,000 houses, which indicates that the housing shortage consisted of 3.8% of the total housing stock (Groot & Vrieselaar, 2019; Spiegelhaar & Vrieselaar, 2020). The shortage is almost at the same level as after World War II, which shows the severity of the problem (Groenemeijer & Lelij, 2019). The current Dutch housing shortage was partially the result of the global 2008 economic crash, but the national government also withdrew from public spending and even closed the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (Dutch: *VROM*) in 2010, which meant that housing became a less prior government task (Hulsman, 2020). This research focuses on the province of Gelderland because the housing shortage in Gelderland is more severe than the national average, and the housing shortage is expected to further increase – as a result, the urgency for building homes is high. The housing shortage in Gelderland was estimated at 3.9% in 2019 (Groenemeijer & Lelij, 2019). Furthermore, the province expects an inflow of new households from the Randstad, which increases the demand for houses to a greater extent (BNR, 2019; Provincie Gelderland, 2019). This case is explained in detail in section 5.1. This section will further explain the complexity of the housing market, the role of the Dutch government on the housing market, the Dutch housing policy and the importance of cooperation between different governmental layers regarding the implementation of the housing policy.

1.1.1 Complexity of the Dutch housing market

The problem of the housing market is complicated because of the many active actors who each have different roles and tasks (Pepers et al., 2018; Beuzenberg et al., 2018). A report by Platform31 distinguishes 14 players in the housing market; among those players, the government is represented by three actors: municipalities, provinces and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (Beuzenberg et al., 2018). The involvement of those three governmental actors indicates that the government is active in the housing market at different levels. With the housing policy, the government exerts influence on the housing market with the purpose of increasing the affordability, quality and availability of houses (Donders et al., 2010).

1.1.2 Role of the Dutch government

As a response to the growing housing shortage, the national government has stipulated the need to build 75,000 houses per year as part of its national policy (Pepers et al., 2018; Beuzenberg, Lustenhouwer & Wassenberg, 2018). The different government bodies have a significant degree of

autonomy over their respective spatial scales: the national government focuses on the national level, the provinces on the regional level and municipalities on the local level. The larger-scale government levels determine guidelines concerning the housing policy for the government layers beneath them.

The implementation of housing policy starts with the national government. A range of instruments are used by the national government to implement housing policy; one is the national housing agenda, which contains the objectives of the housing policy. Each province then draws up a structural vision based on the national housing agenda (Straalen, Janssen-Jansen & Brink, 2014). Municipalities, on the other hand, do not draw up a housing vision from the perspective of the national housing agenda, but instead act based on the wishes and needs of their residents (Schaaf & Spenkelink, 2018 and Michielsen, Groot & Veenstra, 2019). The Housing Act 2015 led to the creation of housing regions, in which municipalities are united. The creation of the housing regions stems from the fact that the housing market has the characteristics of a regional market. The region functions as a discussion partner for coordinating housing visions on a regional scale. On this scale, the region develops a housing agenda that the province then checks to make sure it meets the terms of the structural vision (Groenemeijer & Lelij, 2019 and Schaaf & Spenkelink, 2018). The goal of the housing agenda is to provide clarity about quantitative aspects (number of houses) and qualitative aspects (type of house, target groups) of housing (Wichard, Janssen-Jansen & Spit, 2018).

1.1.3 Importance of cooperation

Koek et al. (2018), Wichard et al. (2018) and Hoedt (2009) have shown that strong cooperation between the different governmental layers is one aspect necessary for achieving a good living environment. A well-coordinated housing agenda can effectively tackle housing problems only if the national policy sets the right guidelines. With the housing policy, the government tries to stimulate the housing market to pursue its goal of 'promoting sufficient living space'. The goal of striving for sufficient living space is enshrined in the Dutch Constitution, making it a consistent government objective (CPB, 2020). This means that proper implementation of housing policy should contribute to solving the housing shortage.

Even though the provinces and municipalities have been working together for years, studies (Teisman & Voermans, 2017; Schaaf & Spenkelink, 2018) show that cooperation between provinces and municipalities in the search for a coordinated housing agenda does not always run smoothly. Additionally, in the future, the need for strong cooperation will be greater because of the introduction of the Environmental Act (Dutch: *Omgevingswet*), which is expected to be introduced in January 2021. It is therefore essential that cooperation between the province and its municipalities run smoothly.

The quality of that cooperation is influenced by hard and soft aspects. The soft aspects relate to the culture of organisations and social factors such as cooperation, while the hard factors refer to things such as tools, instruments, laws and regulations (Nauta, 1999; Waterman, Peters & Philips, 1980). Because of the growing importance of understanding cooperation between governmental organisations, this research focuses on the soft aspects of cooperation.

1.2 Research aim

This thesis aims to gain insight into the soft aspects that hinder cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions to contribute to a full understanding of Gelderland's housing shortage.

Specifically, this thesis focuses on the interactions between the province of Gelderland and its regions because it is in these interactions that policy guidelines are translated into more concrete tasks. Cooperation can be divided into hard and soft aspects. The government plays a role on different levels in the Dutch housing market. The national government can influence the housing market with hard aspects, such as mortgage interest relief and rent allowance. The Dutch government consists of different layers, which makes good interaction between these layers important for the implementation of the housing policy. This interaction refers to the soft side of the cooperation. The soft aspects influence the outcome of these processes – the housing agenda (Mandell & Keats, 2008; Provan & Milward, 2001). After indications that the process of interaction is difficult, it will be interesting to find out which soft aspects hinder the cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions.

Additionally, municipalities often unite in regions because the housing market has developed into a regional market. These regions were established following the Housing Act (Dutch: *Woningwet*) in 2015 and initially reflected the working area of housing associations. The region is often an interlocutor in the cooperative process of establishing the housing agenda. Section 2.5 gives more details about these type of regions.

1.3 Research question

The question of this research concerns the roles of the province and regions of Gelderland, the soft aspects of cooperation and how they can negatively influence the establishment of housing agendas. The main question is as follows:

Which soft aspects hinder cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions in establishing the housing agenda?

Answering the main question requires collecting knowledge about which actors must cooperate, which remit they have, what role the actors have concerning housing policy, which soft aspects of cooperation influence the quality of the housing agenda and which soft aspects obstruct the establishment of the housing agenda. Sub-questions were thus developed to aid in gathering this knowledge:

- *What roles do the province of Gelderland and its regions play when cooperating to produce housing agendas?*
- *Which soft aspects of cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions affect the establishment of the housing agenda, and what influence do these aspects have?*
- *What areas for improvement are there in the soft aspects of the cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions?*

The first sub-question concerns the roles of both the province and the regions in establishing the housing agenda. This research examines how both actors play these roles. The second sub-question is about how the soft characteristics of cooperation influence the establishment of the housing agenda. A distinction is made between soft aspects and how these aspects are valued by the actors involved. In the theoretical framework, the distinctions in soft cooperation aspects are clarified. Finally, this thesis searches for improvements of the soft aspects of cooperation between the province and regions.

1.4 Relevance

This section explains the relevance of this thesis, which is divided into the scientific relevance and societal relevance. The scientific relevance explains the contribution of this thesis to science. The social importance of this research is explained under societal relevance.

1.4.1 Scientific relevance

A wide variety of studies have explored intergovernmental relations, regional cooperation, cooperation in different types of regions and cooperation related to housing construction. Several studies related to these subjects are cited to show what areas are already researched scientifically. In addition, this section closes by identifying the research gap and explaining why this research fills that gap.

There are studies that focus on intergovernmental cooperation (Hardy et al., 2003), intermunicipal partnerships (Laar, 2010; Herweijer & Fraanje, 2011) and interprovincial partnerships (Klaveren, 2006). Miller and Lee (2009) and Stein and Turkewitsch (2010) also focused on the relationships between different government layers. The relationship between governments is regularly evaluated in the Netherlands, whereby inter-administrative relationships are tested against the Code of Intergovernmental Relationships (Dutch: *Code van interbestuurlijke relaties*) (Raad van State, 2006).

Other cooperation studies are more regional and network oriented. Research of Boogers (2013) focuses on the success of cooperation between different actors, including governmental bodies, education authorities, businesses within the region. Within the framework of regional cooperation, research has been conducted into the effects of cooperation (Boogers, 2015), the quality of forms of cooperation in areas which shrink in population (Tinke, 2012) and the differences in regional cooperation among metropolitan regions (Miller & Lee, 2009; Stein & Turkewitsch, 2010).

Furthermore, Salet et al. (2012) have emphasised the need for research on regional cooperation to focus on the process of cooperation. Nauta (1999) has demonstrated that individual personalities influence the collaborative process. For example, research has been conducted on the resources that municipal councillors need to fulfil their tasks in regional cooperation (Raad voor het openbaar bestuur, 2015). These studies have focused much more on the aspects that influence the collaborative process than on the results of the process.

By touching on intergovernmental cooperation, the research topic at hand is also related to housing construction. In this field, research has been carried out on aspects that influence the cooperation process (Knuiman, 2002) and the bottlenecks and challenges involved (Noordhuis & Vrijhoef, 2011). Boudewijn (2007) has stated that better cooperation leads to the acceleration of the construction process. This research builds on Boudewijn's (2007) work by investigating the impact of the collaboration process on the housing agenda. Furthermore, this research complements the literature on intergovernmental relations by focusing on aspects that influence the process of cooperation and thus going beyond simply testing against the Code of intergovernmental relations, which contain regulation for interaction between governmental bodies.

This research fills in the scientific knowledge gap of intergovernmental relations, regional cooperation, cooperation in different types of regions and cooperation related to housing construction because it focuses on the soft aspects of intergovernmental cooperation specifically related to the housing policy. The emphasis of this research is on the influence of the soft aspects of cooperation, which concern the vertical relationship between the province and regions on the housing agenda.

1.4.2 Societal relevance

The housing shortage is a critical problem in the Netherlands, which is why solutions are being sought. However, building a house is a complex process involving many actors. To build homes, the various actors should work well together to limit the risks and prevent delays. Various studies (Bouwend Nederland et al., 2019; Zeeuw, 2015) have demonstrated that close collaboration is essential to building new homes. Given the seriousness of the housing shortage, it is important that cooperation does not hinder the housing construction. The government is also a major player in the housing market and has much influence on the process via its housing policy. The government is often seen as one player, but it consists of several layers, all of which contribute to housing policy. Here, too, it is important that the various levels of government work together closely to properly implement their housing policy. Essential for this close cooperation are good relationships, trust, clarity and openness; these characteristics and others like them ensure that the cooperation effectively improves the housing market situation by means of the housing policy.

Layers of government are often quite independent, with each having its own tasks and obligations but being oriented towards the same goal. Even though the different government layers have been working together since the reform of the Dutch Constitution, cooperation between layers of government often does not proceed smoothly, which means that there are always opportunities to improve and ensure that something positive is gained in cooperation among government actors.

2. | INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

As stated in the introduction, this research focuses on the cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions, and the effect of soft aspects of cooperation on the quality of housing agendas. This chapter explains the administrative structure of the Dutch government, which helps in shedding light on the relations between government layers. First, this chapter explains the history of the current Dutch government structure. The history shows the initial idea behind the structure and the dependencies between the layers. Further sections define the tasks of each layer of the government and describe the added value of each layer concerning the housing policy. After the explanation of the function of the layers, this chapter focuses on developments concerning the structure of the government and interrelations. These developments refer to the regions and 'Housing Deals' (Dutch: *Woondeals*).

2.1 History of the Dutch government structure

When describing the administrative structure of the Netherlands, one may refer to the metaphor of the House of Thorbecke (Dutch: *Huis van Thorbecke*). Thorbecke was a Dutch politician and founder of the Dutch parliamentary democracy. The House of Thorbecke stands for the tripartite division of the Dutch administration, which consists of the national government, provinces and municipalities. The three levels of government are the foundation of the administrative structure and form the floor of the house in the metaphor (Salet, Metze & Levelt, 2012). The metaphor is a simplification of the administrative structure and serves as a basis for understanding the relations between the government layers.

The division of administrative power took place in response to the constitutional reforms of 1848 (Merriënboer, 2017). The revision of the Dutch Constitution led to a transition of responsibility regarding policymaking. The responsibility transferred from the king to ministers, and, at the same time, the revision made it possible to elect ministers (De Nederlandse Grondwet, n.d.). After the reform in 1848, the introduction of the Provincial Act (Dutch: *Provinciewet*) in 1850 provided the basis for the current provincial authorities. This act contains the rules and guidelines regarding the structure, composition and powers of the provincial governments, including rules on the supervision of these administrations (Mensen, 2012). The same applies for the Municipality Act (Dutch: *Gemeentewet*), which came into force in 1851. The latter act ensured similarity in administrative structure and powers for all municipalities in the Netherlands (Berg, 2013). With the introduction of these two laws, the various levels of government obtained a degree of autonomy (Salet et al., 2012). Organic relationships and mutual dependencies between the levels of government characterised the new administrative structure of the Netherlands, whereby the national government, provinces and municipalities form the Dutch government. According to Toonen (1987), the Dutch government could not function if one of the governing levels were missing. Each layer of the government contributes to refining policy and implementation, as designed by Thorbecke.

Within the House of Thorbecke, the national government forms the top floor, the provinces follow below, and on the ground floor are the municipalities. This tripartite division affects each policy area, no matter the subject. Within this division, the national government focuses on policy formulation, the

municipalities focus on implementation, and the provinces – the intermediate layer – bear responsibility for provincial coordination, mediation between the levels of government and the supervision of the implementation of policy (Toonen, 2005). This classification also symbolises the hierarchy of laws and regulations – arrangements and decisions with a broader territorial scope take precedence over those covering a smaller scale. The regulations of the national government take precedence over the regulations of the provinces and municipalities, and the regulations of the provinces stand above the regulations of the municipalities (Raad van State, 2006). Even though provincial and municipal authorities have a high degree of autonomy, a hierarchy is nevertheless formed in internal administration, as the regulations and decisions of higher authorities form guidelines for the regulations and decisions of lower authorities. Over the years, society has become more complex, and social issues no longer fit the limits of a spatial scale. Policy themes, such as mobility and housing, exceed the limits of the administrative scales as Thorbecke devised them. Although a certain layer of the government may have remained primarily responsible for a specific task, there has been an increasing level of cooperation between the levels of government in the House of Thorbecke.

This research concerns the relationship between the administrative layers that together determine the housing agenda. The focus, therefore, is on intergovernmental relationships. In general, all three layers of government are involved in the housing policy process. The task of each layer and how these tasks add value to the housing market are further defined in the next section – as are the relationships between the layers. The outlining of the layers helps one to understand how a housing policy is implemented and which external factors have an influence on housing policy.

2.2 National government

On the national level, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (2018b) deals with all matters related to housing, including housing policy. The Housing Allocation Act (Dutch: *Huisvestingswet*) of 1993 was the first law in the Netherlands related to housing. The law provided instruments for the government to intervene in the distribution of living space and the composition of the housing stock to facilitate a well-functioning housing market (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2016). In combination with the Housing Act (Dutch: *Woningwet*) that was introduced in 1901, the Housing Allocation Act makes clear that the government strives for quality and healthy housing for everyone, which includes steering the housing market to meet the wishes and needs of the citizens.

The national government has the objective of ensuring that the size, quality and differentiation of the housing stock (Schaaf & Spenkelink, 2018) meet the requirements of the nation. The national government – together with many other parties, including market parties, citizens' representatives, the provinces and municipalities – periodically draws up a housing vision through which the parties try to improve the housing market by making agreements (Beuzenberg, Lustenhouwer & Wassenberg, 2018). The National Housing Agenda 2018–2021 is the current structural vision of the national government; the main action points of this vision are as follows:

- Take measures, such as convening expert teams, to accelerate existing construction plans;
- Create opportunities to make better use of the existing housing stock; and
- Guarantee the affordability of housing (Pepers et al., 2018).

The national government can adapt the housing policy through the use of three instruments: stimulation, regulation and taxation. The housing market can be stimulated through, for example, the application of rent allowances to make renting more attractive for house hunters. Furthermore, the national government can regulate the housing market with the help of several statutes: the Housing Allocation Act (Dutch: *Huisvestingswet*), Housing Act (Dutch: *Woningwet*), Spatial Planning Act (Dutch: *Wet ruimtelijke ordening*) and Spatial Planning Decree (Dutch: *Besluit ruimtelijke ordening*). These regulations provide tools for ensuring the efficient use of space, called the *ladder for sustainable urbanisation* (Dutch: *Ladder voor duurzame verstedelijking*) (Schaaf & Schenkelink, 2018). The ladder for sustainable urbanisation is applicable to spatial projects that meet the characteristics of new urban development. With the application of the ladder, municipalities and developers must give a clear motivation for spatial decisions; the new urban development must contribute to proper spatial planning (Kenniscentrum Infomil, n.d.). Another instrument of the national government for influencing the housing market is the levying of taxes related to renting or owning houses. The taxes related to home ownership include the property transfer tax (Dutch: *overdrachtsbelasting*) and the property tax (Dutch: *onroerendezaakbelasting*). Regarding renting, landlords pay taxes in the form of the landlord levy (Dutch: *verhuurdersheffing*). Taxes are one of the main tools for influencing the housing market (Ministerie van Financien, 2019; Belastingdienst, 2020a, 2020b).

2.3 Provinces

The Netherlands consists of 12 provinces, with the provincial states and the provincial executive forming the provincial government of each province. The members of the provincial state provide for the general administration of the province; they are elected every four years and represent a political party. The essential tasks of the provincial states are preparing and supervising policies. On the other hand, the provincial executive handles the daily management of the province. The members of the provincial executive are also elected for four years, but they are elected by members of the provincial state and are called *commissioners*. The principal duties of the commissioners are to prepare and implement decisions made by the provincial state. Additionally, the commissioners are accountable to the provincial states (ProDemos, 2019; Ministerie van BZK, 2019c).

The provinces fall under the authority of the national government and, thereby, are tasked with implementing several national laws. However, the provinces also have a degree of freedom, which allows them to decide on many matters independently; for example, provinces may determine where they construct roads. The province always acts from the position of provincial interest, which means all actions should contribute positively to the province, for example, economically or in terms of sustainability. The province itself determines what constitutes the provincial interest – via the director of integration and the consideration of spatial challenges – and assesses the regional and provincial importance of housing plans. Each province has a substantial amount of freedom to determine what falls within the provincial interest. It is essential to keep in mind that, despite the independent tasks, the province is subordinate to the national government. As such, the province must comply with the conditions set by the national government in the national housing agenda. The objectives of the province are set out in the structural vision, which falls within the mandate of the national government. In this vision, the province focuses mainly on the provincial market and the establishment of provincial

interests. Furthermore, the province retains a certain degree of control over the housing policy themes and is tasked with ensuring that municipalities achieve regional coordination for housing projects (Beuzenberg et al., 2018).

Partly because the housing market developed as a regional market, the province gained more authority in 2012 concerning the implementation of housing policy. From then on, provinces have had control over the total number of houses to be built, the use of planning capacity and the possibilities for building outside existing urban areas (Michielsen, Groot & Veenstra, 2019). The province already plays an essential role in ensuring the reflection of national policy in local implementation, but multiple studies (Alden, 2006; Allmendinger et al., 2010; Cochrane, 2012; Pearce et al., 2006) have confirmed that the total package of tasks has made the province a more relevant player in the housing market than before 2012.

However, the provincial executive has various instruments related to provincial and regional spatial planning, including legal and non-legal instruments (Table 1). The provincial state can, for example, impose additional rules on top of the ladder for sustainable urbanisation. Another instrument is proactive designation, which means that the province designates a location within a municipality where, for example, the building of windmills takes place. Accordingly, the province adjusts the zoning plan to its interests. After establishing the structural vision, the province may institute a reactive designation. This designation may relate to an established zoning plan, environmental permit or management regulation. The application of the reactive designation prevents other decisions from coming into effect (Postul, 2015). Furthermore, a distinction can be made between hard and soft instruments; for example, consultation and knowledge fall under the soft instruments, and financial resources fall under the hard instruments.

Table 1: Provincial instruments for spatial planning.

Legal instruments	Non-legal instruments
Zoning plans	Regional agreements
Management regulations	Financial resources (such as subsidies and funds)
Ordinances	Consultations
Proactive designations	Knowledge (in the form of forecasts, monitoring or meetings)
Reactive designations	

Source: Beuzenberg et al., 2018; Schaaf et al., 2018; Postul, 2015.

2.4 Municipalities

The lowest layer of the House of Thorbecke belongs to the municipalities. The Netherlands has 355 municipalities spread over the 12 provinces. The tasks that belong to the municipalities have a direct relationship with their inhabitants. These tasks include the implementation of national laws, such as issuing passports, but the municipality also has control over numerous other matters, for example, the development of housing (Ministerie van BZK, 2019e). The council of the municipality consists of the city council and the board of the mayor and aldermen. The members of the municipal council make

decisions in the interest of the municipality, develop the budget, check the annual financial report and the municipal executive. The councillors are elected every four years by the residents of the municipality (Ministerie van BZK, 2018c; 2019b). Subsequently, the city council appoints the aldermen, who are part of the college of the mayor and council members. The college is responsible for day-to-day management, which includes the implementation of the laws and decisions of the national and provincial government. Each councillor is assigned a specific task area for which they are responsible, for example, education. The tasks of the municipality vary from administrative tasks to the implementation of laws, for example, from registering residents to drafting zoning plans (Ministerie van BZK, 2019e).

A municipality can manage its housing stock by number and type of housing units, location, price and quality based on the housing needs of the residents. Additionally, the municipality establishes, among other things, the rules for tenants and buyers and housing objectives in the housing vision. Based on the housing vision, the municipality can make performance agreements with housing associations and tenant organisations. The municipality does not need to draw up a housing vision, but it does need the vision to make performance agreements with other parties. The municipality often plays a facilitating and directing role when it comes to the implementation of the housing vision and housing programmes. The municipality can take on this role because it establishes the zoning plan for the location and draws up rules concerning, for example, the share of rental homes in the housing programme and rules for private commissioning (Beuzenberg et al., 2018 and Schaaf et al., 2018).

2.5 Regions

In response to developments in the housing market and the modification of the Housing Act (Dutch: *Woningwet*), the national government determined that municipalities must unite in regions. These regions are also known as *housing market regions*. The region represents the municipalities in their cooperation with their province when determining the housing agenda. It is therefore important to gain insight into the origin and function of these housing market regions.

The reason municipalities unite in regions is that most relocation flows take place within a region, which means that households move within the same region. According to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (2015), relocation flows in the Netherlands can be fully divided into the housing market regions. In 2015, the Housing Act (Dutch: *Woningwet*) determined that municipalities should unite into these regions. Municipalities had the freedom to form a region in consultation with the housing associations active in their areas. The act included some guidelines for forming these regions; these guidelines concerned the number of households in the area, the minimum number of joint municipalities and the requirement for active moving flows within the area. The goal of housing market regions is to bring the work of the housing associations to the regional scale. A housing association can currently only be active in one region (Platform31, n.d.). The formation of regions was, therefore, not entirely voluntarily. Using guidelines, the municipalities could choose with which other municipality they wanted to form a region. However, there has been criticism of the formation of the housing market regions. Siewers (2019) has argued, for example, that the housing market has no straight borders and that the establishment of the regions does not conform to the moving flows and real estate developments of the areas they cover.

Wichard et al. (2018) have described the relationship between the provinces, regions and municipalities as a triangle that situates the regional coordination of housing construction programmes (Figure 1). This research is not focused on how regional coordination takes place, but the triangle model provides insight into how municipalities position themselves towards provinces. The research by Wichard et al. (2018) shows at which administrative layer the initiative lies for determining the housing agenda. In Wichard et al.'s (2018) model, the municipalities work within the provincial framework to determine their housing construction programme. The province principally has control over the quantitative aspect of housing, and the municipalities are free to interpret the qualitative aspect as they see fit. The establishment of regional housing agendas occurs because the region coordinates municipal housing programmes. However, the model starts with the municipalities because they propose the housing construction programmes. From there, coordination will happen between the municipalities within the region. The region then draws up a housing agenda, which the province must approve. In practice, the region often functions as a centre for converting conflicting visions between municipalities – and between municipalities and the province – into a shared vision.

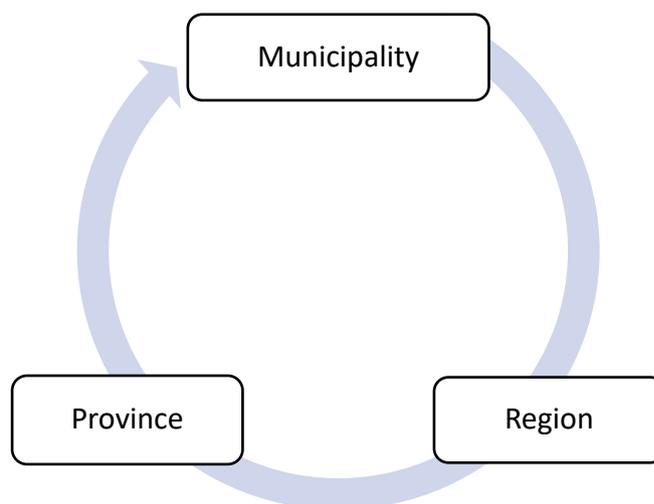


Figure 1: Triangle model in which the municipality forms the starting point for regional coordination.
Source: Wichard et al., 2018 and own editing.

2.6 Housing Deals

Due to the large housing shortage in a number of (urban) regions in the Netherlands, the national government has invited the regions to participate in a discussion aimed at finding a solution. The solution preferred by the regions is to accelerate the construction of houses, which is a complex task. To realise the acceleration, the Housing Deals were created. The Housing Deals are policy documents with the goal to accelerate the housing construction and contain agreements that are directly made between the national government and region. The Housing Deals focus on all regional themes which contribute or are related to the acceleration, such as infrastructure and environment (Ministerie van BZK, 2020). The Housing Deals are important for this research because the situation regarding the

establishment of the Housing Deals seem to involve cooperation between the national government and the regions. This represents a different sort of intergovernmental relations than initially designed by Thorbecke.

The Housing Deals are also focused on improving cooperation between the parties within a region because the deals not only are determined by government parties, but also involve private parties and citizens' representatives. Via clear agreements through a Housing Deal, cooperation between parties within the region and between the region and national government improves (Ministerie van BZK, 2020). Because the Housing Deals focus on cooperation within the region and between the region and the national government, the Housing Deals have also given way to more criticism regarding the function of the province. De Vries (Marijnissen, 2019) has argued, for example, that the province provides no added value in administrative matters and that it would, therefore, be better to remove the province from the House of Thorbecke. Since the introduction of the Municipality Act (Dutch: *Gemeentewet*), the municipalities have developed their authority much further than the provinces. As a result, the province is now, according to De Vries, unnecessary.

2.7 Summary of the Dutch government structure

This section gives an overview of the administrative structure for housing policy and the functions of various layers of government regarding housing policy. Figure 2 shows the mutual governmental relationships concerning housing policy and how the policy documents of the various administrative layers are related to each other.

As previously described, the national government formulates the national housing agenda on the basis of developments in the housing market and demographics. Additionally, the national government is responsible for the system of laws and regulations and determines the powers and instruments of the various parties involved in the housing market to protect and improve quality of living. The national housing agenda forms guidelines for provincial housing policy; the provinces then develop a structural vision that includes the provincial housing vision's principles. These principles then also form the guidelines for the housing visions of the municipalities. The province is responsible for coordinating and considering the housing visions of municipalities with regard to spatial specifications on a provincial and/or regional scale. Then a housing agenda is drawn up by the region and established by the province, including qualitative and quantitative agreements regarding the housing policy. When setting the housing agendas, municipalities often unite in a region because this spatial scale is better suited to the housing market. From the housing agendas, the region crafts a residential programme for each municipality; these programmes ultimately indicate what the housing policy is for houses themselves (and, therefore, what the municipality may add to homes). The municipalities can then make agreements with project developers or housing associations to construct the necessary houses. Agreements concerning the housing policy are in general made between the region and national government. The Housing Deals emphasise the importance of cooperation, exhibiting a different structure of policymaking.

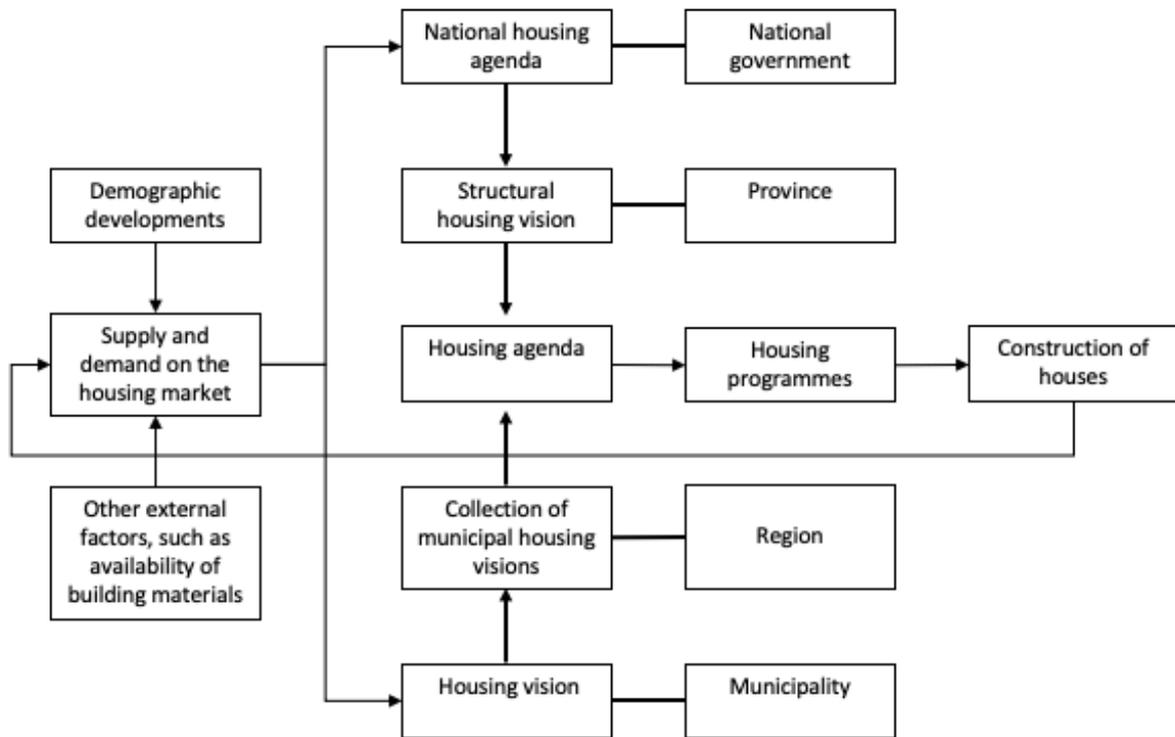


Figure 2: Simplified overview of the governmental structure concerning the housing policy.

3. | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research focuses on the cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its municipalities regarding housing policy. This chapter focuses on theories explaining regional collaboration and soft aspects of collaboration. First, the term 'regional collaboration' is introduced, and several theories related to regional collaboration are further described. The relevant theories for this research are *multi-level governance*, the *institutional collective action theory* and the *collaborative governance theory*. To offer insight into the types of regional collaboration, the dimensions and forms of collaboration are described after the explanation of the regional collaboration theories. Then, the focus of this chapter shifts from regional collaboration in particular to the soft aspects of collaboration in general. The soft aspects are relevant for this research because the housing agendas are the outcome of the described interactions. Finally, a conceptual model is drawn up using the theories discussed in this chapter, indicating the causal relationships pertinent to the research topic.

3.1 Regional collaboration

Within the housing market regions, collaboration takes place between and within the different government layers to form and implement housing policy. This type of collaboration is referred to as *regional collaboration*. Regional collaboration has been defined by Boogers et al. (2015, p.21) as 'all forms of regional collaboration established by Dutch municipalities or required by the national government that are focused on promoting a public interest'. This definition refers to governmental actors that are involved in collaborations concerning a subject that crosses at least municipal boundaries.

An important development concerning regional collaboration is the shift from government to governance. The term *governance* is used by researchers in many ways and forms. According to Finer (1970), governance refers to a change within the government around new processes of governing, changed conditions of ordered rules or new methods regarding governing. Jessop (1997) has stated that this shift is a movement away from the central governing role of the national government to governing influenced by non-governmental organisations. Rhodes (2012, p.33) has defined the shift as 'a change in the pattern and exercise of state authority from a hierarchic or bureaucratic state to governance in and by networks'.

According to Millen and Lee (2009), there are four dimensions of regional collaboration: the *vertical dimension*, *intergovernmental dimension*, *inter-sectoral dimension* and *intra-regional dimension*. As Figure 3 shows, the dimensions offer insight into the different organisational structures of regional collaborations.

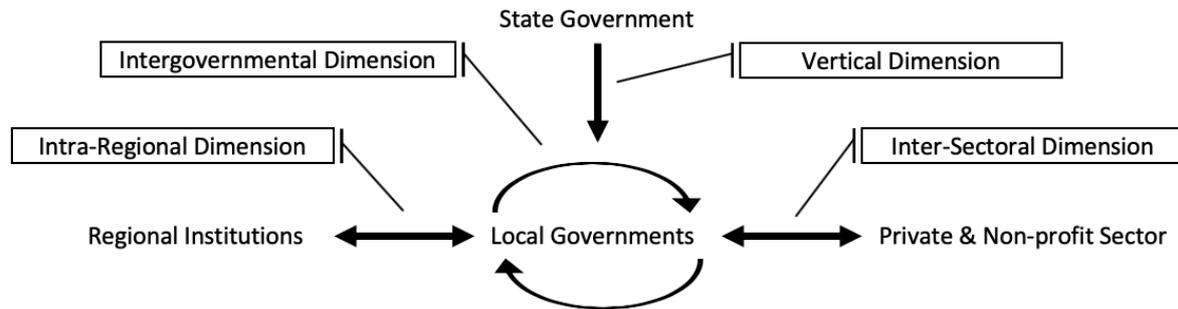


Figure 3: Dimensions of regional collaboration. *Source: Miller & Lee, 2009 and own editing.*

This research only concerns the vertical and intergovernmental dimensions. According to Miller and Lee (2009), the vertical dimension concerns the relationship between the different layers of government (i.e., between the national government, the province and its municipalities). An important characteristic of the relationships in this dimension is that the higher layer of government has a strict and dominant role. As the establishment of the housing agenda often takes place in cooperation between the province and the region, the municipalities within that region should work together. This indicates that there is regional collaboration in the intergovernmental dimension regarding housing policy. Therefore, the intergovernmental dimension is also relevant for this research. In contrast to the vertical dimension, the intergovernmental dimension is horizontal and focuses on inter-organisational interactions. The interactions involve joint policy efforts, resource exchange and project-based work.

For many government partnerships, such as a region, cooperation rules have been drawn up in the Joint Provisions Act (Dutch: *Wet gemeenschappelijke regelingen; Wgr*). The Joint Provisions Act forms the basis for cooperation between public entities – municipalities, provinces and water boards. This law was introduced in 1950, in the same period as the Provincial Act (Dutch: *Provinciewet*) and the Municipal Act (Dutch: *Gemeentewet*). The Joint Provisions Act mainly concerns collaborations which contain a new administrative body. Public entities can enter into multiple collaborations (Overheid.nl, 2020 and ROB, 2015), and the Joint Provisions Act makes it possible for public entities to create different formal structures of collaboration, which can include former city regions (Boogers, 2013). Collaborations that are realised with the use of the Joint Provisions Act are voluntary alliances. Municipalities are free to choose with whom they wish to cooperate (Geertsema, 2017; Hulst & Montfort, 2007). However, the cooperation regarding the establishment of the housing agenda is not based on the Joint Provisions Act, but for the municipalities which form the region the act is relevant. The principles of the House of Thorbecke and the associated hierarchy of laws and regulations provide sufficient structure for the cooperation between the provinces and regions for the implementation of the housing policy. The vertical dimension of collaboration is mandatory by the Provincial Act and Municipality Act, because of the hierarchical coordination (Boogers, 2015; Hes & Sabee, 2015). This type of coordination is characterised by direct steering by a dominant actor, often a public actor (Evers & Vries, 2013; Janssen-Jansen, 2010).

This research only includes the relevant perspectives of governance and regional collaboration to shed further light on the interrelation between the layers of government concerning the implementation of the housing policy, and as such, it focuses on the vertical and intergovernmental dimensions. According

to Tinke (2012), most research objects related to governance in the scientific literature are *network governance* and *multi-level governance*. The perspective of network governance often focuses on the horizontal relationships between the decentralised layers of government and non-governmental organisations (Hajer, Tatenhove & Laurent, 2004). On the other hand, multi-level governance is a broader concept of governance that includes horizontal and vertical relationships, whereby the vertical governance relates to the intergovernmental relations (Bache & Flinders, 2004). Because multi-level governance includes a perspective on intergovernmental relations, the theory is relevant for this research.

As a result of these developments, two main perspectives of the regional collaboration have arisen. These perspectives are the *institutional collective action theory* and the *collaborative governance approach*. Institutional collective action theory focuses on collaboration between government institutions and mainly looks at the costs and benefits of collaboration. In contrast, the collaborative governance approach includes non-governmental actors in the process of policymaking, which makes it less relevant for this research (Boogers, 2013).

Only the relevant theories for this research are further explained in the next sub-sections. As mentioned, those theories are multi-level governance, the institutional collective action theory and the collaborative governance theory. After the explanation of relevant theories the aspects of cooperation and their influence on outcomes are further described.

3.1.1 Multi-level governance

The concept of 'multi-level governance' finds its introduction in the integration process in Europe. Over the years, the focus of the administrative layers has shifted from the individual to the joint tackling of social issues. The three levels of government retain their main tasks, but cooperation and coordination have become more important to solving complex problems. This administrative structure is called multi-level governance, in which the various layers of government add value to solve the problems at their scale level (Teisman, Steen, Frankowski & Vulpen, 2018).

Multi-level governance refers to two types of cooperation: networks and intergovernmental relationships. Multi-level governance was initially used to analyse the European integration process. Haas (1958) and Lindberg (1963) used the term to argue that national governments were losing control of the supranational network of the European Union. The term 'multi-level governance' was first used by Marks (1993, p.392) for 'a system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers – supranational, national, regional and local'. This quote refers to new developments in the field of structural policy in the time the quote was written. However, multi-level governance refers not only to networks, but also to (vertical) intergovernmental relationships. The 'governance' part of multi-level governance generally refers to (horizontal) interactions between governments and non-governments (Bache & Flinders, 2004).

In the debate on governance, there is a dichotomy in which some scientists use the term to describe the activities of governing, such as Zürn (2010), and others use governance to address changes to the roles of those involved in government decisions, such as Rhodes (2012). The focus on vertical relations within the government involves the decentralisation of different tasks and regional institutions

(Kuijpers, 2017). This focus of multi-level governance helps to illustrate the relationships between the layers of government. This sub-section further explains the theory of multi-level governance with an emphasis on vertical intergovernmental relations.

The theory of multi-level governance involves some costs and benefits. According to Majone (1998) and Weingast (1995), the benefits of multi-level governance are the opportunities provided to adjust the scale to reflect heterogeneity, the provision of more information about the preferences of inhabitants, the ability to change preferences and other innovative developments, and facilitation of credible commitments. On the other hand, costs related to multi-level governance arise from incomplete information, inefficient coordination and the capturing of interest groups and corruption (Foster, 1997; Gray, 1973; Lowery et al., 1995; Cai and Treisman, 2001). This research concerns the relationship between the administrative levels that together determine the housing policy. Therefore, the focus is on intergovernmental relationships in which the three layers of government are involved in the policy process.

3.1.2 Institutional collective action theory

Institutional collective action theory tries to explain the collaboration between governmental institutions by looking at the costs and benefits of regional collaboration. The costs and benefits are an indication of the performance of the collaboration (Olson, 1965 and Boogers, 2013) – collaboration concerning a specific regional problem is successful when the benefits outweigh the costs. This definition of success is derived from the rational choice theory and transaction costs theory (Olson, 1965 and Lowery, 2000).

According to institutional collective action theory, the benefits of regional collaboration can be distinguished into four types. First are *strategic benefits*, or benefits which are achieved through accomplishing regional objectives and solving social issues within the region. Secondly, *policy benefits* are benefits that accrue from the development of effective policies within the region. Thirdly, benefits can be related to the reduction of costs and the mitigation of regional vulnerability, also called *operational benefits*. Finally, the most comprehensive benefits are the *economic benefits*, which are measured using the gross regional product (Boogers, 2013 and Feiock, 2004).

The benefits are offset by the costs of collaboration. These costs are referred to as *transaction costs*. Transaction costs relating to regional collaboration usually relate to the effort invested in achieving consensus concerning a regional objective (Boogers, 2013 and Feiock, 2004). The most relevant transaction costs can also be divided into four types. The first type is *information and coordination costs*, which are related to the costs of obtaining information about the preferences and resources of other involved actors. The second type of transaction costs is *negotiation and distribution costs*. These are the costs necessary for achieving consensus within the regional collaboration. During the collaboration, decisions are made by the involved actors, and agreements are monitored. The monitoring entails costs known as *enforcement and surveillance costs*. The last type of transaction costs are *representation costs*. These costs are related to mutual consultations to define point of view, but also to meetings between negotiating partners (Boogers, 2013).

There are several aspects that influence the level of costs related to regional collaboration. First, the type of policy and the nature of the facility matter. Institutional action theory states that within regional cooperation, it is easier to reach a consensus for facilities with easy-to-distribute revenues than for provisions for which distributing revenues is complex. Second, costs can be influenced by the social and geographical characteristics of the involved governmental actors. It is harder to achieve consensus when, for example, two municipalities do not have a shared ambition or problem. If municipalities are distant from each other, it is possible that they do not experience the same problems. Ambitions will also differ between municipalities, as they differ in the population and population composition. The third factor to consider is administrative laws and regulations. Clarity around laws and regulations improves regional cooperation. This can also occur in the opposite direction. Finally, good mutual contact between actors ensures trust. The structure of the network can offer opportunities for positive mutual contact and trust (Boogers, 2013).

This theory fits well with the formation of regions and the cooperation between governments, as it offers indicators for the effectiveness of collaboration. However, it could be considered too simple or that indicators of effectiveness should be more complex (Boogers, 2013; March, 1978). Applying this theory, depends greatly on how the costs and benefits are interpreted (Bristow, 2005). In addition, Kahneman et al. (1986) state that considerations about costs and benefits are influenced by emotions, cultural norms and values. Therefore, another theory will be cited to further complement the indicators of cooperation.

3.1.3 Collaborative governance theory

Collaborative governance theory focuses on policy arrangements between governmental bodies and other organisations. Those arrangements are related to policy programmes and the implementation of those programmes (Ansell & Gash, 2007). The housing agendas are a form of policy arrangement established by the government and private parties to improve the building speed of houses. However, it is not only because of this new trend that the collaborative governance theory is relevant for this study. Since the housing agenda is jointly established by the province and regions, a consensus needs to be achieved about the housing policy programme. As this theory gives insight into the conditions of successful decision-making arrangements and is only applicable in situations where actors are mutually dependent on each other, the theory is relevant for this research (Boogers, 2013). This theory focuses on different factors than the institutional collective action theory; therefore, this theory can be used to complement the institutional collective action theory.

Ansell and Gash (2007) have defined several aspects that influence the process of collaboration: *involvement in decision-making, urgency of the problem, experiences of working together, leadership and personal contact*. According to Ansell and Gash, the level of involvement of the different actors in decision-making influences the outcomes of the decision-making process. If actors are less involved, it may result in a lack of support for the decision to be made. In addition to involvement, it is important that actors have a reason to participate in the process. Both the province and the municipalities need to see the urgency of the housing shortage and the housing agenda as an effective instrument for reducing the housing shortage. Furthermore, previous experiences of collaboration between the actors influence the level of mutual trust and the quality of the process. Ansell and Gash have stated that positive experiences of working together have a beneficial effect on trust and the quality of the

process. Leadership contributes to the creation of pleasant experiences, as strong leadership overcomes obstacles within the process of cooperation. An excellent leader can make a difference for the quality of the collaboration process. Finally, the collaborative governance theory states that with high-quality mutual contact within the collaboration, irritation and frustration can be prevented.

3.2 Aspects of cooperation

The housing agenda is a product of the cooperation between two levels of government: the province and municipalities. To identify the influence of this cooperation on the housing agenda, it is important to define which aspects lead to successful cooperation. To determine which aspects positively influence the outcome of cooperation, reference is made to the literature that concerns influences on the outcome of cooperation that relate to a multi-level approach, regional cooperation and housing. For example, Mies (2008) has written about aspects of communication, common interest, expectations and the process in relation to cooperation between governments. Additionally, Kaats et al. (2011) have mentioned shared ambition, the process, the quality of dialogue, interests and trust as important aspects affecting cooperation between organisations. Other studies confirming important aspects affecting collaboration include Boudewijn (2007), Lencioni (2002) and Knuiman (2007). Comparing the collaborative aspects from above mentioned theories and studies and examining which aspects were most common revealed a selection of collaborative aspects related to collaboration for housing construction. Because collaboration between the province and municipalities is ongoing, it differs from other collaborations related to housing construction, where a partnership ends after the successful completion of a project. Additionally, the province and municipalities are forced to cooperate with each other; they do not have the choice to select another partner. These characteristics make collaboration between provinces and municipalities unique. For that reason, several studies have been cited to confirm the relevance of the referenced cooperation aspects that emerged from the literature. Ultimately, a selection of the following aspects was made: *trust, shared ambition, communication, expectations* and *sense of urgency*. These aspects are further explained in section 3.4.

The aspects of collaboration that arise from the theoretical framework have been confirmed by a wider selection of studies. These aspects form the requirements for good cooperation and influence the outcome of cooperation. In this study, the outcome of collaboration is the housing agenda. The main issue here is that the housing agenda should contribute to solving the housing shortage, which means that the housing agenda should contain agreements for sufficient housing construction plans. Each region is different and suffers from the housing shortage to varying degrees; therefore, what makes a housing plan sufficient is different for each region. In addition, the effect of the housing agenda is difficult to measure since the realisation of housing plans takes years. One can never be entirely sure whether the realisation of housing plans is the result of other policy arrangements, such as the Housing Deals (Mandell & Keats, 2008). It is therefore difficult to determine the quality of a housing agenda. However, it is possible to examine the determination of the housing agenda and identify to what extent it is perceived as effective in achieving the housing ambitions of the region and province to reduce the housing shortage. Effective means, in this situation, that the housing ambitions of the municipalities in the region and province are stated in the housing agenda.

The theoretical approaches explained earlier all have their own view on regional or intergovernmental collaboration. The multi-level governance theory refers not only to the cooperation between government layers, but also to network collaborations, additionally it has a specific focus on the European integration process. The institutional collective action theory and collaborative governance theory have been added to focus the theoretical framework on a regional scale. The institutional collective action theory focuses on the costs and benefits of achieving regional cooperation. If the costs are higher than the benefits, it has a negative impact on cooperation. In addition, collaborative governance theory establishes the conditions under which a compromise can be concluded between cooperating parties. These conditions relate to the outcome of the collaboration (Boogers, 2013).

To better demonstrate the relationship between the aspects of cooperation and the outcome of cooperation, the literature on network cooperation is cited. Mandell and Keats (2008) have indicated that the goal of a collaboration is to bring parties and their resources together. A distinction is made here between soft and hard aspects. According to Waterman et al. (1980), hard aspects are easy to identify and influence, such as financial resources or regulation. In contrast, soft aspects are less tangible and more related to the culture of the organisations involved. However, this research focuses only on the soft aspects because over the years, the hard aspects have changed and cooperation between the two governmental bodies is now taken for granted. There is a causal relationship between the factors highlighted in the literature and the outcome of cooperation, as Figure 4 shows. The factors serve as indicators of the quality of the cooperation (Mandell & Keats, 2008; Provan & Milward, 2001).

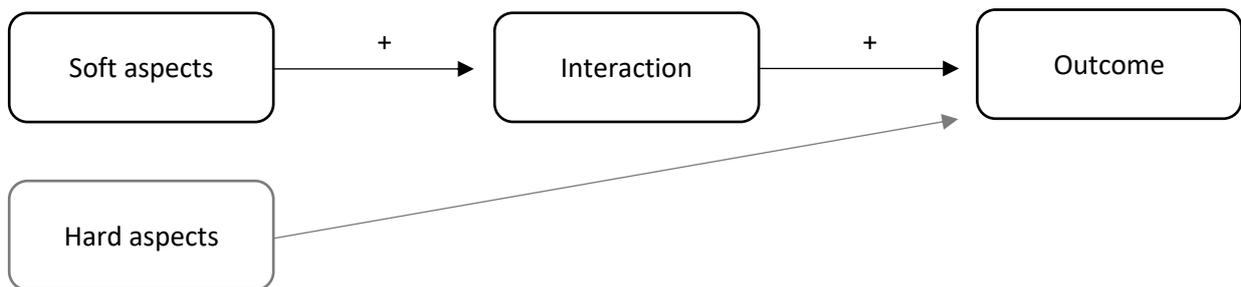


Figure 4: Causality of cooperation. *Source: Mandell & Keats, 2008; Provan & Milward, 2001 and own editing.*

3.4 Conceptual framework

The conceptual model is based on the theoretical perspectives and other scientific literature presented in the previous sections. The model shows the causal relation between soft factors of cooperation, interactions, outcomes and the quality of the housing agenda. The model serves as a basis for analysing cooperation between the province and regions regarding the establishment of the housing agenda.

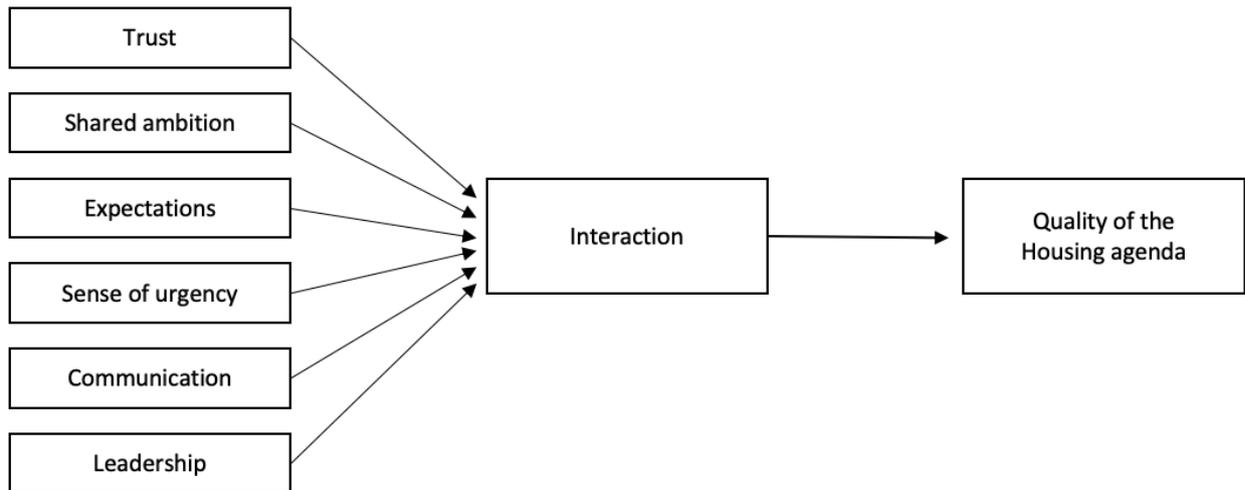


Figure 5: Conceptual model.

This research is focused on the influence of soft factors on the quality of the housing agenda. The selected soft factors are not the only variables that influence the outcome of cooperation, which in this case is the quality of the housing agenda. It is important to keep in mind that the hard aspects of cooperation could also influence the outcome of cooperation. The selection of soft aspects is derived from the theoretical framework and consists of *trust*, *shared ambition*, *expectations*, *sense of urgency*, *communication* and *leadership*. These factors are further explained below.

3.4.1 Trust

Trust is the expectation that another actor will keep their word and meet the expectations associated with an agreement (Van Dale, 2020). Without trust, it is difficult to achieve effective cooperation (Knuiman, 2007). Trust is not specifically about the interests and goals of both actors being the same. According to Mollemans (2002) and Harms (2003), it is about the extent to which the actors cooperate effectively and honestly. For example, Lencioni (2002) has stated that trust between actors increases when they are open about their weaknesses and admit mistakes. Confidence also increases if the actors know each other relatively well and feel free to talk about their private lives before or after a meeting. A study by the Council for Public Administration (2015) has shown that mutual trust contributes to the effectiveness of cooperation. According to the Council, the more positive the cooperation between the actors involved is, the more positive the assessment is of the effectiveness of the cooperation. Other aspects that influence the level of trust are the interdependency between actors, the voluntariness of the collaboration and investment in personal contact, which, if lacking, can cause irritation and frustration (Boogers, 2013 and Ansell & Gash, 2007). According to Klijn et al. (2000), trust is the outcome of openness and effective communication. These aspects form the basis for building trust. Noordhuis and Vrijhoef (2011) have also pointed out that trust is the most crucial bottleneck in collaborations, which makes trust a good indicator of the quality of cooperation. Furthermore, the degree of consensus among actors depends on the level of trust. Reaching consensus takes a substantial amount of time and is difficult to achieve; a great amount of trust in each other helps parties to arrive at a consensus and, therefore, has a positive effect on the outcome of collaboration (Boogers, 2013; Janssen-Jansen, 2010).

3.4.2 Shared ambition

To work well together, actors must have a common goal or ambition in mind. The success of collaboration depends, according to Berg et al. (2002), on the quality of a shared ambition. This vision needs to be broadly conveyed by the involved actors and not only written down. According to Piët (2005), the goals or ambitions do not have to be precisely the same, but there must be clear interfaces. A shared ambition during cooperation ensures that actors feel connected (Kaats & Opheij, 2011). This soft aspect is about sharing a goal that means something to the actor or the administrative layer that they represent. Should there be conflicting interests, it is reflected in the behaviour of the actors, creating tension. This tension is detrimental to collaboration, but according to Boudewijn et al. (2007), conflicts of interest can be present in collaborations as long as the actors involved also have a shared ambition.

3.4.3 Communication

This section states several indicators to explain the communication as a soft aspect of the cooperation between the province and its regions. According to Knuiman (2007), communication is essential for cooperation. Communication is a broad concept which consists of four functions – *information provision, emotional expression, motivation* and *control* (Robbins, 2001). Every interaction that takes place has one or more of these functions. The first function is *information provision*, which refers to the amount of information actors give each other and whether the truth is shared. Actors inform each other with communication, and in cooperation, actors may not consciously share all information. Second, emotions can be expressed through communication, which can be verbal or non-verbal. Furthermore, actors can motivate and control each other by confronting each other and starting conversations.

Communication also involves professional interactions, clear working agreements and clear decisions (Boudewijn, 2007). Professionalism is also related to communication and includes the fulfilment of commitments and decisiveness (Boogers, 2013). The manner of communication also influences the process. The process also includes the willingness of actors to negotiate (Kaats & Opheij, 2011). In addition, Kuijpers (2003) states that having contact after a meeting is an indicator of excellent communication. With good communication, the actors are more inclined to call in case of ambiguity.

3.4.4 Expectations

This aspect of cooperation concerns expectations about ambitions and interests, but also expectations about the roles and behaviour of other actors (Lasker, Weiss & Miller, 2001; Twist & Klijn, 2007). Those related subjects of expectations form indicators to interpret this as a soft aspect of cooperation. This section also provides other indicators to interpret expectations.

According to Twist et al. (2007), collaboration always involves different levels of ambition and different expectations of the parties involved. Mandell et al. (2003) have confirmed this; they have indicated that in collaboration, there is never complete agreement about the ambition. In their view, the intensity of the cooperative relationship influences the degree of shared ambition. For example, proper coordination of the cooperative relationship will contribute to shared ambition, and the parties must know each other's view on the cooperation so that expectations are clear.

Mies (2008) and Lousberg (2012) have agreed that it is essential that expectations are clear. According to them, the parties involved should know what to expect; it is essential that involved parties explicitly state what their needs are. Additionally, actors often bring their own experiences to new partnerships. These experiences create a particular image of an actor, including what to expect from this actor. In new partnerships with new actors, it is unclear what can be expected of actors and it may be that the actors do not meet current expectations of other actors.

In addition, Ostaaijen (2010) has pointed out that actors must have a shared ambition, which leads to a shared agenda and includes expectations regarding the ambition and goals. According to Ostaaijen (2010), a shared agenda has the effect of a magnet, whereby the actors become close to each other. A shared agenda also provides the opportunity to correct and steer actors. For example, such an agenda provides tools for managing expectations. According to Provan and Kenis (2008), such a joint agenda is, in particular, an essential tool in collaborations between parties who both bear responsibility.

3.4.5 Sense of urgency

Sense of urgency concerns two elements: the urgency of the problem and the urgency to act together. The urgency of the problem concerns the need for all parties to understand and acknowledge the crisis and see cooperation as a solution. In the absence of a problem or crisis as the reason for collaboration, the collaboration is less likely to lead to success (Hamilton, 2004; Boogers, 2013). If the perspectives on urgency and the need for cooperation differ between the actors, it hinders the emergence and existence of cooperation (Twist, Klijn, Edelenbos & Kort, 2007). In addition, all actors involved in regional cooperation must feel a 'sense of urgency' around the need to work together. It is important that the actors are aware that their individual actions and capacity are not enough to solve the regional problems. All actors need to be aware of the urgency of the importance to act together if they want to solve the problem (Malmborg, 2003). Boogers (2013) has stated that mutual interdependence is necessary for all actors to act together. When actors need each other to achieve their own goals, they see the collaboration as an urgent need.

3.4.6 Leadership

Several studies (Ansell & Gash, 2012; Boogers et al., 2013, 2015; Hamilton, 2004; Berg et al., 2002) have shown the importance of leadership for regional collaboration. According to these studies, leadership can make the difference between success and failure in regional collaboration. According to Berg et al. (2002), great leaders can develop a long-term focus among the actors, instead of a focus on short-term costs. A leader gives direction to the collaboration and has, in this way, the opportunity to lead a collaboration to success. Stagnation in cooperation is also prevented by means of leadership (Kaats, 2013). On the other hand, a leader should not become too dominant because this has a negative impact on the success of the collaboration. According to Berg et al. (2006), a greater amount of dominance on the part of an actor within a collaboration negatively affects the support of other actors. Geddes (2005) has described the importance of different leadership types. Leadership must be awarded and binding and not emerge from hierarchy. The leader is responsible for the process of collaboration. It is possible for any actor to exercise leadership during a regional collaboration (Boogers, 2013).

4. | METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the process of the research and the methodologies used to answer to the research question. This chapter also focuses on the validity and reliability of the research.

4.1 Research strategy

According to Bryman (2012), the research strategy is the guideline for research. The strategy for this research was rooted in a qualitative approach, which matched the aim of *gaining insight into the effect that soft aspects of cooperation have on the quality of the housing agenda produced by the province of Gelderland and its regions*. The qualitative approach suited this research as the soft aspects of cooperation are difficult to describe in a quantitative manner. The interpretation of the soft aspects depends on how the actors experience the cooperation. Therefore, it was more suitable to use qualitative research methods, as they focus on contextual details and finding multiple interpretations of the research subject (Ragin & Amoros, 2011).

For this research, a case study design was chosen because the research subject focused on human behaviour and social interaction. According to Harrison et al. (2017), those characteristics are typically suitable for conducting a case study. The advantage of the case study as a research design is that it has a holistic view, which means more attention was paid to the details of work processes and relationships. As this research focused on the process of collaboration and the relationship between two layers of government, the context and relatable theories have been described in detail. Another advantage of a case study is the possibility for using multiple data sources. Figure 6 shows that this research includes a document analysis as well as interviews. Multiple sources of data were used to enrich the context and the research tried to find differences and similarities between the assessment of the soft aspects of cooperation that followed from the document analysis, the interviews and the theoretical framework. However, the role of the researcher was taken into account when using a case study as a research design (Yin, 2009). To counter this influence, every part of the research was peer reviewed.

Figure 6 shows the design of the research, which consisted of four phases. This research began with a literature review concerning multi-level governance and intergovernmental cooperation. The used theories were input into the conceptual framework. This research used a deductive approach as reflected in the first phase of this research, which means that various theories from the literature guided this research (Van Thiel, 2014). The next phase was linked to the case study and included a document analysis and interviews. The conceptual framework served as the basis of the interview questionnaire and as themes to focus on while coding the transcripts and documents. The collection and arrangement of the data indicated the beginning of the third phase. The third phase involved coding and analysing the data. When all data had been analysed, the sub-questions were answered using the findings of the case study. The conclusions of the sub-questions led to the overall answer to the main research question. After answering the main research question, the thesis offers a critical reflection on the research.

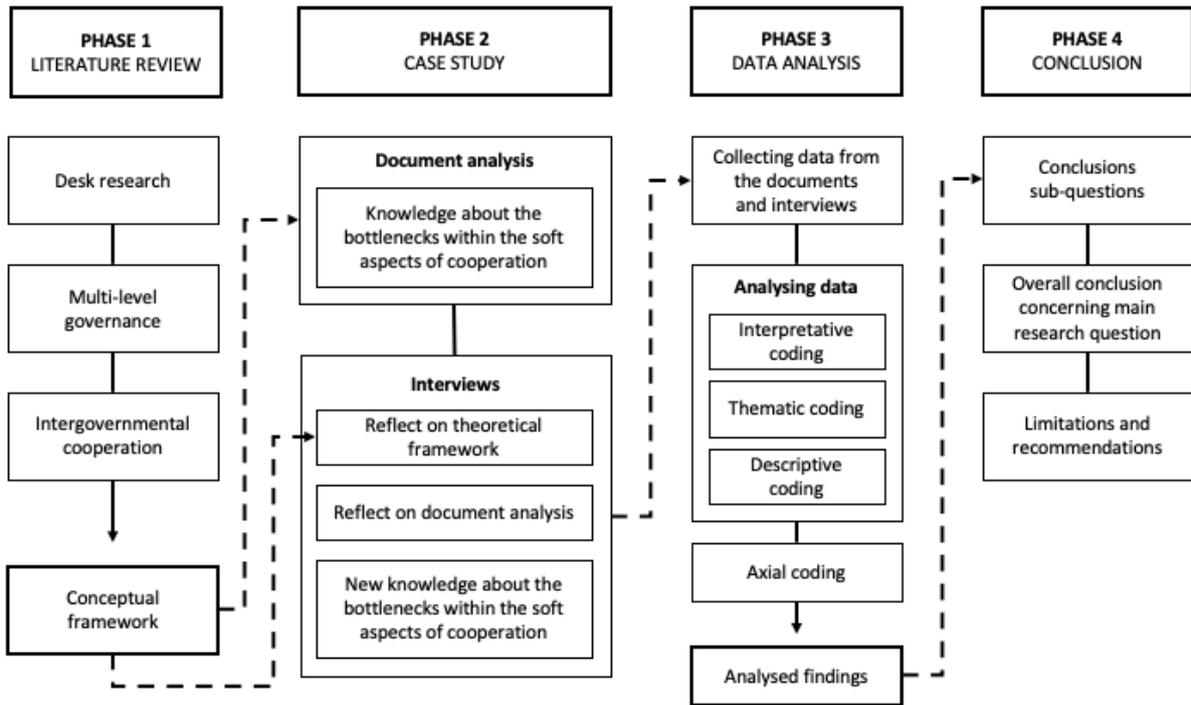


Figure 6: The phases of the research.

4.2 Research philosophy

Research is always conducted from a certain perspective; this perspective influences the researcher's interpretation of the results and choice of research methods. According to Creswell (2013) and Saunders et al. (2019), the research paradigm indicates how the researcher sees reality (ontology) and how the researcher interprets the nature of knowledge (epistemology). This section provides insight into the research paradigm for this research.

This research employed the interpretative research paradigm as the research focused on how the process of cooperation is experienced by the actors and how they interpret the influence of the soft aspects of cooperation on the quality of the housing agenda. Within the interpretative paradigm, a distinction can be made between hermeneutics, *verstehen*, symbolic interactionism and phenomenology. The research approach used for this research was hermeneutics. This approach was chosen because it focuses on the meaning and understanding of written texts or documents and pays attention to the author, subject, reason for writing, type of text, time and place to find deeper meaning in the text (Mantzavinos, 2016). Other approaches are more focused on understanding the behaviour of people, the meanings behind that behaviour and the interpretation of people's experiences (Ryan, 2018).

According to Zimmermann (2015, p.2), 'hermeneutics refers to the sort of understanding by which we integrate facts into a meaningful whole, the kind of practical operation that provides knowledge in the sense of deep familiarity with something.' Therefore, hermeneutics explains how texts and verbal interaction are understood, taking into account their context. Hermeneutics fit well with this study because this research looked at how soft aspects of cooperation between the province and regions

were assessed by those involved. Because hermeneutics is based on discovering the meaning within the context, the context in which this research took place was explained in detail in Chapter 2. Clearly outlining the context made clear how the housing policy is implemented in the Netherlands and the pressure on the government concerning the housing policy. This information is important to put appreciation of the soft aspects of the cooperation in perspective.

4.3 Research methods

According to Van Thiel (2014), research methods include methods for data collection and data analysis. This section provides further explanations of which methods were used for this research and how the data was analysed.

4.3.1 Data collection

In this section, the choices for the methods of data collection are identified and explained. Harrison (2017) has indicated that in a case study research design, it is possible to use multiple methods of data collection. This section focuses on the substantiation of the choice of document analysis and interviews. Considering the COVID-19 virus, conducting observations was problematic, because of the government constrictions, meetings were held digitally.

Both sources of data were used to answer each sub-question. The sub-questions of this research were the following:

- *What roles do the province of Gelderland and its regions play when cooperating to produce housing agendas?*
- *Which soft aspects of cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions affect the establishment of the housing agenda, and what influence do these aspects have?*
- *What areas for improvement are there in the soft aspects of the cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions?*

The document analysis provided information about the role of the province, how some of the soft aspects of cooperation were assessed and which improvements were recommended. The information gathered from the interviews supplemented the findings from the document analysis. By conducting interviews, the researcher was able to ask about the role of both the province and region, the soft aspects of cooperation and the improvement. In the next section, both ways of collecting data will be explained in detail.

Document analysis

In this study, two types of qualitative methods were used. One of these methods was document analysis. According to Denzin (1970, p. 291), 'document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation'. The document analysis was used as it provided more specific information about the context related to the case than the previous literature study, gave insight into the topics, provided supplementary data and validated the findings (Bowen, 2009). The data obtained from the documents gave insight into aspects of cooperation that influence the quality of the housing agenda. These findings gave reasons to ask questions about several aspects of cooperation during the interviews and contributed to the researcher's process of interpreting and

understanding how aspects of the collaboration are assessed and what their effect is on the quality of the housing agenda. The findings from the interviews confirmed and complemented the findings from the document analysis.

The documents were selected for the information they provided about the relationship between the province of Gelderland and its regions, the housing vision of the province of Gelderland and the regional housing vision. The selected documents are reports from external experts, documents on the strategic housing vision of Gelderland regions and the province of Gelderland, discussion reports and fact sheets on housing in Gelderland, advice from the Gelderland Provincial Council, the Housing Deal of the Arnhem-Nijmegen region, letter to parliament about the Arnhem-Nijmegen Housing Deal and the current housing agendas of all regions in Gelderland. Appendix A contains a list of documents with source references. The documents were obtained online or received from persons involved in this study. Afterwards, the received documents were also found to be available online. Eventually, 18 documents were analysed. The documents highlighted the research topic from various perspectives, including the perspectives of the regions, province and external experts.

Document analysis seemed to be a relevant method, as there are policy documents and other reports that provide information about soft aspects of cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions concerning the establishment of the housing agenda. In addition, document analysis has advantageous features. First, it is an efficient method compared to other methods as it relies on existing data rather than collecting new data. Second, the documents can be reviewed multiple times during the research. Finally, documents are very exact; they contain details about the cooperation process, names and references (Bowen, 2009; Yin, 2009).

The purpose of the documents most likely differ from the purpose of the research. Additionally, the researcher can be biased in selecting the documents. This results in an incomplete collection of documents (Bowen, 2009). To counteract this, documents were collected from different types of authors: the housing agendas of each region, policy documents of the province of Gelderland and documents written by experts and related to the housing market of Gelderland. Appendix A shows the diversity of the used documents. Other selection criteria were: type of document, which publisher, year of publication and the qualifications of the author.

Interviews

In addition to the document analysis, interviews were also conducted with the actors involved. Given that interviews are targeted and, therefore, able to focus on specific topics, interviews were the most suitable method for this research (Yin, 2009). The interviews were semi-structured, which gave the participants the opportunity to respond openly in their own words, as the interview structure created an informal conversation atmosphere (Clifford, French & Valentine, 2010). This structure of interview made it possible for the interviewer to ask subsequent questions on the topics, and the structure left enough room for the interviewees to share their own thoughts, enriching the research with new insights. The main purpose of the interviews was to substantiate or refute the findings from the document analysis.

Nevertheless, using semi-structured interviews as a data collection method has, in addition to its strengths, weaknesses. The interviewer may be biased, which is reflected in the questions and selection of interviewees. To be unbiased, the interview guide and selection of interviewees were peer-reviewed. Additionally, there is also the chance of the interviewees only giving answers that they deem socially acceptable (Yin, 2009). The interviews were processed anonymously so that the interviewees felt free to say whatever came to mind. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, video calling ensured that the interviews came as close as possible to face-to-face interviews. Video calling made it possible to read the interviewee’s facial expressions and body language, which made it possible to better interpret the statements made by the interviewees.

The interviewees were selected for their involvement in cooperation around the establishment of the housing agenda. A list of potential interviewees was created by searching the internet for representatives of the province or one of the regions, and later, the selection was expanded using snowball sampling. Additionally, external consultants were added, who were involved in the establishment of the housing agenda. Eventually, 10 people were interviewed. They included representatives from all six regions, representatives of the province and external experts, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: List of interviewees.

Representative of	Date of interview
Province	4 June 2020
External expert	5 June 2020
Urbanised region	5 June 2020
Urbanised region	5 June 2020
Urbanised region	8 June 2020
External expert	10 June 2020
Semi-urbanised region	11 June 2020
Rural region	12 June 2020
Semi-urbanised region	19 June 2020
Urbanised region	22 June 2020

4.3.2 Operationalisation

The theoretical framework and document analysis showed that the soft side of cooperation mainly concerns six aspects in the context of this research. The conceptual framework includes these aspects, as shown in Figure 6. The operationalisation of these aspects is necessary to make them measurable (Scheepers, Tobi & Boeije, 2016). For this research, it was important to know in which context the soft aspects of cooperation were interpreted. The context chapter, theoretical framework, document analysis and interviews gave insight into the context. The context chapter and theoretical framework showed how cooperation between the province and regions is formally arranged. The document analysis and interviews showed the practical side of the cooperation and how the context operates in practice.

The selection of the soft aspects of cooperation, which influence the quality of the housing agenda, arose from the theoretical framework, document analysis and conceptual model. The theoretical

framework provided insight into the sub-aspects that were related to the main aspects. Those sub-aspects were used to determine how the soft aspects of cooperation were interpreted by the involved actors during the interviews and in the documents. For each soft aspect, sub-aspects were determined to guide attempts to describe the perceptions of involved actors on the soft aspects of cooperation. The interviewees were asked about their perceptions of the sub-aspects. Open questions were asked during the interview to enable the interviewees to provide new insights. To ensure that all sub-aspects were covered during the interviews, interviewees were asked follow-up questions and control questions.

There were six soft aspects, four of these aspects were divided into sub-aspects to make the main aspects easier to interpret for the interviewees. The first soft aspect – *trust* – was split into *dealing with mistakes and misunderstanding*, and *mutual contact between the involved actors*. Interview questions that were related to these sub-aspects were ‘Can you tell me how the mutual contact works?’ and *how to deal with errors and misunderstandings*. Furthermore, the aspect *expectations* was also divided into multiple sub-aspects: *clarity of the division of roles*, *misplaced expectations* and *clear structure of the process*. During the interviews, questions were asked about the structure and quality of meetings and discussions, which indicate the soft aspect *communication*. Finally, the aspect *leadership* was split into the questions ‘Who is in charge during the collaboration, and what does that show?’ and ‘How are final decisions made during cooperation?’ The information provided during the interviews was used to verify the findings from the document analysis. In addition to interpreting the soft aspects of cooperation, this study also explored the roles of the actors involved and searched for improvements to the collaborative process.

4.3.3 Data analysis

The researcher plays a significant role in analysing data as analysis concerns interpretation. According to Van Thiel (2014), the researcher can deal with her role in two ways. Researchers could try to distance themselves from their own beliefs and values during the research, or researchers could not try to distance themselves and, instead, explain how they have shaped their research in relation to their own beliefs and values. For this research, the researcher’s perspective was checked against the context of the research subject, and the researcher’s perspectives and ideas about the research subject were checked against the data from the document analysis and interviews.

As mentioned, this research made use of a document analyses and interviews. The analysed documents were all found online. After conducting the interviews, the researcher transcribed them. Both the transcripts and documents were coded using ATLAS.ti. This program was chosen to analyse the data because of the overview it gave of the data. Outliers were more easily noticed when using ATLAS.ti than when documents and transcripts were manually valued by the investigator.

The data was analysed in multiple steps. The first step was to encode all documents and transcripts. In the first coding phase, data was coded to highlight information about the soft aspects, sub-aspects of the cooperation, role of the actors and improvements. The codes were then categorised in respect to the sub-questions of this research. The categories that were created related to the role of actors, the six soft aspects and points for improvement of cooperation. By relying on these categories, the sub-

questions could easily be answered, outliers per category stood out and it was clearly visible how each aspect was assessed.

4.4 Reliability and validity

To safeguard the quality of the research, the validity and reliability were accurately substantiated. In qualitative research, controllability and repeatability are more blurred than with quantitative research. The main reason for the lack of difference between the controllability and repeatability of qualitative data was the role of the researcher's mind in analysing the collected data and the research paradigm for this research. Therefore, the terms *validity* and *reliability* are often replaced by *transferability*, *plausibility* and *comprehensibility* (Van Thiel, 2014).

4.4.1 Plausibility

The plausibility of the conclusions drawn corresponds to the internal validity of the research (Van Thiel, 2014). During this research, the researcher made use of triangulation. The research made use of two types of data sources, which were documents and interviews. Both data sources complemented each other in their findings. Through the use of documents, it was possible to collect a wider range of insights on the research topic. The research topic was viewed from three perspectives, namely, the province, regions and external experts. The researcher tried to approach the subject from different angles that relate to the research subject.

4.4.2 Transferability

The transferability of the research refers to generalisation of the results, which is related to the external validity (Van Thiel, 2014). As this research included a case study, it is harder to generalise the conclusions than with the use of multiple case studies. The case is too specific for generalisation as it concerns only one province, and there are 12 provinces in the Netherlands, each with its own perspective on the housing market. The provinces in the Netherlands have the freedom to determine what they think is in their interests; this means that the provinces can differ in housing strategies. Additionally, all provinces have different distributions of urban and rural areas. To generalise the results, there should be comparable cases (Yin, 2009).

4.4.3 Comprehensibility

When research is comprehensible, it can be repeated. Consistency and objectivity of interviews are hard to achieve when repeating case study research (Van Thiel, 2014). A researcher should also be able to follow the same process and arrive at the same results. To make this possible, it is important to document all steps during the research and to make those steps operational (Yin, 2009). The research results depends on its context, which is important for the interpretation of further research. When the research is repeated, the context plays an important role, and when changes have taken place in the context, the results will likely be different.

4.4.4 Ethics

As this research is about the negative aspects of cooperation between the province and the regions, it was important to create a safe environment for the interviewees. The interviewees were given an explanation of the research at the beginning of the interviews. All interviewees were granted anonymity to create a safe environment, which motivated the interviewees to share their thoughts and opinions about the cooperation regarding the housing agenda. To create that safe environment, the researcher respected the beliefs and values of the interviewees.

5. | FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the research. The relevant documents and transcripts of the interviews were analysed to arrive at the findings. The findings are related to the case study, which is explained first (section 5.1). Second, the results are further discussed using the sub-questions of this research. This means that the roles of the actors involved in the establishment of the housing agenda are considered, then the findings regarding the soft aspects of cooperation are presented, and finally the opportunities for improvement are considered. In this chapter, reference codes are used to refer to the transcripts. Appendix B explains the reference codes.

5.1 Province of Gelderland

The case study focused on the establishment of the housing agenda between the province of Gelderland and its regions. Gelderland has six regions (as shown in Figure 9), and the region Arnhem-Nijmegen is further divided into three sub-regions. The regions differ in degrees of urbanisation. The region Arnhem-Nijmegen has the largest urbanised area, and the region Achterhoek mainly consists of rural areas. Those regions are the two extremes within the province, the other regions consist of a mix of urban and rural areas. For research purposes, the regions are divided into three categories: urbanised, semi-urbanised and rural regions.

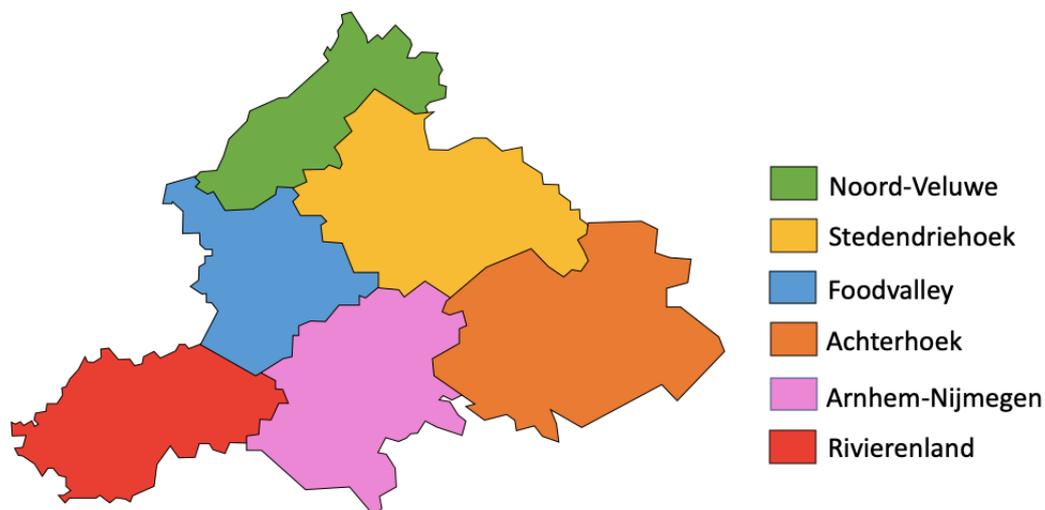


Figure 7: Housing market regions within the province of Gelderland.

Of the 12 provinces of the Netherlands, Gelderland was chosen for multiple reasons. First, Gelderland is the largest province in the Netherlands and has a great variety of urban and peripheral areas. Second, Gelderland is dealing with a housing shortage of 3.9%, which is higher than the average housing shortage in the Netherlands (Groenmeijer & Lelij, 2019). Third, the province is dealing with several developments concerning the provincial housing market. As it is challenging to find a house in the Randstad, people tend to search for homes in the more eastern parts of the Netherlands. Over the next five years, around 60,000 households are expected to move from the Randstad to the eastern provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel. This group of people is expected to consist of young families

and elderly people (BNR, 2019; Provincie Gelderland, 2019). The inflow of people from the Randstad is accelerating the housing shortage in Gelderland. Additionally, while young people are leaving the eastern provinces, they are not leaving behind houses on the housing market (RTL Z, 2019). The province of Gelderland (2019) expects the populations of Arnhem and Nijmegen to increase by 8.4% and 10.8%, respectively, in the next 10 years. If these predictions are correct, Nijmegen will become the Dutch city with the third most severe housing shortage, after Amsterdam and Utrecht. Arnhem and Ede will also rank in the top 10 cities in this regard (Klouwen & Gijsbers, 2019).

5.2 Roles

As mentioned before, the findings are presented on the basis of the sub-questions of this research. The first sub-questions is, 'What roles do the province of Gelderland and its regions play when cooperating to produce housing agendas?' The findings come from the province of Gelderland, its different regions and external experts and were found via analysis of documents and interview transcripts.

5.2.1 Role of the province

When asked about the role of the province, all interviewees indicated that the role of the province with regard to housing agendas has changed. The province had previously focused on the quantitative aspect of housing agendas; however, with the appointment of a new deputy, the focus has shifted to the qualitative aspect. This was also backed by findings from the document analysis because Verdaas and Geelen (2017), Schaaf and Spenkelling (2018) and the housing agendas of the regions all mentioned this shift in provincial focus. In addition, the interviews made clear that the shift in focus had to do with the appointment of a new deputy and a change in executive vision.

According to every interviewee, the housing agenda initiative stems from the province, but the regions see it as a document that must be drawn up by the municipalities within the region (all interviews). The province has the aim of creating a balanced regional housing market through cooperation, facilitated by the housing agenda. The province wants to achieve this goal by focusing on regional coordination and knowledge exchange between the province and regions. The province merge this goal into the housing agenda (Gelderland, n.d.). With the housing agenda, the province is also trying to safeguard its interests. The interviewees and the context of this research show that the province has the power to officially adopt a housing agenda, and it can also manage projects based on provincial interest. The province has significant freedom to determine what exactly falls under the provincial interest, which causes confusion among the regions (Schaaf & Spenkelling, 2018). This freedom is also reflected in the role of the province.

So I think the strength of the province is that we can look beyond the local scale, that we can say to municipality X, which is busy with flexible housing, 'We see that municipality Z already has practical experience with it; you should call the person 'to see if they can help you'. Something like that. Actually, a bit of a broker, I think that is actually a bit of a vague word, but still.

(Province of Gelderland (P1), 2020)

In different policy documents concerning housing, various terms are used for the role of the province. The most common description of the role of the province is that of a *partner* (Jakobs, 2018; Schaaf & Spenkelink, 2018; Gelderland, n.d.; Mulder-Metselaar et al., 2017; SNV, 2019; Klein et al., 2017). The role of a partner was confirmed by all the interviewees. Additionally, all interviews showed that the province's role goes beyond merely determining the housing agenda. The province is present at consultations and focuses on the substantiation of plans and regional coordination. The interviewees indicated that the new focus of the province also influences the role of the province, in the sense that the province has adopted a more active attitude. Furthermore, all interviewees stated that the new attitude of the province goes further than merely establishing the housing agenda, but the province does not co-write the document. The province only thinks along with the regions and formally establishes the housing agenda.

This suggests that the position of members of the provincial executive is important for the attitude the province will adopt and thus also for the role of the province. In addition, the role of the province has changed to a more active attitude that goes beyond just setting the housing agenda.

5.2.2 Role of the region

According to the province, the responsibility for developing the housing agenda lies with the region; the region has the task of crafting a clearly substantiated story for the housing plans (P1). From the interviews and housing agendas (Region Arnhem-Nijmegen, 2019; Mulder-Metselaar et al., 2017; Achterhoek agenda 2020, 2015; SNV, 2019; Ritsema et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2017; Huizing, 2018; Regio Rivierenland, 2018), it appears that all regions do write the housing agenda themselves. The province requires the housing agenda to be drawn up on a regional scale, which requires inter-municipal cooperation. Seven of the 10 interviewees (P1; E1; E2; U4; R1; U1; U2) said that regional coordination between municipalities is difficult. The two most striking reasons for this are the difference between large and small municipalities and interests of the various municipalities. Small municipalities have a greater interest in regional coordination than larger municipalities. This is mainly because smaller municipalities do not have all the required knowledge and capacity in-house and larger municipalities often have more knowledge, partly because they employ more people (P1; E1; U4; R1; U1; U2).

However, there are differences in how regions deal with regional coordination. A combination of documents and interviews (SNV, 2019; Huizing, 2018; Regio Rivierenland, 2018; E1; U4) shows that regions can also see the shared importance of intermunicipal cooperation. The motivation for intermunicipal cooperation can be varied, such as the aim of being on the agenda of the national government or a large municipality recognising the importance of the region for its own interests. Furthermore, all interviewees reported that it is difficult for the regions to identify a shared ambition for the housing agenda. The regions themselves have also started to monitor developments to ensure a better substantiation of the housing plans (Schaaf & Spenkelink, 2018; Gelderland, nd; Verdaas & Geelen, 2020; Region Arnhem-Nijmegen, 2019; Marcouch et al., 2020; E1; E2; R1).

These findings suggest that the region bears responsibility for developing the housing agenda but must also meet the requirements of the province. Regional coordination and the substantiation of housing plans are the main points of attention when creating the housing agenda.

5.3 Soft aspects of cooperation

On the basis of the theoretical framework, the soft aspects of cooperation in establishing the housing agenda were determined. The soft aspects consist of trust, shared ambition, expectations, sense of urgency, communication and leadership. Below, the findings regarding the soft aspects are presented. These findings are related to the following sub-question: Which soft aspects of cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions affect the establishment of the housing agenda, and what influence do these aspects have?

5.3.1 Trust

As determined in the theoretical framework, the degree of trust is assessed based on how mistakes and misunderstandings are handled and the extent to which there is personal contact between the actors involved.

When the province focused on the quantitative aspect of the housing agenda, the province was sometimes accused of not approving plans on poor grounds (P1; E2; R1). With the new provincial executive, the province has changed its focus, is more transparent and invites more people to the dialogue. This finding was reflected in all interviews – the province would like to start the conversation.

In addition, all interviewees, experts and representatives of the regions stated the mutual contact and atmosphere are of good quality. The representatives of the province and regions indicated that there is openness about mistakes and misunderstandings between the province and region and between the municipalities within the region. This openness contributes to the sharing of knowledge used in developing the housing agenda. Informal meetings have helped in achieving openness, effective mutual contact and a positive atmosphere (U3; R1; E1; Gelderland, n.d.). On the other hand, various interviewees (P1; S2; U2; E1; E2) stated that it is difficult to uncover misunderstandings or mistakes because the process is also a political game; misunderstandings or mistakes are hidden behind arguments about what the city council decides or behind a political strategy. These decisions of the city council influences the actions of the officials involved by the housing agenda.

These findings indicate that the contact and atmosphere are positive and that there has been openness about errors and misunderstandings, but that these are sometimes difficult to recognise as such due to a political game being played. Openness contributes to knowledge being shared within the region and also between the region and the province.

5.3.2 Shared ambition

Shared ambition concerns the ambition shared by the regions and the province but also by the municipalities within a region. The findings show that the self-interest of municipalities is paramount when it comes to a shared ambition within the region. This mainly concerns the economic interest that municipalities have in new homes, and the municipalities' own priorities do not contribute to developing the housing agenda because it creates conflicting interests (P1; U1; U2; S1; E2; R1). Half of the interviewees (E1; E2; U1; U2; R1) indicated that it is important for the housing agenda, the municipalities within a region make concessions to achieve a shared ambition and thus prioritise the

importance of the region. Klein et al. (2017), Huizing (2018) and Ritsema et al. (2018) have confirmed this as well.

When it comes to the ambition shared between the province and the regions, the province has shifted its ambition from quantity to quality, as mentioned in section 5.2.1. However, various documents and interviewees stated that the region is still too focused on the number of homes (Verdaas & Geelen, 2017; Schaaf & Spengelink, 2018; P1; E1; U1; U2; E2; S1; R1; U4). According to Schaaf and Spengelink (2018), Geffen et al. (2016) and eight of the 10 interviewees, the continued focus of the municipalities on numbers means that the housing agenda is difficult to achieve. The new aversion municipalities have towards quantitative aspects is noticeable since every representative of a region indicated that he was no longer allowed to talk about quotas (U1; U2; U3; S, R1; S2; U4).

And what people think is also difficult is that at a certain moment – eeh, very long, but we cannot use that word according to the province – but for a long time, the province has worked with a quota, so what was built in your neighbouring municipality, you could not build, so then you get the story that people are so err...yes, so people do not dare to take the map and say what is useful where; it is, of course, super important for the municipality for income to be allowed to build.

(Representative of urbanised region(U1), 2020)

These findings show that a shared ambition between the province and a region and between municipalities within a region is not yet self-evident, which makes it more difficult to realise housing agendas. The ambitions of municipalities are principally aimed at their own interests.

5.3.3 Expectations

The soft aspect of *expectations* concerns the clarity of the roles of the actors involved and the extent to which the consultation structure for determining the housing agenda is fixed. These are two points on which the clarity of expectations is valued.

All interviewees indicated that it is highly clear when meetings are scheduled. They reported that the meetings are planned in advance; however, the number of meetings differs per region. All interviewees also stated that the province is represented during these meetings. This finding was also confirmed by Mulder-Metselaar et al. (2017), SNV (2019), Ritsema et al. (2018), Regio Foodvalley (2018) and Klein et al. (2017).

However, several documents and interviewees stated that the province is inconsistent. Eight out of the 10 interviewees (U1; U2; U2; E2; S1; R1; U4; P1) claimed that the multiplicity of policy documents and themes confuses the regions.

But in addition, they actually have all kinds of other paths that they walk, eh, the action programme comes from the province, which is comprehensive, but of course they also have all kinds of other programmes.

(Urbanised region (U2), 2020)

The province maintains the structure of the analysis, vision and agreements for developing the housing agenda, which means that the province wants to encourage the municipalities to write down well thought-through housing plans and ambitions in the housing agenda (Province of Gelderland, 2020; P1; E2, R1). Despite this structure, various external experts (Schaaf & Spenkelink, 2018; E1; E2) stated that it is not clear to the regions what should be included in the housing agenda, which then leads to unnecessary differences between the housing agendas of the regions.

These findings imply that there are a number of uncertainties regarding developing the housing agenda, which has a negative impact on the agenda. The confusion mainly depends on the content of the housing agenda, as the planning of meetings was clear to all interviewees.

5.3.4 Sense of urgency

The sense of urgency regards how both actors in the cooperation estimate the severity of the housing shortage and how this affects the housing agenda. The province recognises the urgent need to accelerate housing construction and wants to make agreements with the regions about themes such as acceleration, sustainability and affordability. According to the province, the regions also see the urgency in hastening housing construction; the province noted that the sense of urgency influences willingness to cooperate (P1; Province of Gelderland, 2020; Gelderland, n.d.). However, six out of 10 interviewees indicated that the regions do not have sufficient capacity and time to draft housing agendas. Several interviewees (U1; U2; S2; U4) reported that this is due to the high administrative pressure in their own municipalities; there is not much time to work on the housing agenda. They also indicated that activities related to their own municipalities take precedence over activities related to the housing agenda. Other interviewees (E1; E2; U4) stated that smaller municipalities in particular have fewer workers at their disposal than large municipalities, making it extra challenging for smaller municipalities to carry out activities for the housing agenda. Several sources reported that the sense of urgency is important in terms of seeing the need for collaboration and being open to learning from each other and granting each other concessions (Jakobs, 2018; Verdaas & Geelen, 2017; Ritsema et al., 2018; P1; E1; U1; U2; U3; E2; R1).

In the field of collaboration, it is also a bit more difficult to collaborate because there is a lot of knowledge to share, but at the same time the pressure, the workload, is high for everyone, so they do not always have time, and that remains a point of contention – people do want to cooperate and share, at the official level I am talking about now, but eh...people are limited in their time.

(Urbanised region (U1), 2020)

Furthermore, six of the interviewees (E1; U1; U2; E2; S2; U4) indicated a development in the appointment of a process director. A process director converts the process and guides the determination of the housing agenda. This individual is mainly deployed when regions struggle in drawing up the housing agenda or if officials within the region do not have time to write the agenda.

The interviewees were also asked about the sense of urgency regarding a Housing Deal compared to the sense of urgency regarding a housing agenda. The difference between a housing agenda and Housing Deal is that the national government is more involved in Housing Deals, as mentioned in

section 2.6. More than half of the interviewees (P1; U1; U2; E2; U3; S2) indicated that the urgency is greater at the Housing Deal level, as the region has more of an economic interest in the Housing Deals, which helps to accelerate the deals.

These findings suggest that the majority of the regions are struggling to find time for the housing agenda and that the deployment of a process director is seen as a solution. In addition, various sources reported that the sense of urgency is an important aspect of regional cooperation. Regions are more interested in the Housing Deals than in the housing agenda, as the Housing Deals have higher economic benefits.

5.3.5 Communication

The soft aspect *communication* entails how discussions proceed and how mutual contact is experienced. Below are the findings related to meetings about the housing agenda.

All interviewees and the documents about the strategic housing vision of the region Arnhem-Nijmegen (2019) and province of Gelderland (n.d.) indicated that mutual contact between the province and regions and within the regions is effective in the sense that officials know how to find each other and the atmosphere is informal. Discussions can sometimes be challenging (U1; U2; E2), but all interviewees agreed that mutual contact always takes place from a position of respect.

Discussions are difficult, mainly because of disagreements about the number of homes, and this damages the process of developing the housing agenda (Schaaf & Spenkelink, 2018; Geffen et al., 2016; P1; U1; S2; U2; U4; E1). Various sources indicated that there has been no effective discussion about how to strengthen the housing market in the region (Schaaf & Spenkelink, 2018; U1; U2; U4). From this point of view, according to experts (Geffen et al., 2016; Michielsen et al., 2019; E1; E2), the province does not want to think about this issue and is too critical of municipal housing plans. However, representatives of the province of Gelderland indicated in several sources (Schaaf & Spenkelink, 2018; Gelderland, n.d. ; SNV, 2019; P1) that they are open to entering the conversation. This was also confirmed by all representatives of the regions and external experts, and it is also reflected in the province's participation in meetings, as shown in the examination of the role of the province.

In the field of communication, one can distinguish between larger and smaller municipalities. Half of the interviewees reported that larger municipalities are more active during meetings, have a larger network and often have a more direct relationship with the province (E1; E2; S1). The smaller municipalities do not have the time to attend all meetings, mainly because they have fewer civil servants.

The findings thus suggest that the atmosphere between the province and regions and between the regions is positive and that people treat each other with respect. However, difficult discussions do not contribute to the quality of the contents of the housing agenda.

5.3.6 Leadership

When it comes to leadership, the research examined which actor controls the collaborative process of the housing agenda. All interviewees agreed that the province does not exercise leadership when it

comes to developing the housing agenda. Additionally, Schaaf and Spenkelink (2018), Verdaas and Geelen (2017), province of Gelderland (n.d.), SNV (2019), Ritsema et al. (2018) and Regio Food Valley (2018) agreed that the province is not in the lead in the process of drawing up the housing agenda. The mentioned sources and all interviewees agreed that the province has a mediating and weak guiding role, the main focus of which is the substantiation of housing plans and regional coordination.

The region is held responsible for developing the housing agenda (Schaaf & Spenkelink, 2018; SNV, 2019; Ritsema et al., 2018; all interviewees). In some cases, there is an official process leader (SNV, 2019; Ritsema et al., 2018; Regio Food Valley, 2018; U3). Half of the interviewees (E1; U1; E2; U2; U4) indicated that the choice for a process director was made more frequently. The deployment of process directors was also confirmed by various documents. In cases where a process director is used, the content is still provided by the region, but the process is monitored by the process director (Klein et al., 2017; Schaaf & Spenkelink, 2018; Ritsema et al., 2018). However, the province is ultimately the one that formally adopts the housing agenda (P1; Provincie Gelderland, n.d. ; E1; U1; U2; E2).

Furthermore, half of the interviewees indicated that, within the region, the larger municipalities have more of a leading role than the smaller municipalities. For example, the larger municipalities play the role of 'a wise older brother' when it comes to regional cooperation. It is crucial that the importance of the region is seen, and the role implies that larger municipalities share knowledge with smaller municipalities (U1; U2; E1 ; U4; E2).

*So it is also challenging to ensure that those larger municipalities play their role as the older brother and to make sure that there is a sense of equality.
(External expert (E2), 2020)*

These findings illustrate that responsibility for developing the housing agenda lies with the region. The region is increasingly outsourcing the process of drawing up the housing agenda to process directors. Ultimately, it remains the province that formally adopts the housing agenda.

5.4 Improvements

The interviewees were also asked about potential improvements to cooperation, and a number of suggestions emerged from the document analysis as well. The findings of this section are related to the following sub-question: What areas for improvement are there in the soft aspects of the cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions?

The most noticeable suggestions for improvement concerned regional cooperation, including a desire for more openness between the municipalities within a region and more knowledge-sharing so that actors can learn from each other and so that each municipality is not left to discover for itself how to deal with a situation or subject (Regio Arnhem-Nijmegen, 2019; P1; U1; U2; U2; E1; R1; S1).

*I think it really helps that sharing knowledge can really make so much of a difference that everyone can benefit from.
(Urbanised region (U1), 2020)*

In addition, many documents argued for more governance to create more support for developing the housing agenda. Involving companies, educational institutions or other interested parties in creating the housing agenda would better leverage knowledge and qualities that could add value to the content of the housing agenda (Region Arnhem-Nijmegen, 2019; Marcouch et al., 2020; Provincie Gelderland, nd; Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2020b; Mulder-Metselaar et al., 2017; Achterhoek Agenda 2020, 2015; SNV, 2019; Ritsema et al., 2018; Regio Food Valley, 2018; Klein et al., 2017). Additionally, the housing market is complex, involving more actors than just the authorities (Chapter 2). Half of the interviewees (E1; U1; U2; E2; R1) also advocated for more governance to improve the quality of the housing agenda. So, other actors of the housing market can share their knowledge and ideas with the authorities.

Finally, a minor point for improvement came from the external experts (E1; E2; Schaaf & Spengelink, 2018). They argued for the uniformisation of the housing agendas to avoid unnecessary differences between the agendas of different regions and to give more structural direction so that the content can be focused on more clearly.

These findings suggest that cooperation between the province and the regions and within the regions is not yet perfect and that openness and knowledge-sharing would strengthen the cooperation.

6. | CONCLUSION & REFLECTION

This chapter answers the main question of this research and then reflects on the research, the results and the research process.

6.1 Conclusion

In response to the growing housing shortage, the national government has stipulated the need to build a large number of homes in the national housing policy. The national housing policy is implemented based on the housing agendas, which are established by the province and municipalities. A well-coordinated housing agenda can effectively tackle the housing problem if the national policy sets the right guidelines. This research has focused on the province of Gelderland and its regions since the province has a significant housing shortage and the process of establishing the housing agendas seems to be difficult. With the introduction of the Environmental Act (Dutch: *Omgevingswet*) in January 2021, the need for strong cooperation will be greater, which makes it more important that the governmental layers can work together smoothly. Therefore, this research has focused on the soft aspects of cooperation, as preliminary research showed that the cooperation between provinces and municipalities in the search for a coordinated housing agenda does not always run smoothly. This research has sought an answer to the following question: *Which soft aspects hinder cooperation between the province of Gelderland and its regions in establishing the housing agenda?* To answer the question, a qualitative study was conducted on the influences of the soft aspects of working together on setting the housing agenda. A document analysis and interviews were used for the qualitative research.

The theoretical framework has shown that, in the cooperation between the province and its regions, there are six soft aspects (trust, shared ambition, communication, expectations, sense of urgency and leadership) that influence the housing agenda. The results from the qualitative research have demonstrated that all six aspects can negatively affect the housing agenda and that the aspects are interrelated. In addition, the regions are still uncertain regarding what regional cooperation can bring them and how much time and capacity they should invest to achieve the desired housing agenda. The results have also shown that regions missed a process leader due to a lack of time, capacity, sense of urgency and sense of the importance of regional cooperation and the housing agenda, but that the deployment of process directors is an effective solution for the missing process leader.

Trust between the municipalities within a region is strongly influenced by politics. The results have demonstrated that political games are used to conceal mistakes and misunderstandings. As a result of this political strategy, there is less openness among the actors, and trust is thereby damaged. When it comes to the cooperative relationship between the province and regions, the new attitude of the province is appreciated by the regions. Because the province wants to enter into a dialogue with the regions, more openness is created, which has a positive influence on the relationship; however, the regions still remain suspicious that the province will continue to express its own will in the name of the provincial interest. The province must serve the provincial interest, but the province has substantial freedom in determining what is covered, and because the province is ultimately the one that determines the housing agenda, some mistrust exists.

The results have also shown that there is still no shared ambition within the regions. In particular, the importance of regional cooperation is not seen. Municipalities should compromise more and learn more from each other in the context of regional interests. The effect of the housing agenda for the region is difficult to measure, and as a result, the importance of the housing agenda for the region – and thus for the municipalities in that region – is not yet seen. A higher sense of urgency would help in highlighting the importance of regional cooperation and the housing agenda as an instrument to tackle the housing shortage.

In addition, the results have indicated that expectations regarding provincial interests are not consistent. Many provincial documents mention different themes regarding housing, causing confusion among the regions. Clearer requirements should also be set for the housing agenda in terms of structure so that it is clearer for the regions what is expected of them.

The results have also illustrated that the municipalities within a region put their own economic interests first so that the number of homes to be built is the most critical discussion point and discussions therefore continue along those lines. The qualitative aspects of housing fall into the background, while the province insists on quality and substantiation.

Finally, the context and results have shown that the regions are still seeking to fulfil their role in developing the housing agenda. It is clear to the regions that they should draw up the housing agenda and that the province is a partner in this respect, but that the province does not co-write the agenda. However, the results have also shown that regions are still in search of a shared ambition in the field of housing. Furthermore, it is an ongoing task for the municipalities within the regions to determine how much time and human capacity they want or need to make available for developing the housing agenda. The regions are seeking a leader to draw up the housing agenda. Because many municipalities do not see the urgency and regional importance, they do not feel obliged to take the lead and thus free up time and capacity for the housing agenda. However, a process director offers an effective solution for this problem as he takes the responsibility to draw up the agenda.

6.2 Reflection

This section reflects on the research topic, the theories used, methods and the research process in general. First, this section reflects on the process of coming up with this research subject. Followed by a reflection on the theoretical framework and methodology.

In the beginning it was difficult to come up with a subject, but eventually I came up with the subject to investigate the social side of the housing shortage. This was still very broad, so as I read about the subject, I had the idea to focus on the relationship between the province and municipalities and the setting of the housing agendas. By means of a literature study, I first extensively visualised the context in order to clarify my knowledge about the cooperation between the province and municipalities and the housing agenda. The context was initially very extensive, so I had to narrow it down to only relevant information for this research. On the basis of the context, I searched for theories that were connected to this form of cooperation. It was hard to find theories about the cooperation between the province

and municipalities in the Netherlands, as most theories about cooperation are more related to governance and networks. This type of cooperation is vertical, because it is a cooperation within the government, but both actors have a high degree of independence and control that they can also be seen as individual organisations. There is a hierarchy in the government system that makes this cooperation unique. Ultimately, I decided to use different collaboration theories that connect to the subject and complement each other to make it suitable for the subject.

The search for the right theories was also reflected in the research process. The theoretical framework was, like the context, very broad at first, after which I later specified it further on the research topic. In retrospect, it was a good choice to use multiple theories of regional cooperation as a theoretical framework, when the interviews showed that intermunicipal cooperation also played a major role in drawing up the housing agenda. During the interviews, it quickly became clear that determining the housing agenda was not only about the relationship between the province and region, but also about the collaboration within the region.

As research methods, interviews and document analysis were used for this research. In hindsight, observations could also have been a valuable research method for this study. Because of COVID-19, everything went slightly differently and I no longer saw the opportunity to possibly join a meeting about the Housing agenda. Concerning the observations, I think it is very important to be able to read the body language of those involved in order to make a good observation and as a result of the virus outbreak, I lacked to see the added value of observing via online meetings. In my experience I also noticed that the switch to online meetings was difficult. Partly because of this search and my own experience with online meetings, I decided not to make observations. I would definitely recommend it to someone who wants to do the same kind of research. Instead of the observations, I consciously ensured that I also interview external experts, because they are less dependent on the collaboration and look at the collaboration with a fresh look.

The interviews that were held went well despite COVID-19. The interview questions had a positive approach, although this research focuses on the negative influence of soft aspects. Each time the interviews started very openly by asking the interviewees if they could tell something about the cooperation between the province and its regions or about how the housing agenda was drawn up. By starting the interview in a neutral manner with those questions, the interviewees' answers were open and honest, revealing negative points of the cooperation. In retrospect, it was smart to start the interviews like this, because the negative points can be sensitive.

The results showed that the focus of this research was also on inter-municipal cooperation within the regions. Ultimately, research was conducted into cooperation between the province and region, and between the municipalities within the region. It is noticeable that the province of Gelderland plays a fairly large role in the regions when it comes to intermunicipal cooperation. The province always focuses on intermunicipal cooperation when drawing up the housing agenda.

6.3 Recommendations

The results have shown that cooperation on the housing agenda can run more smoothly than it currently does. To achieve this, it is important that municipalities within a region recognise that the

housing agenda effectively contributes to solving the housing shortage and balancing the housing market. In addition, it is also important that municipalities within the region see the regional importance of the cooperation and therefore find it worthwhile to put an official on the establishment of the housing agenda. If more capacity and time were made available for drawing up the housing agenda, it would indicate that the housing agenda is being taken seriously and that the effectiveness of the housing agenda is recognised. However, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of the housing agenda. Therefore, the municipalities struggle to see the benefits of regional coordination. I also think that separate departments should be added to the government regarding the implementation of the housing policy. Because housing now falls under other political themes, the urgency of the housing shortage seems less prominent, as themes such as sustainability are higher on the agenda.

In my view it is more convenient if there is an organisation per region that is only focused on housing policy. The theme of housing no longer falls under the province and municipalities. The regional organisation consists of members of educational institutions, construction organisations, government institutions and residents' organisations and are in a direct connection with the national government. The members of the regional organisation are not eligible, but the themes on which the organisation focuses are requestable. This means that the municipalities can indicate what is needed, such as tiny housing or sustainable senior housing, so that the regional organisation can focus on meeting this need. By not making the members eligible, a good working relationship can be built. This gives members longer time to get to know each other, instead of rebuilding that relationship every four years. In addition, the regional organisation is only focused on housing, making this their most pressing matter. Thanks to a direct connection to the national government, regional organisations have the opportunity to clearly indicate what they need and how the national government can respond to the housing market by means of housing policy. The regional organisations are not only in contact with the national government, but also with each other, so there is also coordination with neighbouring regions. The advantage of the regional organisations is that the urgency of the housing shortage is recognised, that the focus is really on solving the housing shortage and the organisation has nothing to do with the cooperation history between municipalities and the province and the rivalry between municipalities when it comes to the economic importance of the number of inhabitants.

To conclude, I recommend a number of follow-up studies. As mentioned, a process director is increasingly deployed by regions to lead the collaboration of the housing agenda. The effect of using a process director on the quality of the housing agenda could be a possible follow-up study. Furthermore, this study only focused on the province of Gelderland, but there are several provinces in the Netherlands, a comparative study could be done. The situation on the provincial housing market is different in every province, also the degree of urbanisation differs per province which makes it interesting to study the process of cooperation in the other provinces. It was too much of a challenge to compare provinces for this research period. Lastly, it may also be interesting to make recommendations based on this study to improve cooperation, and then to re-examine the influence of the cooperation on the quality of the housing agenda in a few years' time to see if the quality of the housing agenda is improved.

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